

Challenges and benefits of combining textual analysis and ethnographic methods to explore educational contexts, texts, and practices

Book or Report Section

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Sage Research Methods Data and Research Literacy: Case Study

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Author bio. <i>Bios will not be copy-edited; please ensure they are correct.</i>		[JENNIFER SIZER is a Lecturer in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at the University of Reading. She is currently the Academic Language and Literacy Liaison for the Reading School of Art, School of Built Environment and Henley Business School (undergraduates). Jennifer is also the Convener for the BALEAP Creative Disciplines Special Interest Group. Jennifer has over 15 years of experience working and teaching in the higher education in the UK and overseas, including Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Her research interests include disciplinary differences and specificity in language use, particularly within the creative disciplines and adopts ethnographic approaches, including textography and collaborative autoethnography. Jennifer is currently working towards a Doctorate in Education (EdD) with the working title: 'Understanding language use of architecture students. A textographic analysis to inform English for Specific Academic Purposes practice'.] https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2750-6728 <i>I have published with Sage and want to use my existing bio</i> ☐ <i>I have published with Sage and want to update my bio</i> ☐ <i>I have not published with Sage before</i> ☒
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For which student level is this case study most suitable?		Postgraduate
Method Categorisation		Qualitative
Discipline of Original Research		<i>Education [D2]</i>
Published articles based on the research project this case study reflects on.		Sizer, J. (2019b). Unobtrusive textography of a university building as an innovative research method. BALEAP 2019 Conference: Innovation, Exploration and Transformation. Leeds, April 12–14. https://www.baleap.org/event/baleap-2019-leeds

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Abstract

*The abstract should be a concise summary of this case study. What original research is this case study based on? What aspect of the **research process**, or **specific methodological and practical challenges**, will your case study address? Who will this case study be useful for?*

*Emphasize what the reader will **learn** from reading this case study, and how they might **apply** it in their own research practice.*

*Please do **not** cite references within the abstract.*

This case study is based on original research adopting a textographic research approach. Textography combines both textual analysis and ethnography to investigate the texts, context and practices of a specific discourse community. Textography can include ethnographic methods including but not limited to observations, documentary evidence and/or interviews. Textography can also include texts including but not limited to contextual texts featuring in the linguistic landscape, accessible texts in the virtual and physical context or widely available texts e.g. textbooks and journal articles, or historical texts from local or public archives, examples of routine writing business such as correspondence, diaries and even student assessments such as essays and presentations. Before embarking on textography, researchers must reflect upon microethical considerations such as trustworthiness and researcher positionality, macroethical considerations such as ethical approval and context access and practical considerations such as data collection i.e. textual and ethnographic data. Textography has been used in mainly educational contexts but can be used in a variety of contexts to explore potential collaboration, support and/or membership of another community.

Learning Outcomes

*Learning outcomes must explain what the reader will learn from reading your case study. Readers should be learning about research **methodology, methods, and practicalities**. How will the reader be able to apply what they have learned to their own research practice?*

*Please refer to these learning outcomes when writing your case study. Your case study must satisfy each proposed outcome. It is vital that you provide **achievable and measurable** learning outcomes. Please start each learning outcome with an **action verb**.*

See the links below for guidance on writing effective learning outcomes:

- [Writing learning outcomes](#)
- [Blooms Taxonomy Action Verbs](#)

Insert **3–5** learning outcomes, **beginning with an action verb**, completing this statement:

Having read this case study, readers should be able to . . .

- [Explain the benefits of combining textual analysis and ethnographic methods in one research project]
- [Acknowledge the possible challenges associated with planning and conducting research using a textographic approach]
- [Identify the key factors and considerations in the process of planning and conducting textographic research]

Case Study

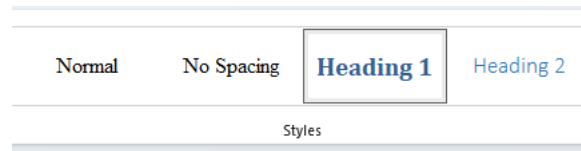
The main body of the text should be between **2,000 and 5,000 words**.

We encourage the use of headings and sub-headings to add structure to the body of your case, enhance online discoverability and make your case easier to read on screen.

Suggested top-level headings (H1s) are included below, **starting at “Project Overview and Context**.

Note: The wording of these headings is up to your discretion, but please adhere to the guidance written in *italics* below each heading.

For section headings please use Word Style 'Heading 1'. For any sub-headings within sections use Word Style 'Heading 2'. To use Word styles in Microsoft Word, select the text you want to format, click the "Home" tab and then use the "Styles" pane.



Every section with a heading must be followed by a Section Summary.

