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Task-based language teaching and genre awareness in sports news writing: A case study

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Abstract: Physical Education undergraduates increasingly need occupational English literacy for sports-media writing, but ESP courses rarely focus on acquiring the sports news genre as language learners do. Since the consolidation of English as the language of global sports media is being strongly felt, this situation seems urgent. The paper investigated the use of task-based teaching methods to promote sports news genre writing and also genre awareness in English learners during that process. The research was a qualitative case study involving 26 second-year Physical Education undergraduates, including 8 primary students and the class lecturer. The focus was a six-meeting unit of instruction on one sub-genre: the live/running match report. Data collection included lecturer observation records, detailed lesson plans, different drafts of a student's writing, rubric scores from before and after the intervention, and semi-structured interviews. Data were interpreted using reflexive thematic analysis combined with a systematic move analysis of the drafts. Five areas of results show that bringing real-life language-use demands into the lesson while working within the classroom's constraints was a constant back-and-forth. In contrast, students' genre awareness varied in three areas: structure, register, and audience. Several learners were still struggling with their sport fan identity and emerging reporters' one at this stage. This outcome allows genre knowledge to be discussed, for the most part, based on a real, task-centered process and offers suggestions for mixed-proficiency ESP classes that may be used to arrange writing lessons in a career-related context.

Keywords: English for specific purposes, genre awareness, sports news writing

Abstrak: Kebutuhan akan bahasa Inggris kejuruan untuk pelaporan olahraga terus meningkat di kalangan mahasiswa S1 Pendidikan Jasmani. Sayangnya, kurikulum Bahasa Inggris untuk Tujuan Khusus (ESP) yang ada jarang menyentuh persoalan bagaimana mahasiswa sebenarnya menguasai genre pelaporan olahraga. Celah ini terasa semakin mendesak. Pasalnya, Bahasa Inggris makin kokoh sebagai bahasa media olahraga global. Studi ini mencoba menjawab dua pertanyaan sekaligus. Pertama, bagaimana pengajaran bahasa berbasis tugas membentuk penulisan genre pelaporan olahraga. Kedua, bagaimana kesadaran genre berkembang pada mahasiswa selama proses tersebut. Metode penelitian berupa studi kasus kualitatif. Penelitian ini melibatkan dua puluh enam mahasiswa S1 Pendidikan Jasmani. Delapan mahasiswa di antaranya jadi fokus utama, dan seorang dosen pengajar ikut terlibat. Ada enam sesi yang dijalani, semuanya mengerucut ke satu subgenre, yaitu pelaporan pertandingan langsung atau yang sedang berlangsung. Data dijaring lewat observasi kelas, rencana pelajaran, draf bertahap, skor rubrik pra dan pasca intervensi, serta wawancara semi-terstruktur. Analisisnya memadukan analisis tematik reflektif dengan penelusuran langkah demi langkah yang terstruktur pada draf-draf tersebut. Lima tema yang muncul memperlihatkan hal yang sama. Implementasi berjalan lewat negosiasi yang terus-menerus, di satu sisi ada tuntutan tugas otentik, di sisi lain ada keterbatasan kelas. Kesadaran genre tumbuh dengan ritme yang tidak seragam. Tiap dimensi bergerak dengan kecepatannya sendiri: struktural, register, maupun audiens. Menariknya, sebagian mahasiswa berusaha merajut batas yang kabur antara diri mereka sebagai penggemar olahraga dan sebagai calon jurnalis. Dari sini, studi ini memperluas teori pengetahuan genre ke ranah proses berbasis tugas yang otentik. Implikasi praktisnya juga jelas, yakni panduan menyusun pengajaran menulis profesional di kelas ESP dengan tingkat kemahiran yang beragam.

Kata kunci: Bahasa Inggris untuk tujuan khusus, kesadaran genre, menulis berita olahraga

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INTRODUCTION

In the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course in Physical Education (PE), the primary focus is to equip students with English language skills they can use in professional or academic settings related to sports. Sports news writing is one form of professional literacy that Physical Education students practice, both when communicating with coaches and athletes and when writing about sports for the media and other organizations. Discussions of sports journalism and related issues rarely, if ever, appear in general or academic English classes. Research has also identified sports journalism and media communication as key fields where English is essential for those working or studying in sports-related environments (Anqi et al., 2024; Penjak, 2024; Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020). It is not enough for students to be proficient in English. In many cases, students may have good overall English proficiency but still be unable to produce sports news texts because they do not understand the appropriate genre or discourse structure.

One pedagogical approach worth considering is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). In this approach, learning happens through tasks students set for themselves (Husain et al., 2021). They are exposed to and actively use the target language during a specific period or in specific situations. This method keeps learners highly engaged. They make their own decisions, prepare and deliver presentations, and so on. In ESP, TBLT may be one way to interest and involve learners, also leading them into better levels of writing. However, the fact is that sometimes fluency and vocabulary richness are gained before grammatical accuracy (Erlam & Tolosa, 2022; Fujita & Shintani, 2025; Georgy, 2023; Mulyadi et al., 2023; Rinantanti et al., 2024; Sharmin, 2023; Vo et al., 2025). These findings indicate that content, structure, and task activities all significantly influence students' work outcomes. However, these findings do not explain how students ultimately become familiar with the characteristics of well-written sports news articles. This question naturally raises the concept of genre awareness.

