

*Textography: narrowing the gap between
text and context in ethnographic
explorations of situated academic writing*

Book or Report Section

Other

Author submitted manuscript

Sizer, J. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2750-6728> (2021)
Textography: narrowing the gap between text and context in
ethnographic explorations of situated academic writing. In:
Guillén-Galve, I. and Bocanegra-Valle, A. (eds.) *Ethnographies
of Academic Writing Research: Theory, methods, and
interpretation. Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. John
Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam, pp. 39-60. ISBN
9789027210067 doi: 10.1075/rmal.1.03siz Available at
<https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/111480/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the
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To link to this article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/rmal.1.03siz>

Publisher: John Benjamins Publishing Company

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Chapter 3

Textography: Narrowing the gap between text and context in ethnographic explorations of situated academic writing

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Abstract

This chapter draws upon work by John M. Swales (1998, 2018), which explored situated academic writing, utilising an approach he called *textography*. This chapter describes the variety of texts, contexts and practices which can be investigated using textographic methods through a combination of *textual* analysis and ethnography: textography. It argues textographic research provides scope to move beyond linguistic description and explore interpretations and practices of authors and audiences within the context providing rich data with *thick description* (Geertz, 1973). The chapter also argues that textography presents an opportunity for *deep theorising* (Lillis, 2008) by bridging the gap between text and context. It also reflects on considerations when using textographic approaches including ethical considerations. Finally, the chapter suggests textography's possibilities for academic writing research.

Keywords: textography, linguistic ethnography, ethnographic research methods, thick description, trustworthiness

Introduction

This chapter provides a methodological reflection of textography as a tool for ethnographically-oriented research utilising textual analysis and ethnographic methods to explore academic writing contexts, practices and texts. Critical analysis and reflection suggest that textography presents opportunities to narrow the gap between text and context through deep theorizing and also to produce thick descriptions of contexts, texts and practice. The chapter thus contributes to the book by substantiating Tardy's claim (Chapter 2) that, given how thick description has been taken up in the field, writing researchers will find it methodologically useful to reflect on how they might more closely honour the principles of thick description in their research. These critical insights also inform important considerations when applying textography as a methodological tool such as trustworthiness and micro and macro ethics. Finally, several possibilities for future uses of textography for academic writing research are presented based on theoretical reflections of textography as an analytical approach.

Textography origins

Textography combines textual analysis with ethnography to explore texts, contexts, and textual practices such as academic writing practices (Paltridge, 2008; Sizer, 2019a).

Textography was first coined by John M. Swales (2018) who brought together *textual* analytical approaches with methods associated with *ethnography* in a portmanteau to become *textography*, to explore situated academic writing. Swales (2018) described his textography as “more than a disembodied textual or discoursal analysis, but...less than a full ethnographic account” (p. 1). For Swales, and other researchers from formalist-textualist traditions, their research may include ethnographic methods, such as

interviews, but may appear not to embrace ethnographic methodology through theoretical outlook or deep theorizing (Blommaert, 2007; Lillis, 2008). However, textographies, including Swales' (2018) textography, go further than merely adopting ethnographic research methods but also feature a more ethnographic research methodology through inclusion of *thick descriptions* (Geertz, 1973) narrowing the gap between text and context (Lillis, 2008).

The linguistic analysis of textography is enriched through ethnography and enhanced through attention to context (Copland & Creese, 2011; Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015) and perhaps heeds Malinowski's call to "burst the bonds of mere linguistics" (cited in Rock, 2015, p.147) while simultaneously returning detailed textual analysis to academic writing research (Lillis, 2008). Swales' textography used both linguistics and ethnography to explore the context, a university building, collecting texts and discovering distinct textual practices and communities (Bazerman, 1998). Thus, textography as a research method can provide an "inside view of the worlds in which the texts are written" by examining the *contextualization* and the *situatedness* of texts (Starfield, Paltridge, & Ravelli, 2014, p.105). This chapter will articulate the defining characteristics of a textography as well as suggest how textography may be applied in future academic writing research.

Textography characteristics

Textography is characterised by the combination of textual analysis and ethnographic research methods to explore texts and textual practices within a particular context.

Textographic studies must incorporate and investigate all three elements from Sizer's (2019a) textography triangle (see Figure 1) i.e. text, context, and practice.

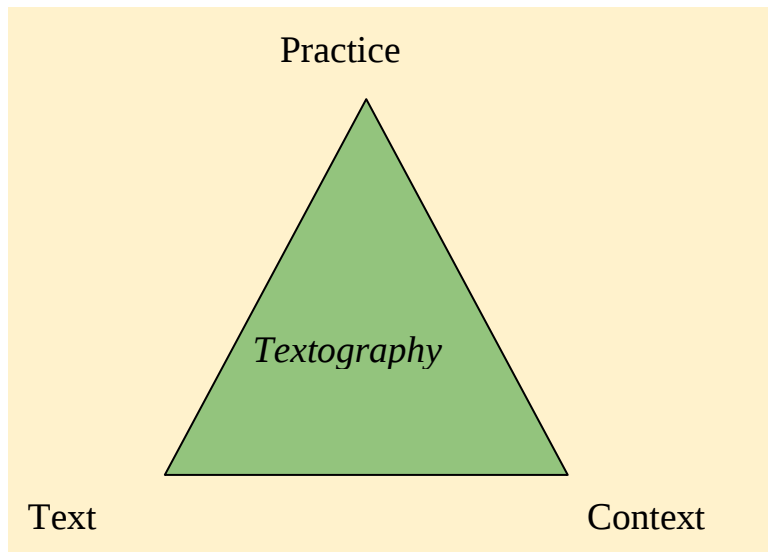


Figure 1. Textography triangle from Sizer's (2019a)