Each Section Summary should consist of **3-5** bullet points, written out as **full sentences**, which summarize the key information in the section.

Project Overview and Context

Here you can include information about the focus of your research project. Why were you interested in studying this topic? In what context was this research undertaken? You may wish to begin with a brief positionality statement, succinctly articulating key aspects of your identity, life experiences, and political/theoretical beliefs.

This section should not read as a literature review but should explain the **rationale** behind your research project. In the following sections you will be concentrating on your research methodology, which is the primary focus of your case study.

[Project Overview and Context

This research project was conducted within the context of higher education i.e. university. As a practitioner-researcher or pracademic (a portmanteau of practitioner & academic), I teach and research academic language use in higher education. However, higher education is not just one monolithic, homogenous context; instead, higher education institutions are comprised of many faculties, schools, departments, and courses with considerable disciplinary variation. These differing contexts can constitute specific 'discourse communities' with 6 defining characteristics:

1. Shared goals: broadly agreed set of common public [and often historical] goals [*e.g. shared intellectual endeavour of pursuit and dissemination of subject knowledge*]

2. Shared correspondence: mechanisms of intercommunication among members often with predictable timing i.e. rhythms [*e.g. meetings, bulletins, newsletters, noticeboards*]
3. Shared information: participatory mechanisms for information and feedback [*e.g. departmental research forums and/or conferences sharing current research progress*]
4. Shared texts: possess one or more genres (text types) to reach goals [*e.g. shared conventions in discipline-specific texts such as journal articles*]
5. Shared language: specialised lexis (terminology) [*e.g. community-specific / departmental abbreviations and acronyms*]
6. Shared membership: threshold level of members with relevant expertise [*e.g. students enter as novices/apprentices and some students remain and others join the community/department and become experts when able to demonstrate understanding and contribution to 5 other characteristics*]

(Swales, 2002 p. 24-27)

Discourse communities, and their differing contextual texts and practices, can present challenges to not only students as novices but also non-expert outsiders such as practitioners supporting students in other, less familiar, discourse communities. This unfamiliarity can be especially challenging to navigate when practitioners are engaging in English for Specific Academic Purposes (sometimes referred to as ESAP) provision in which students share the same subject, course or department and, perhaps also, share characteristics of a discourse community the practitioner has neither membership nor experience of. University students can often express interest in more discipline-specific provision as they perceive the relevance to their own studies rather than the more generic provision which applies to most, but not all, students and can be more 'economical' in terms of practitioners' efforts and time (Jordan, 2000). Practitioners seeking more discipline-specific provision may be able to draw from the reservoir of knowledge from previous practitioners not only from ESAP and/or linguistics backgrounds e.g. BALEAR (the global forum for EAP professionals) but also practitioners from learning development and/or academic literacies backgrounds e.g. ALDinHE (Association for Learning Development in Higher Education) as well as subject experts themselves who may have written about pedagogical and/or assessment practices and textual practices within their discipline. However, this knowledge is often as a result of context-specific research and may not always apply to other contexts and/or reflect practitioners' local context. In addition, some disciplines and/or contexts may have less research to draw upon. So, how can practitioners learn more about a discourse community, without joining the discourse community? Practitioners can further their understanding of language use within a particular context by combining textual analysis and ethnographic approaches in small-scale local explorations of the discourse community's context and associated texts and practices.]

Section Summary

What are the **3-5** main key points the reader should take from this section?

- *Educational and professional contexts, such as universities contain many different communities.*
- *Discourse communities share distinct membership and language (e.g. specialised vocabulary) and contextual texts and practices.*
- *Understanding discourse communities, in any context, as an outsider can be challenging but small-scale, local research can explore a specific discourse community's context, texts and practices.*

Research Design

Describe **how** you designed your study, and **why** you designed it that way. Explain the rationale behind any fundamental decisions you made.

-Why was the chosen research method the right choice for answering your research question?

-What type of data would your methods produce, and how did you plan to analyse the data?

-How did you ensure your research findings would be reliable and/or trustworthy?

-Etc.

In later sections you can describe any changes that were made to your original design.

Ensure that you define and explain any key terms for the reader.

[Research Design

The featured research study is best described as a 'textography' (a portmanteau of **textual** analysis & **ethnography**). Textography was first coined and used by Swales (1998) in his textography of a University of Michigan building featuring different voices and communities on each floor: the Computing Resource Site (CRS), the Herbarium and the English Language Institute (ELI). Swales (1998), first provides a brief history of the building using archival data, then collects and analyses texts from each floor and interviews the authors in situ about their textual histories i.e. collected texts. Swales (1998) describes his textography as "more than a disembodied...textual analysis, but...less than a full ethnographic account". Analysis of context-specific texts has a long tradition in applied linguistics as texts are often considered

to reflect their contexts. In particular, writing is often considered a situated and contextual practice (Swales, 1998; Sizer, 2021). The inclusion of ethnographic methods in textographic research allows for more focus on the context as well as the texts and textual practices (See Figure 1 below).

