
Writer's Statement about "Diagrams as an Instructional and Communicative Medium for Engineering Students"

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Coming out of high school, I had learned to view writing as a boring, tedious, and unnecessarily complex process full of standard formats and timed essays. When I entered Professor Roozen's ENC 1102H class in my first semester, these preconceived notions made me dread the amount of writing I would be doing in his class. We immediately dove headfirst into scholarly inquiry and literate activity by reading Andrea Fishman's "Becoming Literate: A Lesson from the Amish." My notions of writing were immediately changed. Fishman's work exposed how heavily writing is intertwined with our everyday lives and exposed me to the vast variety of literary activities present in our lives. Shortly after reading this piece, I was given the first assignment in a series of steps to construct an inquiry project.

The inquiry project Dr. Roozen assigned was intricate and engaging. The overall goal of the project was to select a specific literary activity and analyze its role in a specific discourse community. The audience that I would be writing this towards was individuals that are interested in literary activity and how it applies to different situations, contexts, and communities, otherwise known as writing studies scholars. The projects created by my class were to respond to or expand on previous writing studies scholar's works and provide substance to contribute to the future discourse on the topic. This narrowed my focus for my paper and illuminated the context and audience that I would be writing towards. With an understanding of the context, audience, and goal of the project, I was able to begin work on the project.

The first step in creating my inquiry project was to select a literary activity to analyze. This seemingly simple assignment turned out to be one of the major obstacles for me during my project. I was looking for an activity that fulfilled three key requirements: relevance, accessibility, and interest. The activity I chose would have to be relevant to writing studies scholars and the discourse within that community, it would have to be accessible to me in order to collect interviews and data, and it would have to be personally interesting to me. Interest seemed to be the most difficult thing for me to find in an activity. Most of my interests involved STEM activities and engineering so I found it hard to apply to writing studies and literate activity because I was a first-year engineering student. Continuing with the line of thought evoked from Fishman's piece, I looked to my first year engineering classes for sources of literary activity. At first it seemed that I could not find any significant literate activities that were both essential to engineering and relevant to writing studies, but after taking a closer look, I found that I was overlooking the diagrams used in the course textbooks. This discovery let me to find a unique literate activity that fulfilled all three of my

requirements. Diagrams were ingrained in almost all assignments we were given for our engineering class. Whether it was learning how to use a robotic kit or communicating the results of an experiment, diagrams were always present. I was now able to see diagrams as a method of communicating and learning for engineering students and I was able to use this as the focus for my inquiry project. Once I had selected this as my focus, the rest of the inquiry project became much easier and I was able to trace the processes involved in creating and using diagrams within engineering.

Overall, I was incredibly satisfied with the experience and knowledge gained by performing my inquiry project. It opened my eyes to the scope of literate activity and has given me a new love of writing as a form of communication. This inquiry project also demonstrated that my interests are related to writing in many more ways than I previously thought. I hope that my inquiry project can inspire others to apply their interests to writing.