Chapter 4. Working With Words

Writing is a technology. Writing allows us to capture otherwise ephemeral conversations and ideas, to put words down on paper. Current concerns about technology echo the original complaints (circa fifth century BCE) about writing: it makes it easier for others to cheat, it hurts our in-person relationships, it's not trustworthy, and it's making us stupid. Despite these concerns (and it's worth analyzing these concerns to consider where they come from and whether or not they're fair), many of our most popular technologies continue to change in ways that make it easier to access and capture words. For one, the computer developed as a counting machine, which has morphed into a tool that, among many things, allows us to consume words to our hearts' content. Although the telephone originally allowed us to speak to each other directly, plenty of people never speak on their phones anymore—they just send written messages. All of this to say: we love words, and we have access to copious amounts of them.

Digital technologies have been a boon for researchers, since we now have so many tools that help us find, sort, count, and analyze word patterns in discursive **corpuses**,* or groupings of compositions. Such treatment of words, in which we consider the relationship between a text and its social context, is broadly called **discourse analysis**, and in this chapter we will address one particular approach to discourse analysis that considers language in social interaction. In Chapter 3, you had the opportunity to practice word work by developing your semantic worknet. During this phase you used **content analysis**—counting words, noting their proximity to other words, and identifying key concepts in part by their frequency and placement in the text. Another way to understand the relationships between words and social context is to conduct **rhetorical analysis**, keying in on the rhetorical situation in which a particular composition develops. Finally, **genre analysis** considers how the particular kind of text you are examining functions like a cultural artifact, providing clues about the context in which it developed.

All of these methods—discourse analysis, content analysis, rhetorical analysis, and genre analysis—are ways of examining words and the detailed

Corpus is Latin for "body" (as in body of work or body of information), which has the same root as corpse—a totally different kind of body.

stories they tell about social interaction and rhetorical contexts. These analytical methods demonstrate the significance of word patterns we are able to observe in texts all around us. Charles Antaki, Michael Billig, Derek Edwards, and Jonathan Potter have worked together to suggest that the key to success in such analyses is actually *doing analysis.* This may seem rather common sense, but analysis is probably the hardest part of conducting effective research. By insisting that doing analysis means *doing analysis,* Antaki and his co-authors mean that analytical tools are not equations in which you can simply plug in a few variables and unlock a fixed meaning. They note that analysis is not

- simply pointing out the weaknesses in someone else's work,
- just sharing findings,
- summarizing the research, or
- stating an opinion.

Instead, analysis

- is a messy process,
- connects findings within a larger rhetorical context,
- describes significance of emergent patterns, and
- explains the "so what" component of the work to an audience.

Analysis helps us understand not just what words say but also what they *do*, not just what they represent but also how they *mean*. Analysis is a foundational activity for successful, effective research writing, and it is also the starting place for production, design, and delivery—processes that we will address in subsequent chapters. Delivery, in particular, is often the concern with which people start—how will I write up my research? What will it look like? What words will I use? But we encourage you to be patient. Effective research takes time, and it can/should be messy along the way. You can't know what you'll write until you have asked and answered your research question by wholly engaging in the analysis, getting pulled into the analysis, getting lost in the analysis! And then—when you've identified the significance of your findings—turn to Chapter 8 and consider methods for writing up your research.

■ Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method, and the many varieties of discourse analysis constitute the area of research called discourse studies, which are practiced in social science and humanities disciplines. For our purposes we will focus on discourse analysis (DA) that examines language in social interaction, which includes language communicated through talk, text, and gesture. Since our focus in this chapter is on words, we will walk through the following steps:

1. Considering how you select a discursive corpus, a group of texts for analysis;
2. Exploring and identifying the **rhetorical situation**, or the context in which communication takes place, for the corpus; and
3. Preparing or **transcribing** discourse, that is, moving from discourse in interaction—the kind of talk that might happen with a friend during the day, in an interview setting, or on a digital platform—to written words on a page.

After you've selected a corpus, explored its development, identified its rhetorical situation, and prepared it for analysis, then the fun really begins: tagging or coding patterns in the text and interpreting findings. We'll save these last two steps for the end of the chapter when we'll ask you to develop a coding scheme for the corpus and method of analysis that you select.