Students' genre awareness involves observing genre conventions and a text's formal characteristics. This includes understanding rhetorical features or strategies, identifying the target audience, recognizing the speaker's or writer's position or stance, and understanding the context and content that drive the writer's choices (Tardy et al., 2020). Therefore, genre awareness is not merely about knowing a text's type and format. It also involves understanding how the text is written (language and style) and how choices regarding content and delivery shape the author's message and communication. Furthermore, this higher-order thinking skill should be regarded as an individual skill (Deng et al., 2024; Kessler, 2021; Kessler & Tuckley, 2023).

In this paper, genre awareness is measured across three aspects: (a) structural genre competence, which is the ability to understand the structural conventions and genre characteristics of a specific genre; (b) communicative genre competence, which is the ability to use language to convey information professionally and accurately, supported by factual evidence and evaluation; and (c) receptive genre competence, which is the ability to recognize the varying expectations of readers and how that awareness can influence the selection of information to be presented as well as its form of presentation.

Sports news writing offers an excellent example for an in-depth examination of this issue, as this format involves filtering out what is essential, establishing a chronological order, incorporating others' perspectives through quotes, using statistics as supporting

evidence, providing analysis, and finally summarizing the information into an easily digestible form. Hajimia et al. (2022) identify three main elements in the structure of newspaper reports; meanwhile, the sports news genre requires a strong combination of score reporting, quotations (or others' statements), and evaluation (Khudiar, 2023).

The main issue in this study is the limited understanding of how genre awareness develops when learners complete realistic, time-pressured tasks. Previous research has examined Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) writing and genre awareness separately. However, few studies have examined genre awareness development in an authenticity-based TBLT course for sports news writing. This qualitative study employs an interpretive paradigm through a case study design. Various classroom practices, writing genres, students' written work, and student journals are treated as resources that reveal the construction of shared meaning (Tardy et al., 2020). In addition to presenting one cycle of a six-meeting ESP unit for match live/running sports reports, this article reports on students' developing genre awareness. The research questions are:

RQ1: How is Task-Based Language Teaching implemented to facilitate sports news genre writing?

RQ2: How do students develop genre awareness throughout the task cycle?

The researchers conducted this study with one PE class consisting of 26 undergraduate students, plus eight students selected from this group, whose drafts and interview results were analyzed in depth. The data analysis provides a comprehensive, detailed picture of how students were guided to understand the sports news genre and apply it through instruction and exposure.

METHOD

Research design and rationale for a case study approach

The research utilized a qualitative case study approach. The main data source was descriptive written exam scores from essays completed before and after the intervention. These were, however, regarded more as aids to interpreting qualitative results than as a quantitative measure of change. This one-case limitation study centered on one ESP class with six sessions dedicated to task-based learning and the investigation of a sports journalism subgenre, specifically live or ongoing game reports. A qualitative case study method was chosen mainly because the research questions focused on classroom ambiance, teaching techniques, and genre understanding in a concrete case.

Kayi-Aydar (2026) notes that case studies are excellent tools for examining situation-specific pedagogical procedures and activities in applied linguistics.

Another justification is that, in this context, thorough contextual understanding was necessary rather than simply identifying causal variables. The study aims to explore students' subjective views on various stressors related to homework pressure, the type and timing of feedback they received from lecturers, genre-related teaching, and the need for audience awareness. According to Pandey (2025), understanding these process-oriented issues requires a holistic analysis of conversations between instructors and students, students' written texts, and participants' stories.

The last justification refers to the methodological triangulation within a single qualitative case study. For the first research question on implementation, observation and lesson-notes data were used as the main sources for analysis. Second, for the second research question about raising genre awareness, the analysis focused on students' drafts and interviews with participants. Only a simple comparison of scores between the pre-intervention and post-intervention writing exercises was made to corroborate the qualitative changes reflected in the drafts.

Research context and participants

This study was conducted in the Department of PE at a state university during a six-session unit on writing live match/race reports as part of the ESP course, "English for Physical Education." The class met for 100 minutes each week over six sessions. The class was selected through location-specific sampling and by choosing the Physical Education ESP course, which was deliberately selected for its representativeness, as the phenomenon under study existed naturally and was not artificially introduced through experimentation.

The class had 26 enrolled students. Criteria for inclusion were: (1) officially being enrolled, (2) signing a consent form after receiving full explanation, (3) attending at least five of the six sessions, (4) not having previously received any formal education in sports news writing (thus assuring their complete novitiate in the genre). Of the 26 students who signed up, all met these conditions. In line with the policies, participation was optional and not counted in their performance assessments. The rewards offered to students matched those offered by the institution, and ethical permission from the university had been obtained in advance.

