

Process Analysis. A way of reflecting, after the fact (though soon after!) on the process of reading, composing, or solving any problem or navigating any kind of text. The process analysis describes how you went about completing the task, what decisions were made and why, what options were considered and discarded or could be used in the future. I often use process analyses with the pre and in-service teachers with whom I work, asking them to compose process analyses of inquiry lessons, classroom activity, peer coaching, or teacher research episodes. The analysis answers these questions: What did you do? Why did you do it and do it in that order? What decisions did you make? How did it go? What did you learn? What will you do differently next time? What is the mental model for successfully completing this task? How does the mental model help address challenges and solve problems during the process?

The PA – process analysis – can be composed multimodally with a flow chart, slide show, or other means.

The process analysis can be very helpful in identifying the essential elements of a **mental model** or **map** that can guide problem-solvers to complete a particular kind of task. A mental model can typically be represented visually as a process, flow chart or map.

A process analysis requires that the teacher or learner speak or write about what they were doing, why, what happened – both successes and challenges - choices they made and why, other choices they could make, and what they learned and will do differently next time. Tips for engaging in a process analysis, such as the following, can be useful suggestions to guide the composing.

Before:

What is the task? What are you doing /working on?

How is it similar to other tasks you've completed in the past? How might this prior experience help you?

How will the task involve reading and composing?

How are you feeling about the task?

How will you get started? What steps will you need to take? How will you divide up the work if this is a group project?

What is the purpose of the task? How will you know you have been successful? In what contexts will the product be shared and used? In what situations will it be useful in the future? (knowledge of purpose and context – essential to a mental model)

During:

Consider what you are doing, the decisions you are making, what seems to be working and not working and why. Consider this and perhaps talk out loud about it or make some quick notes if you are able so you'll have some reminders afterwards when you compose your process analysis.

How did you get the stuff you needed to do the meaning-making and composing?

(Procedural Knowledge of Substance – essential to a mental model)

How did you go about structuring the composition on the macro-level?

What moves did you make to structure the composition at the micro-level/sentence and word level?

(Procedural knowledge of form – essential to a mental model)

After:

What did you do, and in what order?

Why did you do what you did? And in that order?

What worked? Why did it work?

What did not seem to work? Why not? What did you do about this?

How did you feel at various points in the process?

What options did you have that you did not play out? What could or will you do differently the next time you have this task or are faced by similar challenges?

To what degree were you successful? How do you know?

How can you be even more successful next time?