This trinity of elements is not necessarily unique to textography. In fact, the textography triangle was inspired by and adapted from a triangle of discourse analysis (Angermuller, Maingueneau, & Wodak, 2014). However, textographic research differs from other research approaches, not only in terms of explicit intention to investigate all three elements but also in the adoption of a combination of both linguistic and ethnographic methods. Swales' textography was the prototype for this approach and investigated academic writing practices within the context of three separate departments within a university building by analysing a diverse range of texts within this context.

Texts

Swales (2018) collected and analysed a huge array of contextual texts including texts which frequently feature in academic writing research and subsequent textographic

research. such as journal articles (Pérez-Penup, 2019) and textbooks (Januin & Stephen, 2015; Paltridge, 2006; Wahyudi, 2014; Zhu, Ren, & Han, 2016), as well as book chapters, reviews, and encyclopedia entries written by participants within the context. In addition to being frequent text types in academic writing research, these texts are often also widely/publicly available, so can be used as referential material for comparison against researchers' interpretations and enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of research (Guba, 1981). Swales' (2018) textography also included other less familiar academic writing, written by the same participants, such as floras and systemic botany monographs, and other texts including curriculum vitae. Swales (2018) also collected texts which are often excluded from academic writing research but constitute what Swales refers to as *routine writing business* which could be described as more *naturalistic data* (Hammersley & Atkins, 1983; Sarangi, 2005) and sometimes referred to as *situated everyday activity* or *slice of life data* (Guba, 1981). In textographic research, these routine or everyday texts have included correspondence (emails, letters and notes), memos, minutes, reports, forms, brochures, manuals, item specifications, standard practice guides, briefing sheets, visitor/guest book and other contextual/institutional documentation (Alafnan, 2016; Lontoc, 2014; Seloni, 2014; Souza, 2012; Swales, 2018). These, often overlooked, highly-contextualised texts may have some bearing on both academic writing practices and other, more frequently researched, academic texts.

In textographic research, text collection does not begin and end at academic texts, but instead explores a *web of texts* and routine writing within the context not only via institutional/procedural/contextual texts e.g. documentation but also through other texts such as participants' diary of activities and curriculum vitae (Swales, 1998, 2018). This web of texts can also include archival and historical texts to provide a history of

the context (cf. Alafnan, 2016). Swales' (2018) textography featured a brief history of The North University Building provided by Margaret Luebs via archival research (Swales & Luebs, 1995; Swales, 1998). Indeed, my first foray into textographic research also included a historical description of the research site (university building) based on archival research (Sizer, 2019b). Alongside the historical background, Swales, Chang and Luebs also collected and curated over 80 photographs, which accompanied Swales' (2018) description of the context. Other textographic research has also included photographs of text and context (Lontoc, 2014; Sizer, 2019b). The use of images provides a record of the physical location as well as visual cues of the context (Lillis, 2008; Swales 2018). These photographs can also become sources of data and texts to be analysed (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Pink, 2013, 2015). In addition to the previously mentioned texts, other textographic research has also featured texts authored by students in the web of texts such as student essays (Lontoc, 2014; Paltridge, 2006), student presentations (Januin & Stephen, 2015), student exegesis [text accompanying visual projects in art and design Masters degrees] (Paltridge, 2004) and student theses (Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, & Tuckwell, 2012; Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield, & Tuckwell, 2013; Seloni, 2014; Starfield, Paltridge, & Ravelli, 2012). While the previously-mentioned texts do not form an exhaustive list of all the text types previously featured in textographic research, they do illustrate the diversity of possible texts. For further reflection on possible texts for future textographic research please see final section of this chapter.

Contexts

All textographic research featured in this chapter, including Swales' (2018) original textography, has investigated an educational context, the majority being higher education contexts. These site-based explorations of texts and practices have taken place in a variety of locations in Asia including China, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines (Alafnan, 2016; Januin & Stephen, 2015; Lontoc, 2014; Wahyudi, 2014; Zhu, Ren, & Han, 2016), also Australia and New Zealand (Paltridge, 2004; Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield, & Tuckwell, 2013; Starfield, Paltridge, & Ravelli, 2012), as well as Central and South America (Pérez-Penup, 2019; Souza, 2012), the United Kingdom (Sizer, 2019b) and the United States of America (Seloni, 2014; Swales, 2018). For Swales' textography (2018), the context was a university building in Michigan that housed three distinctive departments, on three different floors: Computing Resource Site, Herbarium, and English Language Institute. This mezzo/meso-level approach to context focuses on specific floors and/or departments and/or subjects within the larger institutional context e.g. university. Many textographies have investigated specific areas within the broader context based on physical boundaries, as was the case for Swales' (2018) university building, or more conceptual boundaries e.g. art and design (Paltridge, 2004), visual and performing arts (Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield, & Tuckwell, 2013; Starfield, Paltridge, & Ravelli, 2012), English for Academic Purposes (EAP) within a university (Januin & Stephen, 2015; Wahyudi, 2014), or English as a Second Language (ESL) within a school (Lontoc, 2014).

