CHAPTER 18

HOW DRAWING IS USED TO CONCEPTUALIZE AND COMMUNICATE DESIGN IDEAS IN GRAPHIC DESIGN: EXPLORING SCAMPING THROUGH A LITERACY PRACTICE LENS

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Most students in higher education are typically required to demonstrate their learning and thinking through the production of some form of written text, often an essay. However, in course environments where knowledge forms and practices are constituted visually or rely heavily on other semiotic resources for meaning-making, this is frequently not the case. Students in such academic contexts demonstrate their learning and give expression to their thinking in predominantly non-written and visual ways. This chapter draws on an aspect of a larger research study that used academic literacies as its theoretical and methodological framework. The study explored the literacy practices of students completing courses in visual art and media fields at a vocational higher education institution in South Africa. In these courses, students demonstrate their learning primarily through the production of visual, digital and print-based products such as film clips, posters, logos, photography, and three-dimensional (3D) product-packaging.

In this chapter I draw attention to students completing a graphic design (GD) diploma course and how they use drawings as the primary way of communicating their design ideas. Drawings that are used in this manner to visually articulate design ideas are called "scamps" and the process associated with creating such drawings is called "scamping." Scamping is also a valued practice in the professional context of GD where the designer is expected to translate information provided by a client and visually capture their concepts with scamps. I explore the process of scamping through a literacy practice lens but also subject this analysis to a further reading centred on how assumptions about knowledge in the academic and professional domains influence, guide and give value to the literacy practice itself. The

discussion illustrates that a consideration of knowledge recontextualization provides an explanation of how professional knowledge practices influence the literacy practices privileged in the academic domain. The exploration of scamping in this graphic design context provides a good example of the evolving semiotic practices in higher education that result when different sets of practices drawn from industry and academia are brought together. A further implication of this intersection of practices is the creation of a pedagogic space where the lecturer is able to act as a co-constructor in the creation of assignment texts alongside the student.

THEORETICAL FRAMING

Academic literacies as a field of research has typically focused on writing in higher education (HE) (Theresa Lillis & Mary Scott, 2007). However, a steady shift in this focus has seen the field's theorization being brought to bear on "new contexts" of vocational and professional studies (Mary Lea, 2012; Mary Lea & Barry Stierer, 2000; Candice Satchwell & Roz Ivanič, 2007), and the increasingly expansive range of communicative practices in the academy (Chris Abbott, 2002; Arlene Archer, 2006; Lucia Thesen, 2006). South African researchers have also explored the potential of visual communicative modes as an additional means whereby students can demonstrate their learning (Archer, 2006; Thesen, 2001). In recent research Mary Lea (2012) has argued that the nature of the texts students are required to produce for assessment purposes in HE are increasingly coming under the influence of a global shift from traditional discipline-based courses to professional programmes. She also proposes that an academic literacies lens can be generative for exploring the new assessment and learning spaces created as the inherent tensions between "professional practice-based knowledge and a theorized written assessment of that knowledge" jostle for position in HE (Lea, 2012, p. 94). My work is located along this new trajectory and explores meaning making and learning in vocational practice-based course environments where the construction of written texts is less prominent. In my research the concept of literacy practice is conceptualized in terms of epistemology (Lea, 1999, 2012). This understanding allows me to highlight the productive connection between curriculum theorization and the argument that literacy practices and knowledge in learning environments are embedded in each other.

CONSIDERING KNOWLEDGE IN THE CURRICULUM

Academic literacies has been valuable for exploring how students demonstrate their learning through their production of written and non-written texts. As a field of research however, it has been less helpful in providing the theoretical tools to explore the broader structuring processes implicated, but not directly visible, in the