■ Identifying a Corpus

There are lots of starting places for word work. You might already have a research question, so you might need to identify the corresponding corpus that will help you answer your question. Or, you might stumble upon an interesting text or idea, and though you may have questions, your thoughts may not have crystalized into clear research questions as yet. Wherever you are in the process, you will have to identify a set of meaningful words, the data that will help you answer a research question. Some examples of corpuses include the following:

- **Conversation as corpus:** Discourse analyst Dorothy Smith chronicles transcribed accounts of the friends of a woman—simply referred to as "K"—who support the suggestion that she is mentally ill. Smith critiques both the friends' accounts and the line of questioning that the interviewer provides, suggesting that together they develop an idea of "K" as mentally ill, though the facts do not necessarily support their finding. Smith uses her analysis to demonstrate that interviews are co-constructed and that interviewers have significant power in the accounts they elicit.

- **Digital text as corpus:** Jennifer Gonzalez writes about education on her blog, Cult of Pedagogy. She has lots of articles posted, but some are much more popular than others, and some stir controversy. Responsiveness to her posts can be measured, in part, by the number of comments she receives on each post. A researcher could use the comments on her posts, her posts alone, or these texts together as a research corpus.

- **Social media as corpus:** Recently, a student followed the Tennessee Titans' twitter feed for a month and used the entirety of their tweets as a corpus.* In her analysis, she was able to note how frequently the Titans tweeted, when and what they tweeted, how many times the team was retweeted or responded to, and discursive patterns in their tweets.

- **Print archive as corpus:** You may have a stack of texts in your home, library, or university that are ripe for analysis. Kate's university was recently gifted an incredible archive of 1500 letters written by schoolchildren to Holocaust survivor Nessy Marks. Her students began digitizing and cataloging this rich archive, learning about the schoolchildren's reactions to elements of Ms. Marks' story that range from admissions of family connections to the holocaust to demonstrations of patriotism.

- **"Homely Discourse" as corpus:** Carolyn Miller has suggested that "homely discourse" such as "the recommendation, the user manual, the progress report, the ransom note, the lecture, and the white paper, as well as the eulogy, the apologia, the inaugural, the public

Narrowing a corpus to a specific time can help with establishing a well-defined scope (e.g., one hour of conversation, a Twitter hashtag across one week or one month, a print archive in a specific year).

proceeding, and the sermon" are all worthy of analysis (155). In fact, "everyday" texts, such as greeting cards and menus, can be fascinating corpuses. Paige Lenssen published her study of Enron's "honest ser-vices clause," certainly homely discourse within the larger body of the company's corporate documents. Her work, published in the student journal *Xchanges,* traces the company's breaches of ethics before their collapse.

In Chapter 1 we defined research as the systematic asking of questions and congruent use of methods to learn answers to interesting, important ques-tions. In selecting a corpus we once again encourage you to tap into your curi-osities as a starting place for research.

Try This Together: Identifying Corpuses (30 minutes)

With a small group, follow your curiosities and select an example for each of the kinds of corpuses listed here:

- **Identify a conversation as corpus**. This could be a face-to-face conversation, a video, an au-dio recording, or a textual conversation.
- **Select a digital text that you might consider for analysis.** This might be a blog, journal man-uscript, newspaper article, etc.
- **Choose a social media corpus.** This can come from any digital platform, but make sure to narrow your selection such that you choose a particular thread, post, hashtag, or set of comments. Oftentimes, social media researchers organize corpuses, or corpora, by following designated timeframes or hashtags.

Look for a print archive. This could be an extensive personal magazine collection, a trove of letters, or something within your university library's holdings.

- **Lastly, find some homely discourse.** Look around you and find some "everyday" texts that you might not have initially considered for analysis. These texts might be signs, posters, forms, advertisements, cards, or similar. Sometimes the more "homely" or unexpected, the more interesting the analysis!

As you search for these various corpuses, take particular note of how you find them, what draws you to them, and what further analysis of them might glean for you.