Textographies can also adopt a wider mezzo/meso-level approach to context by exploring an institution's texts and textual practices (Alafnan, 2016) or adopt a more macro-level approach including multiple sites and/or institutions to investigate a broader context e.g. Paltridge's (2006) textography investigated College English in China collected texts from the government and textbooks as well as teachers and

examiners. Zhu, Ren, and Han (2016) took a similar approach when investigating textbooks in Chinese higher education with participants from multiple sites and institutions. Alternatively, a more micro-level approach can focus in on an individual site, such as a group of students or one classroom (Januin & Stephen, 2015; Lontoc, 2014; Souza, 2012) or focus on situated academic writing of one participant (Pérez-Penup, 2019; Seloni, 2014). Almost all of the previously-mentioned textographers could be considered practitioner-researchers as they are often familiar with some of the contextual texts (either as authors and/or audience) and already working with the specific context and interested in associated textual practices.

Practices

The situated writing and texts within these specific contexts ranged from academic, educational to more professional communication allowing textographers to analyse textual practices of themselves as academics/educators/professionals, colleagues including academics, professionals and other educators and also students. In more service-based professional contexts, such as Computing Resource Site; textual collection included more procedural and instructional texts e.g., correspondence and manuals, whereas more academic contexts such as Herbarium, and English Language Institute featured some context-specific procedural and/or instructional texts, e.g., item specifications, but also included more situated academic writing such as journal articles (Swales, 2018). Other textographies have chosen to focus on one of these communication modes, for example, Pérez-Penup's (2019) textography focussed on more academic writing texts and practices such as articles and conference proceedings whereas Alafnan's (2016) textography focussed on more professional writing and

practices relating to administration rather than academia and/or pedagogy. Although Swales (2018) deliberately excluded pedagogic/educational contexts, located on the top floor of the building, some included texts could be described as more educational i.e. written for students such as textbooks. Similar texts for student audiences which also feature in textographic research include documentation and guidance (including physical signs within the building), correspondence and feedback (Januin & Stephen, 2015; Lontoc, 2014; Paltridge, 2006; Seloni, 2014; Sizer, 2019b; Souza, 2012; Wahyudi, 2014; Zhu, Ren, & Han, 2016). Other textographic research has also included a range of texts and practices from students (Januin & Stephen, 2015; Lontoc, 2014; Paltridge, 2006; Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield, & Tuckwell, 2013; Seloni, 2014; Souza, 2012; Starfield, Paltridge, & Ravelli, 2012).

In terms of academic writing practices textographic research has covered many key areas of interest such as authorial identity (Pérez-Penup, 2019; Seloni, 2014; Souza, 2012; Swales, 2018), writing process e.g. drafting/editing (Januin & Stephen, 2015; Lontoc, 2014; Seloni, 2014), intertextuality (Alafnan, 2016; Lontoc, 2014; Pérez-Penup, 2019; Seloni, 2014; Swales, 2018) communities of practice and discourse communities (Seloni, 2014; Starfield & Ravelli, 2006; Swales, 2018) and writing features e.g. register, macrostructures, moves/steps (Alafnan, 2016; Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, & Tuckwell, 2012; Starfield & Ravelli, 2006; Zhu, Ren, & Han, 2016). These academic writing practices alongside associated texts and contexts were analysed through textographic methods i.e. combination of both textual analysis and ethnographic methods.

Textography as methods

One of the strengths of textography, as an approach to academic writing research, is the flexibility to investigate a broad range of texts, contexts and practices using varying research methods, including methodological approaches associated with ethnography and linguistics. e.g., observations, interviews and textual analysis, resulting in rich histories (Albero-Posac & Luzón, Chapter 4, this volume; Lillis, 2008). Many academic writing researchers highlight the potential limitations for description and interpretation from just one data source and suggest observing everything of possible significance to build a more detailed and holistic picture of the context, practices and texts through multiple data sources (Hammersley & Atkins, 1983; Lillis, 2008; Shaw, Copland, & Snell, 2015). Textographic research can identify and incorporate an even broader range of data sources through the combination of both textual analysis and ethnographic research methods (Bazerman, 1998), including: academic writing texts, contextual texts, observations from field notes, texts from archives and/or multimodal texts e.g. photographs, and/or textual life history interviews. The collection and analysis of a wider variety of data sources can also provide opportunities to enhance trustworthiness, credibility and confirmability of research through triangulation (Brown, 2009; Croker, 2009; Guba, 1981; Heigham & Sakui, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Rallis & Rossman, 2009).