Eight participants were hand-picked from the class for interviews and in-depth study of their draft texts. Sampling based on their most varied Pretest scores (i.e., three students with the highest scores, three students in the middle range, and two at the bottom level) ensured that students representing different ability levels were included. The remaining activities, including classroom observations and interview rounds with the students, were carried out as planned. The students agreed to use the pseudonyms S1 and S8. With help from an experienced ESP lecturer, researchers prepared a cycle of assignments. In addition to a separate consent form, which the instructor signed, researchers interviewed the instructor once at the end of the study. To avoid bias in observation, all classroom observations were carried out by a non-teaching and non-assessment person.

The task-based implementation

The six sessions focus on a special kind of sports story: live game reports. Hajimia et al. (2022) describe this kind of sports news as the most difficult because it requires combining statistics, evaluation, commentary, and narrative pacing within time limits. Table 1 below presents the lesson framework.

In the first and second meetings (pre-task), students explored the genre of live game reports and completed a genre-introduction task, while also having their vocabulary level checked. In Meeting 3 (task), students worked in groups and used a live broadcast simulation to write the first version of their reports based on real-time data. At Meeting 4 (drafting and reporting), students do a trial run, make changes, and get their work done by exchanging drafts for peer comments. In Meeting 5 (language aspect), the lecturer brings

the whole class together and, using some student drafts (anonymized), teaches narrative organization and language. In Meeting 6 (final task), students work individually to submit their final version of the report, incorporating all improvements and revisions from the feedback they received. The lesson plan for all six classes, which has been drafted beforehand, has certainly served as a guiding tool to make the lesson move in line with the plan.

Table 1. Six-meeting task cycle design for the live/running match report genre

Meeting	Task-Cycle Phase	Instructional Focus	Output / Artifact
1	Pre-task: exposure and noticing	Analyze authentic live/running match reports; identify the nine rhetorical moves; notice headline, lead, statistics, and quotations.	Annotated model texts and move map
2	Pre-task: language priming	Practice reporting verbs, statistic-embedding phrases, evaluative lexis, and headline–lead compression.	Vocabulary and phrase bank
3	Task: initial production	Compose a live/running match report from a simulated real-time data feed.	Initial draft
4	Planning and report	Rehearse the report, revise content and organization, and exchange drafts for peer feedback.	Peer-revised draft
5	Language focus	Analyze move structure, register, grammar, and audience choices using anonymized excerpts from students' drafts.	Annotated class corpus and revised understanding of genre features
6	Final task: individual production	Produce a polished live/running match report incorporating peer and language-focus feedback.	Final draft

Data collection techniques

Five data sources were collected using established procedures and instruments. First, classroom observations were conducted. A non-participant observer took notes in a structured field setting, using a protocol adapted from previous TBLT implementations and genre-related episode research, and attended all six sessions. This method recorded the participants' fidelity to the task cycle structure, spoken length, genre-related conversations, and difficulties such as time pressure from which one could easily deduce through field observations. Additionally, with permission, researchers audio-recorded the overall class reports and language-focused segments for word-for-word transcription. Second, students wrote drafts. Students completed three types of drafts: an initial draft (Meeting 3), a peer-revised draft (Session 4), and a final draft (Meeting 6). All drafts were shared digitally in a single folder and saved under the authors' pseudonyms, resulting in three distinct sets of drafts from 26 students (78 in total). All drafts from the eight key students were analyzed based on their overall trajectories.

Third, written outputs at the pre- and post-stages were collected in the weeks right before and after the 6-lesson intervention module. All experimental participants completed a written match report performance task under controlled conditions in the same room. It was timed for 30 minutes (a fixed duration). Two raters assessed the products independently using the same rubric (Rock, 2022; Santoso et al., 2025), covering move structure, content (accuracy), organization/cohesion, language (accuracy), and register/style. Raters were given a five-point scale on which to mark the writing characteristics of the student writers at each level of writing. To safeguard against subjective judgment, raters were not told participants' identities or the specific stage. Agreement between raters (inter-rater agreement) was checked before the use of aggregated scores in statistical analysis.

Fourth, semi-structured interviews lasting 20 to 40 minutes were conducted separately with each student in the focus group as a follow-up to sessions 2 and 6, and with the lecturer, who was also interviewed at the end, using a guided questionnaire (interview protocol). These interviews aimed to explore students' perspectives on the assignment cycle and their level of awareness of genre and the feedback process. They were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Fifth, the six worksheets from the recorded group sessions (one worksheet for each session) were used to assess implementation fidelity.

Data analysis procedures

Data analysis was conducted along the two parallel threads. First, interview transcripts and field notes underwent thematic analysis using the reflective and non-reflective stages, as described by the researchers. The first stage of this analytical process, according to (Braun & Clarke, 2021), is familiarizing yourself with the material. The second step is coding, in which the codes are generated and developed. The third step is generating themes from the coded data. The fourth step is refining the themes through review. The fifth step is defining and naming the themes to capture the main idea of the research. Finally, the sixth step is presenting findings and writing the report.

