

# Distance Learning in Teaching the Russian Language (the Experience of Tashkent State University)

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**Abstract**—The article presents the experience of teaching Russian using distance learning technologies at Tashkent State University of the Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi. The basis of the research is a comparative analysis of the organizational and methodological work of teachers of the Russian language and the opinions of students studying the Russian language about the method (form) of the organization of training, the methods used by the teacher and their success/ failure, effectiveness/inefficiency. The authors set a goal – to determine the effectiveness of the combination of methods and techniques used in the distance learning format and traditional face-to-face training. The results of the study allowed the authors to come to the conclusion that when organizing distance learning, it is necessary to take into account the specifics of the subject and the success of mastering the discipline by students depends on the professionalism of the teacher, who skillfully combines methods and techniques that work most effectively in a particular audience and material.

**Index Terms**—educational tendencies of higher education, the technologies of digital learning, education efficiency, forms of distance education

## I. INTRODUCTION

A lot has been written about distance education in the last three years, because the circumstances in which humanity found itself due to the COVID-19 pandemic were very difficult and, in many ways, tragic (Ableev & Kuzminskaya, 2021; Otts et al., 2021; Saenko et al., 2021; Tyumentseva et al., 2021; Tuzcuoğlu et al., 2022). The education system around the world was forced to undergo a kind of experiment called "distance learning". The results of this experiment have been reported by teachers and researchers in the scientific literature for the past three years. But, in our opinion, the main conclusion that the scientific and research community has come to is that distance learning should not be an end in itself, it should supplement traditional learning; the opportunities of distance learning should be used only as an additional way of learning; thus, distance learning should be used dosed as one of the possible additional ways of sharing knowledge (Abramova & Korotaeva, 2019; Semikina & Semikin, 2019). Digital learning should be used carefully and should be applied only in those learning situations in which it will be useful and necessary, where it will serve to form students' useful skills and abilities, develop cognitive and creative abilities, teach them to work independently and where it will contribute to the development of self-organization and independence of pupils and students (Chernigovskaya et al., 2020; Godenko et al., 2021; Kivi et al., 2021; Panova et al., 2021; Rustan, 2021; Winoto, 2022). In this regard, Tashkent State University of the Uzbek Language and Literature named after Navoi has

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quite an interesting experience in combining methods and opportunities of distance learning and full-time education. The experience of the teaching staff of this university is interesting because it is used in the post-pandemic period of time and is used not under the pressure of forced external circumstances, but as a methodological technique that helps to improve students' knowledge and improve the level of teaching.

Students of Tashkent State University of the Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi, studying Russian, are in a non-linguistic environment. To solve this problem, the university management has found a very interesting and effective way of teaching: the university invites teachers from Russia, native speakers, to teach Russian remotely, using the capabilities of the Internet telecommunications network (Skype technologies, telegram technologies, etc.). To add more, the classroom work is not excluded, on the contrary, in the classroom the work of distance learning is included quite organically. Working with students in the classroom remains a priority, and online lessons in the amount of 12-15 hours per month are an addition to the main course. At the same time, during the online class, the leading teacher is present in the audience in a real format and helps the teacher – a native speaker of the Russian language – conduct the lesson: monitors students, directs their work, helps to orient the students in new material and establish contact with the teacher who works remotely, to orient the students in the situation, to establish contact with the other students, tracks the development of the lesson in the right direction, etc. Such a system of work has been used for several years; teachers are invited from different universities in Russia. Classes on the same subject are conducted both in the classroom in person (leading teacher) and remotely (guest teacher). However, it should be added that distance learning is conducted within the classroom, as if included in the educational process, limited by the boundaries of traditional learning.

Students have the opportunity to listen to Russian in the original, and of course, to work in the classroom with a teacher who is a native speaker, which has a very beneficial effect on the quality of students' knowledge, significantly increases the level of competence and professionalism of future teachers (Alhrahshesh & Ivanova, 2022; Tsvetkova et al., 2021).

## II. METHOD

An online survey of foreign students from Uzbekistan was used as the main empirical method. Students of Tashkent State University of the Uzbek Language and Literature named after A. Navoi participated in the survey. Respondents were offered questions with the possibility of choosing an answer (multiple or limited), questions with an open answer form.

