Learning Tatar Language Online: Does COIL Model Fit?

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COIL Conference, NY, March 19-20, 2015
Background Info

- Kazan Federal University is one of the oldest and best comprehensive universities in Russia
- Kazan is the capital of Tatarstan Republic; over 1mln people, about 47% of ethnic Russians and 48% of ethnic Tatars
COIL for Language Learning

- **Natural** setting that enables real-world tasks and expanded communicative repertoire – CLT principle (Kohn & Warth, 2011)
- Multicultural, global setting → learning **culture**, “negotiate diverse knowledges across traditional boundaries” (Starke-Meyerring & Wilson, 2008), “increased awareness of one’s own culture and of other cultures” (Kohn & Warth, 2011)
- Developing **language skills** (writing, reading, listening, speaking) → focus on form and content (aligns with Meskill & Anthony, 2010; Marrone et. al., 2012; Oxford & Crookall, 1990)
- Environment for **peer-to-peer collaborative** learning (sociocultural approach to teaching, Vygotskian ideas, Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Song et. al. 2004)
The Power of Media

What media can do? What a man can do with the help of media? In
Power of Media

- 6-week module run 2009-2012 in the COIL format
- Based on Blackboard platform hosted by UAlbany
- In 2012 involved 25 UAlbany students, 16 EHU students and 8 KFU students
- **Activities** included *Media & I* introductory discussion, 3 forum discussions based on videos, TV Ad Critique + peer-comments
- For KFU students it was **integrated into a face-to-face English** language course (upper-intermediate/advance language proficiency level)
- Completed post-project questionnaire related to the overall success of the project, benefits and drawbacks + language gains
Research questions:

1. How does an existing Tatar language course *Ana Tele* fit the COIL model?

2. Is there any need to COIL *Ana Tele*?

3. If yes, what could be done?
Research Design

- Setting: Kazan University, Ana Tele laboratory
- Participants: N=108 (103 students, 5 course developers)
- Mixed-method study
- Data collection instrument: questionnaire for students via email (2014), face-to-face interviews with 4 tutors and 1 IT staff member, 1 administrator (2015), observation, self-reflection
- Duration of study: 2014-2015
Ana Tele anatele.ef.com

- Open online course for learning Tatar (max. 10000 students)
- 9 levels, each includes 8 sections, 296 self-teaching lessons, 9 level tests, 293 video films, 10960 audio records
- Laboratories of pronunciation, writing and grammar + online dictionary
- Online collaborative speaking sessions guided by an instructor
- 5020 registered learners, 4778 learners from Russia, 242 users from other countries, such as:
  - Kazakhstan (65 learners)
  - China (37 learners)
  - Turkey (17 learners)
  - Australia (15 learners)
  - Ukraine (12 learners)
  - UK (7 learners)
  - USA (7 learners)
  - Germany (3 learners)
Course Features

• focus on four skills: reading, writing (basic), listening and speaking
• open for to anyone (a learner doesn’t have to be a University student)
• the variety of language levels to choose
• free of charge and open 24/7

Activities:
• watching videos
http://anatele.ef.com/school/e12/#school/2950197/374/567/2112/9007/40258/120056
• learning new words
• use of new vocabulary
• grammar study
• listening comprehensions tasks
• writing (gap-filling)
• collaborative live speaking sessions with an instructor (up to 6 students at once)
Course Students’ and Developers’ Perspectives

Students’ perspectives:

• Problems faced
  o technical issues – 30%
  o difficulties with course design and content – 36%
  o lack of motivation – 5%
  o lack of collaborative group work, online discussion – 33%
• Positive feedback – 29%

Course developers’ perspectives:

• Lack of collaborative live speaking sessions
• Insufficient technical support
• Low motivation of most learners for live classes
What hinders COIL format

• Administrative barriers
• Monocultural content
• Predesigned format of the platform (LMS)
• Low motivation of instructors – to make changes in epistemological beliefs
• Insufficient knowledge and skills of course developers
• Lack of proper promotion of the school
Yes, there is a need to COIL Ana Tele

- Students’ interest in collaborative sessions
- International body of students
- Cultural content
- Developed online content
- Live sessions
What could be done NOW:
Steps to COIL the school

- Redesign content to make it multicultural
- Include new activities (oral and written collaborative activities)
- Promote the course among students of other cultures
- Motivate students by offering Certificates of Completion
- Make the school more flexible with LMS features
- Increase professional development of course designers
References


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Thank you!