literacy practices that support the creation of assignment texts. Lea predicts that "as academic, disciplinary and professional boundaries shift and blur" academic literacies researchers will be required to focus not only on the "micro-practices" of text production but also cast their inquiry to broader institutional practices, like the curriculum, in order to fully understand the new learning spaces being created in the academy (2012, p. 109). Such a framework is already an imperative within vocational HE as the impact and influence of the professional domain cannot be excluded from conceptualizing how curricula, subjects and assessment practices are constructed. Simply focusing on the literacy practices used by students to demonstrate their learning does not go far enough in explaining how such practices become privileged or the role the professional domain plays in structuring such practices. Basil Bernstein's (1996, 2000) notion of *knowledge recontextualization* offers a way of attending to this theoretical gap. Using recontextualization as an analytical lens provides a language of description for theorizing how professional practices and knowledge become implicated in the literacy practices associated with assignment production. Recontextualization describes the processes through which knowledge produced outside the educational context (in the disciplines or in the professional domains) becomes transformed, adapted and re-appropriated to constitute content subjects and the curriculum. Bernstein argues that as knowledge moves from its "original site to its new positioning, as pedagogic discourse, a transformation takes place" (2000, p. 32). This transformation occurs because as knowledge moves from one context to another, a space is created for ideology to play a role (Bernstein, 2000). The important outcome of this process is that knowledge associated with the curriculum, i.e., curriculum knowledge, is, therefore, different from what might be called disciplinary or workplace knowledge (Johan Muller, 2008). In its broadest sense, the main outcome of this recontextualization process is the curriculum (Suellen Shay, 2011). The curriculum is therefore influenced by ideologically mediated choices of key curriculum role players like lecturers or curriculum developers. The choices made by curriculum role players' about what knowledge to include in curricula is therefore also influenced by their assumptions about the purpose of education and their conceptualizations of learning and teaching or ideal graduate attributes. According to Bernstein, educational knowledge is de-contextualized or "abstracted from its social base, position and power relations" as a result of recontextualization (2000, p. 38).

WHAT IS SCAMPING?

Scamping is a term used in GD to refer to the process of making design ideas visible by creating a drawing or sketch. Scamping relies strongly on what graphic designers in education call hand skills, i.e., a suite of skills requiring the use of one's hands to cut, mount and manipulate a variety of materials, the foremost of these

being the ability to sketch and draw. Hand skills are often contrasted with the use of technologies such as the computer or digital design tools when creating design products. Scamps are characteristically small drawings or sketches produced with pencils onto layout or photocopy paper. The materials used to produce scamps, that are cheap and easily erasable, function to give the scamping process a rehearsal quality, imbuing the scamps with a provisional or draft status. Multiple scamps are typically produced to explore a single idea and these are commonly drawn alongside each other. Unsuitable ideas are simply crossed out and newer iterations are drawn alongside the discarded drawings, as shown in Figures 18.1 and 18.2.
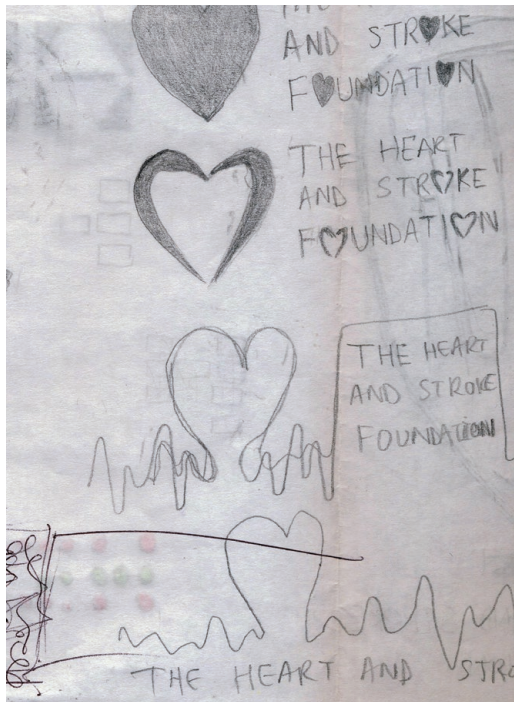

Figure 18.1: A series of scamps produced for a logo design project.

Because scamps are produced with impermanent and relatively cheap materials, the need to create a final, perfect design idea or concept is circumvented. Placing multiple draft ideas together on the same sheet of paper suggests that they all share the same status as potential "final" design concepts.

In the course, scamps are distinguished, on one level, from finished or final drawings on the basis of the "mark-making" materials used. Final drawings are commonly presented separately, can be mounted and are completed using gouache, paint, or copy markers on cartridge or bleed-proof paper; thus mark-making materials that are expensive and difficult to alter. In addition to being distinguished by their material

qualities, scamps are also contrasted with other forms of drawing practiced in the course, specifically perceptual or naturalistic drawing associated with Fine Art:

> I'm saying it's drawing but it's different drawing … there's perceptual drawing which might be more what the Drawing subject does … scamping is drawing for design.
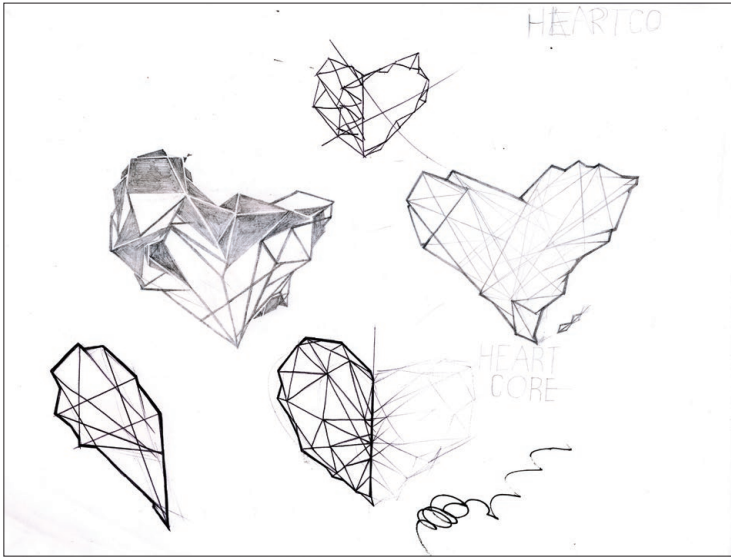

Figure 18.2: Scamps showing how a student experimented with a logo design idea.

In the interview extract above, Tessa, a course lecturer, alludes to the notion that the curriculum conceptualizes the act of drawing in different ways. The subject called Drawing, places focus on naturalistic and perceptual drawing commonly associated with the Fine Art discipline. The subject privileges personal expression using various observational and rendering techniques to create realistic images of, e.g., a landscape. When Tessa says "scamping is drawing for design" she is associating it with the activities of a designer who is more concerned with creating a visual message that meets a very specific purpose. Examples of this can be seen in images above of the logo scamps students produced for a Cape Town based organization. The scamps attempt to represent visually what such a logo might look like and show how the students experiment with image, text, typography, layout, composition and placement of their logo concept. In the course, lecturers talk about scamping as an image generating tool where one's conceptualization and thinking about a design product is visually expressed. This understanding is captured later by Tessa when she says "Scamping is really conceptual drawing"; suggesting that the primary semiotic purpose of scamping is the visualisation of conceptual ideas and the

main way in which a creative or design concept becomes translated into a concrete and visual form.

SCAMPING AND ASSIGNMENT PRODUCTION

Scamping cannot be fully understood without relating it to the way assignments are completed in this course. Scamping is integral to the "Design Process"—a curriculum constructed procedure that guides and sequences the different tasks and activities students are required to undertake when completing a design-based assignment. A description of how assignments are meant to be produced is provided by this sequential six-stage process. Each stage is named and a description of the function the stage serves in the overall assignment construction process is provided. Scamping takes place at stage three of the process where students "put pencil to paper" and visually give meaning to their conceptual ideas. The design process is often directly incorporated into assignment briefs, with this practice especially evident at the 1st and 2nd year levels.

The design process aims to guide student assignment practices; however, it also provides direction for the role that lecturers are required to play as students construct their assignments. For example, the process explicitly requires students to "Show the lecturer what you are doing" and "Consult with [your] lecturer." Lecturers also need to "Sign off" or approve concepts before students are allowed to move onto the next stage of assignment construction. The process suggests that lecturers are continually involved in activities building up to the construction of the final assignment text. Additionally, periodic opportunities for lecturer-student interaction in the act of such text design and construction are also created. Helen, another lecturer in the course, highlights how this role is pedagogically constructed when she describes what happens when students show her their scamps.

> I look at the scamps … and the student might say right these are the ones that I've come up with and then I'll say okay, "This looks promising or that doesn't because that's been re-done so many times" …. So I will give them guides saying this is a good potential option, this one not so much or that one, it's too, futuristic or it's too this or it's too that. So I will give them guidance. They'll be showing me their ideas on paper … and then I'll say fine if you like it then maybe take that one further or show me more variations.

The lecturer's primary role is to comment on the quality of the work, and in the lower levels of the course this might involve approving or rejecting scamps. As Helen's description suggests, lecturers might propose alternative approaches and encourage students to be more exploratory and creative with a concept. These feed-

back moments provide opportunities for lecturers to offer guidance on how to overcome design related problems, while also checking that students are sticking to, or meeting, the requirements of the brief. In the course context, scamping and the production of assignments more generally also includes a prominent collaborative aspect. The lecturer is involved in providing continual feedback throughout the production of the assignment text, even though the creation of the text is undertaken primarily by the individual student.

SCAMPING IN THE PROFESSIONAL DOMAIN

In the discussion above I have shown that scamping is a fundamental semiotic practice that allows students to express and communicate their creative ideas and conceptualization through drawing. I have also suggested that the act of scamping is underpinned by conventions and rules, embedded and regulated by the curriculum and pedagogic practices that prescribe the material qualities of scamps and the function of scamping during assignment construction. These literacy practices support scamping as the key means of communicating design conceptualization. Scamping is, however, a practice rooted in the professional context. In the following extract, Helen explains how scamping is a fundamental aspect of the professional designer's practice.

