

VII International Forum on Teacher Education

Creating Video Lectures on Literary History Academic Disciplines: Psychological and Didactic Approaches

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Abstract

The article is focused on studying a video lecture as a component of modern digital educational resources. This topic is considered relevant because online learning is becoming an integral part and a tangible basis of modern education. Meanwhile, urgent move to remote learning because of the pandemic revealed a number of pending issues related to the principles of creating video content for digital educational resources. This problem is of special significance in philological education. This is due to the amount of educational information and metadisciplinary level of its presenting.

The article outlines the problems associated with the implementation of online learning, and their impact on the lectures' content and presentation. A set of issues related to creating video lectures for digital educational resources on historical and literary academic disciplines is examined. Firstly, it is the issue of selecting information for a video lecture, which is supposed to be both concise and informative. This issue is so relevant for the course of history of literature because academic disciplines of such kind involve a large amount of information that cannot be reduced to short logical constructions. Secondly, it is the issue of visual information corresponding to text resources. Here apt models of partial duplication, expansion and partial presenting of information, etc., are considered. Thirdly, not only the content, but also the form of presentation is becoming a significant issue. The principles of creating a video lecture aimed at maintaining a sustainable interest in the video content and in the studied topic are observed.

Keywords: online learning, psychological and didactic principles, digital educational resources, literary history academic disciplines, video lectures.

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Published by Kazan federal university and peer-reviewed under responsibility of IFTE-2021 (VII International Forum on Teacher Education)

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Introduction

Online learning is becoming an integral part and a tangible basis of modern education. In the field of higher education, it is determined not only by current legislation (e.g., Federal Educational Standard), but also by a number of circumstances that are increasingly closely following the educational process. These circumstances include a decrease in university classroom hours, an increase in student's independent work presumed, an increasing number of employed full-time students associated with the need to pay tuition fees, the general focus of education on the use of active and interactive ways of working with students.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of the article is to identify the specifics of video lectures on literary history academic disciplines. The objectives, which contribute to the purpose, include the analysis of video lectures of this major posted on open access platforms, observing personal experience of creating a video lecture and polling students majoring in philology to identify the perception of the lecture of literary history type in video format.

Literature review

Indeed, the following statement of a contemporary scholar that the future of education is still not in a total switch to the online mode, but in the organization of blended forms of education, appears to be fair: “Blended learning is becoming more common within e-learning. This is due to the following circumstances: – the learning process executed fully online is more suitable for experienced students who want to combine work and studies; – in Russian educational system, the legal regulation of the number of classroom hours and the grading procedure for students studying remotely limits the possibilities for training carried out entirely online, but does not prevent the implementation of blended learning” (Fomina, 2014).

That being said, despite the creation of a solid corpus of digital educational resources, which includes both local resources of universities and open access resources on various platforms, a number of issues remain under discussion. They are connected with the structure of the educational process, the interrelation of real and virtual education within it (Ranasinghe & Wright, 2019; Odhabi & Nicks-McCaleb, 2011), with perceiving and understanding information when working with digital educational resources, the capability apply it in practice (Hong, Pi, & Yang, 2018; Fanguy, Costley, Baldwin, Lange, & Wang, 2019). Education in the humanities, particularly concerning philology, is holding a special position here regarding the study of literary history academic disciplines.

Difficulties occur due to the amount of educational information, metadisciplinary level of its presenting, vagueness of subdivision. This determines the relevance of addressing the topic of the research.

Another relevant aspect of addressing the topic under study is supposed to be mentioned. It is associated with the problematic aspects of philological education in general, which is not always clearly stated in its target orientation. In the article “The Concept of Higher Philological and Pedagogical Education in the Tatarstan Republic” we point out this problem area and define its both narrow and wide scopes: “The purpose of higher philological education, historically formed in the region, should determine the curriculum, a list of competences that are formed for this particular student. These objectives are: 1. To prepare scientists in the field of Philology. 2. To prepare teachers for secondary and high school. 3. To prepare persons with high level education for State activities. 4. To prepare persons with high level education to form the cultural level of society. Only a clear awareness of the goals, not abstract “philological education”, will lead us to success” (Bushkanets, Mahinina, Nasrutdinova, & Sidorova, 2016).