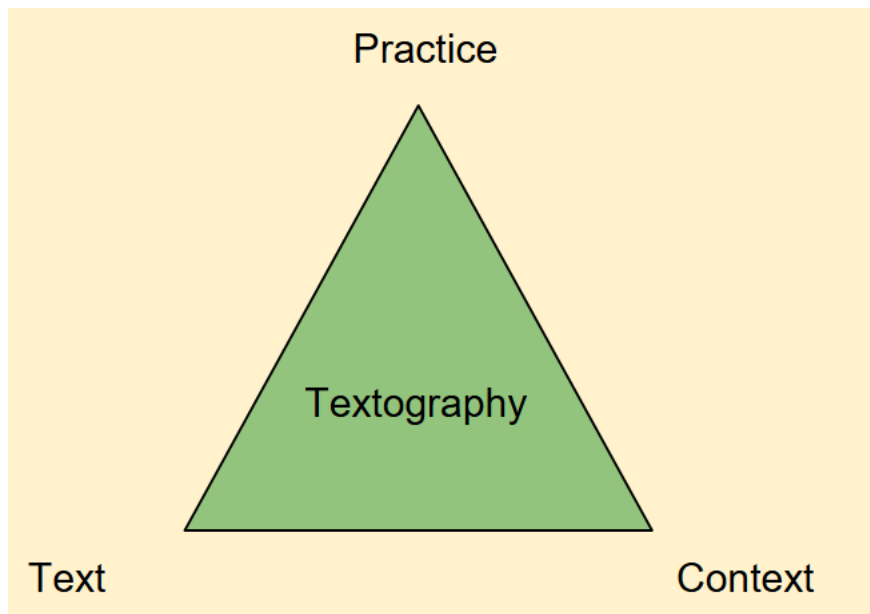


Figure 1: Textography triangle adapted from (Sizer, 2019a)

Ethnographic methods

Ethnography as a research method is a qualitative approach and researchers utilising ethnographic methods often operate within an interpretivist paradigm which considers reality to be subjective and created by individuals within communities while also needing interpretation as for interpretivists there is no single objective reality or truth (Patel, 2015). However, it is worth pointing out that ethnography and/or ethnographic methods may also be used by researchers operating within alternative paradigms (see Patel, 2015 for further guidance). Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) provide a detailed description of ethnographic work which can include but is not limited to:

1. Ethnographic work is often conducted within the context or 'field' i.e. not a researcher-controlled setting e.g. experiment.
2. Ethnographic data can involve multiple data sources such as archives, observations and interviews.
3. Ethnographic data collection is unstructured:
 - i. does not follow a fixed research design order.
 - ii. interpretation of data often results in theory building through thematic analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2022 for more on thematic analysis) where codes and themes are generated during analysis rather than testing pre-defined theory i.e. hypothesis.
4. Ethnographic research is often small-scale and usually just one setting/context.

5. Ethnographic analysis prioritises descriptions, explanations and theories over statistical analysis and quantification.
-

This particular research project reflects many of the ethnographic features of Hammersely and Atkinson's (2007) list. Similarly to Swales' 1998 textography, this textography also features one research setting i.e. a university building, in this case, a Creative and Cultural Industries building. Data collection also followed similar approaches to Swales' textography i.e. observational and archival. Data, in the form of texts, were collected from the context through field observation and documentary evidence i.e. photographs of texts in situ such as noticeboards and signs which form part of the linguistic landscape (Traweek, 1988). Other data sources in this research project included archival data to provide a history of the building and the community within.

Unobtrusive textography

However, there is one distinction between Swales' original prototype and this research project which adopts an unobtrusive approach. Swales (1998, p. 192) reflected that textography can have some 'unsettling' and even 'disruptive' effects. In contrast, this research project sought to mitigate these effects through a more unobtrusive approach i.e. collection of accessible texts through fieldwork and photography within the university building. The unobtrusive textography project took place during the grad[uation] show, or final exhibition. During this week, current and former alumni, and students, as well as members of the public, such as local school children, are invited into the building to view work produced by students from the Creative and Cultural Industries. The timing was considered to be less disruptive as the building and occupants were more welcoming of outsiders and photography and the building's contextual texts were accessible and on show. Observing the grad show throughout the week also demonstrated its significance. Swales (1998) and Traweek (1988) include almost anthropological observations about the passage of time as rhythms with seasons and festivals. Similarly, in this research project, the grad show represented a harvest festival in which artefacts cultivated across the year are presented to the community and also signified the changing of the season to autumn as the leaves [or posters] begin to fall and the stores are emptied ready for the cycle to begin anew. The grad show also presents opportunities not only to celebrate and present students' produce but also to attract and acquire new members to the discourse community to continue the student lifecycle.