Methods of textual analysis

All textographic research includes analysis of texts collected from the context. In Swales' (2018) textography collated these texts into participants' individual textual histories, which were analysed and then discussed via interviews. In textography, this

textual analysis may begin with analysing specific text types or genres such as journal articles (Pérez-Penup, 2019), theses (Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, & Tuckwell, 2012; Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield, & Tuckwell, 2013) or textbooks (Januin & Stephen, 2015; Wahyudi, 2014) for particular characteristics and features e.g. moves, steps and structure (Tardy & Swales, 2014). Genre analysis places much emphasis on textual analysis and sees texts as situated and context-specific and representing textual practices of particular communities (Hyland, 2018; Tardy & Swales, 2014). Despite this, formalist-textualist approaches such as genre analysis, and more broadly discourse analysis, as well as other linguistic approaches such as corpus and/or systemic functional linguistics, can focus too heavily on textual analysis and therefore texts. This emphasis can result in textual bias (Lillis & Scott, 2015) which, in textography, can be counteracted through greater emphasis on context and practice through incorporating more ethnographic methods such as interviews about texts and observation of textual practices. Textographers can also use excerpts and images of collected texts, including interview transcripts and field notes, in textographic analysis and description not only to provide contextualised examples but can also act as referential material for other researchers providing opportunities to further enhance trustworthiness and credibility of research (Guba, 1981).

Methods of ethnographic analysis: Interviews and observations

In contrast to the previously-mentioned formalist-textualist approaches, Swales not only analysed texts but also interviewed texts' authors to better understand the author's emic or insider perspective (Lillis, 2008). Interviews are perhaps the data collection tool most often associated with ethnography and are frequent in more *writer-focused* research but

less frequent among formalist-textualist linguistic and *text-focused* research (Lillis, 2008). The majority of textography also includes interviews (Januin & Stephen, 2015; Lontoc, 2014; Paltridge, 2004, 2006; Pérez-Penup, 2019; Seloni, 2014; Swales, 2018; Wahyudi, 2014), which can present opportunities for dialogue and discussion of texts, and the authors' voice to be heard rather than monologic reports from researchers about what authors have written (Denzin, 2001). To achieve this, Lillis (2008) suggests writer-focused talk around texts should foster and promote participants' comments and reflections that go beyond texts. Swales' (1998, 2018) loosely structured interviews focus not only on texts but also on participants' textual life histories and provide narrative accounts of writers' experience and emic perspectives but also incorporate contextual accounts and interpretations from researcher's etic perspective (Denzin, 2001; Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015). Other textographic research also make explicit intentions to transcend textual bias not only through talk around texts interviews but also through engagement with participants' histories and more emic-perspectives (Seloni, 2014; Wahyudi, 2014).

After interview, transcripts are refined and adjusted by participants demonstrating the value placed on participants' interpretations (Lillis, 2008; Pérez-Penup, 2019; Swales, 1998, 2018). This incorporation of participant validation or *member checks* not only demonstrates interest in insider/emic perspective but can also enhances trustworthiness and credibility of research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Rallis & Rossman, 2009). Additionally, Swales and other textographers also use verbatim transcription, including recording writers' reactions and paralinguistic cues such as laughter, and use verbatim excerpts and snippets of transcripts and texts in descriptions (Lontoc, 2014; Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield, & Tuckwell, 2013; Souza, 2012; Swales, 2018). The inclusion of verbatim transcripts and snippets again demonstrates interest

not only in insiders' perspective but also provides opportunities to enhance trustworthiness and confirmability of research (Brown, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

In addition to collecting texts and interviewing participants about texts, Swales and other textographers also engaged in another method closely associated with ethnography: fieldwork (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). This fieldwork involved collecting and collating field notes of contextual observations. In Swales' (2018) textography, these contextual observations focused on what he called *routine business* including observing, photographing and describing the ambience, layout and accessibility/privacy of spaces, historical and temporal knowledge (e.g. rhythms and cycles of work, length of service and evolution of groups) as well as typical roles and trajectories, group activities and how groups functioned. To complement these etic observations, Swales (2018) also asked participants to keep a diary of their activities and routines. Swales' (2018) inclusion of and interest in these more routine practices appear to demonstrate the adoption of Green and Bloome's (2014) *ethnographic perspective* as this routine business represents more *naturalistic data* (Hammersley & Atkins, 1983; Sarangi, 2005) sometimes referred to as *situated everyday activity* (Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015) or *slice of life data* (Guba, 1981). This focus on routine business allows for opportunities to defamiliarise everyday, possibly mundane, activities and view with fresh eyes and understandings (Edwards, 2012). Making the familiar strange is an important aspect of analysis and interpretation (Erickson, 1984; Lillis, 2008) particularly when researchers may be familiar with the context, texts and/or textual practices as is often the case for textographic research (cf. Alafnan, 2016; Januin & Stephen, 2015; Lontoc, 2014; Souza, 2012; Swales, 2018).