Initially, coding was conducted mainly through iterative cycles, with NVivo supporting the analysis by enabling the creation of various document types to support non-linear analysis. In addition to software analysis, the two researchers manually coded the interview transcripts, discussed their perspectives, and maintained a reflective diary. Secondly, the student papers were assessed by using a move-analysis framework based on Hajimia et al. (2022). Initially, the framework comprises nine moves. It was slightly modified to highlight better features of sports news which include scores and quotes so that the final move-completeness score ranges from 0 to 9. This process was carried out in Excel, where we tracked how students' move scores changed from the first version of their work through peer revision to the final paper, while a class-average mean also indicated overall performance .

The thematic and move analyses were combined using a finding-to-theme matrix. The main idea was first drawn from the interviews, observation notes, and drafts; related findings of different types were classified into topics through thematic analysis, and the topics were eventually developed into five themes. It also shows what the evidential route from the data to conclusions actually looked like. Both rubric scores (before and after) were reported as means, standard deviations, and absolute and normalized gains based on

category means. These descriptive scores enhance the qualitative findings rather than support claims of cause and effect.

Pre- and post-rubric scores were primarily described in Excel using means, standard deviations, and gain scores, and the qualitative-dominant design is why no inferential analysis was conducted. In the findings, triangulation helped cross-validate multiple sources to answer each research question. As a result, RQ1 can be answered using lesson plans and observations, supported by the instructor interview. RQ2 will be supported by draft move analysis and student interviews, while being cross-checked with rubric score development over time. This triangulation matrix would not only confirm whether each answer is based on all sources of evidence but also highlight any discrepancies, if they exist.

Trustworthiness and research ethics

Credibility was established by collecting multiple sources of evidence, including focal students who were tasked with checking the correctness of written data through transcripts. By elaborating on the task and participants involved, transferability of the study results was confirmed at a higher level so that readers would feel that the application of the results would not be a difficult decision when they wanted to apply them in their own context. For dependability, the authors kept written records of decisions related to coding as well as of the whole coding process including the coder-coder activity: 20% of the coded parts were subjected to re-coding after three weeks to verify how consistent the coders (researchers) were. The researchers reflected their assumptions in the field notes kept in the research diary, thereby demonstrating that their research was grounded in objectivity. Moreover, a second external researcher independently analyzed whether the identified themes were well grounded in the original data.

In terms of research ethics, after obtaining ethical clearance from the institute, the researchers began collecting data. The 26 students, in addition to the lecturer, who participated were asked to sign forms so they could freely decide whether to take part in the study. Participants were also told they could drop out at any time, and the researchers clearly explained, without jargon, how the data would be handled; participants could also refer to the same explanation in a document. The researcher's scores were independent of whether students were part of the study, so the grade did not depend on participants in a particular group. Privacy of the participants was another area the researchers took care of. They were given pseudonyms. The researcher kept the physical computers locked, used password-secured storage, and deleted the data at the end of the timeline, when all research outputs had reached their final version and were ready for public use.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study began by collecting the observational record, interview transcripts, and students' drafts, then iteratively reviewing them for initial coding and reflective thematic analysis that led to the research results. The analysis followed a step-by-step process, moving from initial to conceptual to thematic levels. Each step involved cross-referencing data from different sources. First, a few findings were extracted from the diverse sources. Then, conceptual categories were created that integrated all those different findings. The last step was to get the most representative themes after cross-checking. Themes 1 and 2 address RQ1, explaining how and why task processes changed. Themes 3 to 5 mainly

address RQ2, showing varying rates of development in students' understanding of text structure, audience, and register.

Across the different data sources, three major patterns stood out before the final formulation of the themes. Structural awareness was the most consistent feature; students could identify the lead and move sequence. Register awareness was more contested, as students had to integrate evaluative language with factual reporting. Audience awareness came later and was inconsistent. At this point, some students could picture an unknown reader reading the writing instead of the lecturer. These patterns led to five analytic themes.

Table 2. Evidence-to-theme development matrix

Evidence and initial finding	**Analytic category**	**Theme**	**RQ**
Evidence: Observation notes + instructor interview + lesson plans. Finding: Planning time had to be shortened when students could not keep pace with the live feed.	Authenticity–manageability tension	1. Racing the clock: authenticity under pressure	RQ1
Evidence: Observation notes + student interviews + anonymized drafts used in Meeting 5. Finding: Students responded to their own anonymized sentences as shared class material, reducing the personal risk of error discussion.	Psychological safety and shared noticing	2. Seeing ourselves on the screen: learning from anonymized drafts	RQ1
Evidence: Drafts + Meeting 1 observation + S2/S8 interviews. Finding: Students increasingly recognized and used the lead-and-move sequence, but some still needed to restructure consciously.	Structural genre awareness	3. From list to lead: developing structural genre awareness	RQ2
Evidence: Meeting 5 observation + S6/S3 interviews. Finding: Students differed in how they balanced factual reporting and personal evaluation.	Register awareness and identity negotiation	4. Walking the line between fan and reporter: negotiating register and identity	RQ2
Evidence: S1/S7 interviews + classroom discussion about headlines and readers. Finding: Some students shifted from imagining the lecturer as an audience to imagining an anonymous reader they encounter in everyday media.	Audience awareness and writer–reader positioning	5. Writing for a stranger scrolling by: developing audience awareness	RQ2

Implementation data revealed that the original live-report assignment produced two outcomes: students were highly engaged, but the course ran into schedule and logistical problems. When students struggled to keep up, the lecturer adjusted teaching methods and later turned students' drafts into communal teaching texts. In addition, developmental data revealed that genre awareness was quite uneven: comprehension of structural features had already come together by that time, but understanding of different registers and audiences kept changing without a solid pattern. That said, these emerging patterns suggest that genre acquisition is better described as a complex process of adaptation and identity negotiation, rather than a linear acquisition of rules.