The collection of data unobtrusively meant texts were contextually documented via photographs rather than decontextualised through removal and collection. This documenting process revealed a unique linguistic landscape within the Creative and Cultural Industries building distinctive from other university buildings and communities. Linguistic analysis of the texts within the linguistic landscape also reflected some of the community practices e.g. apprenticeship model of community through novice/non-expert status of

students (Lave & Wenger, 1991) demonstrated by signage about various rules and expectations.

Trustworthiness

This unobtrusive textography project features several methodological elements which can enhance trustworthiness. I refer here, to Lincoln and Guba's (1986) trustworthiness criteria for qualitative research: creditability, transferability, dependability and confirmability. In terms of credibility, the data collected was routine or everyday allowing for comparisons. The wide variety of texts and data from multiple perspectives allows for data triangulation enhancing not only credibility but also confirmability. Also, the time taken for careful documentation and observation led to prolonged and sustained engagement with the context further enhancing credibility. The sustained engagement and careful documentation and analysis of texts allows for detailed, rich contextual descriptions and thick descriptions of the context further enhancing transferability. The use of publicly available and accessible texts, which can be accessed and analysed by other researchers, further enhances credibility, dependability and confirmability. For further discussion of trustworthiness: (Sizer, 2021 53-55). Other methodological options for textography to enhance trustworthiness are discussed in the next section: Research Practicalities.

Section Summary

What are the 3-5 main key points the reader should take from this section?

- *Textography is a research method combining textual analysis and ethnography in the same research project.*
- *A textography research project is interested in exploring texts, practices and context.*
- *Ethnographic approaches are qualitative and in textography often include archival research, contextual observation and documentation and interviews with community members.*
- *An unobtrusive textography seeks to document and analyse only accessible contexts, texts and practices.*
- *The multiple sources of accessible data and sustained engagement with context can be a benefit of textography research in terms of trustworthiness.*

Research Practicalities

Includes a discussion of **practical** and **ethical considerations** you had to navigate when conducting your research. Were there challenges that had to be overcome to access participants or data? Were your personal skills compatible with the research you were intending to carry out? What of time constraints, costs, and resources? What ethical considerations were essential?

Research practicalities

When conducting a textographic research project, a researcher must factor in both practical and ethical considerations associated with textual/linguistic analysis and ethnographic research. Practical and ethical considerations are important in the planning stage to ensure access to both the context and texts. Practical considerations are also vital during data collection and analysis i.e. selection of text types/genres and ethnographic methods.

Ethical considerations: Microethical and Macroethical

Researchers adopting textography, or other ethnographic approaches should begin by reflecting on the project's microethical considerations such as the trustworthiness of the research and the positionality of the researcher (Copland & Creese, 2016; Sizer, 2021). As previously discussed, trustworthiness qualitative criteria: creditability, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) can be enhanced through elements of unobtrusive textography such as multiple sources of accessible data and sustained engagement with context. This is also true for other textographies adopting less unobtrusive approaches such as interviews (e.g. Swales, 1998). Interview data can further enhance trustworthiness using interview transcripts for community member checks further enhancing credibility as well as verbatim transcript excerpts further enhancing confirmability. A further source of data i.e. interviews also allows for triangulation of data further enhancing credibility, confirmability and dependability.

Microethical considerations can and should include the researchers' position within the research context i.e. more emic perspective as an insider of the community or a more etic perspective as an outsider (Copland & Creese, 2016; Sizer, 2021). The researcher's position and status within the community may also have practical implications on access to the context and texts. As mentioned in the previous section, an external researcher could potentially disrupt the context and community members (Swales, 1998). One way to mitigate this disruption could be to adopt a more unobtrusive textography and/or use of participant researchers already familiar with or embedded within the context. A participant researcher already embedded can be very beneficial for sustained engagement and can result in thick contextual descriptions. However, this positionality can present some macroethical concerns as the context and/or community members may be unintentionally

identifiable as a result of research. Macroethical concerns relate more to the institution than the individual researcher and include ethical approval. Researchers must always check their institutional ethical guidance and seek ethical approval, if necessary, before embarking on textographic research. Ethical approval may not always be necessary for unobtrusive textography research featuring accessible texts and contexts not requiring explicit permission for access while also excluding participants. However, researchers must check with their institutions and are advised to inform and discuss with the community before beginning research. This discussion with community members can highlight any concerns as well as inform practical considerations such as ethnographic approaches and/or text collection.

