Textographies and the researching and teaching of writing

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This presentation discusses the use of textographies in the researching and teaching of writing. A textography is an approach to genre analysis which combines elements of text analysis with elements of ethnography in order to examine what texts are like, and why. Three examples of textographies will be presented. The first is a study which examined the theses that art and design students write in their masters’ degrees. The second is a study that examined the writing section of Chinese College English tests. The third is a course for second language graduate students learning to write in academic settings. In each of these examples the analysis moves ‘beyond the text’ in order to explore the context in which the texts are produced as well as reasons for the choices that students make in their writing. In the first example the researcher looks at the students’ writing and tries to gain an insider’s understanding of why the texts are written as they are. In the second example the researchers are teachers who are wanting to uncover what students ‘need to know’ in order to do well in their College English exams. In the third example, the students are the researchers, trying to understand in what way the context in which they are writing impacts on what they write, and why. Each of these examples aims to explore not just the particular nature and character of the texts, but also the values that underlie the texts, and the role the texts play in the particular academic setting.

Brian Paltridge is Associate Professor TESOL at the University of Sydney where he teaches courses on English for specific purposes, discourse analysis, and research methods in language learning. He is author of *Genre, frames and writing in research settings* (John Benjamins, 1997), *Making sense of discourse analysis* (AEE Publishers, 2000), *Genre and the language learning classroom* (University of Michigan Press, 2001), *Discourse analysis* (Continuum, 2006), and with Sue Starfield, *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language* (Routledge, 2007). He is a member of the editorial board for the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* and the *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*. With Diane Belcher, he is editor of the journal *English for Specific Purposes*.

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