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THE IMPACT OF VOICE BLOGGING ON THE ORAL PROFICIENCY OF UPPER SECONDARY STUDENTS IN L2 KAZAKH SPEAKING

This study had the goal to assess the impact of a 12-week voice blogging intervention on the oral proficiency of Russian-speaking upper secondary students learning Kazakh in Kazakhstan. A total of 84 learners were randomly assigned to either an experimental group, which engaged in weekly voice recording and posting via WhatsApp outside of regular class time, or a control group that received standard classroom instruction without any extracurricular speaking in Kazakh. The speaking output of both groups was evaluated based on complexity, fluency, and accuracy measures before and after the intervention. Additionally, the experimental group completed a questionnaire after the experiment to provide insights into their perceptions of the course. The results revealed that learners in the trial group exhibited significantly higher levels of complexity and fluency in their post-test narrations as opposed to the no-blogging group. However, there was no significant effect on speech accuracy. The schoolers' feedback on the audio blogging activity was positive. These findings suggest that audio blogging can be an effective and engaging method to hone L2 speaking skills.

Key words: L2 speaking, Kazakh language, oral performance, audio blogging, second language.

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Жоғары сынып оқушыларының қазақша ауызекі тілде сөйлеу дағдыларына дауыстық блогингтің әсері

Зерттеу жұмысының мақсаты қазақ тілін шет тілі ретінде оқытатын Қазақстандағы орыс тілді жоғары сынып оқушыларының ауызша сөйлеу деңгейіне дауыстық блогингтің 12 апталық курсының әсерін бағалау болды. 84 оқушы кездейсоқ тәсілмен қазақ тілінің сыныптан тыс сөйлеу практикасынсыз стандартты мектепте оқыған білімі негізінде бақылау тобына, сондай-ақ қатысушылары апта сайын сабақтан тыс уақытта дауыстық хабарламалар жазып, WhatsApp-қа жолдап отыратын эксперименттік топтарға бөлінді. Екі топ қатысушыларының ауызша қазақшасы эксперименттік жұмысқа дейін және одан кейін сөйлеудің күрделілігі, еркін сөйлеуі мен дәлдік көрсеткіштері негізінде бағаланды. Сонымен қатар эксперименттік топтың білім алушылары эксперименттен кейін олардың өтілген курсты қабылдауы туралы нәтижені анықтау үшін сауалнама толтырды. Алынған нәтижелер бойынша зерттеу аяқталғаннан кейін эксперименттік топтағы оқушылар бақылау тобымен салыстырғанда қазақ тілінде сөйлеудің күрделілігі мен еркіндігінің едәуір жоғары деңгейін көрсетті. Алайда эксперимент барысы сөйлеудің дәлдігіне айтарлықтай әсер еткен жоқ. Дауыстық блог туралы мектеп оқушылары оң пікір білдірді. Нәтижелер аудиоблог жүргізу шет тілінің сөйлеу дағдыларын жақсартудың тиімді және қызықты әдісі деген тұжырымды растады.

Түйін сөздер: L2 деңгейіндегі ауызекі сөйлеу тілі, қазақ тілі, ауызша орындау, аудиоблогинг, екінші тіл.

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Влияние голосового блогинга на навыки устной казахской речи учащихся старших классов

Целью исследования было оценить влияние 12-недельного курса голосового блогинга на уровень владения устной речью русскоязычных старшеклассников в Казахстане, изучающих

казахский язык. 84 школьника были случайным образом распределены в контрольную группу, которая проходила стандартное школьное обучение без какой-либо внеклассной речевой практики казахского языка, а также в экспериментальную группу, в которой участники еженедельно во внеурочное время записывали голосовые сообщения и публиковали их в WhatsApp. Казахская речь участников обеих групп оценивались на основе показателей сложности, беглости и точности речи до и после экспериментального вмешательства. Кроме того, ученики из экспериментальной группы после эксперимента заполнили опросник для сбора информации об их восприятии пройденного курса. Результаты показали, что учащиеся в экспериментальной группе по окончании исследования продемонстрировали значительно более высокий уровень сложности и беглости казахской речи по сравнению с контрольной группой. Однако значительного влияния на точность речи не наблюдалось. Отзывы школьников о голосовом блоггинге были положительными. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что ведение аудиоблога может быть эффективным и увлекательным методом для улучшения речевых навыков иностранного языка.