Practical considerations: data collection

In textography, the researcher has several data collection options through both textual and ethnographic data. The options chosen are informed by the researcher's positionality as well as the context and community.

Textual data

As previously mentioned in ethical considerations, the choice of text is most heavily influenced by access. In unobtrusive textography, texts need to be accessible. Accessible texts may feature as part of the contextual linguistic landscape (Sizer, 2021; Sizer, 2019b) and can represent situated practices as well as 'routine writing business' (Swales, 1998). In other textographic research, these routine or everyday contextual texts have included but are not limited to correspondence (emails, letters and notes), memos, minutes, reports, forms, brochures, posters, signs, noticeboards, manuals, guides, briefing sheets, visitor/guest book and other contextual/institutional documentation (AlAfnan, 2016; Sizer, 2021; Sizer, 2019b; Swales, 2018). Accessible texts in a physical format within the context are often collected via photography. However, other accessible texts may have been written within the context of the community but not feature physically within the context as was the case with Souza's (2012) textography of teaching online which explored texts within a virtual context. In addition, other texts used in textography may have been written within the context for and by the community but be accessible to non-community members such as journal articles written by community members (Pérez-Penup, 2019; Swales, 1998) or textbooks for new and developing members (Januin & Stephen, 2015; Paltridge, 2007). Finally, depending on access, many historic texts written about or for the community may be accessible via archival research and can be used as part of textography (AlAfnan, 2016; Sizer, 2021; Sizer, 2019b; Swales, 1998).

Other accessible texts which could also be relevant for textography also include but are not limited to:

- Webpages including staff biographies
- Example student dissertations available via the university's library website (may require ethical approval for research use)

- Corpus collections e.g. British Academic Written English Corpus (may give an indication of disciplinary community's texts and practices but may be less relevant to local context)

Textographers with favourable ethical approval and access may choose to collect less accessible texts such as community members' diary entries and curriculum vitae or other personal and/or internal i.e. contextual texts (Swales, 1998) and/or texts written for and submitted to the community such as student-authored texts e.g. student essays (Paltridge, 2007), student theses/dissertations (Seloni, 2014) or even student presentations (Januin & Stephen, 2015).

Ethnographic data

Textography needs to combine the collection of both textual and ethnographic data. Textographers can use two main ethnographic approaches: observation and/or interviews. Observations of situated practices and contextual texts can be documented via photography (Sizer, 2021; Sizer, 2019b), as previously mentioned, and also documented via field notes and reflections from the researcher (AlAfnan, 2016; Swales, 1998) but also in some cases recorded via either audio and/or video (subject to ethical approval and permission) (Januin & Stephen, 2015). In addition to contextual observation, textographers also frequently use interview data (Januin & Stephen, 2015; Pérez-Penup, 2019; Seloni, 2014; Swales, 1998). These interviews may be with authors and/or audiences of collected texts to provide a more emic (insider) perspective (Copland & Creese, 2016) on the texts and textual practices including participants' textual life histories. Interviews also allow for the use of verbatim transcripts and snippets as data, further enhancing trustworthiness and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Section Summary

What are the 3-5 main key points the reader should take from this section?

- *Microethical considerations for the researcher include their positionality and trustworthiness of research.*
- *Macroethical considerations for the researcher's institution and/or employer include ethical approval and anonymity of participants and/or context.*
- *Practical considerations for textual data include availability and accessibility of texts and can include a variety of contextual texts as well as texts written by and/or for community members.*
- *Practical considerations for ethnographic data include access and permission, for contextual observations and/or interviews with community members..*

Method in Action

How did your research project play out in reality? Did it go according to plan, or did you need to adapt parts of the process? This should be a **“warts and all”** description and evaluation of how your chosen research method/approach actually worked **in practice**.

What went well? What did not go to plan? What challenges did you face? How did you respond? Remember that cases should explore both the successes of your methodology and the challenges and problems. Both can provide rich learning opportunities.

What went well

This unobtrusive textography research project worked well in terms of gaining a new perspective of a particular discourse community of which I was not a member. Viewing the context carefully via a new lens (in this case a camera lens) allowed me to consider the context from a student's more emic perspective alongside my more etic (outsider) perspective (Copland & Creese, 2016). As an outsider, observing and documenting the linguistic landscape was time-consuming but led to sustained engagement within the research context. This sustained engagement, alongside detailed documentation via photography, encouraged thick and detailed contextual descriptions and led to interesting and helpful insights.