■ Exploring and Establishing the Context

Once you have identified an interesting corpus, harness your detective skills and spend some time exploring. Consider the playful approach to learning about a text that you developed in Chapter 3 when you constructed a worknet. Draw on that same willingness to experiment and follow leads down rabbit holes in your approach to learning about the corpus you have identified.

■ Taking Notes As You Go

Preparing your corpus for analysis is part of the research process, so make note of what you find as you go. This means annotate your corpus, note your experiences at every step along the research path, and consider these observations and annotations in your final analysis. An annotation is a short summary of work, whether a book or textual source (as in writing your literature review), or an observational experience (like a site visit or a response to data collection). There are lots of ways to annotate, and we encourage you to try different methods and combine them along the way until you find what works best for you.

Try This: Identify the Rhetorical Context of a Corpus (30 minutes)

Now that you have identified potential research spaces, return one more time to the corpus that you find most interesting to explore it and identify its rhetorical contexts. Consider the following:

- By whom and how were the texts in the corpus developed?
- For whom and why were the texts in the corpus developed?
- What is the context in which the texts in the corpus were developed?
- When were the texts in the corpus created?

Essentially, consider the *Who, What, When, Where, Why,* and *How* of these texts. Then, spend some time looking slant at the text, i.e., consider what surrounds the text—the other authors, texts, images, and contexts that impact its uptake.

Chapter 3*	Consider our discussion of the components of annotations.
Chapter 5	Think about the steps we suggest in composing a research memo.
Chapter 6	Peruse our recommendations about developing an annotated map.
Lists of questions	Take a page from writing teacher Michael Bunn, who encourages us to "Read Like Writers," asking questions of texts before, during, and after we read them.
Double-entry journal	On one side of the page make notes about your research experiences and specific steps in your process, and on the other side reflect on those experiences in subsequent considerations of your data.
Research log	Create a log to catalogue your responses to the text and your initial impressions - these will be helpful when you begin coding your corpus.
Study formal features	Consider the formal aspects of the text (how long is it? how is it structured? does it have headings or images?) as well as your thoughts, feelings, and analyses.

Note taking strategies often change from one research project to the next. We encourage you to try these approaches and to ask your classmates how they take notes.

Experiment with these different methods, and don't forget the material components of annotation. For instance, selecting a particular pen, paper, app, or digital format for creating your annotations can usefully change your approach to a corpus. You can record your observations and analyses on the text itself, in a separate document, in a journal, or using audio, video, or images. You might also combine some of these modes and create a multimodal response or annotation. There are some digital platforms that allow you to provide audio or image tags within corpora; such practice is a great way to start coding a selected corpus.

◼ Preparing the Corpus for Analysis

You may have easy access to your selected corpus, and it may even be made of digital text that is easily manipulable. If so, awesome! However, if you're

working with print text that you'll need to digitize to code more easily, or if you're working with an audio conversation that you'll need to transcribe, you may need to take some time to prepare the text for analysis. Be persistent if you need to take this step. Preparing text for analysis is an interpretive act, and it can be just as interesting as analysis. In fact, it may allow you a closeness to the data that might make things easier as you begin analysis.

If you are examining print texts, you may want to copy or scan your corpus and then preserve the originals. You may want to curate your archive (see the discussion of working with archives and curating collections in Chapter 6). Digitizing your corpus may be helpful, but it is not necessary. You may instead want to work with print versions of your texts. Either way, make sure that you can annotate and fully examine the corpus you've selected without damaging the original.

If you are working with a spoken or gestural conversation, you will need to transcribe the discourse. Transcription translates words from one mode to another, and you can decide what level of detail you need for the work you are doing. For instance, you may select a minimal level of detail for transcription that simply records what has been said in a conversation. However, you might want to capture much more—the way something has been phrased or extratextual sounds that make up a conversation, including laughter and sighs, emphasis, pauses, gestures, facial expressions. Analysts who practice a version of discourse analysis called conversation analysis believe that for analysis, you need all the components of a given conversation, so their transcription is very detailed, and it might be hard to read for someone who isn't familiar with the method.