The purpose of this article is to determine the effectiveness of the combination of methods and techniques used in distance learning and traditional face-to-face training; to determine the level of knowledge of students in groups in which the teaching of Russian as a foreign language full-time was supplemented by classes in a remote format with a native Russian teacher; to determine the list of tools, methods and techniques of distance learning that are most effective in teaching a foreign language, in particular, Russian as a foreign language.

## III. POPULATION AND SAMPLES

38 first-year respondents took part in this study (Table 1). They were the students of two groups who study at Tashkent State University of the Uzbek Language and Literature named after A. Navoi and have a class named "Practice of oral and written speech". 100% of students studying this subject took part in the survey, which is a sufficient number to ensure the reliability of the results. The students of these groups had experience working not only in the classroom with the dominant role of a leading teacher, but also in a remote format with a teacher of Russian as a Foreign Language from Moscow Polytechnic University (MPU).

TABLE 1  
SAMPLES DISTRIBUTION

Respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage ratio
Students	38	100%
<b>Academic groups distribution</b>		
<b>Groups 1</b>	22	50%
<b>Groups 2</b>	16	50%

## IV. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The authors of this article conducted an educational and pedagogical study using the questionnaire method. The questionnaire was anonymous, written in Russian and included 41 questions: the questions are of a closed and open nature. The influence of the leading teacher in the survey of students was excluded.

The questionnaire questions are grouped into three blocks. The first set of questions is aimed at clarifying the information of the socio-cultural profile: country, university, group, age, interests. The task of the questions of the second block is to identify the level of satisfaction of students with the quality of teaching this subject in a distance format. The third set of questions includes questions that reveal the level of motivation of students; this information is

interesting to the teacher from the point of view of identifying the quality of the development of the course content. In addition, the questionnaire included questions in which students were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the methods and techniques used by the guest teacher in online classes.

When compiling the questionnaire questions, the authors determined the following parameters (criteria) of the analysis: the method of organizing training sessions; the methods used by the teacher; the technical means and software used in the training session; the respondent's subjective attitude to the organization of the lesson; expectations from training sessions, the convenience of the time of the lesson.

## V. DATA COLLECTION

An anonymous correspondence survey of students was conducted through the Google forms platform using a standardized questionnaire form. After posting the questionnaire in Google forms, students were sent a link by which each student passed an individual anonymous survey.

## VI. DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data processing was carried out by standard mathematical and statistic methods of analysis. The primary information was processed using the Microsoft Excel program.

## VII. FINDINGS

The analysis of the results of the survey of students of Tashkent State University of the Uzbek Language and Literature named after A. Navoi allows us to state that students highly appreciate this method of organizing training. All the respondents noted that, thanks to this form of training, they had a unique experience of working with a native speaker, which significantly increased their level of knowledge. The first section consists of questions aimed at identifying the social status of students: education, age, gender, group, university, course, etc. The second section is more informative, it consists of 12 closed-ended questions. Students should evaluate each lesson conducted in a distance format on a 5-point scale. Thus, the second block is aimed at the respondents' assessment of the quality of teaching the discipline "Practice of Oral and written speech" in the digital format. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of the respondents' responses with an assessment of each topic of the class.

TABLE 2  
DISTRIBUTION OF ANSWERS TO THE FIRST SECTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

No.	The topic of the class	5 points	4 points	3 points
1	Punctuation. A.S. Pushkin – the sun of the Russian poetry.	81 %	19%	0
2	A simple sentence. Expressive reading of the works of A.S. Pushkin.	67 %	33 %	0
3	Punctuation marks at the end of the sentence. The film adaptation of the works of A.S. Pushkin.	81 %	19 %	0
4	A dash in a simple sentence. The image of the mother in literature.	66 %	34 %	0
5	Dash between subject and predicate. A.S. Pushkin's prose "The Captain's Daughter"	62 %	38 %	0
6	Intonation dash. A.P. Chekhov is Pushkin in prose.	76 %	20%	0
7	Connecting dash. The story of A.P. Chekhov "Thick and thin".	62 %	38 %	0
8	Dash in an incomplete sentence. There is no future without history.	52 %	33 %	15 %
9	Separation of definitions. About the Nobel Prize.	71 %	19 %	9,5%
10	Comparative turn. Astrology: science or quackery?	81 %	9 %	9,5 %
11	Addressing. Punctuation marks with addressing. Heraldry is also a science!	57 %	33 %	10 %
12	Introductory constructions. Punctuation marks in introductory constructions.	81 %	9,5 %	9,5 %