The linguistic landscape demonstrated students' role as novices in the community and the use of the apprenticeship model (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This insight was impactful on my own practice as students may be less aware of text types and/or language needs of the community they have recently joined. Therefore, I have adapted my practice to reduce the reliance on self-assessment in developing materials to support students. Another helpful insight was the significance of the 'grad show' i.e. final exhibition. In many undergraduate courses, importance is placed on the final submitted artefact i.e. a dissertation or thesis and often represents community membership. However, in contrast, creative and cultural industries courses emphasise the 'grad show' as a ceremony marking community membership. This is also reflected in the unique rhythm and cycle of work in this community as dissertations were often submitted much earlier e.g. in January rather than submitted as their final artefact in April/May onwards. This insight is also impactful as it highlights the need for more ESAP (discipline-specific) support for dissertations in terms of timing but also perhaps in approach due to different assumptions about significance.

Another aspect of the research project which went well and produced interesting insights was the archival and historical research. This textography went further than Swales' (1998) short history of a university building and traced the history of the community before this building was erected in 1956, formerly called College of Art, until renamed Eldon building in

2000, with a new wing added in 2014 (Sizer, 2019b). Archival and historical research revealed aspects of the community's history and documents, before 1956, such as a 1920s prospectus listing 'architecture' courses and photographs from 1945 showcasing creative work on display being viewed by community members in a strikingly similar way to more recent grad shows. This similarity in ceremony demonstrates an almost ancestral ritual and link to the past (Sizer, 2019b) as well as a shared goal of recruiting new members (Traweek, 1988; Swales, 2002) as the 1945 exhibition photographs were also shared in local newspapers. Traweek (1988) defines a community as a group with a shared past, who hope to share a future, acquire new members and is distinctive from other communities (Sizer, 2019b). Based on this textography research project, the Creative and Cultural Industries building appeared, based on Traweek's definition, a community. This insight, alongside other parameters, influenced the decision to offer ESAP support as a discipline i.e. creative disciplines rather than as a subject and/or course e.g. architecture.

Challenges:

One of the challenges with this unobtrusive textography, and perhaps others following a similar approach, is that the whole building (and corresponding faculty) could be considered a community based on Traweek's (1988) definition. However, it is more difficult to ascertain to what extent this constitutes a discourse community/ies. In Swales' (1998) textography, different floors of the building represented different voices, departments and communities. An unobtrusive textography may be able to explore some of the layout, accessibility and privacy of spaces within the context. This approach may even indicate some of the communities within the building via boundary markers such as special use spaces e.g. studios (Scollon & Scollon, 2003; Sizer, 2019b). However, further sustained engagement with the context, e.g. observing other routine business practices i.e. meetings, teaching as well as ethical approval, may be needed to gain more spatial and temporal knowledge of the community (Traweek, 1988). Examples of spatial and temporal knowledge can include but are not limited to rhythms and cycles of work and evolution of groups as well as typical roles and trajectories, group activities and how groups function and communicate (Sizer, 2019b). This enhanced spatial and temporal knowledge may help in identifying and distinguishing between different discourse communities. Depending on the context, it may be challenging to collect identifying characteristics for distinctive discourse communities within the context via accessible texts and observation alone. This can be especially difficult in contexts which may represent communities at a micro-level e.g. course teams or departments, meso-level e.g. one building or faculty with different floors or macro-level e.g. institutional i.e. whole university. One way to possibly counteract this challenge is via interviews with community members. Interviews with community members can elicit information helpful in identifying discourse communities such as length of service i.e. shared membership and access and discussion of examples of shared and distinctive language and texts.

Section Summary

What are the **3-5** main key points the reader should take from this section?

- *Documenting the linguistic landscape can be a time-consuming process but can provide interesting insights into context, texts and practices.*
- *Archival and historical research can provide helpful insights into a community's shared history, goals and purpose.*
- *Unobtrusive textography via observation and accessible texts alone may not provide enough data to identify a discourse community, so more observations and/or interviews with community members may be helpful.*

Practical Lessons Learned

Looking back, reflect on which aspects of your methodology went well, and which aspects did not go well. What would you do differently? What did you learn from the experience, and what advice do you have for readers planning their own research projects? Please note that this section is **not** referring to research findings, but instead the lessons learned from the methodology in practice.

In terms of practical lessons learned, researchers wanting to gain a better understanding of a particular community, their contexts, texts and practices can benefit from textographic approaches. Unobtrusive textography can provide helpful initial insights, whereas textography with ethical approval and more access may provide more opportunities for data collection.