Ключевые слова: разговорная речь уровня L2, казахский язык, устное исполнение, аудиоблоггинг, второй язык.

Introduction

Language policy of Kazakhstan has been strongly motivated by the need to popularize Kazakh, which had occupied a relatively peripheral position in the Soviet-era marketplace as a national language of a new nation-state. With the aim of promoting Kazakh as the new national language, Kazakhstan's language policy has emphasized its development and institutionalization in government and schools (Smagulova, 2021: 265).

However, the promotion of Kazakh language is not only a matter of national identity and pride, but also a crucial skill for teachers and learners in the 21st century. In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, teachers face the imperative to adapt to new technological advancements and embrace the challenges presented by the evolving educational system. Alongside foundational skills and competencies, it is increasingly crucial for teachers to implement today's technologies to motivate students to learn the language. Knowledge transfer is considered one of the key problems that should be solved in the education field, especially when improving academic performance is an integral element of an educational program (Shunatay, 2023: 92).

To enhance students' academic performance, it is essential to examine how they can apply their knowledge across different domains and contexts. This is especially relevant for language learning, which involves both receptive and productive skills.

In language learning, listening and reading are commonly classified as receptive skills since they involve the comprehension and interpretation of the language input. These skills require students to perceive and understand spoken and written

language, respectively. On the other hand, oral and written speech are categorized as productive skills as they involve the active production of language (Kaldarova, 2023: 117-118), that is, students are required to generate their own spoken or written output, expressing their thoughts, ideas, and opinions using the target language. Productive skills require learners to apply their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and discourse to create meaningful and coherent communication. Developing proficiency in both receptive and productive skills is crucial for effective language acquisition and communication.

Language learning has undergone a significant transformation with the advent of digital technologies and online communication platforms. These advancements have opened up new avenues for language learners to practice their target language in authentic and meaningful ways. Moreover, resorting to appropriate means for second language acquisition plays an essential role in foreign language teaching and learning (Ualikhan, 2020). One such innovative approach is voice blogging, which combines the benefits of traditional writing with the power of spoken communication. Voice blogging involves recording and sharing audio messages through digital platforms, enabling learners to express themselves orally and receive feedback from their peers and instructors.

This scholarly work strives to address the mentioned research gap by elucidating the influence of a twelve-week voice blogging intervention on the speaking performance of upper secondary students who were native Russian speakers in the context of L2 Kazakh. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Does the implementation of voice blogging enhance the oral complexity of L2 Kazakh in upper secondary students?

2. Does the implementation of voice blogging enhance the oral fluency of L2 Kazakh in upper secondary students?

3. Does the implementation of voice blogging improve the oral accuracy of L2 Kazakh in upper secondary students?

By answering these research questions, this research intends to enrich the knowledge base concerning the efficacy of voice blogging as a tool for improving L2 Kazakh speaking skills.

Goals and methods

Participants

The study involved 84 Russian-speaking students (45 females) ranging in age from 14 to 18 years, with a mean age of 15.82. These students were enrolled in grades 9-11 in a Kazakh language class but had limited knowledge of the Kazakh language (A1-A2 proficiency level according to Qaztest). The participants were recruited from an urban general education school in Kazakhstan, with two classes selected from each of the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. There were 28 participants from each grade, with 14 students in each class. The participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental group ($n = 42$), where their regular Kazakh language lessons were supplemented with voice blogging, or the control group ($n = 42$), which did not receive additional speaking practice in Kazakh.

Intervention

The participants were invited to join a private WhatsApp group created by the researchers. In addition to their regular Kazakh language lessons, they were required to produce an audio blog entry outside the classroom on a weekly basis for a total of 12 weeks. Once a week, the researcher sent a reminder to the participants to post a voicemail to the group, discussing the topic covered in that week's Kazakh language class. The participants were instructed to keep their voice recordings between 30 seconds and five minutes in length. The researcher listened to all the voicemail recordings and provided constructive criticism by recording a response voice message for each of the 42 participants who submitted their audio messages to the group.