This table shows that the first 7 classes received the highest scores: 62-81% of students rated "excellent", there is no "satisfactory" grade. The absolute majority gives a high assessment of the quality of teaching the discipline "Practice of oral and written speech" to the first 7 classes. Theoretical and practical knowledge, skills acquired in these classes, the level of interest in the subject, and, consequently, the level of motivation have significantly increased. Classes from No.8-12 in the assessment of students (8-14.5%) were rated "satisfactory", 57-81% of the respondents – "excellent", and about 33% – "good". The three points by which the students rated the next few classes, indicate that the effectiveness of teaching in these classes has decreased: motivation has decreased, the indicators of students' assimilation of new knowledge, skills and abilities have also decreased. To find out the reason, let us examine the fourth block of questions (5 items) that are included in the questionnaire of work in the classroom in the distant format are shown in Figure 1.

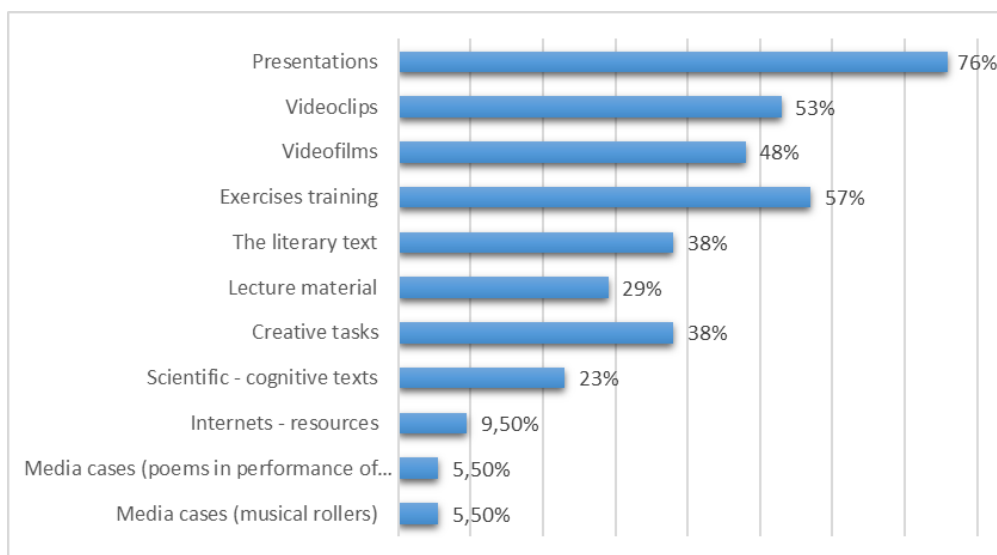


Figure 1. Types of Work in the Classroom in the Distant Format

Thus, the highest scores were given to the classes where a variety of forms, methods and techniques was used and that turned out to be the most effective in the distance format. The teacher relied on such types of work as presentation, training exercises, lectures, working with texts. Such types of work, typical for classroom work, turned out to be somewhat tiring and monotonous for digital classes. This is probably due to the fact that live communication is destroyed in the digital format. A teacher who conducts classes online does not have the opportunity, having received feedback from students, to change the activities quickly, he or she does not have information about the potential and basic knowledge of students. The interaction between the teacher and the student, the quality of mutual understanding, personal approach – all these important components of the educational process are significantly transformed in the remote mode. Types of work and exercises, which are of the most interest to the students working in the distant format are shown in Figure 2.

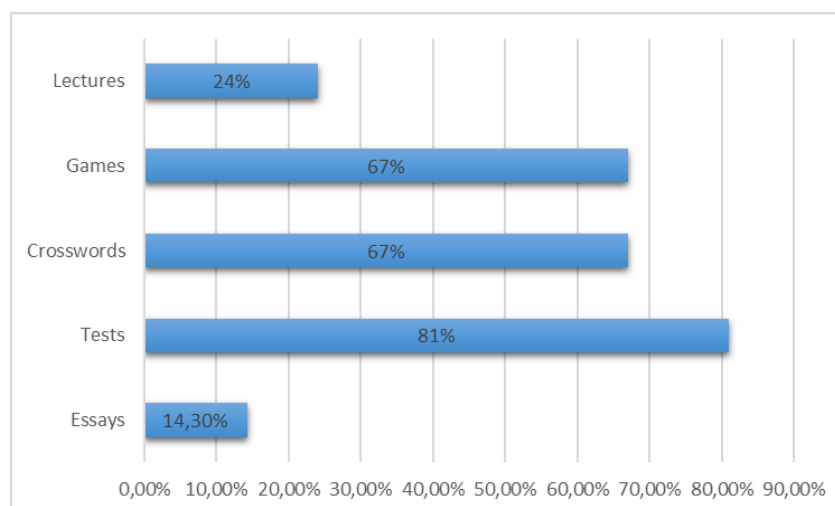


Figure 2. Types of Work and Exercises, Which Are of the Most Interest to the Students Working in the Distant Format