Unobtrusive textography: accessible texts

Unobtrusive textography should begin with accessible texts. These texts can be collected via public or local archives e.g. newspaper, if relevant, or via virtual contexts e.g. webpages i.e. history and biographies. Other accessible texts may be authored by and/or for the community such as journal articles and textbooks. Finally, some accessible texts authored by and/or for similar communities such as students' theses/dissertations may also be helpful but may not reflect local context and may also need permission for use in research. This unobtrusive approach is recommended for researchers interested in a more short-term project without needing ethical approval and possibly with limited access to the community and/or context. Unobtrusive textographies can be used as initial needs analysis tools for supporting community members with texts and/or practices (Sizer, 2019a) but could also be used from a business perspective to investigate working and communication practices (AlAfnan, 2016) which could be particularly helpful as part of change management e.g. mergers or policy change. For university business in particular unobtrusive textography could

be used as part of initial investigations involving Transnational Education (TNE) and partnerships or perhaps restructuring. Unobtrusive textography may also be useful as an investigative careers tool to explore placements, internships and other contexts before application.

Less obtrusive textography: linguistic landscapes and observations

Depending on your chosen context of study and/or institution (and ethics policy) researchers may be able to collect and document texts from the linguistic landscape. In some cases, particularly if the context is accessible by members of the public, this approach may not require ethical approval, but the researcher must check their local ethics policy as well as check with the context and community before beginning research. .

If a researcher is already embedded within the context e.g. participant researcher, they may be able to conduct observations as part of their role. For example, 'shadowing' colleagues and/or observing classes may be encouraged as part of continuing professional development and may even extend beyond the immediate context i.e. working with other departments (Jordan, 2000). However, this may present challenges when disseminating findings as researchers may need to collect retrospective consent from participants after the study is completed which could include shadowed and/or observed colleagues as well as others present e.g. students and/or colleagues. Retrospective consent may be difficult to achieve in terms of tracing and contacting participants but may also be something ethics boards may be less comfortable approving. One way to mitigate this ethical dilemma can be through researcher participant's observations via autotextographic accounts, therefore reducing the number of participants to just the researcher. However, in some cases, this approach may also require ethical approval and consent from other members of the community the autotextographer is working alongside. Again, as mentioned previously, it is advised to secure permission from the context and/or community before beginning research and also checking your local ethics policy and/or board, for guidance.

This less obtrusive approach requires the researcher to either be already embedded, and familiar with, the context of the study or be able to gain permission and access to study the context. Developing a good working relationship with community members within the context is a helpful starting point before embarking on this approach.

Textography: observations and interviews

If textographers discuss their work with the context and community, and gain permission before beginning research, they may also gain insights into suitable methods for the collection of textual and ethnographic data. Textographers can then use this information to choose from the vast range of methods available for textographic research, as discussed throughout this case study and then seek formal ethical approval. The ethical approval process, as well as data collection and analysis , of an extensive textography can be a lengthy and time-consuming process. Therefore, this more extensive and expansive approach may

be more appropriate for researchers interested in pursuing a long-term research project such as a doctorate level or post-doctorate level study but could be considered as part of a postgraduate level e.g. MA or MRes final project.

Section Summary

What are the 3-5 main key points the reader should take from this section?

- *Unobtrusive textographies can be helpful initial research tools to investigate accessible texts and practices and can be beneficial to those considering collaborating with/supporting/joining another community of which they are not yet a member.*
- *Less obtrusive textographies may include linguistic landscapes and/or observation of contextual practice but this may need ethical approval and/or permission from context, community and/or participants.*
- *More extensive textographies can include further observations for more sustained engagement and/or interviews but this approach requires ethical approval and consent and can be very detailed but often time-consuming.*

Conclusion

Includes a round-up of the issues discussed in your case study. This should **not** be a discussion of conclusions drawn from the research findings, but should focus reflectively on the **research methodology and methods**. Include just enough detail of your findings to enable the reader to understand how the method/approach you used could be utilized by others. Would you recommend using this method/approach or, on reflection, would you make difference choices in the future? **What can readers learn from your experience and apply to their own research?**

In conclusion, I would recommend textography as a method for researchers who are interested in learning more about a particular discourse community's context, texts and practices. Textography has the benefit of combining linguistic analysis and ethnographic approaches so that the resulting research does not prioritise texts while overlooking the texts' authors and audiences nor prioritise observation of practices such as verbal communication while overlooking other communication such as written texts (Sizer, 2019a; Sizer, 2021)

A textographer has a choice of data collection (textual and ethnographic) options which need to be informed based on the community and context of the study, the textographer's microethical considerations such as positionality and trustworthiness and macroethical considerations such as ethical approval as well as practical considerations around access to context, texts and practices. These careful considerations may result in an unobtrusive, less obtrusive, or more extensive textography. Textographies have been used in mainly educational contexts, often universities, but can be used in a range of contexts for researchers interested in another community they wish to support the members of, collaborate with and/or join.