Measures

A picture description task was used to assess the complexity, fluency, and accuracy of the participants' spoken Kazakh before and after the intervention. The task involved showing participants a series of simple

pictures related to daily routines and food, and they were asked to describe what they saw in Kazakh. For example, the pictures depicted activities such as waking up, having breakfast, going to school or work, having lunch, doing homework or office work, and going to bed. Participants had three minutes to prepare before starting the description task. The narratives were recorded for later evaluation. The researchers transcribed and analyzed the narrative test outcomes using a quantitative content analysis approach with the PRAAT software. Changes in the participants' oral performance over the research period were estimated based on speaking complexity (total number of clauses / total number of sentences), fluency ($[\text{total number of syllables} / \text{seconds of speech record}] \times 60$), and accuracy (total number of grammatical and lexical errors per 100 words of the speaking test response, excluding minor mispronunciations). The Guiraud index could not be computed due to the absence of a commonly accepted list of the most frequent Kazakh words, unlike in English.

Data analysis

In the data analysis phase, the following steps were taken:

1. Descriptive statistics: Mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) were determined for demographics and speech data.

2. Assessment of assumptions: The D'Agostino-Pearson test and visual inspection of Q-Q plots were performed to assess the normal distribution of the variables.

3. Unpaired t-test: Pre- and post-test scores were analyzed using a two-tailed unpaired t-test to explore the differences between the control and experimental groups. The difference between groups was deemed significant once p-value was <0.05 . The procedures were conducted using an R package.

Literature Review

By examining the effectiveness of digital learning tools and methods, researchers seek to contribute to the advancement of language education in Kazakhstan's secondary schools, and secondary education is no exception (Abdikeroova, 2023: 34).

Thus, Toleuzhan et al. (2023) have undertaken research exploring the relationship between digital learning and oral skills in secondary education. Their study attempted to discover how technology-based educational approaches affected the oral proficiency among secondary school students. The findings of

the study indicated that secondary education students had a positive attitude to the use of modern digital learning technologies for oral speech development (Toluzhan, 2023: 198-221).

Albogami & Algethami (2022) investigated the use of WhatsApp as a tool for teaching English speaking in a Saudi EFL context. As a result, the intervention enhanced learners' speaking performance, increased their motivation and attitude towards speaking, and reduced their anxiety and fear of making mistakes. WhatsApp proved to be an effective platform for teaching speaking skills, particularly in an EFL setting where limited time is available for oral communication. These findings highlight the value of incorporating mobile applications like WhatsApp in language learning to foster speaking proficiency and create a supportive learning environment (Albogami, 2022: 183-201).

Namaziandost et al. (2022) undertook a study to explore the impact of synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) text chat and voice chat on the oral proficiency and anxiety levels of Iranian EFL learners. The participants were divided into two groups, one engaging in synchronous text chat for six weeks and the other in synchronous voice chat, for the same period. Eventually, both groups showed improved performance in their post-test compared to their pretest scores. Furthermore, the text chat group experienced a decrease in anxiety levels. These findings suggest that synchronous CMC, particularly text chat, can be beneficial in enhancing oral proficiency and reducing anxiety in EFL learners (Namaziandost, 2022: 599-616).

Kim et al. (2021) elucidated how blogs influence the oral proficiency of Korean EFL learners. The participants were allocated to groups practicing (a) voice and text blogging, (b) voice blogging, (c) text blogging, and (d) a control group. Each trial group received 15 blog sessions in total. The findings revealed that all experimental groups demonstrated improvement in oral proficiency, with the voice and text blogging group outperforming the voice blogging group and the control group. The results of the interviews were also positive, further supporting the effectiveness of the blogging activities (Kim, 2021: 712-734).

Miskam & Saidalvi (2019) investigated the effectiveness of Flipgrid, an online video-mediated communication tool, in enhancing students' oral presentation skills. The findings imply that the use of Flipgrid translates into successful mastery of oral speech skills among the students (Miskam, 2019: 536-541).

Another research (Anggraeni et al., 2020) discovered that vlogs led to improvements in various areas of students' speaking abilities, including vocabulary enrichment, enhanced speaking fluency, as well as better pronunciation and intonation. Based on these positive outcomes, the authors recommend the use of vlogs as option for fostering speaking skills, highlighting the favorable responses from students towards this approach (Anggraeni, 2020: 23-31).

A paper by Zemlyanova et al. (2021) focussed on the effectiveness of the VoiceThread application to boost oral foreign language skills. The results revealed that the majority of the research sample reported positive experiences with VoiceThread, stating that it helped improve their oral language skills and they enjoyed using it for language learning purposes. These findings have practical implications for incorporating mobile learning platforms, such as VoiceThread, into language teaching practices, particularly for beginners (Zemlyanova, 2021: 1-11).