The third set of questions in the questionnaire includes 9 questions that allow students to express a personal opinion based on a personal analysis of the main types of speech activity (listening, speaking, writing, reading). This section allows a research to identify how much the level of knowledge of students has increased thanks to the classes with a native Russian teacher. The respondents were asked to choose only one option corresponding to their opinion (Table 3).

TABLE 3  
DISTRIBUTION OF ANSWERS TO THE THIRD SECTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

No.	Speech activity	No	Rather no than yes	Partly	Rather yes than no	Yes
1	Listening	1 %	0	9,5 %	14,3	71,4 %
2	Grammar	0	1 %	0	19%	76,2%
3	Writing	14,3%	0	9,5 %	19%	57,15
4	Reading	0	9,5%	1 %	19%	66 %

It should be added that this section also included open types of questions to which students gave detailed answers. This type of inquiring allowed the authors to get a more complete picture of how much the level of knowledge of students has improved. To the question "Why did your knowledge of grammar/reading/writing/listening improve?", the respondents answered: "The explanations were very detailed, the presence of presentations helped to learn the material better", "I began to make fewer mistakes in dictation", "A good explanation and performing a large number of grammar exercises helped to raise my level", "Performing a large number of exercises and a detailed explanation of the material, which included the peculiarities of grammar, significantly increased the level of knowledge," "The teacher explained well, and I remembered a lot of new grammar rules".

Listening: "Communication with the teacher in Russian during the lesson significantly improved my listening skills, as I listened attentively to the Russian speech", "My listening skills improved because we talked a lot with the teacher", "I listened attentively to the lectures, so my listening skills improved", "We watched a lot of episodes from feature films what helped me to understand Russian speech better", "We listened to romantic songs based on the poems of A.S. Pushkin in the videos of famous opera singers – it improved my listening skills", "We listened to the poems of A.S. Pushkin performed by famous actors: A. Raikin, V. Smekhov, I. Smoktunovsky, A. Demidova and others – it helped me better understand the Russian language".

Writing: "My writing skills have improved, there are fewer mistakes in essays and dictation", "My knowledge in the field of punctuation has increased, there are fewer mistakes in the usage of commas", "The writing skills have improved because we did a lot of written tasks", "Many new words were remembered in the process of writing".

Speaking: "Discussions improved the speaking skill", "Working with fiction and discussing these texts helped to speak better in Russian", "The answers to the questions on the topics "The creative path of A.S. Pushkin", "The Life and work of A.P. Chekhov", "Nobel Prize Laureates", "Heraldry is also a science" significantly improved speaking skills, expanded knowledge in the field of vocabulary", "Working with texts and performing after-reading communication tasks significantly improved my speaking skills".

The students noted that the lexical stock of words has significantly expanded: "My lexis has been boosted because we read a lot of fiction, stories and novellas", "I learned a lot of words because we read a lot of poems, listened to romances performed by famous opera singers, we also learned a lot of poems by A.S. Pushkin by heart", "My lexis has been broadened because there were a lot of discussions on the given topics", "There were a lot of new words", "There were a lot of exercises with complex vocabulary, so I learned a lot of new words".

## VIII. DISCUSSION

In general, the survey showed that students, studying in the distant format with a teacher (a native speaker of Russian), noted a significant increase in their language level. In this case, distant learning was part of the classroom work and was very organic, it was interwoven into the educational process, not violating the principles of traditional education, but rather complementing it, deepening it. In the absence of a language environment in the process of learning Russian, this approach turned out to be an interesting and effective solution. The survey showed that the motivation of students to the learning process has significantly increased (Figure 3).

