

Exit Self-Assessment

I. "MY SYNTHESIS PRODUCT SHOWS THAT..."

(adapted from the "Phases of research and engagement" in the Practicum course in the expectation that these are also relevant goals for students' work in moving towards the synthesis product)

A. I can convey who I want to influence/affect concerning what (Subject, Audience, Purpose).

The audience that I imagine for this synthesis, even if it does not reach that audience, is Spanish teachers. The subject is a proposal for teaching materials that will facilitate a focus on communication. The purpose is to clarify why there is a need for this type of teaching resource and how I intend to address that need.

B. I know what others have done before, either in the form of writing or action, that informs and connects with my project, and I know what others are doing now.

The research that I have done throughout the CCT Program, and particularly in the Practicum class has helped inform me on what experts in the fields of education, linguistics, second language acquisition, and materials development have said on the topics I am addressing. It is difficult to stay on top of all the information available. I have struggled with this aspect and find that I am most lacking in the area of studies based on classroom teaching.

C. I have teased out my vision, so as to expand my view of issues associated with the project, expose possible new directions, clarify direction/scope within the larger set of issues, and decide the most important direction.

I started with an approach to research that would inform me about this important work of others so that I would make the mistake of arguing, as if for the first time, what others had already covered. I then took a more specific approach by developing my own thoughts and seeking out the work of others to reinforce and strengthen my arguments. I have struggled to maintain my own vision while also acknowledging the work of more accomplished scholars who have already drawn these conclusions

D. I have identified the premises and propositions that my project depends on, and can state counter-propositions. I have taken stock of the thinking and research I need to do to counter those counter-propositions or to revise my own propositions.

Many of the premises and propositions on which my arguments depend are highly debatable. In the realm of education, new theories that build on, and clarify as well as those that refute older theories are very common. While there are educational trends moving more and more in the direction of a student-centered approach and other specific practices that I build on, not all would agree with these approaches or the prioritization that I propose. I have gained an overview of the varying philosophies and I have chosen to build on those that I find the most compelling based on both theory (through research) and practice (through my own experiences).

E. I have clear objectives with respect to product, both written and practice, and process, including personal development as a reflective practitioner. I have arranged my work in a sequence (with realistic deadlines) to realize these objectives.

Bringing this project to a close proved to be the most difficult as well as the most rewarding aspect of the process. My project incorporates ideas that have been developing and involving in my mind for many years now, and I could continue to think about them and learn more about how various experts weigh in on the subject (I will, undoubtedly do so). The end of the semester provided a deadline forcing me to tie things up and bring closure to

3. I have developed efficient ways to organize my time, research materials, computer access, bibliographies, etc.

This project has required the collection and processing of so much material that efficient ways of handling it all has been crucial to "survival" and successful completion of the project.

4. I have experimented with new tools and experiences, even if not every one became part of my toolkit as a learner, teacher/facilitator of others, and reflective practitioner.

It is hard for me to identify all the ways that this program has influenced my thinking and approach to the work that I do. So many new techniques or new ways to see them have evolved during my completion of this program. At times it was just learning to better appreciate and articulate approaches that I already practiced, at times it meant developing entirely new ways of approaching my work in the classroom.

5. I have paid attention to the emotional dimensions of undertaking my own project but have found ways to clear away distractions from other sources (present & past) and not get blocked, turning apparent obstacles into opportunities to move into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory.

I made the decision to study as a full time student in my final year of the program because I did not want my studies to take a back seat to anything else. As a teacher, I found that my first responsibility was always to my students and their learning experience. As a result, I did not always have as much time and energy to dedicate to my own studies as I would like. That's why I cleared the "space" in my life to really focus on my completion of the "capstone" courses, which I knew would be more demanding and would ultimately be more fulfilling if I had more time and energy to invest. The result has been financial debt and other sacrifices related to forgoing full-time employment at this stage of my life, but I have no regrets as I know that my final product has benefited in ways that could not possibly be calculated as a result of this decision.

6. I have developed peer and other horizontal relationships. I have sought support and advice from peers, and have given support and advice to them when asked for.

