International Online Language Teaching: Collaborative and Natural vs. Self-paced and Structured

G. Sadykova, G. Gimaletdinova, L. Khalitova, N. Migmanova

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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
Power of Media vs. Ana Tele

**POWER OF MEDIA**

- Online module integrated into 3 courses:
  - An online master course Media Literacy (ETAP 638) offered by SUNY-Albany
  - English course for KFU Master students majoring in English
  - Media Studies course for bachelor students of European Humanities University (EHU)

**ANA TELE** [anatele.ef.com](http://anatele.ef.com)

- Online school for learning Tatar language
- Tatar is one of the Turkish languages, mother tongue of Tatars who represent the second largest ethnic group in Russia mostly living in Tatarstan
Power of Media

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
How did the cross-cultural collaboration enrich your knowledge and skills? (KFU students)

- I learned more about roles media play in my life and country – 66.67%
- I learned more about roles media play in other countries – 83.33%
- I gained some understanding of how people think in other countries – 83.33%
- The collaboration helped me break some stereotypes about people in other countries that I had had before the collaboration – 16.67%
- I learned some new words and phrases – 66.67%
- I learned about some cultural phenomena in other countries – 16.67%
- I learned more about education in other countries – 50%
Power of Media: Benefits for Language Learners

- **Natural** setting that enables real-world tasks (CLT principle)
- Does enable **language gains in vocabulary & sentence structures** (instances of uptake from peers – phrases & words)
- Multicultural, global setting → learning **culture**, «negotiate diverse knowledges across traditional boundaries» (Starke-Meyerring & Wilson, 2008)
- Asynchronous written communication is great for **written assignments** – both informal discussions and more formal papers (TV Ad Critique) → **focus on form** (aligns with Meskill & Anthony, 2010)
- Environment for **peer-to-peer collaborative** learning (sociocultural approach to teaching, Vygotskian ideas, Palloff & Pratt, 1999)
Power of Media: Challenges

- Logistics of setting up COIL activities (differences in curriculum, academic schedule, policies, time zone)
- Lack of immediate feedback, timely responses, follow-up responses – drawbacks of asynchronous online communication
- No synchronous communication (not able to practice oral skills (phonetics), strategies of spontaneous communication)
Ana Tele

- Self-paced open online course for learning Tatar (max. 10000 students)
- 9 levels, each includes 8 sections, 72 self-teaching sections in total 296 lessons, 296 6372 exercises, 9 level tests, 293 video films, 10960 audio records, 6795 photos
- Laboratories of pronunciation, writing and grammar + online dictionary
- 7261 registered learners, 7072 learners from Russia, 189 users from other countries, such as:
  - Kazakhstan (60 learners)
  - Ukraine (16 learners)
  - Turkey (21 learners)
  - USA (11 learners)
  - Germany (8 learners)
Ana Tele

• focus on four skills: reading, speaking, writing (basic) and listening
• from beginners to advanced learners
• open for all people interested in learning Tatar
• free of charge and open 24/7

Activities:
• watching videos
• learning new words
• use of new vocabulary
• grammar study
• listening comprehensions task
• writing (gap-filling)
• live lessons with tutors for speaking practice
# Ana Tele Questionnaire

Questionnaire for students of online school for the Tatar language ANA TELE

Please answer the questions and underline (or highlight) selected answer/answers.

1. Mark your level on the platform ANA TELE: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

2. How often do you log in to ANA TELE account?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily:</th>
<th>Weekly:</th>
<th>Monthly:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) 1-3 times</td>
<td>B) 4-6 times</td>
<td>A) 1-3 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) 4-6 times</td>
<td></td>
<td>B) 4-6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) 7-9 times</td>
<td></td>
<td>C) 7-9 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) 10-times and more</td>
<td></td>
<td>D) 10 times and more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What age group do you belong to: 1) under 25 2) 26-35 years 3) 36-45 years 4) 46 years and older

4. How do you evaluate the self-motivation in the study of the Tatar on the platform ANA TELE?

   1) I have low self-motivation, I constantly need to be controlled by a teacher.
   2) I'm rather self-motivated, but sometimes I need to be controlled by a teacher.
   3) I'm highly self-motivated and do not need to be controlled by a teacher.

5. When studying certain aspects of the Tatar language suggested by the platform ANA TELE I appreciate the following (you can choose more than one):

   1) grammar
   2) vocabulary
   3) listening comprehension
   4) speaking

6. As a student, which of the following tasks you would be interested to complete on the platform ANA TELE? (you can choose more than one):

   1) Writing essays.
   2) Doing collaborative group projects.
   3) Digital storytelling (uploading video or photo material).
   4) Participating in online discussions.
   5) Doing creative works in a self-paced format.
## Ana Tele Questionnaire

### Table 1. Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of learners (N=48)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36–45</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Ana Tele Questionnaire Results

**Table 2. Frequency of logging in to ANA TELE account**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>1–3 times</th>
<th>4–6 times</th>
<th>7–9 times</th>
<th>10 times &amp; more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3. Self-Motivation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of self-motivation</th>
<th>Number of learners (N=48)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Ana Tele Questionnaire Results

**Table 4. Students' appreciation of language aspects suggested by ANA TELE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of language</th>
<th>Number of choices for each aspect (Ch=48)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5. Students' preferences in self-paced format or collaborative activities in correlation with their age group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of activities</th>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 35</td>
<td>36–45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing essays</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group projects</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital storytelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ana Tele: Benefits & Drawbacks

BENEFITS

- Deep dive into Tatar culture
- Taking one’s own pace while taking language level
- The variety of language levels to choose
- Available to anyone (a learner doesn’t have to be a University student)
- Free of charge

DRAWBACKS

- Lack of motivation for speaking classes → insufficient speaking practice (Lowenthal & Dunlap, 2010)
- Grammar activities for beginners need improvement
- Writing activities are not well developed
- Technical problems (aligns with Song et al., 2004)
Implications

- Online language learning may take a variety of forms that have their benefits and drawbacks.
- Modern technologies enable combining synchronous and asynchronous, oral and written forms of learning to ensure the best combination for a given context.
- Collaborative activities and peer-to-peer learning may compensate for the lack of face-to-face interaction.
- Cross-cultural online projects are of significant importance for developing cultural awareness, breaking geographical boundaries, improving intercultural communication skills, building strong media literacy skills.
- Self-paced activities in online courses are likely to be reasonable for less popular languages (like Tatar).
Recommendations

- Online courses of both types should benefit from the importance of training speaking skills.
- Organizing collaborative activities like digital storytelling aimed at establishing students’ social presence to improve listening and speaking skills.
- Building team-spirit while working as a group on a given task.
- Taking into account the age group of the students while suggesting different tasks.
- Creating the atmosphere of competitiveness in small groups.
References

Contact Us

Gulnara Sadykova gsadykova@yahoo.com
Gulnara Gimaletdinova gim-nar@yandex.ru
Liliia Khalitova lilia_khalitova@mail.ru
Nazira Migmanova nazira_5190088@mail.ru

Kazan Federal University

Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication

2 Tatarstan St., Kazan 420021, Russia