Many discourse analysts who study language in social interaction employ an interim level of detail that includes text, pause, and emphasis. Figure 4.1 includes an extract of conversation between a writing consultant and a student in the Writing Center. The number that precedes each line allows the analyst to easily reference particular moments in the conversation for analysis. The capital letter with the colon following it indicates who is speaking, in this case the "G" indicates the student, and the "T" indicates the tutor. The bracket "[" indicates overlapping speech, and the parenthesis indicates a pause in the conversation "(.)". The conversation is aligned so that it's easy

to read. Such an approach to transcription makes it accessible, and the audience has a fairly good idea of how the speech was delivered. The thing is, whatever you choose to transcribe should be something you address in analysis. So if you don't plan to analyze facial expression, there's no need to transcribe facial expression.

Extract 1

55	G:	You don't have to read it like (.) you can read it quietly. I mean,
56		I've got other stuff that I can do.
57	T:	Well maybe what we can do is actually (.) to make sure that your
58		meaning and intentions are clear. So maybe I'll read the first ten lines out
59		[loud
60	G:	[O.K.
61	T:	And we can make sure we're on the same um (.) paycheck.

Figure 4.1. Example of a transcribed conversation.

Try This: Transcribe a Video (60 minutes)

One of the most exciting parts of transcription is how it helps you really be attentive to words used in interaction. What we initially notice when we listen to or watch something is so different than what we notice upon second, third, or fourth attempts at listening/seeing. When we transform audio/gestural data to written data, this effect is compounded. Follow these steps to try transcription for yourself:

1. Select a brief video (30 seconds is ideal!) that includes interaction between at least two people.

2. Before you transcribe, watch/listen to the video at least three times. After each viewing, take notes about what stands out to you. How does your analysis gain detail with each subsequent viewing?

3. Now that you're becoming more familiar with the excerpt, after your third viewing, compile all your notes and transcribe this discourse, attempting to capture the multiple methods of communication (textual, gestural, oral) in words.

4. To effectively transcribe the interaction, you'll need to watch or listen to it many more times. Transcription is much easier if you can also slow down the video or audio. After you've completed the transcription at the end of your third viewing, take notes about what stands out to you after spending considerably more time with this text. How does this impression differ from the first three viewings and your notes about the experiences? What do these differences suggest about your relationship to the corpus, to time, and sense-making?

■ Content Analysis

We may be able to discern a text's focal concerns by noticing the words and phrases that repeat within it. Similarly, patterns of omission help researchers account for underrepresented, downplayed, or altogether ignored matters.

Content analysis is practiced in numerous fields; it is a systematic approach to examining patterns in data and provides a quantitative treatment of discourse. For instance, you might consider how many times a particular term, phrase, theme, or, more generally, **code**, is mentioned in a text and then analyze its significance to the document's purpose or context. Returning again to the semantic phase of the worknets detailed in Chapter 3, patterns surfaced through content analysis can be useful for understanding a text or corpus you're analyzing, and it can also be insightful when applied to your own writing. In both cases—applied to your own writing or to the writing of others—content analysis helps us develop an **indexical awareness**.* By indexical awareness, we mean that as writers or as readers, content analysis clarifies patterns of repetition and omission, or patterns of what is and is not there.

Try This: Content Analysis of a Text (60 minutes)

Use content analysis to examine your own text. Start by selecting something you have recently written. Then, copy the text into a document or use an app that allows you to quantify the corpus (word processing software can help you do this, as can free apps that develop word clouds and visualizations, like Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org/), TagCrowd (tagcrowd.com/), NGram Analyzer (guidetodatamining.com/ngramAnalyzer/), and AntConc (www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/), if you want to get advanced. Now, spend some time analyzing the corpus:

- Identify **word frequency**: What are the most frequently used words in the corpus? How many times are they mentioned?
- Identify **collocation**: Which words are located next to each other? How frequently are they located next to each other?
- Consider **uptake**: If you've shared this text with others, perhaps through social media, how many individuals have liked or shared it? What is the life of the thread? Does it change or switch platforms?
- Identify **textual patterns**: How many words are in each paragraph? In each sentence?