The issues related to the principles of creating video lectures in general are touched upon in a number of scientific and methodological articles. Thus, both positive and negative aspects of this form of education are defined in the article by Olga Moskalenko “Video Lectures as a Modern Method of Psychology Teaching in Higher Educational Institutions” (2016). The opportunity to choose the format of watching the video lecture is listed among the advantages of this teaching method, and students` inactivity in learning is correctly considered a disadvantage (Moskalenko, 2016).

Shabalin in his article “Creating Educational Video Lectures as a Didactic Problem” (2012) clearly formulates a number of requirements for video lectures, analyzing the content of various educational platforms. Having specified that “the semantic unit of an educational video recording is one idea (a thesis and a proof, a proven record, an example, a paradox, a problem)” (Shabalin, 2012), he denotes the maximum duration of a video lecture – 10 minutes. The need for additional orientation in the lecture by means of abstracts and “navigation through the semantic parts of the lecture” is also viewed in the article. The author considers the use of video recording capabilities to be another important aspect: alternating close-ups and medium-sized shots of the lecturer, additional video materials, active color background.

Nikishina, Zapesotskaya, & Kuznetsova (2017) in their article “The Technology of Creating Videlectures: Myths and Reality” also state the need to structure the information presented in the lecture, which should be based on “goal-setting through the division of the information into sections (modules), topics, a step-by-step presentation of the information within a topic, consistent definition of key points in each part of the educational materials”.

The issue of the effectiveness of a video lecture is posed in the article “Evaluation Technology of the Video Lectures` Effectiveness” by Lazarenko, Prirodova, Nikishina, & Kuznetsova (2018). They experimentally prove the influence of the personification of the lecturer on the quality of the lecture information adoption, using observations of changes in theta- and alpha-rhythms in the encephalography of persons under test. The experiment conducted allowed the authors to conclude that “the personification of the lecturer at the psychophysiological level leads to a decrease in alpha-rhythm with an increase in theta-rhythm, which therefore indicates the activation of the processes of voluntary attention and active memorization of polysensory information. Regardless of the model of the educational process implemented (classroom, remote), the need for a personified presence of the lecturer remains” (Lazarenko et al., 2018).

All things considered, yet we believe that lectures on literary history academic disciplines bear some specific features, which determine certain principles of selection and arrangement of information, and structure, and video sequence. The novelty of our research is to clarify the peculiarities of video lectures regarding teaching literary history courses.

Methodology

In our research primarily theoretical methods, namely the analysis of the subject of research based on the study of psychological and pedagogical literature, reflexive-system analysis of appropriate arrangement of teaching activities, were used. Methods of observation, content analysis of open access educational resources posted on various educational platforms, generalization of the authors` personal experience in creating video lectures, polling groups of Master`s degree students of remote learning, within which the developed video content was tested, were also used. The research involved 37 students at the first and second years of Educational Science Master`s degree. The students were informed about the research and their participation was voluntary.

To elicit how our statements correlate with students` perception, a questionnaire was developed, which included the following questions: How often do you refer to video lectures? What kind of lectures do you consider the most interesting? What kind of lectures do you consider the most helpful? What form of presentation do you consider preferable?

Do you pay attention to the lecturer's facial expression and gestures? Is it necessary to support the lecture with visuals? Do you consider it possible to fully replace traditional lectures with video lectures as a part of a training course?

37 students of the Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication of Kazan Federal University took part in the survey. When calculating the results, we did not take into account 5 questionnaires, in which the respondents answered that they never refer to video lectures, that is, their judgments about this method of teaching are speculative. However, since the respondents continued to answer the questions, we still processed the data of their questionnaires: we believe that the answers of these respondents can be viewed as a projection of the prevailing stereotypes about educational video content.

Results

Out of 32 respondents referring to video lectures, only 5 persons (15.6%) said that they do it regularly, the rest do so 2-3 times per semester. This brings us to the conclusion that the skill and habit of using this kind of content is not well-formed.

The next two questions concerned the content of video lectures and the manner of presenting the material. The majority of the respondents (68.75%) chose lectures devoted to the analysis of one work of literature as interesting for them, while only 21.9% of respondents preferred the review, which is correlated with the traditional lecture on literary history academic disciplines.