Umirzakova & Yotsov (2023) studied user dialogues for creating student-oriented chatbots, and also identified the functions and areas of their use in the educational environment, and a comparative analysis of platforms and their potential for implementing chatbots was run. With the help of the ManyBot constructor, a chatbot «Virtual Assistant for DO» was integrated into the Telegram messenger and browser. A survey was conducted among teachers, students, undergraduates and doctoral students. The survey results showed the relevance of the use of chatbots in education (Umirzakova, 2023: 161-172).

The voice blogging has gained popularity in various contexts of language learning, however there is a scarcity of research exploring its effectiveness in improving oral proficiency, particularly in the context of L2 Kazakh speaking among upper secondary students who are native Russian speakers. This gap in the literature calls for a study that goes into the impact of a voice blogging course on the oral proficiency of these learners.

Another problem is that teaching foreign language, including speaking dimension, is commonly treated carelessly in our country. Evidence unearthed that literacy praxis in the high schools of Central Asia seem to be deficient both in the quality of literacy teaching and in the culture of literacy, namely critical thinking and metacognition (Dimitriou, 2020: 27-47).

Jiang et al. (2021) in their study claim that shifting oral communication to a less-priority position among

teachers exerts a negative influence on upper secondary students (Jiang, 2021: 8). Students generally exhibit higher levels of proficiency in reading, writing, and translation compared to their oral communication skills. The underdevelopment of their oral communication abilities is primarily manifested in two ways. Firstly, they struggle with accurate pronunciation in Kazakh, lack fluency in expression, and are weak in organize their discourse coherently in both dialogic and monologic narratives. Secondly, they lack a sense of appropriateness and politeness in their speech. Despite having acquired vocabulary, sentence patterns, and idioms, students are often uncertain about the semantic specifics and usage rules in real-life communication, which engenders pragmatic errors.

Results ana Discussion

To address the research questions 1 to 3 and further investigate the specific effects of the voice blogging intervention on individual dependent variables (post-test complexity, fluency, and accuracy), follow-up univariate tests were conducted. These tests aimed to determine if there were significant differences between the experimental and control groups.

The results of the univariate tests indicated the following:

- For research question 1 (L2 Kazakh speaking complexity), there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($F(1, 75) = 9.112, p = .003$). This suggests that voice blogging had an impact on improving the complexity of participants' speaking in L2 Kazakh.

- For research question 2 (L2 Kazakh speaking fluency), there was a statistically significant difference

between the experimental and control groups ($F(1, 75) = 6.513, p = .013$). This indicates that voice blogging had a positive effect on enhancing the fluency of participants' L2 Kazakh speaking skills.

- For research question 3 (L2 Kazakh speaking accuracy), there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($F(1, 75) = 5.221, p = .025$). This suggests that voice blogging contributed to improving the accuracy of participants' L2 Kazakh speaking.

These findings demonstrate that the voice blogging intervention had a significant influence on the participants' L2 Kazakh speaking performance in terms of complexity, fluency, and accuracy. The results provide support for the effectiveness of voice blogging as a means of enhancing oral communication skills in L2 Kazakh among Russian-speaking upper secondary school students.

1. Does the implementation of voice blogging enhance the complexity of L2 Kazakh speaking skills among upper secondary school students?

The t-test analysis in Figure 1 reveals a statistically significant difference in L2 speaking complexity between the participants who engaged in blogging ($M = 1.576, SD = .183$) and their counterparts who did not ($M = 1.463, SD = .169$) at the end of the treatment period ($t = 2.9, p = .004$, Cohen's $d = .642$). This indicates that the participants who utilized voice blogging demonstrated a higher level of L2 speaking complexity compared to those who did not participate in the intervention. The effect size, as indicated by Cohen's d , is considered medium to large, suggesting a meaningful impact of voice blogging on L2 speaking complexity.

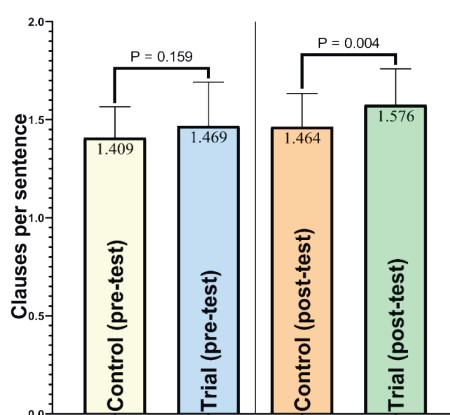


Figure 1 – Scores on speaking complexity ($n = 84$). Horizontal bars correspond to mean values. Error bars show standard deviation.

