Self-paced learning: Lnvestigating an online Tatar language course

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Abstract

© 2016, Slovenska Vzdelavacia Obstaravacia. All rights reserved.The research1 presented in this paper is a part of a larger project aimed at investigating the useful and challenging components of a self-paced online Tatar language school Ana Tele ("Mother Tongue"), which was designed in Kazan Federal University, Russia. We emphasized the importance of developing open online courses for such less commonly used languages as Tatar in order to support their ethnic identity and cultural integrity. Ana Tele is a unique and relatively new online environment for learning the Tatar language. It was launched in 2012 and within four years of its functioning has engaged 10084 users. In this study, we made a focus on a self-paced format of the course and analyzed the advantages and challenges of the project taking into account both the students' and the course-developers' perceptions. The data comprise a survey which was carried out with randomly chosen students of the course (N=170), face-to-face interviews with course participants who completed the survey (N=10) and course developers including technical administrators (N=2), and the instructors (N=8). We have found out that self-paced format of the course meets the demands of its users. Implications for improving Ana Tele platform are discussed on the issues of the content as well as technological maintenance. In particular, insertion of more detailed instructions to all activities and assignments could help students self-regulate study time and develop effective learning strategies according to their individual targets. Collaborative activities are closely connected with technical support and technical possibilities; their use could be helpful as students appreciate activities of this format. The improvements discussed are aimed at increasing students' motivation, self-regulation and overall course satisfaction.

Keywords

Collaborative activities, Online learning, Self-paced language course, Selfregulation, Tatar language