The Tools that Matter: The Assessment of Online Resource Tools

Objectives:
- Discuss & reflect on the criteria used to assess the effectiveness of online resources
- Connect learning theory across the modes of communication
- List methods of assessing online resources
- Assess the online resources

Introduction:
Hello everyone and thank you for coming to the Tools that Matter: The Assessment of Online Resources. This is an interactive presentation. I’ll need you all to contribute. There will be some discussion, reflection and you’ll need your cell phones.

In the age of technology educators are encouraged to incorporate online resources into their teaching; encouraged by students who love technology, administrators who see the necessity and by policy makers that tie technology to the country’s economic success. But as a former high school ESL specialist and Director of language programs I’ve wondered out of the numerous resources available online which are effective and worth the investment of the time it takes to learn to use the resource and at times the money.

When looking at the assessment of online resources it was important for me to ground whatever I discovered in theory, in what we know about learning and best practices. So first, a looked back at theories and research on how people transmit, retain and transform information across oral, written and online modes of communication. I wanted to see if something fundamentally changed as we progressed. After finding the similarities and differences across modalities, I looked at current trends in assessment methods as noted in scholarly literature and bridged that connection. With very little published on the assessment of online resources specifically I expanded the review to include the assessment of online classes and electronic platforms. And what I’m going to present here is a very broad overview- not intended to go into much depth on any particular aspect, but to encourage reflection on how to use online resources meaningfully. But first we’re going to start with a poll.

Discussion: What online resources do you currently use in your classroom or schools?

Out of all of these, how do we decide which to use? For the most part we make decision implicitly and sometimes when there is little time for planning, we do it very quickly. During this presentation I want to take the implicit and make it explicit, so that we can reflect on how we’re using online resources and move towards assessment. You’ll be presented with theories
and research, but these are not all inclusive. As you’re listening consider your own beliefs on how you think students learn and try to bridge those concepts to how we can assess.

**Video Presentation:** theories/research on communication across modalities  
https://youtu.be/dZfKt-Nvf_4

**Discussion:** I want you to turn to person next to you. Introduce yourself if you don’t already know them (name, school, subject). And then let’s discuss for about 4 minutes how we can use online resources to support student learning and what are some potential drawbacks, for example I often wonder about online safety and the amount of information that students are putting out there about themselves in blog posts and ePortfolios. Let’s come back together and share some of your thoughts. Now let’s transition look more at the assessment side.

**Video Presentation:** Current trends in the assessment of online resources  

**Mock Assessment 1:** Let’s access Capzles, which of the following do you believe this resource captures?
- [ ] Presents content
- [ ] Encourages one to think and create
- [ ] Gives one the freedom to make choices
- [ ] Collaborative and social

Just because a resource doesn’t check all the boxes doesn’t mean its “not good”. Unless you’re teaching a concept completely online, these resources are imbedded in our instruction. So if a resource isn’t collaborative and social in nature then ensure the lesson has that component.

**Mock Assessment 2:** Now let’s drill down a little deeper, which of the follow do you believe this resource captures?
- [ ] Anticipates student needs
- [ ] Connects to academic classes or concepts
- [ ] Organized and easy to use
- [ ] Has accurate and credible information

Now here if an online resource isn’t checking all the boxes then you might want to consider the use. If the resource is not anticipating the student’s needs, what steps am I going to take to be responsive to needs during in the lesson. If a resource isn’t connected to academic concepts what function is it serving? Maybe it has entertainment value. If it’s not accomplishing what you’ve intended, maybe you need to pitch it.

Overall these are the important considerations that the literature has highlighted, but take this more as a descriptive not prescriptive measure. The important thing is that we’re taking the time to assess, make some of our implicit considerations explicit. If these categories don’t work
for you, add to it or delete from it until it is an accurate representation of you and your school’s beliefs and values.

Where does my exploration go from here? We’re going to use this information to review the VCU library’s online resources, specifically the libguides and video tutorials. The next step in the research will be on understanding student perceptions of online resources; what they use and what characteristics they find helpful.

Additional Resources:
I like these two sights because they list resources by purpose

Thank you all for coming and I hope you’ve had a pleasant experience. I can take any questions that you have...