Having students share anonymous drafts with the class is another piece of supporting evidence. Instead of only looking at outside examples, students saw how their own ideas were taken up and became themes in collective academic discussion. This approach made previously abstract genre characteristics more concrete and, according to the interviews, led students to change their perception of mistakes. Rather than seeing mistakes as proof of incompetence, they came to see them as genre features that could be tackled jointly. Descriptive essay data support these findings. The main pre- to post-improvements were in move structure, whereas linguistic accuracy was least affected. Similarly, Table 3, which depicts these students' progress at the writing stage, shows that all eight focal individuals improved their move-completeness scores by the end, regardless of the level and stability of improvement. Thus, these quantitative results mainly support the qualitative narratives and do not directly prove that a pedagogical measure led to these changes.

Tables 3 and 4 show that overall score increases in one class are broadly consistent, and that the move structure score increased most steeply. In contrast, language accuracy increased the least, and the two students described in the narratives below, whose genre relationship is very unstable, also had the least balanced scores.

Theme 1: Racing the clock (authenticity under pressure)

The reason for using a LIVE match report is that it requires the writer to comment on and track a real-life event as it happens. The group created their reports during the third meeting using the live-feed material they had. Through live commentary, scores, and intermittent event updates, the students had to respond. The writing task was planned as the first step after an initial planning phase. However, the classroom observation record from meeting 4 revealed that many student pairs still had not even completed their first drafts. Because of this, the lecturer took away some planning time and instead gave students time for peer review. This change clearly shows how real-life tasks combine and are constrained by a time limit of only 6 meetings in the classroom.

> "I am more aware of the tension while the students are taking notes on my live report. I want them to understand the feelings of a journalist at the scene, to be on the move with the events. However, once I put that pressure on them, the less confident students just froze. So, I ended up walking around and telling them, "Just write down the score and one quote; we will work together on the rest later." Of course, what I did did not really match the lesson plan, but I could not just sit there and watch them struggle without helping. (Course lecturer)

S5, a confident speaker but nervous writer, recalled the session differently:

> "With the updates going on like goal, then card, then another goal, I was really wondering what time it had come, whether I was even allowed to speak in a normal way. I was aware that this is supposed to be quite an enjoyable sensation, a game of matches, in other words; however, the fact remained that during the very short break I just wanted to halt the clock."(S5, post-Meeting 6 interview)

The lecturer and S5 saw the issue in the same light: the time factor contributed to the activity's authenticity, but for some learners, it made them struggle to write under duress. On the one hand, the time-bound activity pushed certain students to the limits, while the other group saw it as a barrier that prevented even the initial step of writing. Therefore, the data showed that the authenticity dimension was an unevenly distributed advantage that depended on learners' language and cognitive task-management ability. The literature often credits TBLT's success to strict adherence to the task cycle plan. This inconsistency, though, makes the overall picture murkier and more complex than that tidy account suggests (Bryfonski, 2024; Iswati & Triastuti, 2021; Tajeddin & Mansouri, 2024; Yan & Goh, 2023). In this case, a well-prepared and skilled lecturer still changed the task from time to time because the task pressure was not completely unpredictable to him and her, at least not at the beginning. This change is better explained as an interplay among lecturer, student, and task authenticity than as a mere deviation from the model.

Another aspect the story adds is how authenticity is usually perceived in task-based ESP. Authenticity is not merely an aspect of a task; rather, it results from learners doing the task. Without preparation, the lecturer provided strong support during the activity, which helped maintain the task's communicative purpose, even when time constraints prevented weaker learners from participating. All in all, this topic does not go against the idea that authentic task-oriented ESP activities can lead to students' engagement (Fujita & Shintani, 2025; Mulyadi et al., 2023; Rinantanti et al., 2024); only an extra insight it brings is that the motivational power of authenticity does not necessarily mean manageability. In classrooms with students at different levels, a lecturer's ability to continually adjust and support students is how authenticity gets integrated into the teaching process pedagogically.

Theme 2: Seeing ourselves on the screen: learning from anonymized drafts

Meeting 5 centered around a language-related issue. In the lesson plan, a selection of students' sentences from their Meetings 3 and 4 drafts (which would not have been revealed to anyone) were added to the list of model texts alongside authentic ones. Field records say the lecturer showed a sentence without a title to the students and asked them to pick out its mistakes. Nobody pointed out who had written the sentence (which might well have been anonymous), but the students still got up to answer. Eventually, two of them admitted in an interview that they had recognized their own sentences.