However, researchers already familiar with the context need to consider not only their familiarity but also their reflexivity i.e. account for their place within the context of

study (Hammersley & Atkins, 1983). The reflexivity debate over the researcher's position and impact has featured in much research (see., e.g., Khuder & Petrić, this book) and ranges from Geertz's (1988) uncommon, perhaps unachievable and undesirable "anonymous murmurs" from invisible researchers to more researcher-saturated autotextographic accounts (cf. Alafnan, 2016; Souza, 2012; Swales, 2018). Swales' (2018) self-reflexivity resulted in the inclusion of his autotextographic account which was more analytic in style due to complete member status, analysis, and inclusion of dialogue with informants (Anderson, 2006). In addition to dialogue, Swales also employs an external colleague, Tony Dudley-Evans, as *interlinear commentator* and interviewer to provide an almost collaborative autotextographic account of the English Language Institute (for a detailed description of collaborative autoethnography see Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2016). Dudley-Evans also appears to play the role of critical friend and auditor providing, albeit a partial, audit of data, which may further enhance trustworthiness, dependability and confirmability of research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Rallis & Rossman, 2009).

In addition to providing opportunities for autotextographic accounts, researchers already working with or within the context of study, also have opportunities for more extensive fieldwork and sustained engagement (Alafnan, 2016; Januin & Stephen, 2015; Souza, 2012; Swales, 2018), as well as detailed recording of observed contextual practices and texts through collection of not only texts but also field notes (Alafnan, 2016; Swales, 2018). These field notes can also be accompanied by photographs of texts and contexts, as featured in many textographies (Lontoc, 2014; Sizer 2019b; Swales, 2018) or even audio/visual recording (Januin & Stephen, 2015) which provide a new lens or angle through which to view the familiar and uncover everyday practices (Pink, 2013, 2015).

The context-specific background knowledge and observations recorded in field notes, during textography, form the basis for interpretation and detailed contextual descriptions (Copland & Creese, 2011; Wolcott, 1999) which can allow readers to consider how findings may relate to their academic writing contexts, therefore, providing opportunities to enhance trustworthiness and transferability of research (Brown, 2009).

Textographic methodological approaches

In summary, textographic research can draw upon a broad range of research methods including methods for textual analysis and ethnographic analysis. This diversity is hugely beneficial for academic writing researchers who hail from a broad church including but not limited to Linguistics (corpus or systemic functional linguistics & genre theory), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), or Academic Literacies and Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in the Disciplines (WAC/WID) (Ding & Bruce, 2017), and who may be researching a variety of academic disciplines and contexts (Shaw, Copland, & Snell, 2015). Textography can respond flexibly to the research context with collection and analysis methodological options (Rock, 2015) which reflect not only the discipline/context but perhaps also the researcher's background, role and access (Ding & Bruce, 2017). However, focussing on textography as a collection of methods is reductionist (Blommaert, 2007) and risks cherry-picking research methods but not adopting an ethnographic perspective or theoretical outlook (Blommaert, 2007; Green & Bloome, 2014). This risk may be even greater for researchers less familiar with ethnography, who perhaps unintentionally, expect a familiar result based on presuppositions rather than embracing ethnography's uncertainty (Shaw, Copland, & Snell, 2015). Researchers may also equate ethnographic methods, such as interviews or

fieldwork, with ethnographic methodology (Blommaert, 2007; Lillis, 2008). To avoid this, academic writing researchers using a textographic approach should engage with theoretical assumptions underpinning ethnography as well as ethnographic methods.

Textography as methodological assumptions

Academic writing researchers incorporating ethnographic approaches cannot assume that their research is ethnographic. Swales (2018) explicitly states he is not comfortable labelling his research as a fully-fledged ethnography and instead creates and prefers the term textography. Although Gillen's foreword, in the 20th-anniversary edition of Swales' textography, suggests Swales' textography is ethnographic in not only methods but also its 'ethnographic commitment' (2018, p. xiv as cited in Swales, 2018), textographers should commit to and engage with an ethnographic perspective and theoretical assumptions before adopting ethnographic methods (Blommaert, 2007; Green & Bloome, 2014; Hammersley, 1994). Briefly, the theoretical assumptions underpinning ethnographic methodology fall under three overlapping headings: naturalism, understanding and discovery (Hammersley, 1994). For a more detailed description of ethnographic understanding and perspective see Bocanegra-Valle and Guillén-Galve, this book. Textographic research values naturally occurring data such as that obtained via interviews, observations, and authentic texts based on natural, not artificial, contexts (Hammersley & Atkins, 1983). Context is a vital component of the textography triangle through the influence of ethnography but also genre analysis in which genres are understood to be socially situated which shape and are shaped by their contexts (Tardy & Swales, 2014). This shared assumption of the importance of [natural]

contexts and data is necessary before embarking on textography. However, textographers need to be aware of the potential for Labov's (1972) *observer paradox* when analysing spoken and written texts which by virtue of being collected/observed may inadvertently become less natural.

Next, *understanding* refers to the interpretive nature of both ethnography and textography (Denzin, 2001; Geertz, 1973). Textographic research goes beyond textual interpretations from an etic-perspective (outsider researcher perspective) and includes emic-perspectives contextualised and interpreted by participants through interviews, observations, and other methods of data collection. However, other academic writing researchers may not necessarily share these interpretivist assumptions and instead operate within a paradigm that adopts more formalist-textualist methods to investigate academic writing practices and texts from a more etic-perspective (Pederson, 2007). Finally, Hammersely's (1994) *discovery* relates to inductive hypothesis-building nature of research (Hammersley & Atkins, 1983). The starting point for textographic research, including Swales' (2018) textography, is contextual exploration and text collection and not a hypothesis to be tested. Swales (2018) discusses his iterative process which subsequently generated his conclusions/hypotheses and refined his definition of a discourse community. In summary, textographic research, and future textographers, may not be aiming for full ethnographic accounts of academic writing practices and instead attempt to go further than merely including ethnographic methods and ensure ethnographic assumptions and understandings are also incorporated into textographic research.

