Whirlwind Tour of Perusall

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A genre of educational technology called social annotation allows students to annotate texts online. Perusall and Hypothes.is are free social annotation tools that many educators have adopted. With these tools students can annotate and read and comment on classmates' annotations. Social annotation builds on sociocultural processes of learning and is an effective tool for scaffolding academic reading and writing in first-year writing contexts. I will briefly demonstrate Perusall—join me for a whirlwind tour!

1. What is Perusall?
   a. Free web-based application. Teachers create a free teacher account and then create courses. Students create a free Perusall student account and log in with a course code.
   b. Teacher uploads content to the library—pdfs, URLs, certain web-hosted videos and podcasts.
   c. Students open assigned resources and annotate. Annotations pane is a sidebar with tools. Highlight, comment, and comment on other comments.
   d. Can also be installed in LMS systems, requires more steps.
2. Uses in the first-year writing classroom
   a. Unpack difficult texts together—interpret, identify rhetorical moves, ask questions, etc.
   b. Language focus: gloss vocabulary items, translate, link to resources. Multimedia can be used in annotations (images, audio, video).
   c. Peer review—post student work.
   d. Annotate course documents—syllabus, assignment sheets, etc.
   e. Perusall provides course statistics for grading.
   f. Perusall also contains a chat feature and other tools.
3. Research Support
   a. Annotation is an effective reading strategy, which forces students to slow down and process what they read (Porter-O'Donnell, 2004).
   b. Helps reader make meaning and take a position, rather than merely understand at the surface-level (Porter-O'Donnell, 2004; Wolfe, 2008).
   c. Collaborative learning: scaffolding and sociocultural model (Vygotsky, 1978; Palincsar, 1998), reading comprehension is based on cultural background knowledge. Students can help one another by filling in gaps (Thoms & Poole, 2017).
   d. Collaborative learning: see other people's interpretations of text and discuss. Students can take their time to compose annotations. Quiet students can participate/interact in a comfortable manner (Thoms & Poole, 2017).
4. Recommendations
   a. Model and provide examples of annotated texts—students may not have done this before.
   b. Provide structure by developing a list of annotation types (such as making connections, asking questions, analyzing an author's craft etc., see Porter-O'Donnell (2004) for more ideas), and be clear about what you expect (# of annotations, word counts, rubric criteria).
   c. Promote a collaborative classroom community.

Selected References and Resources

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