

## **Introducing generic staging through music videos**

**Brett Laybutt<sup>1</sup>**

*College of Business and Communication*

### **ABSTRACT**

This short paper will describe an activity presented at Yokohama JALT Tech Myshare on January 22, 2017, on using music videos in order to introduce the concept of 'staging' in written genres to low-level EFL classes. Specifically, the video "Weapon of Choice" by Fatboy Slim (<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCDIYvFmgW8>>) featuring the actor Christopher Walken was used to introduce the four stages of a 'recount' genre and then to scaffold writing activities.

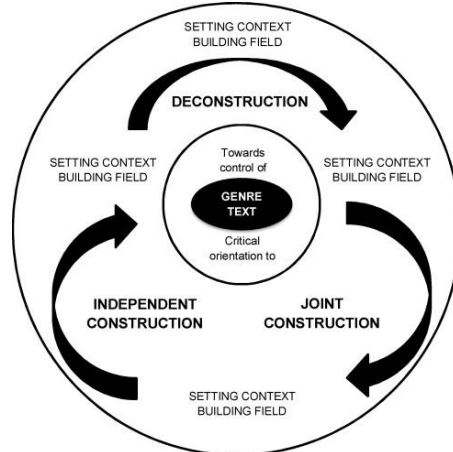
### **INTRODUCTION**

Genre-based pedagogy arose out of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), a theory of language in social contexts, and views genre as a "staged, goal-oriented social process" (Rose & Martin, 2012, p.1). Out of SFL, the 'Sydney School' as it came to be known (Hyon, 1996) developed a text-based writing pedagogy whereby the features of genres are explicitly taught (Hyland, 2007) and students are scaffolded by the teacher to gradually build control of the features of various written genres (Rose & Martin, 2012, p. 66). This scaffolding generally proceeds in a three-step teaching-learning sequence (Paltridge, 2001), as shown below in Figure 1. However, while the use of genre-based instruction has become more common in writing courses (Hyland, 2007), it is still mainly limited to academic writing or English for Special Purposes classes (Lin, 2003). This paper will show how this genre pedagogy can be adapted using music videos to appeal to students in a general English course at a Japanese two-year vocational college. The advantages of using music videos as a writing resource are that they increase motivation, lower affective filter, and appeal to different learning styles (Engh, 2013).

---

<sup>1</sup> Brett Laybutt is English Coordinator at College of Business and Communication in Kawasaki, Japan. He has an MA in TEFL/TESL from the University of Birmingham, UK and is interested in the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics in EFL.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Teaching/learning cycle**



## DECONSTRUCTION

The 'recount' genre consists of four stages: 1. Orientation 2. Events in Chronological Order 3. Reorientation and 4. Coda and features past tense, temporal conjunctions or clauses, and human participants (Butt, et al, 2000). The music video for "Weapon of Choice" by Fatboy Slim, especially through the interaction of action and camera work, reflects these stages. The video opens with a static shot of a man, who may be a hotel custodian or night manager, seated in a hotel lobby as shown below in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Screenshot of music video opening**



The camera then zooms progressively closer in a series of still shots to the man who remains seated. Meanwhile, the music is quiet and muffled. The man then moves his head slightly in time with the music. As the music builds, the man stands but the camera remains still. This passage forms the Orientation stage.

The video could be stopped here and language activities with students could include a discussion of questions such as:

- Who was the man?
- Where was he?
- What was he doing?

This could also introduce grammatical features, such as the past progressive.

The transition to the next stage is signaled both by the music, which becomes considerably louder, and the camera, which now tracks the actor as he becomes more animated and begins dancing, as in Figure 3.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Christopher Walken dancing in the hotel**



The man then dances in various locations throughout the hotel and the camera moves and follows him. This is the Events in Chronological Order stage of the recount genre. These are presented as a series of discrete events one after the other and the camera reflects this through sharp cutting and changing angles as the actor dances in the different areas, for example, the lobby, an escalator, an elevator hall, and even flying through the air. Language activities for students could include story-boarding the locations, retelling to a partner, putting locations in order, or checking hotel items from a teacher-prepared list. Grammatical items would include simple past and prepositions of location. Finally, the dancer lands back on his feet and both he and the camera pause. The direction of the man's head and gaze then shifts from directly facing the camera to looking out to the side, as shown in Figure 4.

**FIGURE 4**  
**Christopher Walken standing in the lobby**



This shift in gaze invites subtly signals to the viewer (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996) a progression from the Events stage to a Reorientation as the man shifts from action to reflection. He then walks back to his seat and sits down, mirroring the opening Orientation stage. This is the Coda, or Personal Comments, stage and the man also seems to be thinking about what just happened, as shown in Figure 5.

**FIGURE 5**  
**Christopher Walken thinking**



Language activities at this stage could include discussion of both what the man was thinking at the end, and what the students thought about the music video. Language for giving opinions and modality for hedging opinions could also be introduced.

## **JOINT CONSTRUCTION**

After the video has been watch and discussed, students can then be scaffolded into the writing process. Some ideas for scaffolding could be reordering screenshots and then writing captions for each, cloze activities with other examples of recounts, or the most common, using writing frames such as that in Appendix A. Here the students are

gradually guided into writing a recount genre. Also, writing features such as spelling and punctuation conventions can be taught.

## **INDEPENDENT CONSTRUCTION**

Once the students are familiar with the stages and the writing process of the recount they can then be encouraged to produce their own piece of writing. In order to give some focus to the writing process, students could be encouraged to find a video they like and write about that. This would add an element of personalization to their writing. Alternatively, the teacher could show another music video to the entire class which all students must then write about. This would have the advantage of making class grading easier by providing an opportunity for the teacher to compare student's work.

## **CONCLUSION**

This short paper has demonstrated how music videos can be used as a tool for genre-based writing instruction. One caveat to this would be the choice of video. Some music videos are simply various shots of the musician singing the song in various locations, which does not lend itself to recount writing. Care must be taken by the teacher to choose or screen videos carefully to make sure they adhere to the stages of a recount genre.

## **REFERENCES**

- Butt, D., Fahey, R., Feez, S., Spinks, S. & Yallop, C. (2000). *Using functional grammar: An explorer's guide*. Sydney, N.S.W: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research.
- Eng, D. (2013). Why Use Music in English Language Learning? A Survey of the Literature. *English Language Teaching*, 6(2), 113-127.
- Hyland, K. (2007). Genre pedagogy: Language, literacy and L2 writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 16(3), 148-164.
- Hyon, S. (1996). Genre in three traditions: Implications for ESL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(4), 693-722.
- Kress G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge
- Lin, B. (2003). English in Singapore: An insider's perspective of syllabus renewal through a genre-based approach. *RELC Journal*, 34(2), 223-246.
- Paltridge, B. (2001). *Genre and the language learning classroom*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press
- Rose, D., & Martin, J. (2012). *Learning to write, reading to learn: Genre, knowledge, and pedagogy in the Sydney school*. Sheffield: Equinox.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Writing frame for low-level writers**

**INTRODUCTION**

Today we watched \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.

**ORIENTATION**

At first, a man was \_\_\_\_\_. He was in/at/on \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**EVENTS**

Suddenly, he \_\_\_\_\_  
and then he \_\_\_\_\_.  
Next, he \_\_\_\_\_.  
After that he \_\_\_\_\_.  
Then suddenly, he \_\_\_\_\_.  
He flew \_\_\_\_\_.

**REORIENTATION**

Finally he \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**CODA**

I think \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.