Book Review

A Review of *How to Analyse Texts: A Toolkit for Students of English*

Reviewed by Joshua Schulze, Western Oregon University

How to Analyse Texts: A Toolkit for Students of English introduces novice linguists, teachers, and advanced students of English to the process of examining texts to connect language use and context. Acknowledging that the term "text" has different definitions in linguistics and social sciences, the authors define the term to embrace spoken, written, and multimodal forms of communication. The authors encourage readers to think of texts "not as isolated artefacts, but as part of the social texture of any community" (p. 3). With this goal in mind, the authors divide the book into three parts: Foundations: Researching texts; Drilling down: how texts are structured; and Building Up: texts and contexts. Each part is designed to demonstrate how text analysis illuminates the connection between language and context and ultimately improves our understanding of language's role in making meaning.

Part I, "Foundations: Researching Texts," lays the groundwork for text analysis. The authors emphasize that text analysis does not involve examining abstract material, but rather texts that surround us in daily life, such as diaries, greeting cards, and letters, and reflecting on how those texts represent language development. The authors encourage readers to make text analysis relevant by developing their own questions about language then demonstrating how to answer those questions systematically through research.

Part II, "Drilling Down: How texts are structured" examines language as a semiotic system, a system of signs designed to convey meaning. It begins by unpacking the role of signs such as icons, ideographs and emojis, and discussing how analysis can help readers understand the cultural values conveyed by these signs. In the second section of Part II, the authors provide a detailed overview of the sound system of spoken language. While this section may be complex for the linguistic novice because of the sheer number of terms it introduces, the authors' use of clear and concise definitions and examples make the section informative. The subsequent sections focus on lexical and semantic aspects of language and show readers how language users convey ideas through language play, including creative use of morphemes, etymology

and cohesive devices. The last section focuses on grammar. The authors demonstrate the role of grammar in making meaning across multiple genres, both spoken and written, and provide concrete examples of how to use textual analysis in the classroom to provoke critical examination of texts. Perhaps most powerful and timely, and potentially most engaging for the reader, is the topic of analyzing political discourse. The authors show how students can conduct critical discourse analysis that reveals ideological viewpoints by pinpointing linguistic features that "reveal particular ways of seeing the world, particular stereotypical belief systems, and particular political ideologies" (p. 146).

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Part III, "Building up: Texts and Contexts," concentrates on how linguistic analysis can shed light on language's role in our world. It begins by exemplifying the differences between spoken and written discourse and by demonstrating how to examine that data systematically. The authors recommend transcribing conversation in varying contexts both face to face and digital modes, and then comparing this language to the written discourse of novels or popular magazines. The authors suggest specific activities that help readers uncover how language is used to construct points of view, ideology, and gendered discourse.

Perhaps the title, *How to analyze texts: A toolkit for students of English*, is too limiting, as the prospective audience for this text certainly extends beyond just students of English. Native and non-native speakers alike will find the text to be a worthy introduction to the process of textual analysis. For the native speaker, it is a strong tool to support metalinguistic awareness. For the non-native speaker, it does this as well, but also has the added benefit of providing opportunities for the English learner to simultaneously learn about and through language, using higher-order thinking skills. Furthermore, teachers of linguistically diverse students, particularly in higher education and upper secondary contexts will find an abundance of practical activities to include in their classroom that will simultaneously promote robust academic language use and critical thinking. The text may also be useful within professional learning communities, as it provides educators with an accessible and supportive introduction to textual analysis that respects the readers' knowledge base while promoting knowledge of language, something that is recognized as an essential part of today's teaching. Teacher educators will also find use for this text in a TESL endorsement sequence focusing on educational linguistics. Future teachers who are native and non-native speakers alike will be supported in understanding how language makes meaning in varying contexts and will have an opportunity to reinterpret some of these activities for varying contexts. Overall, this text is a useful tool for anyone who wants to develop a deeper understanding of how language constructs our world.

Joshua Schulze is an Assistant Professor of Education at Western Oregon University. His scholarly interests include systemic functional linguistics and new teacher mentoring. He holds a doctorate in education in language, literacy and culture from University of Massachusetts Amherst. He has taught K-12 instructional contexts in the US and abroad and is currently a member of the ORTESOL board. He may be reached at schulzejm@wou.edu.