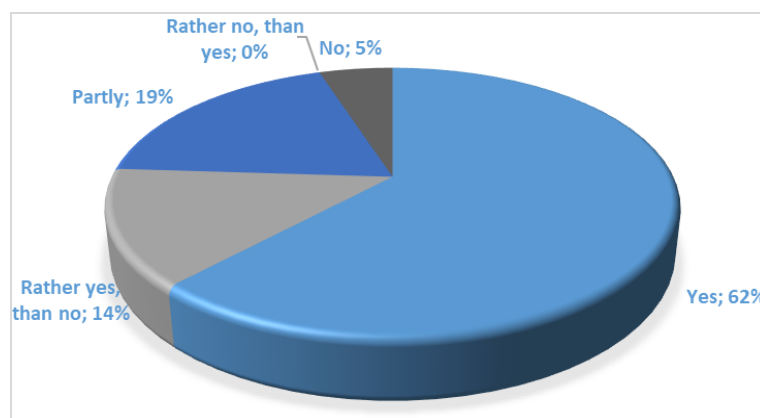


Figure 3. Do the Students Like to Study in the Distant Format?

91% of the respondents noted that lessons with a native speaker in a distant format "had a good impact" or "positively influenced, improved the level of knowledge". Nevertheless, it should be added that 5% noted that they do not like to study in the distant format, 9% - their knowledge in the field of studying the discipline of "Practice of oral and written speech" has not improved, they have not found any changes for the better (Figure 4).

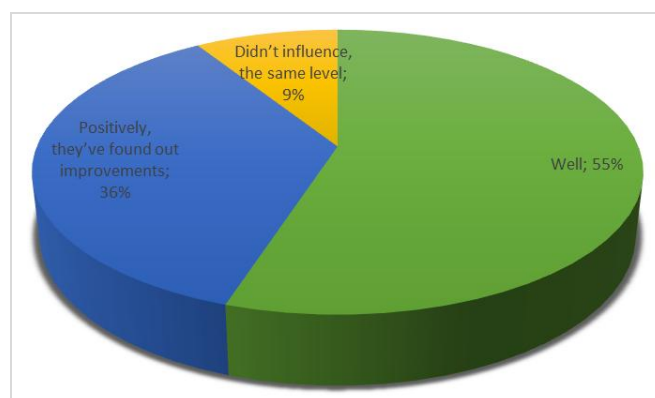


Figure 4. How did Distant Learning Influence the Students' Level?

In our opinion, the reasons that served as the basis of negative reviews were, on the one hand, the teacher's use of methods and techniques of distant learning not fully in the lessons of Russian, on the other hand, the shortcomings of distant learning itself, which usually always manifest themselves in the learning process: the absence of a teacher in the audience and his presence only in the digital format still destroys live communication. Communication in the off-line mode cannot be replaced by any digital tool. The process of understanding between students and the teacher is disrupted, and the process of monitoring also leaves much to be desired. In addition, technical failures, instability of the Internet connection also affect the quality of classes and the quality of knowledge.

Despite the presence of a teacher-curator in the audience, who helps to smooth out these problems: monitors students during the lesson, explains difficult moments in their native language, helps to establish the process of understanding between a teacher working remotely and students in the audience, smooths difficult moments, helps students navigate complex material, and the teacher needs to establish contact with the audience – the percentage of students dissatisfied with digital education, although it is below 10%, nevertheless, still exists. Of course, it should be noted that the percentage of dissatisfied people has significantly decreased from 78% (figures of the pandemic period, when everyone was forced to work online in the self-isolation mode) to 9%, which is primarily due to the fact that distant learning in this case is used reasonably, taking into account the shortcomings that were originally included. At Tashkent State University of the Uzbek Language and Literature named after A. Navoi, an attempt was made to apply the best that digital technologies provide, overcoming space and creating a semblance of a language environment thanks to the ability to communicate with a native speaker. Thus, the competent use of such a unique phenomenon as distance learning has helped to solve many issues in the process of teaching students who study a foreign language in a non-linguistic environment.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Analyzing the experience of organizing the learning process in the universities presented in this study in the period from 2020 to 2021 and summarizing the data obtained during the study, allows the authors to draw the following conclusions about the prospects of the development of the educational system: the organization of training in a mixed format, taking into account the peculiarities of individual academic disciplines, was approved by all the respondents and proved to be positive.

Of course, the process of introducing digital technologies into the educational process will improve the quality of education, making it more competitive, mobile and flexible, but the complete rejection of interpersonal interaction during face-to-face classes has a detrimental effect on the academic performance of the students, and, in general, on the quality of education.

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