Textography methodology: Deep theorising through text and context

To successfully incorporate an ethnographic theoretical outlook, textographers must engage in deep-theorizing when researching academic writing practices through contextual and textual analysis (Blommaert, 2007; Lillis, 2008). In the past, some academic writing research has been accused of fostering a myopic focus on practices resulting in increasing calls for more focus on the contexts of academic writing (Lillis, 2008). Textographic research answers this call through textography's original aim to investigate and focus on *situated* academic writing (Swales, 2018). Textographers share the view that academic texts and practices are situated and cannot be separated from context and that contexts should be investigated not assumed (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015; Tardy & Swales, 2014). Ethnographic research, in general, may also answer this call but may be unable to heed Lillis and Scott's (2015) warning that ethnographies' focus on contextual practices, at the expense of texts, could result in detailed textual analysis disappearing from academic writing research. In contrast, textography's focus on situated academic writing practices along with incorporation of textual analysis enables a more holistic account of academic writing but also returns texts to the analytical frame, narrowing the gap between text and context through *deep theorizing* (Lillis, 2008; Lillis & Scott, 2015; Lillis & Tuck, 2016). Another suggestion for bridging the context/text gap is thick description and participation (Geertz, 1973; Lillis, 2008).

Textography methodology: Thick description

Thick description through thick participation

Textography aims to move beyond purely linguistic descriptions of texts and context-less thin descriptions of writing practices (Denzin, 2001; Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015) and instead provide a thick description of situated academic writing practices (Swales, 1998). Thick description, which provides contextual and historical details and interpretations rather than just surface-level textual features (see Chapter 2, this volume), is a vital element for all qualitative research, including textography (Denzin, 2001; Geertz, 1973; Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007). Textography uses thick descriptions to illuminate narratives behind the texts (Cronin & Shaw, 2002). Furthermore, textography's combination of ethnographic data collection approaches with textual analysis can help researchers reach rich thick descriptions of contextual/institutional writing practices (Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015). Textographies require collection of a diverse range of multiple data sources over extensive periods, which also necessitates a sustained and deep interaction with the context resulting in *thick participation* (Lillis, 2008; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Sarangi, 2005; Tardy, this volume). Lillis (2008) emphasises the importance and value of thick participation and prolonged engagement with participants' academic writing contexts allowing for greater exploration of the relationship between contexts and texts. Finally, thick description, with a strong narrative of the context, allows readers to consider how research relates to their contexts thus further enhancing trustworthiness and transferability (Brown, 2009; Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Thick description through contextualisation

Textography presents opportunities to focus on specific contexts while also providing multiple data sources which can be narrativised and contextualised to provide thicker

contextualised descriptions and analyses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). To contextualize data, textographers should include contextual descriptions during data collection (e.g., observations and interviews) and combine these with reflections to create thick descriptions (Croker, 2009). Textography's recorded observations (e.g., audio and photographs) and field notes also provide opportunities to contextualise and thicken events by describing in context (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Shaw, Copland, & Snell, 2015). Textography's use of interview snippets and autotextographic accounts (Heigham & Sakui, 2009) may also provide opportunities for rich contextual descriptions allowing readers to get a sense of and *visualize the context* (Heigham & Sakui, 2009; Lillis, 2008; Swales, 1998). Textography's combination of thick contextual descriptions alongside contextual images, recordings and texts may also provide opportunities to enhance trustworthiness and transferability (Brown, 2009; Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Thick description through narrativisation

Textographers should also aim to provide a *narrative of the context* (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1986) through the analysis of temporal findings, such as the different academic rhythms identified by Sizer, 2019 and Swales 2018, based on sustained engagement with context over time (Geertz, 1973; Lillis, 2008), or observations of the academic writing lifecycle (Traweek, 1988). Temporal findings commonly feature in textographic research and are often the result of archival research, engagement and observation of context over time, and/or exploration of socio-historical perspectives during interviews (cf. Alafnan, 2016; Sizer, 2019b; Swales, 2018). These temporal findings also extend to the texts lifecycle and processes through the discussion

and inclusion of drafts and revised texts (Januin & Stephens, 2014; Lontoc, 2014; Pérez-Penup, 2019; Seloni, 2014) and reception histories of texts (Swales, 2018). Finally, textographic interviews can also explore socio-historical perspectives through Cultural-Historical Activation Theory (Seloni, 2014) and discussion of textual life histories (Swales, 2018). Interview transcripts and vignettes can also be particularly helpful in achieving richer descriptions through narrativising data (Shaw, Copland, & Snell, 2015). As Lillis (2008) explains, “thick description and thick participation help...foreground what is significant to writers from their specific sociohistorical [and contextual] perspectives” (p. 373). However, a balance needs to be struck between telling stories and sharing research findings. This is particularly relevant for researchers’ own accounts which can range from analytical to more evocative and autobiographical (Donnelly, 2015). In autotextography, researchers can explore their own contexts to produce more evocative accounts, but avoid autobiographical accounts, by tethering these reflections to the context through textual analysis (Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015).