> "When she showed our sentences on the screen, not just the BBC ones, that is when it made sense. I could see my mistake was not grammar; it was that I put the quote before I said who scored."(S4, post-Meeting 6 interview)

S7 described a more uncomfortable version:

> "At first I was scared she would show mine, and everyone would laugh, because my sentence did not even have a real lead; it just started in the middle. However, she did not say whose it was, and when she fixed it together with the class, I actually felt, okay, this is not about me being bad at English; this is just something I did not know yet."(S7, post-Meeting 6 interview)

The study of using partially finished student papers as a common teaching resource was found to have a potential social downside. When students feared being seen as making mistakes and became anxious when their work was handed around or discussed in class, this fear likely made them withdraw socially and avoid interaction. Anonymity could turn the tables. Students in these two interviews felt they could discuss a genre's features as long as they did not know the sentence's author. In such situations, the discussion could focus on the features of an example rather than the qualities of an individual's writing. This study also includes an emotional aspect, in addition to past descriptions of learning how a piece has been created (Dong & Lu, 2020; Dugartsyrenova, 2020, Orpa & Sohan, 2026), where the emphasis was on the technicalities of language learning.

From this theme, it can be inferred that psychological safety is an essential prerequisite for genre noticing, i.e., a mutual condition that allows participants to act freely without fear of negative evaluation or rejection. What frightened S7 was not just making a grammatical mistake, but that her work and ideas were exposed and she became the subject of public judgment. Keeping the author's identity secret helped students treat the sentence as a common sample of a genre problem. Different levels of genre-related conversations were found in mixed-proficiency pairwork groups, a significant feature which this division highlighted.

In fact, anonymity did not necessarily lead to equal levels of participation. Rather, the data indicate that anonymity created a more secure environment for discussing mistakes, whereas proficiency differences and partners still determined the extent of genre talk present. Consequently, psychological safety was just one factor (a condition) supporting task and noticing activities that were implemented within the module and not replacing them.

Theme 3: From list to lead: developing structural genre awareness

Most students were surprised in the first session when it was pointed out that the beginning of a news article differs greatly from that of a story or an essay. Meeting 1 notes showed students identifying where the score first appears in real-life reports, with some even circling the last paragraph until they realized they needed to point out the first sentence. Only in Meeting 5 were S2 and S8 among the first to submit initial drafts in which they presented the facts chronologically, starting with the ending rather than the beginning.

> "At first I did not know a report needs a special first sentence, with all the important information together. I used to start with, the match began, and then tell everything in order, like a story. After the language focus lesson, I do not have to think about it so hard anymore; it is like my hand knows where the score goes."(S2, post-Meeting 6 interview)

S8 described a similar shift, though far less finished:

> "I still sometimes write the story first and the score after, and then I have to go back and cut it up and move things around. If we had one more meeting, I would not need to fix it afterward. However, at least now I know that is what I am supposed to be fixing, before I did not even know there was a rule." (S8, post-Meeting 6 interview)

The accounts of S2 and S8 show two different results from the same instructional approach. S2 said the lead was becoming more of a habit, so to speak, while S8 still had to go over the main points by hand before putting down the first draft. Both learners knew how the move worked consciously, but they differed in how much they could do it without thinking. This difference aligns with Tardy et al. (2020) view that it is a mistake to think genre knowledge is a single thing, and with the fact that process-genre researchers emphasize a kind of awareness that allows one to take control of a text's organization (Huang & Zhang, 2022).

So S8's difficulty suggests that genre development cannot be understood purely as adding one thing at a time. A learner might know a formal feature well enough to use it and identify it in a target text, but that does not necessarily mean they can call on it under pressure in a time-limited situation. Our finding, then, is a reminder of just the reasons why a writer's process of writing must be studied: a result may only tell us whether a lead was written or not, and leave the rest, such as effort involved or number of revisions, out of sight. This explanation also helps us make sense of the data we gather before and after writing. For example, a student might score higher because her lead strategy is used more often, while she is still quite different from another student as to how confident she is when making the target move in real time while writing. This means that, for lecturers, while both are components of the same genre learning context, they must be regarded as different learning outcomes.

Theme 4: Walking the line between fan and reporter: negotiating register and identity

Most students, as the instructor said, were "already a fan before they were even a writer," and used this as an excuse to narrate matches in a highly animated, opinionated style. Taking on the live report required students to keep their language under control and to switch to a register that was at once evaluative and factual, a very different skill from merely understanding grammar or sentence structure. This came up in Meeting 5, when the lecturer asked whether the report could say the team "deserved" to win.