■ Rhetorical Analysis

Whereas discourse analysis examines patterns, often of language in interaction, and content analysis considers quantifiable, systemic patterns in discourse, rhetorical analysis considers the context, audience, and purpose for discourse. Rhetorical analysis helps demonstrate the significance of a text by carefully considering the rhetorical situation in which it develops and the ways that it supports its purpose. There are lots of definitions of rhetoric, and the definition that makes the most sense to you and your understanding of communication will impact how you deploy rhetorical analysis. Here are a few definitions of rhetoric:

> The ancient Greek rhetor, **Aristotle**: "Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."

> British rhetorician, **I. A. Richards**: "Rhetoric…should be a study of misunderstanding and its remedies" (3).

> Contemporary American rhetors, **Elizabeth Wardle** and **Doug Downs**: "Rhetoric is a field of study in which people examine how persuasion and communication work, and it is also the art of human interaction, communication, and persuasion" (366).

> Contemporary American genre theorist, **Charles Bazerman**: "The study of how people use language and other symbols to realize human goals and carry out human activities. . . . ultimately a practical study offering people greater control over their symbolic activity" (6).

Rhetorical analysis helps us understand the various components that make a communicative act/artifact successful or not. A key component to effective rhetorical analysis is careful, active attention to what the author and her text are trying to accomplish. Krista Ratcliffe calls such attention **rhetorical listening**.

Try This: Defining Rhetoric (30 minutes)

Find a few alternative definitions of rhetoric on your own, and see which one is most appealing to you. Now, mush them together, paraphrase, and come up with a definition that resonates with your understanding of rhetoric.

Most people summarize rhetorical listening as an orientation of active openness toward communication, and Ratcliffe identifies multiple components for such a stance:

- "acknowledging the existence" of the other, their self, and discourse
- "listening for (un)conscious presences, absences, and unknowns"
- purposefully "integrating this information into our world views and decision making" (29)

Rhetorical listening often draws our attention to absences. Jacqueline Jones Royster's work on literacy practices, particularly of nineteenth century Black women, demonstrates how listening for and being curious about absences often leads us to understudied rhetors. Temptaous McCoy has coined the term **amplification rhetorics (AR)**, a method of seeking out and amplifying rhetorical practices that may not have been effectively heard. She describes AR as a way of examining and celebrating the experiences and community rhetorics of Black and marginalized communities.

Try This: Analyzing Keywords (60 minutes)

Working with something you have recently written, assign keywords (one or two-word phrases) you believe would do well to convey its significance (don't count, just consider what you think is most important about the text). To do so, follow these steps:

1. Identify five to seven keywords based on your sense of the text.

2. Then, turn to a keyword generating tool, such as TagCrowd (tagcrowd.com) or the NGram Analyzer (guidetodatamining.com/ngramAnalyzer/). Copy and paste your writing into the platform and initiate the analysis with the aid of the keyword generating tool. Which words or phrases match (as in, you thought they were significant and they show up frequently in your text)? Which words or phrases appear in one list but not the other? What do you think explains the differences in the lists?

3. Next, identify two keywords or phrases you believe are not sufficiently represented in either list. What are these keywords or phrases, and how are they significant to the work you are doing? Develop a one-page revision memo that accounts for how you could go about expanding the presence of these underrepresented words or phrases in your writing.

Another way of thinking of rhetorical listening in the context of texts is Peter Elbow's practice of "The Believing Game," in which he encourages audience members to suspend potential disbelief or critique of a text. Instead of starting with critique, he works to step into the authors' shoes and actually believe whatever they are suggesting. Complimentary to this practice is Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin's formulation of **invitational rhetoric**. They offer invitational rhetoric as counter to understandings of rhetoric as primarily about persuasion, like Aristotle's definition of rhetoric. They see persuasion as ultimately about power, whereas invitational rhetoric instead works to develop equitable relationships. Like rhetorical listening, invitational rhetoric is a method for establishing understanding within relationships. They define such work as "an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and see it as the rhetor does" (5). Although these approaches all differ, what they have in common is using rhetorical awareness to invite understanding rather than arguing for one's own point of view or "winning" an argument.