2. Does the implementation of voice blogging enhance the fluency of L2 Kazakh speaking skills among upper secondary school students?

Figure 2 illustrates the results of an independent t-test conducted to examine the L2 speaking fluency in the audio blogging group compared to the control group. The sample size consisted of participants who underwent the experiment. The

mean values for the two groups are represented by the corresponding bars, and the error bars indicate the standard deviation. The analysis revealed a significant difference between the groups, with the audio blogging group (M = 112.214, SD = 5.757) demonstrating higher L2 speaking fluency compared to the control group (M = 108.693, SD = 3.327) ($t = 3.4$, $p = .001$, Cohen's $d = .749$).

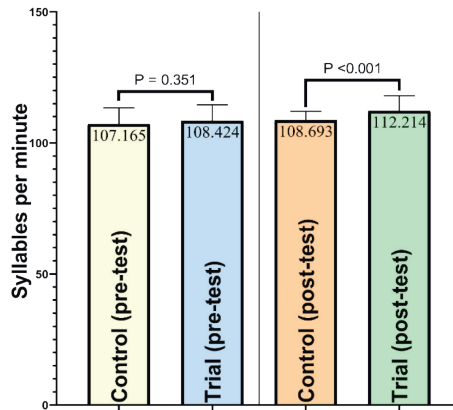


Figure 2 – Scores on speaking fluency (n = 84).

Horizontal bars correspond to mean values. Error bars show standard deviation.

3. Does the implementation of voice blogging improve the accuracy of L2 Kazakh speaking skills among upper secondary school students?

Figure 3 illustrates the comparison of error rates in the oral language of bloggers and non-bloggers at the end of the research. The mean values for the two groups are represented by the corresponding bars,

and the error bars indicate the standard deviation. The analysis revealed that the bloggers' oral language (M = 81.928, SD = 4.852) had a slightly lower error rate compared to non-bloggers (M = 83.526, SD = 4.092). However, this difference was not statistically significant ($t = 1.6$, $p = .11$, Cohen's $d = .356$).

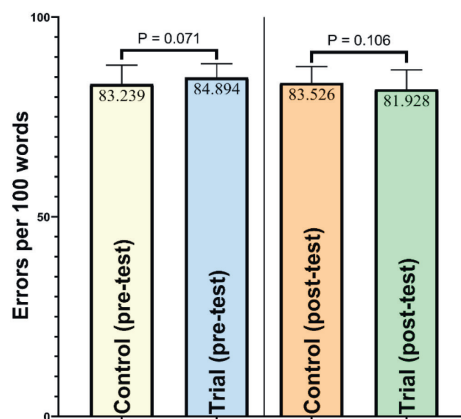


Figure 3 – Scores on speaking accuracy (n = 84). Horizontal bars correspond to mean values. Error bars show standard deviation.

Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate the impact of a 12-week voice blogging course on the L2 Kazakh speaking proficiency of upper secondary school students who were native Russian speakers. The findings demonstrated that voice blogging had a positive influence on the complexity and fluency of L2 Kazakh speaking, although it did not have a significant effect on speaking accuracy. The retrospective perception survey revealed that students who participated in the voice blogging course found it manageable, met their learning expectations, and increased their interest in and success with acquiring the Kazakh language compared to not engaging in the course.

Through regular recording and sharing of voicemail messages, students had the opportunity to practice using more complex sentence structures and vocabulary, leading to improved complexity in their speech. Voice blogging also contributed to more fluent and natural production of Kazakh speech, as evidenced by the higher number of syllables per minute in the post-test narrations of

the experimental group. However, the lack of a significant impact on speaking accuracy suggests that the focus on complexity and fluency may have resulted in a higher occurrence of grammatical and lexical errors.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that foreign language teachers incorporate audio blogging activities into their students' extracurricular learning. By providing L2 students with opportunities for voice-based communication and feedback, educators can enhance their oral performance. However, it is important for teachers to adopt holistic pedagogical strategies that encompass both the interconnected and competing aspects of speaking proficiency. Further research should explore the long-term effects of audio blogging beyond the intervention period used in this study, as well as the transferability of the acquired skills to face-to-face communication scenarios. Additionally, investigating the impact of this extracurricular activity on different learner groups and settings, as well as identifying the factors that moderate its effectiveness, would be valuable directions for future research.

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