It was not until my final year in the program and the completion of Practicum and Synthesis that I really started to develop these sorts of relationships with peers and to enjoy collaborating with them on specific aspects of my work. It has been very rewarding for me to be able to do so, and I have benefited from and enjoyed the diversity of interests and approaches that I have seen as a result

7. I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my advisor and other readers. I didn't wait for them to tell me how to solve an expository problem, what must be read and covered in a literature review, or what was meant by some comment I didn't understand. I didn't put off giving my writing to my advisor and other readers or avoid talking to them because I thought that they didn't see things the same way as I do.

This has been a glaring area of weakness for me. I lost the support of my reader, I think, because of poor communication on my part. I have a tendency to want to be very independent and do things my own way. When my reader questioned whether he should in fact serve as a reader given the fact that my topic was not directly related to his area of expertise, I was unsure of how to respond and so I did not respond for several weeks. I never heard from him again, despite following up again. Perhaps if I was not so ready to do things on my own, I would have reached out to my reader in different ways, communicated with him better and gained more from his insights.

8. I have revised seriously, which involved responding to the comments of others. I came to see this not as bowing down to the views of others, but taking them in and working them into my own reflective inquiry until I could convey more powerfully to others what I'm about (which may have changed as a result of the reflective inquiry).

I have been very appreciative of the input from others including my advisor, peers, my fiancée and others who have taken the trouble to read and respond to aspects of my work. I have not incorporated suggested changes in every case, but more often than not, I have.

9. I have inquired and negotiated about formal standards, but gone on to develop and internalize my own criteria for doing work—criteria other than jumping through hoops set by the professor so I get a good grade.

I feel that, throughout this program, I have set my own standards, and that these standards have, for the most part been consistent with the standards of my professors. At times I have had more time and energy to dedicate than other times. I felt on the verge of having to withdraw from the program at times, early-on in my studies. I have pursued topics of personal interest to me in ways that could best serve my personal and professional development, luckily, this approach has worked well in the CCT program.

10. I have approached the CCT synthesis course and the CCT program as works-in-progress, which means that, instead of harboring criticisms to submit after the fact, I have found opportunities to affirm what is working well and to suggest directions for further development.

As mentioned above, I have found ways to pursue areas of interest to me throughout the program. I entered the program because it seemed to offer a program that would support the development of ideas that I had already begun thinking about. In some situations, this program offered an opportunity for me to further pursue such pre-existing thoughts or theories, and in other situations it presented be with new ideas to implement and new perspectives to consider.

my project. I found that as I did so, my motivation to work on it increased significantly. Every spare moment I had, I wanted to dedicate to completing this project.

F. I have gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources.

I feel as though I have been encouraged to develop my work in a way that would not have been encouraged in a different program. I have enjoyed the opportunity to pursue an independent research project in each of the courses of this program and the way I have been able to develop ideas in my own way.

G. I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports.

This has been a crucial aspect of finding the proper tone, scope and progression of my project. Being encouraged to "find the story" underlying all the research and thought development I had conducted provided a structure and a path for presenting my ideas. Periodically re-evaluating how well I was sticking to that path was crucial to my continued progression, as was letting go of those ideas that were too far astray from this path.

H. My writing and other products Grab the attention of the readers/audience, Orient them, move them along in Steps, so they appreciate the Position I've led them to.

I have attempted to follow the "GOSP" model, particularly in preparing the oral presentation of my work. This proved to be a helpful of organizing the presentation of my work, and allowed for a "break through" in terms of how I could better organize my written synthesis. In the end, I followed the progression of ideas used in my oral presentation to make my writing flow better.

I. I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.

The goal of my project is to facilitate better classroom teaching of Spanish. I hope that I may use the teaching materials developed to do so, and to bring to the attention of teachers the importance of an approach that emphasizes communication.

J. To feed into my future learning and other work, I have taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing.

This has been the most important aspect of my completion of this program and synthesis. I have developed specific arguments for what should be changed and why and have familiarized myself with what others have published on the topic.

II. DEVELOPING AS A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER, INCLUDING TAKING INITIATIVE IN AND THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

1. I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from CCT and other courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social and/or educational change.

The CCT program has helped me to think through my criticisms with educational trends I have experienced in a critical and creative way. This has led me to a more profound understanding of what I oppose, what I support, why I hold those positions, and what I can do to change things for the better

2. I have also integrated into my own inquiry and engagement the processes, experiences, and struggles of previous courses.

Specific lessons learned in courses during my studies here have contributed in direct and clear ways to my final synthesis. Research developed and ideas developed for final papers in other courses have also contributed directly to my synthesis