Try This: Rhetorical Analysis (60 minutes)

Practice rhetorical analysis. Select an article that interests you, perhaps one that you identified to work with in Chapter 3 or something you came across when you searched for potential corpora at the beginning of this chapter. Spend some time considering why this article is persuasive or appealing to you:

- **Who is the audience?** What evidence suggests this audience?
- **What is the context in which it was written?** What evidence suggests this?
- **What is its purpose?** You might also identify the thesis or orienting principle and consider the larger relationship between the work's purpose and its stated argument or principle. What evidence leads you to this finding?
- **Who is the author?** Really—who is the author? Draw on your worknet findings and consider the author's relationship to this rhetorical situation. What is the exigency, or reason, for writing this work?

Or, you might return to considering the *Who, What, When, Where, Why,* and *How* of this article.

There are many ways to practice rhetorical analysis, although it is often reduced to an equation rather than a tool for discovery of a text. Let rhetorical analysis be a method that opens up understanding and possibility rather than one that simply labels certain words or passages. Consider how identifying a particular rhetorical appeal adds depth and nuance to a text and connects you to it in complex ways. For instance, the previous "Try This" offered two approaches to rhetorical analysis. The next "Try This" offers two additional approaches. Consider which one resonates most with you. Which method helps you identify the significance and interest of a text?

Try This: More Rhetorical Analysis (60 minutes)

Working with a text/genre/corpus of your choosing, develop responses to the following prompt. If you seek a text as the basis of your analysis, we recommend Captain Brett Crozier's letter to shipmates aboard the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt during the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak, which was published by the San Francisco Chronicle (s3.documentcloud.org/documents/6939308/TR-COVID-19-Assistance-Request.pdf).

In what ways does the author offer specific appeals to the audience? Consider particular instances of the following appeals in the text:

- **Kairos**, which refers to timeliness—indications of why the text is contemporarily relevant
- **Ethos**, which we addressed in detail in Chapter 2, generally concerns the relative credibility of an author or argument
- **Logos**, which means demonstrating specific pieces of evidence that support the text's purpose
- **Pathos**, which relates to engaging the emotions

Practice rhetorical listening:

- What is not here? Are there any notable absences? Things/people/ideas the author does not mention?
- Are there ideas or appeals that potentially challenge your acceptance of the author's work?

Although we have asked you to identify individual appeals, such rhetorical tools usually work together, and it can be hard to pull them apart. In identifying the various rhetorical components of a text, consider how they collaborate to make a text successful and persuasive . . . or not.

■ Genre Analysis

Hopefully in trying out these methods you're beginning to notice that there are lots of overlaps. Although we've offered distinctions, at their core, all of these methods are rhetorical, and they're all discursive. They all value words and suggest that they are meaningful, particularly when you consider them within context. Further, you can mix and match methods to best meet your research project. One method is termed "rhetorical analysis," because it places the rhetorical moves that an author makes in the foreground. "Content analysis" is also rhetorical, but it places a numerical accounting of certain words, phrases, or rhetorical moves in the foreground. A final method (which is also grounded in a rhetorical framing of language) to consider is **genre analysis.*** Genre is often used as a synonym for type or kind, and most of us are used to thinking about genre in terms of movies, music, and literature. For genre analysis, we'll ask you to turn your attention to the homely genres we find all around us, genres in the wild, genres that develop because of a clear rhetorical need, or **exigency**. Exigency and **genre** have a sort of problem and solution relationship. For example, consider the relationships of these exigencies and genres:

Exigency	Genre
You're hungry and want to know what you can order and how much it will cost at a restaurant	Menu
It's the beginning of the semester and you want to know what to expect in class	Syllabus
You might want to return the thing that you bought from the store, and you need proof of purchase	Receipt
You have been caught speeding, and you need to know how to pay for the penalty	Speeding Ticket

Most of us practice genre analysis every time we compose something new. For instance, the first time that you write a resume, you probably look at some examples, consider what seem to be the norms and expectations— or **conventions**—and then you choose how you might personalize or **deviate** from those in a way that is consistent with success in the genre. There are a