Reflections on textography for academic writing research

Textography fosters both emic-perceptions based on context and etic-perceptions based on text and triangulates these interpretations to provide a more holistic and detailed picture of situated academic writing practices. Textography presents opportunities to broaden linguistic research through attention to the academic writing context (Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015; Rock 2015). Additionally, textography can bring detailed textual analysis back into frame for academic writing research (Lillis & Tuck, 2016);

therefore, bringing together text and context. However, balancing contextual and textual focus can be challenging and textographic research should avoid being tied down with too much textual analysis (Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015). This balance is particularly important when considering the academic writing context's emic-perceptions of research, e.g., arts and humanities, may be more familiar with ethnographic approaches (cf. Paltridge, 2004; Pérez-Penup, 2019; Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield, & Tuckwell, 2013; Seloni, 2014) while other academic writing contexts, e.g., Herbarium, may be more familiar with scientific approaches and may appreciate more quantitative reporting of academic writing practices.

Reflections on ethics: Trustworthiness

Academic writing researchers, combining ethnographic and linguistic approaches through textography represents “a conscious effort to resist the perceived empirical rigour, neatness and certainty of linguistic analysis” (Shaw, Copland, & Snell, 2015, p. 8). However, some researchers from more positivist and/or deductive research backgrounds may dismiss ethnographic methodology, including textography, as mere story-telling (Hammersley & Atkins, 1983), and believe ethnographic approaches, such as textography, lack trustworthiness: validity [internal and external], reliability and objectivity (Guba, 1981). Textography has a more inductive approach so should, therefore, escape attempts at positivist circumscription more suitable for deductive science such as linguistics (Blommaert & Jie, 2010). Therefore, Guba (1981; also Lincoln & Guba, 1986) proposed new parallel criteria for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (see Table 1).

Table 1. Textographic methodological options to enhance trustworthiness

Trustworthiness: scientific criteria	Trustworthiness: qualitative criteria	Possible methodological options enhancing trustworthiness in textographies
Internal validity	Credibility	Prolonged engagement Referential materials: widely available texts or raw ‘routine’ or everyday data to compare interpretations. Member checks: interview transcripts refined and adjusted by participants, textual analysis and interpretation discussed with authors in interviews. Data triangulation: incorporate a wide variety of texts Peer debriefing: collaborative textographies, or critical friend
External validity / generalizability	Transferability	Detailed contextual description, Thick descriptions
Reliability	Dependability	Audit by external researcher e.g., interlinear commentator Triangulation: overlapping of textographic research methods Inclusion of texts which may be accessed and analysed by other researchers
Objectivity	Confirmability	Triangulation: data from variety of perspectives, methods and sources Verbatim excerpts of transcripts Accessible/open access data: university web pages, academics’ publications

There are several possible techniques, highlighted throughout this chapter, which can be used in textographic research to further enhance trustworthiness. Guba’s (1981) steps (see Table 1) can lead to more credible and plausible findings. These steps include a key feature of textography — i.e., contextual engagement which encapsulates both *sustained engagement* (Geertz, 1973; Lillis, 2007), and *prolonged engagement* (Guba, 1981;

Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Rallis & Rossman, 2009). Textography's incorporation of a wide variety of texts and collection methods necessitates a prolonged and sustained contextual engagement and also provide opportunities to *cross-check* interpretations across various sources and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). This triangulation of data and analysis procedures may enhance credibility as well as dependability and confirmability. Textography data sources often include contextual documents, photographs and/or recordings, which can represent *slice of life data* and be used to test credibility of interpretations (Guba, 1981). Textographies also present opportunities for enhanced credibility through *peer debriefing* (Guba, 1981) through more detached roles, e.g., Dudley-Evans' *interlinear commentator* role (Swales, 2018), or more collaborative roles (cf. Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield, & Tuckwell, 2013; Starfield, Paltridge, & Ravelli, 2014). Textography often features participant interviews and sharing of transcripts which can act as *member checks* continuously soliciting emic perspectives and participant interpretations (Guba, 1981; Lillis, 2008). Another step textographers can consider for more consistent and dependable findings is auditing (Guba, 1981). This approach is less common, other than Dudley-Evans audit-like role, but future textographies may include audits and/or be subject to audit-like procedures e.g., during thesis defence. Guba (1981) also recommends thick descriptions to aid in more context-relevant and transferrable findings which can be achieved through textography's use of multiple data sources, contextualisation and narrativisation. Guba's (1981) final criteria *confirmability* is again enhanced through audit, but may also be enhanced through making data open access or using verbatim quotes and/or accessible data.