> "In the beginning, I just wrote 'the team played very well and won,' very simple, general. Now I think, is this too much like my opinion? A reporter still has feeling in the writing but not the same as, like, my personal diary. Honestly, I am still not one hundred percent sure where that line is." (S6, post-Meeting 6 interview)

S3, one of the class's stronger writers, described the opposite problem:

> "For me it was just the opposite problem. My first draft had absolutely no emotion; it felt like reading a weather broadcast: "this happened, then this happened." When the lecturer said we could still have some emotion, just

> not too much, I had actually to put quite a bit back. So some people were cutting theirs, while others were increasing theirs, and we found it very funny when we looked at the different pairs' work." (S3, post-Meeting 6 interview)

S6 and S3 solved the same instructional problem in very different ways: S6 got better at keeping personal evaluation out while S3 figured out how to bring just enough evaluation back into writing that had become overly factual. By "rhetorical knowledge," Tardy et al. 2020) mean the capacity to make genre choices suitable to the communicative needs and contexts. The present findings add another element to that capacity: identities that are students who were trying, on the one hand, to hold on to their identity as sports fans and, on the other hand, to the professional tone required of a press report are two different angles. These examples indicate that developing the professional register is not only about picking the right expressions. Rather, the writer must also decide who they are: who is a writer, really? Moreover, how much of the existing sports-fan identity can still be found in a professional text? From a rhetorical perspective, this finding extends the genre-knowledge concept into a vocational ESP setting where learners already take part in an active informal discourse community.

The finding also highlights a methodological limitation of rubric-based assessment. A register/style score can show that a student's language is more or less aligned with the expected genre. However, it cannot by itself reveal whether a low score reflects failure, active experimentation, or an unresolved negotiation between competing voices. The qualitative accounts were therefore necessary to interpret the meaning behind changes in register performance.

Theme 5: Writing for a stranger scrolling by: developing audience awareness

The clearest indication of a change in students' audience awareness was that, in the Meeting 6 interviews, they identified who they now imagined reading their work. At first, several focal students, without hesitation, named the lecturer or whoever grades it. By the end of the cycle, however, another answer emerged.

> "Now, when I am drafting a headline, I am actually thinking about people merely gliding their eyes over the text, not really reading it in detail. So, what element of news will make these people actually decide to stop their scrolling? This kind of thought process is not similar to how one would write a sentence." (S1, post-Meeting 6 interview)

S7 extended the same theme:

> "Before, I was writing so the lecturer would see I did the task correctly. Now, I do not know; I imagine somebody on their phone on the bus. Maybe they do not even care about this team, and I have to make them care for like ten seconds. That is a strange thing to think about when you are used to writing for school." (S7, post-Meeting 6 interview)

S7's case is particularly significant because it reflects a change in the imagined recipient of the text. Early in the module, students mostly envisioned the lecturer or the

grader as their audience. By Meeting 6, S1 and S7 talked about encountering a 'random stranger reader' while scrolling on a mobile phone. This change was therefore not merely becoming more conscious of an audience in the generic sense; it was about changing whom the student perceived themselves to be talking to. This changing conception of a target audience is linked with the fact that Kessler (2021); Kessler & Tuckley (2023) show that a person's understanding of metacognition around genre did not always happen in a step-by-step linear fashion. The recent findings complement their work by illustrating these changes and showing what the transition looked like: students began to think about readers they first had to catch the attention of rather than evaluators they needed to please.

In fact, this change was not merely about realizing that audience matters, but about changing the writer-reader interaction at the composing stage. Those students who still mainly referred to the task as an 'exercise' were at a stage where they had not fully shifted their audience focus. In essence, that means that different students' level of audience awareness can develop faster or slower than their awareness of structure. The 'target reader' the student imagined was also not the 'expert academic' kind which is often taught to assume by genre pedagogy lecturers. S1 and S7 portrayed an everyday reader who could be really into sports but could also easily scroll past their story quickly. Such readers did not serve as lecturers, nor as gatekeepers through specialist work, and thus the audience imagined could have been just the students' own sports community, but at the same time the writer was expected to play an even more 'public-facing' role.

This creates an interesting inversion in the writing situation. Students were not simply learning to address a distant or higher-status audience; they were learning to address people like themselves while occupying a new authorial position. The occupational genre thus required distance from the lecturer-evaluator without requiring distance from the sports community itself. The audience finding deepens the identity issue identified in Theme 4. A fan did not have to stop being a fan in order to become a reporter; rather, the student had to learn how a reporter speaks to other fans. Genre learning therefore involved movement within the same social field rather than a complete departure from it.

Themes 4 and 5 together show that genre at the university was not just cognitively learning language, but also learning to perform different self-roles. Students not only memorized rhetorical conventions but also tried out their own expression, while the audience's position is an element they need for occupational writing. Most studies of genre awareness are concentrated on postgraduate or English major students who are already seen as university-level writers (Deng et al., 2024; Kessler, 2021). Therefore, this study of physical education students offers a different starting point. Before the class, the PE students were very good at understanding the informal jargon used in sports, but their contact with sports news was very limited. The contrast between these language behaviors seems to have been understood as an element of the learning process, and not only as a defect to be corrected.

In English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching, this implies that through discourse analysis of learner texts, learners' backgrounds of their discourse communities may also be considered a major source of genre learning. Instead of seeing casual or informal sports discussion merely as an obstacle that needs to be overcome, lecturers are better advised to point out the differences between fans' language and that used by news reporters and draw the attention of learners in that regard so that they can be encouraged to think critically and

be involved in a writing activity for their own audiences. Both the focal students' move-completeness development and the class's rubric scores before and after the six-meeting module support these points. Themes 3 and 4 are supported mainly by quantitative evidence from these rubrics and changes in writing. Table 3 outlines drafting process changes for the eight focal students; Table 4 summarizes the full class's changes in writing ability before and after the six-meeting session. These data sets alone do not show the direction and size of change, but together they provide a sense of it. The qualitative interpretation explains those changes.