> … as a designer you should be able to internalize what your client is giving you and be able to translate that information onto paper into a visual that the client can see …. So we're teaching them that, once they've got the research or once they've got their information they should be able to start translating that onto paper or into some sort of visual format for your client to see ….

Helen describes how, in industry, scamping as a practice is associated with translating "information into paper on to a visual that the client can see," suggesting that the designer is expected to visually represent their conceptualization of information provided by the client through scamps. She also recognizes that industry-referenced practices shift and change when incorporated into the academic domain. Helen's reference to "research," that is the first stage of the design process, signals that in the absence of a real client the creation of design products in the course has a different initiation point.

USING RECONTEXTUALIZATION TO UNDERSTAND SCAMPING

In this section I illustrate how subjecting the data on scamping to a further reading using recontextualization as an analytical lens helps to illuminate how the

literacy practices that support scamping in this context are created through the bringing together of valued practices from both the professional and academic domains. The act of designing a logo in the professional context is largely dependent on several variables including the client, the designer(s), the purpose that the logo is meant to serve, the development timeframe and the budget. This means that in industry the design process of this logo can be a dynamic, quick and flexible process. However, when this process is recontextualized into the GD course it becomes the "design process"—a sequence of six steps usually carried out over six to ten days, in a classroom and/or computer lab environment where the pace, sequencing of selected tasks and the evaluation of such tasks are carefully constructed to adhere to the educational values and principles espoused by the course and its lecturers. In the process of creating the design process in the GD academic context, a translation occurs of what it means to undertake design work in industry. Typically, in industry, the design of any product is initiated by the client. The designer is tasked with interpreting the client's needs and as a first step visually representing their conceptualization with hand drawn scamps. Based on the data collected, the process of interpreting the client's needs happens quickly. The ability to draw scamps is prized as it allows the designer to visually express initial conceptualizations at the point of interaction with the client.

In the academic context, the design process, while attempting to capture and simulate professional design practices, is also a construction tailor-made to accommodate the contextual and educational demands and realities of the academic setting. Thus, the purpose of the design process, particularly as it is manifested in assignment briefs, is not simply to provide students with practical direction, for example, on how to construct a logo. It is also fundamentally about facilitating students' learning of a variety of conceptual principles about color theory, layout, and composition that are associated with various sub-disciplinary areas aligned to GD. The briefs therefore direct attention not only to the sequence and pace at which tasks need to be completed, often much slower than typically expected in industry, but they also include lecturer-facilitated explorations of conceptual and procedural knowledge to support the design work being completed.

In the academic context, stronger focus is placed on student learning and in this respect the design process foregrounds the lecturer's role in facilitating this learning. A simple reading of the assignment practices might suggest that the lecturer simply "stands in" for the client. However, the lecturer's role is deeply imbued with an educational function that accounts for a fundamental shift in how the design process is recontextualized in the academic context. The lecturer's feedback, that is structured to be continual and supportive, means that in certain instances there is a degree of co-construction of the assignment text as the lecturer helps the student refine and polish their ideas, and focus their efforts on meeting the requirements of the brief. The process of scamping and assignment construction, while mainly individual,

always takes place in a communal, public and collaborative manner, and the draft quality of the produced text is as highly prized as the final assignment. This is in stark contrast to the construction of essays in HE, that is a highly individualistic and private activity that rarely accommodates the creation of draft or multiple versions of the same text for review. A conclusion could therefore be drawn that only the final essay product, rather than the process of its construction, is subjected to evaluation and the lecturer's role is primarily centred on the evaluation of the final text.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The purpose of this chapter has been twofold. Firstly, using a literacy practice lens it describes how students in a GD course use scamping as a way to visually express and communicate their design ideas and conceptualization. Secondly, I have presented an argument that illustrates the value of bringing a recontextualization analysis to the study of literacy practices. Using recontextualization as an analytical lens, I show how practices valued in the professional domain can come to inform the type of literacy practices students are required to use when completing assignments in their course. Furthermore, by paying attention to ideological process associated with choices about knowledge, recontextualization as an analytic lens offers a more nuanced understanding of how professional-based practices intersect with, and become transformed by, the academic-informed values and practices. In this way this provides insight into processes that give rise to privileged literacy practices. In the GD context, the literacy practices associated with scamping are forged as a result of the intersection between academia and industry, foregrounding the visual but also making provision for lecturers as co-constructors in the creation of visual assignments. Discussing scamping in GD through a literacy practice lens draws attention to the ways in which learning and thinking in HE are being continually mediated by an evolving range of semiotic resources.

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