Ethical reflections: Micro and macro ethics

Before embarking on academic writing research, textographers need to reflect carefully on trustworthiness criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) as well as on other ethical considerations such as microethics and macroethics (Copland & Creese, 2016). Macroethical considerations include institutional ethical procedures, such as obtaining ethical approval. This can be a challenge for textographic practitioner research which may not be able to ensure complete anonymity and/or confidentiality (Kubanyiova, 2015) as once the researcher's employer is revealed often the context is also revealed, particularly in autotextography. In addition, the thicker the contextual description the greater the risk of unintentional identification of contexts and/or participants. One method of mitigating macroethical dilemmas is the exclusion of participants altogether through *unobtrusive textography* wherein the researcher utilises methods such as observation and photography to document the linguistic landscape of a context (Sizer, 2019b) and textual analysis of accessible (publicly-available) texts — e.g., academics' bios on university websites. However, lack of participants and reduced scope for emic-perspectives may be less desirable for some academic writing researchers. Kubanyiova (2015) recommends a more contextual approach to ethical considerations to bring together both macroethics and microethics, reflecting on microethical considerations such as researchers' position within the context. Copland and Creese (2016) suggest reflexivity as one way to bridge macroethical and microethical. As explained by Chiseri-Strater (1996) "all researchers are positioned" (p. 155) and this position has an impact on the whole research process. Not all textographic accounts necessarily need explicit positionality but can disclose positionality through the inclusion of others' perceptions of researcher and reflections on role/s and status within the research context, for example, Swales' (2018) use of Dudley-Evans as interviewer and interlinear commentator (Chiseri-Strater, 1996). Positionality is particularly important in

practitioner-researcher textography where exclusion of self as outsider in some contexts may be challenging (Swales, 2018).

Textography's possibilities for academic writing research

The combination in textographic research of both linguistic analysis and ethnographically-oriented research approaches as well as triangulation of academic writing texts, contexts, and practices provides a range of options for academic writing researchers. Textography's inclusion of textual analysis allows for anchoring of ethnographic observations through academic writing texts acting as referential data which can be accessed and analysed by others and also returning detailed textual analysis to academic writing research (Denzin, 2001; Lillis, 2008; Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015). This emphasis on textual analysis also promotes collection of a range of texts and perspectives through extending texts and textual analysis beyond authors to also include audiences e.g. students (Lillis & Tuck, 2016). This range of texts also present opportunities to explore how texts connect as a web utilising complexity theory (as used by Souza, 2012) or perhaps in future textographies Lillis' 2008 suggestion for indexicality or intertextuality could be used to explore academic writing practices such as authorship and plagiarism. Textography's flexibility in textual collection also allows for inclusion of texts which are less frequently studied in academic writing research e.g. practice-based theses, exegesis, florals and systemic botany monographs (cf. Paltridge, 2004, 2008; Paltridge, Starfield, Ravelli, & Tuckwell, 2012; Swales, 2018) or other less frequently studied texts such as multimodal texts (Archer, 2006) including linguistic landscapes of academic writing contexts (Sizer, 2019b) and spoken texts such as

presentations (Januin & Stephen, 2015) and perhaps other spoken texts e.g., lectures, tutorials and observations. Textography can also collect and analyse other relevant texts through archives (Swales, 2018) but also through accessible public texts, such as university webpages and bios which could perhaps aid in creation of textual histories through internet archives. Other more contextual texts such as documentation, correspondence and diaries, e.g., academic diary entries (Back, 2016), can also be collected for textographic research. Finally, textography can draw upon a variety of linguistic research methods for textual analysis of academic writing such as conversation/discourse analysis, genre/text analysis, quantitative variation analysis, corpus analysis, multimodal analysis and social semiotics (Shaw, Copland, & Snell, 2015) depending on the academic writing context.

Textography has been used in a variety of academic writing contexts including specific subject areas (Paltridge 2008, Ravelli, Paltridge, Starfield, & Tuckwell, 2012; Swales, 2018) and even virtual/online contexts (Souza, 2012) as well as smaller-scale micro textographies (Lontoc, 2014). Future textographic research could also bring together micro textographies with others from similar physical/local contexts or *place discourse communities* and/or more *global discourse communities* with shared interests and/or disciplines to produce collaborative textographies (Swales, 2018). These collaborative textographies could include students, academics, professional services, and others involved in academic writing and even include crowd-sourced texts from particular contexts and/or subject areas. Textography has been used to investigate other educational contexts such as schools (Lontoc, 2014) which can help form a narrative and more holistic picture of pre-academic writing practices before university. Textography could also be used to explore more professional contexts to investigate washback effects from professional settings such as genres used by practitioners on

academic writing in more practice-based degrees. Textography can also be used unobtrusively (Sizer, 2019b) to investigate academic writing contexts which are less accessible to academic writing researchers due to physical location or perhaps confidentiality such as practice-based degrees e.g. healthcare. One previously-mentioned method which can aid accessibility is collecting texts from virtual environments (Souza, 2012). Textography has also been used to investigate a range of academic writing practices within a wide range of texts. In addition to texts, textography can analyse other contextual features which may influence academic writing practices such as artefacts and objects, spaces and time (Traweek, 1998) using sensory/visual ethnographic techniques (Pink, 2013, 2015). Finally, academic writing researchers can use textography to investigate their own academic writing practices through autotextography or collaborative autotextography or to investigate other academic writing practices as a needs analysis tool to inform academic writing pedagogy (Sizer, 2019a).

In summary, textography is a robust and versatile ethnographically-oriented research approach that can provide a holistic understanding of academic writing texts, contexts, and practices through a combination of textual analysis and ethnographically-oriented data collection and analysis procedures.

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