Discussion Questions

[Insert **three to five** discussion questions related to the methodology and practical considerations described in your case study]

Discussion questions should be suitable for eliciting debate and critical thinking. The questions should encourage the reader to **apply what they have learned beyond the context of the research project discussed**. They should **not** test the reader's memory of specifics about the discussed project. Avoid questions which require only a single-word answer such as "yes" or "no." Please also avoid combining multiple questions into one.

Please make sure that each discussion question is a **single question**, i.e., avoiding multiple questions combined under one point.

1. Do you consider yourself to be a member of a particular discourse community or communities?
 2. What do the texts in your linguistic landscape (work, study or elsewhere) communicate to members or insiders?
 3. What do the texts in your linguistic landscape (work, study or elsewhere) communicate to outsiders?
 4. Which accessible texts could represent the practices and context of a discourse community of which you have been a member? *This could be a community of students, employees or another community.*
 5. Would you prefer an unobtrusive, less obtrusive or more extensive textographic approach?
-

Multiple Choice Quiz Questions

Multiple Choice Quiz Questions **should**:

- Test understanding of the case study and the methodology in question, as opposed to comprehension-based questions which test the reader's memory
- Relate to research methodology, not the substantive research topic
- Cause the reader to identify the rationale behind the answer.

Multiple Choice Quiz Questions **should not**:

- Require any information that is not included in this case study
- Include 'all of the above', 'none of the above' or implausible distractors

Example:

What was the method used to increase the reliability of this field observation study?

A - Inter-coder reliability was calculated to ensure an acceptable Krippendorff's alpha.

B - Constant comparison was used, whereby two coders visiting the same site simultaneously would conduct independent coding and reconvene to resolve any discrepant codes to produce a single set of codes for the observation. - CORRECT

C - Researchers were asked to write about how their personal idiosyncrasies might have shaped the coding process, so these reflexive accounts can be used by the reader in assessing the study's reliability

Guidance for writing MCQs can be accessed using these links:

- [Tips for writing effective multiple-choice questions](#)
- [The process of writing a multiple-choice question](#)

[Insert **three to five** multiple choice quiz questions below. Each question should have **three possible answers** (A, B, or C), with **only one correct answer**. Please indicate the correct answer by writing CORRECT after the relevant answer.]

1. What are the six defining characteristics of a discourse community? Shared...
 - a. goals, history, philosophy, motto, context, membership
 - b. texts, language, vocabulary, correspondence, style, context
 - c. goals, correspondence, information, texts language, membership [CORRECT]
2. What are the three elements of the textography triangle?
 - a. texts, ethnography, setting
 - b. texts, contexts, practices [CORRECT]
 - c. context, text, texture
3. Linguistics is usually most interested in the analysis of...
 - a. text [CORRECT]
 - b. practice
 - c. context
4. Trustworthiness criteria in qualitative research includes
 - a. trust, worth, truth, quality
 - b. validity, generalizability, reliability, objectivity
 - c. credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability [CORRECT]
5. An unobtrusive textography usually features...
 - a. interviews
 - b. observations
 - c. accessible texts [CORRECT]

Further Reading

Please ensure the recommended readings, web resources, and cited references are inclusive and represent a diversity of people. Given our global readership, we aim to publish content that allows individuals with a broad range of perspectives to be reflected in our pedagogical resources.

[Insert list of up to six further readings here. They can include web resources.]

- Sizer, J. (2021). Narrowing the gap between text and context in ethnographic explorations of situated academic writing. In I. Iguillen-Galve & A. Bocanegra-Valle (Eds.), *Ethnographies of Academic Writing Research*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/portsmouth-ebooks/detail.action?docID=6735756>.
- Patel, S. (2015) 'The research paradigm – methodology, epistemology and ontology – explained in simple language' (July 15, 2015)

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References should conform to American Psychological Association (APA) style, 7th edition, and should contain the digital object identifier (DOI) where available. Sage will not accept cases that are incorrectly referenced. Please ensure accuracy before submission. For help on reference styling see <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines>.

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Sizer, J. (2019a). Textography as a needs analysis and research tool for English for Academic Purposes and learning development practitioners. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, (15), DOI: 10.47408/jldhe.v0i15.554

Sizer, J. (2019b). Unobtrusive textography of a university building as an innovative research method. BALEAP 2019 Conference: Innovation, Exploration and Transformation. Leeds, April 12–14. <https://www.baleap.org/event/baleap-2019-leeds>

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