We assume that his calculation reflects the dissatisfaction with the needs of students in obtaining a sample of an integral literary analysis of a particular literary text. Indeed, in traditional coverage of literary material on live classroom lectures mainly the historical and literary approach and attributing the work to a certain literary school is being maintained, which makes it impossible to focus on its artistic identity. But on seminars students are required to analyze the artistic identity of the text. Apparently, video content is of interest for students in preparation for seminars, since it allows them to get information related to the interpretation of certain literary works.

Nevertheless, the lectures devoted to the analysis of one work of literature were considered helpful by slightly fewer students (59.4%). Meanwhile, the number of students who preferred the content devoted to the special aspect of the text analysis increased significantly (by 2.33 times). This may be associated with preparing for exams, during which students are most often asked to answer a specific question about a work, highlighting its certain characteristics.

The majority of respondents (84.4%) considered manner of live conversation preferable, only 3 students opted for academic manner and 2 students opted for artistic manner. Thus, it becomes obvious that the manner of presentation cannot be the same for traditional classroom teaching and video lecture, taking into consideration that the latter does not stimulate the active perception of the material. However, the preference of academic manner over artistic one, albeit insignificant, suggests that excessive dominance of the lecturer may distract the attention of the recipient from the essence of the subject.

To a certain extent, the question on importance of the lecturer`s facial expressions and gestures during the lecture was related to the previous question. Most of the respondents (81.25%) considered that the lecturer`s behavior draws attention to the material presented. This answer correlates with the preference expressed in the previous question about the manner of presentation: the manner of live conversation naturally assumes the significance of the lecturer`s facial expressions and gestures. It should be noted that one of the respondents turned out to be true visual learner, strongly fixing attention on the external details of the lecturer`s behavior that it prevented him from concentrating on the content of the lecturer`s speech.

Remarkably, this factor (the significance of the lecturer`s facial expressions and gestures as a way to draw attention to the material) was considered important by those 5 people who said they had never watched the video lectures. In this case students were presumably guided by their experience of watching video content of not educational but entertaining kind. It is common knowledge that modern young people actively use such resources almost every day, and that their authors use very active, sometimes even grotesque, gestures and facial expressions.

The issue of the importance of the visuals in video lectures was also related to the question of the need to support the lecturer`s speech with presentations, illustrations, video fragments, etc. All respondents favored the need for visual support of the lecture, but their opinions on how helpful it might be were divided: 40.6% of the respondents believe that video sequence contributes to maintaining interest in the educational resource, 59.4% are convinced that visuals contribute to a deeper understanding of the material. Obviously, the evident predilection of students for the presence of not only the lecturer, but also additional visual reference on camera indicates the well-established habit of simultaneous perception of audio and video content.

When answering the question about the possibility of replacing traditional lectures with their video alternatives, 21.9% of the respondents considered full replacement possible, 65.6% considered partial one, and 12.5% were against the replacement. This result shows the reluctance of students to fully switch to the online education format, the unwillingness to abandon live, direct contact with the lecturer.

An unexpected result was revealed when analyzing the answers to this question of those respondents who initially admitted that they had never turned to video lectures. Only 3 persons out of 5 (60%) spoke out totally against replacing traditional lectures with video content, which indicates their principled position on this issue. However, 1 person opted for the possibility of partial, and 1 person – for the possibility of complete replacement of traditional lectures with a video format. This opinion of people who have never seen video lectures supposedly indicates the students` habit of living in the virtual space, as well as their loyalty to remote communication formed as a result of the pandemic.

Discussion

Due to current pervasive move to remote learning the possibility of spontaneous recording of a lecture by a lecturer or a student has arisen. It leads to the need to differentiate the forms of lecture presentation of this kind of educational material. These forms may be conveniently classified into: online lecture as a recording of a lecture in its traditional spontaneous delivery, and video lecture as a specially made studio recording of a designed and structured lecture material.

The issue of the existence of literary education in terms of the problem under study also requires a preliminary discussion. On the one hand, it is connected with the need to consider particular phenomena of literature within wide literary, cultural and historical context, which is usually rather difficult for students to observe, and independent mastering of this context does not seem productive. Another difficulty concerns the need for in-depth work with particular texts, which requires awareness of comments and analysis conducted.

Hence, the specificity of the lecture material in teaching literary history courses involves the need to include a large amount of information in it. It sets the task of developing criteria for its selection in accordance with the particular objectives of presenting the lecture material, first of which goes what cohort it is focused on.

