Julie L. Kling

Reflection Paper

CBT

N. Stone

U.W. Stout

June 26, 2010

The purpose of my RLOs is to assist students in the use of Web CT which is the LMS used at Northwest State Community College. The RLOs are specifically planned for use as part of an orientation course to Web CT for students enrolled in ENG 090 Basic Composition. However, since the college uses Web CT for all online courses, these RLOs were designed so that they would be appropriate for use by any instructor as part of a required orientation or as standalone helps within a course. The first RLO was created to help students locate, open and print assignments in Web CT. The second RLO was created to assist students in learning how use the Web CT e-mail feature to communicate with peers and instructor(s) as well as how to write effective e-mails following basic netiquette guidelines.

Since the purpose of the RLOs is to teach specific procedures, Horton’s instructional strategy of combining absorb-do-connect activities was selected as the appropriate learning strategy. Success for each RLO is measured by the learner’s ability to complete the required task. Mastery of the tasks is necessary for the student to be successful in online courses. Horton’s approach is deemed appropriate because of the connection with what is to be learned and student’s work situation. In this case, the connection is to be made between what the student is learning and the student’s future success in online courses. Each RLO begins with an absorb activity in the form of a PowerPoint presentation that teaches the specific steps involved in a procedure. Students then are offered “do” activities to reinforce the procedure. For example, in RLO #1, after learning the steps for opening assignments, students complete a “drag and drop” activity to help remember the steps. Each RLO concludes with connect activities. In the first module, students will be asked to print out a course assignment for the online course being taken. Mastery is being able to locate and open an assignment. RLO #2 concludes with a connect activity in which students e-mail the course instructor. Again the task is connected with an actual course being taken.

The designer plans to use the RLOs in an orientation course for Web CT that will be taken prior to Basic Composition. The RLOs were initially designed to be placed in specific modules in the course. While the RLOs are usable and will still be used in those modules, the RLOs needed to become more “generic” throughout the design process. The RLOs are now usable by any instructor rather than just for a specific course. Decisions made along the way regarding design required the removal of course specific references, an increase in adaptability of the RLOs, and a focus on the task itself rather than the relationship to what comes next in a course. A challenge the designer faced was not to think about what comes before or after the RLO in the larger course context. In designing the RLOs, this designer had a specific placement in mind that links to course content in the Basic Composition course that the Web CT orientation course is paired with. All references to the Basic Composition course needed to be removed. While the arrangement and navigation of materials in the RLO itself needed to be considered, the design had to allow other content to come before or after. Decisions had to be made to make sure each RLO could be considered complete and usable on its own.

For example, in the original design, RLO #1, how to locate and assignment file in Web CT, ended with students opening a specific assignment that was part of the Basic Composition course. This direction was removed, and students were invited to open any course assignment as a measure of success. For RLO #2, how to use Web CT e-mail to communicate effectively with instructor and/or peers, the original design required students to keep a journal and included specific questions that were to be included in the journal. Journaling is a part of the Basic Composition course for which the RLOs are specifically created. However, for the RLO to have a broader use and to be able to stand alone, the journal questions were either removed or became questions for students to use for self-reflection. In other course situations, students may not be keeping journals or the instructor may not want to take the time for students to journal about netiquette. The links to netiquette web pages were maintained, but the tie to a specific assignment was removed. The “Good or Bad” student e-mail activity was originally created as an activity which would require students to make the corrections themselves on a Word (.doc) file and e-mail to the instructor as a writing assignment. However, to make it more usable, the “Good or Bad” e-mail became a self-assessment activity in which students decide if an example of a student e-mail to a professor is appropriate or not. Students click on either “good” or “bad” , are then routed to appropriate feedback, and finally to a revised version of the e-mail.

Accessibility was considered when selecting colors for the layout and design of the PowerPoint design. Feedback indicated that the colors selected worked well. However, in RLO #2, the links to netiquette web pages were initially embedded in an object/graphic that while separating the links into four separate sections and giving some visual interest, the print of the links could not be in a user-friendly font. So the decision was made to delete the fancy object and just place the links so that they could be clearly distinguished by learners. Udutu was selected as the authoring tool since it is SCORM compliant. Accessibility was also considered as navigation bars and links were created. Adjustments were also made after feedback to make sure the links to return to different points in the document were more visible. Button size was also considered as well as consistency of navigational design. In RLO #2, navigational arrows appear at the bottom of each page, and the same shapes are used for a specific type of link. For example, in the “Good or Bad’ e-mail activity, a star is used each time to indicate the link to move to the revised e-mail.

The results of the usability test were helpful in affirming the colors of the layout and design as mentioned above and also providing some helpful suggestions for enlarging type size in places and making navigation links clearer. The usability results also indicated the importance of providing a clear description of how the RLO is to be used. Some of the feedback indicated that the user did not understand the context of the RLO. The user of the RLO would need to be using Web CT. So it needs to be clearly indicated in the description of the RLO that it is meant to be used with Web CT LMS and is not usable with other LMS systems. However, the Netiquette and “Good or Bad” e-mail activities of RLO #2 could be extracted and be a separate RLO that would be helpful to anyone sending e-mail in an online course. The feedback made this designer aware of even more potential for that RLO.

The assessment method used in RLO #1 was Formative Assessment**.** Students will have completed the objective for the RLO when they are able to successfully print out a course assignment in Web CT. Students may keep trying until they successfully do so. RLO #2 uses a Summative Assessment in whichstudents are asked to send a two paragraph e-mail to their instructor indicating their experience using e-mail and their expectations for the role of e-mail in an on-line course. An assessment rubric is provided.

While the designer took fledging steps with course authoring software and increased her knowledge of how PowerPoint can be used, the designer would still like to explore more advanced authoring tools, such as Camtasia. The designer would also like to be more comfortable adding other forms of multimedia. This is probably going to happen over the next two months as the designer as been asked to redesign an ethics course and included more multimedia. The designer’s institution is considering branching out beyond just the use of Microsoft Office as a tool for course design! (I would like to think I had some influence in this.)