

Challenges in assessing quality and measuring impact of OERs

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Measuring the quality of ICT tools and their impact on learning outcomes is not an easy task. Carol Chapelle, the leading authority on the evaluation of CALL tools, states: 'Evaluation of innovation is perhaps the most significant challenge teachers and curriculum developers face when attempting to introduce innovation into language education.' (Chapelle, 2007) This proposition is eminently applicable to innovative tools in interpreter training. There is a considerable array of online resources, authoring tools, VLEs and blogs offering trainers and students best practice or 'know-how' in terms of aids for a teacher or guidance for a student. And yet how to choose what is best is a challenge in itself. The need for evaluation of the available tools is apparent but 'what to evaluate,' 'how to evaluate,' and 'for whom' remains to be answered. To take the example of ORCIT, an interpreter training open access resources, we may consider it necessary to evaluate the pedagogical subject matter, localised resources or the effectiveness of the instructional design. But what about the effectiveness and the impact of the resources as measured by learning outcomes? How do we construct an experimental design where the test group needs to have limited access, or even none, to open resources? Choosing the right methodology or managing influencing factors should have a considerable impact on the results of the evaluation. But how do we insure that our choice is sound?

All of the challenges listed above will be addressed in this paper. The expectation is that the forum discussion might lead to some answers and propose the best way to determine an appropriate methodology or methodologies to address the challenge of evaluating innovative tools.