In using genre analysis mindfully and consistently, you work towards making your writing and research performances more consistently successful.

number of things to consider when you examine a genre. First, you might pay attention to the conventions and deviations. Then, you might consider the particular **affordances**, or what the genre allows, and **constraints**, the things the genre doesn't allow. For instance, if you're excited to go to a new restaurant, but it doesn't have an online menu, you will have to go to the restaurant to find out what your options are. A restaurant that changes their menu on a daily basis might purposefully choose not to put their menu online because the affordances and constraints of an online menu are such that you'll need to constantly change what's there to make sure that you aren't misleading potential customers. A menu on a blackboard has the affordance of being easy to change for immediate customers who are in the restaurant, but it's constrained too in that it doesn't share menu items with potential customers outside of the restaurant as a digital menu might.

Genre analysis can be powerful in helping us understand the work words do in our communities. For instance, together with a student we studied the crime notices distributed through email at our university. By looking at seven years of these warnings, we were able to see the way that the genre changed over time; it transformed from a simple notice to a specific warning

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Try This Together: Genre Analysis (45 minutes)

With a partner, select a genre that interests you. We've named a number of them throughout this chapter, but you might also consider online reviews, tweets, recipes, game manuals, instructions, emails, or memos. Find three to five examples of artifacts within the genre. Now try identifying some of the components of the genre:

- What is the genre's exigency?
- What is the social action of the genre? What does it do?
- What are the conventions of the genre? What are features it has evolved to include? What are perhaps other features this genre has shed or left behind for good reason?
- What are the deviations in the various examples you have collected? Which are most effective and why?

Taking these findings together, what can you learn about the genre? What is the impact of the genre? How might you use this information in the future?

that encouraged members of the community to be vigilant about their safety and active in reporting suspicions. Unfortunately, given the vague information about suspects provided in the crime notices, the change in the genre had the impact of making members of the campus community feel unsafe and encouraging people to act on racial biases rather than evidence. Our analysis helped us understand this campus problem and offer strategies for confronting it.

Focus on Delivery: Developing a Coding Scheme

Now we turn to making sense of methods for examining discursive patterns by developing a **coding scheme**. There are a few ways to develop codes and to identify the emergent patterns in the corpus:

- **Deductive coding/tagging:** With this approach, you use a theoretical frame, research instrument, or established set of codes and look through your data to tag places where you see the pattern operating.

- **Inductive coding/tagging:** With this approach you develop codes based on interpretation. Instead of bringing a prescriptive set of patterns to a text and then looking for those patterns, you approach your data with openness. Then, you read, rhetorically listen to, and annotate your text. Next, as you notice connections between ideas and words in the text, you develop codes that describe those patterns. Finally, you apply these codes throughout the corpus by systematically noting each time you see the code applied.

Whichever approach you use, make sure to be consistent with your codes. To be systematic with your coding, develop a plan for identifying your codes within the corpus. There are numerous digital platforms that can help you, or you can create a coding notebook, and you might consider color-coding to make your coded data discernible. You might **triangulate** your findings by working with a partner or research team to see if they code the data in the same way that you do.

Florian Schneider suggests that you might pay attention to the following kinds of linguistic and rhetorical patterns in a text, and they may become your codes:

- **Word groups:** Be attentive to the vocabulary and syntax. Certain groups of words may demonstrate connection to a particular community, interest, or event.

- **Grammar features:** Consider pronoun usage, demonstrations of colloquial or vernacular language, and level of formality.

- **Rhetorical and literary figures:** Look for specific uses of language such as allegories, metaphors, similes, idioms, and proverbs. If you're unfamiliar with these terms, take time to look them up and find some examples.

- **Direct and indirect speech:** Identify the speaker(s) in the text. Do some of the ideas or words come from someone other than the author? If so, when? What is the effect?

- **Once you've coded your data, carefully write up your findings.** Then, it is time to make sense of what you have learned! Consider the significance of the words you have examined, their rhetorical impact, and the contextual meaning you have identified. Chapter 8 offers some different recommendations for how you might write up your findings.

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