Table 3. Focal students' move-completeness scores (0–9) across the three drafts of the live/running match report

Student	Initial Draft (M3)	Peer-Revised Draft (M4)	Final Draft (M6)
S1	6	8	9
S2	3	5	7
S3	7	8	9
S4	5	6	8
S5	4	6	7
S6	3	5	6
S7	4	6	8
S8	3	4	6
Full class mean (n = 26)	4.2	5.8	7.2

Table 3 reveals an almost unbroken rise in the move patterns of the eight students who were closely followed. Overall, the class mean rose from 4.2 in the first draft to 5.8 in peer revision and 7.2 in the revised version. So, on average, from the first draft to the final draft, the number of moves went up by 3.0. The two top performers, S1 and S3, reached the top level (9/9) in the final version, while S6 and S8 remained at 6/9, indicating difficulty managing this kind of text in their interviews. The results suggest that multiple revisions and feedback helped students expand their move knowledge, but individual students varied in their ability to control the sequence of moves while writing.

Table 4. Pre- and post-intervention analytic rubric scores (full class, n = 26)

Rubric Category	Pretest M (SD)	Posttest M (SD)	Gain
Move structure	2.3 (0.7)	4.0 (0.6)	+1.7
Content accuracy	2.8 (0.7)	4.1 (0.6)	+1.3
Organization/cohesion	2.5 (0.8)	3.9 (0.7)	+1.4
Language accuracy	2.6 (0.8)	3.3 (0.7)	+0.7
Register / style	2.2 (0.9)	3.6 (0.8)	+1.4

Table 4 presents the full-class descriptive results (N = 26). Mean performance increased in every rubric category. Move structure gained the most in terms of absolute points (+1.7) and at the same time achieved the highest normalized gain (0.63). This result supports Theme 3 finding that genre structural awareness was most clearly developed. The

Content accuracy gained 1.3 points with N-gain of 0.59, and in organization/cohesion 1.4 (0.56). Register/style also went up by the same degree of 1.4 with 0.50, and all these figures suggest a noticeable improvement. On the contrary, the absolute gain in Language accuracy (+0.7) and the normalized gain of this category (0.29) was the very first one, and the results show that linguistic control development has been much slower in comparison to genre organization. Total mean across the five categories went up from 2.48 to 3.78 or equivalently, the mean-based normalized gain was 0.52. As these N-gain values come from categorical means and not from the individual scores they only give descriptive, not inferential, evidence of the treatment effectiveness.

This research has three main shortcomings. First, the study explored a very narrow range of variables (i.e., one school, one homogeneous class, one sports news sub-genre). So, applying the findings to other ESP contexts will require caution. Second, with six meetings per group, it is unclear whether such gradual audience-building and identity development could continue over the long run. Third, there is no control group; consequently, we cannot attribute all pre- and post-differences to one type of learning, TBLT in this case, as other ingredients (e.g., lecturer input, class discussions, etc.) may have played a role. Getting similar results across different ESP genres and learner groups, with a longer interval and a control condition, can increase confidence in the findings.

Future studies could also examine whether the same patterns occur when learners move from live/running match reports to other sports-news sub-genres and workplace settings. Such work would help determine which aspects of genre-awareness development are specific to the task and which may reflect broader processes of occupational genre learning.

CONCLUSION

The article focuses on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) through one ESP module that integrates live broadcasting of current sports news, and on students' genre awareness, which changes throughout the task cycle. The findings point to a need to redesign tasks to make room for authentic tasks and balance their demands with classroom constraints, especially the time pressure of real-time reporting in class. Only the ability to recognize a sequence of leads and moves signals genre structure awareness, which remained constant over several lessons. Students' understanding of language style still has some way to go before it becomes detached from reality. At the same time, changes emerged, from very few students writing mostly for their lecturer's approval to others aiming at their target readership in the public press. The rubrics for move completion, along with the pre- and post-assessments, also revealed a similar pattern, though the linguistic features underwent less significant transformations.

This paper is an important work that discusses research on genre awareness through learning by doing, as students are immersed in a real-world work environment. At the same time, the ESP curriculum is developed based on Physical Education, where students are required not only to master a set of formal and rhetorical devices but also to identify themselves as writers and be familiar with the writer's and the reader's position. From a teaching point of view, these findings show the value of task design that includes a variety of authentic journalism exercises, learning from peer drafts, and repeated lessons devoted to register and audience, rather than viewing genre acquisition as simply knowing the rules

through practice. Because these findings come from a single qualitative case study, they should be used only in the context of a broader program. To do this, the next study should conduct a larger-scale longitudinal study of their students and compare patterns across and within sports news subgenres in ESP contexts to determine how far these patterns hold.

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