Some currently relevant examples are to be considered. For instance, in the abstract to the cyclus of online courses “Three Centuries of Russian Literature” developed by St. Petersburg State University for applicants it is noted: “A distinctive feature of this lecture cyclus is the emphasis not on strict historical representations, analysis of plots or biographies of the writers, but on the aspiration to understand the cultural and historical context in which the works of literature were created.

The authors' attention is focused on identifying the main patterns of the development of Russian literature, analyzing literary forms and genres, defining the images of classical Russian novels – from tyrant merchants to intelligent members of *zemstvo*, from “unwanted” to “new” people” (Three Centuries of Russian Literature in online courses of St. Petersburg State University, 2019). Undoubtedly, the wide coverage of the material correctly determines the authors' wish to identify the main lines of development of literature, into which the applicant can “embed” certain writers or works that appear familiar, thus ensuring the proper depth of the answer.

To public lectures on literature, which are of popularizing nature, another principle of selecting information is inherent. These are, for example, lectures posted on the “Arzamas” platform. The lecture by famous literary critic and scholar Roman Timenchik (n.d.) on Anna Akhmatova (Akhmatova. “An idler, I came here...”) actually entails one poem of the poetess, and through this conversation the essence of the novelty and the specifics of her artistry are indicated.

The lectures on Russian literature by the professor of the Department of Literature of the Transbaikalian State University Lyudmila Kamedina, hosted on the YouTube platform, are structured differently (Tvsoyuz, 2019a). As a rule, at the beginning of the lecture, a thesis is formulated that denotes the main distinguishing feature of the writer's work as a whole. In the lecture on Maxim Gorky, the humanistic nature of the writer's work is indicated, and all the works mentioned (“Old Izergil”, “Mother”, “The Lower Depths”) are being commented in this vein.

In the lecture on Mikhail Lermontov Lyudmila Kamedina emphasizes the presence of secret hidden meanings of his works, their mystical, prophetic nature (Tvsoyuz, 2019b). Revealing this idea, she focuses on particular poems of the poet: specific historical and biographical facts associated with these poems are reported, in which these prophetic motives are manifested.

When selecting the information for a course of video lectures on children's literature of preschool age, we found ourselves in a difficult situation regarding the correlation of a small number of lectures and large material, which had to cover the history of the development of both world and Russian literature for preschool children from its origins to this day. At the same time, the material was not supposed to be of fully scientific literary kind, because some of students obtaining Master's degree do not have basic philological education. Therefore, in our lectures, the key lines of literary development were outlined, concerning mainly the genres of literary fairy tale and poetry for children.

It was also important not to make the lecture as a list of names and titles, but to give a general idea of how these phenomena were formed, what are their main features, and how all this can be used in further practical work with children in preschool institutions. Specifying the main feature of the development of the phenomenon becomes a thesis that unites and structures all the material. In the lecture on foreign and Russian poetry for preschool children, we talk about its folklore origins and briefly name the specific features that confirm this thesis: the concreteness of images (thingness), common use of personifications, word creation, word play, dialogism and question-and-answer form, special rhythmic organization and intonation structure, sound images.

Further, using the example of English poetry for children, a typology of the development of this phenomenon in world literature is drawn, two lines are formed: playful and lyrical.

Describing the development of Russian poetry for children, which was guided by the path of world literature, we point out these lines again, and we add one more line – didactic one – which arose due to specific Russian sociocultural circumstances.

Another important issue is the form of presentation. Since a video lecture requires a small amount of time, then rhythm, pace and manner of speaking become crucial components.

In the examples mentioned above, lecturers strive to overcome the drawback noted by all researchers of this form of mastering the material – the inactivity of students. It is partially achieved by using a manner of live conversation, reflection, unfolding in front of the viewer and listener. Roman D. Timenchik typically uses an even academic tone, scientific phrases, special terminology. Lyudmila V. Kamedina, aiming her materials at school teachers and school children, uses neutral, in some cases colloquial vocabulary, reiteration, rhetorical questions, metaphorical images that make the speech more lively.

Our literature lectures for preschool children are an attempt to combine academic and neutral ways of information presentation. On the one hand, we claim a fairly clear logic of reasoning, in compliance with which the theses are necessarily accompanied by the arguments. On the other hand, we avoid stuffing the lecture with special terminology, introducing only those concepts that can be recognized without necessarily referring to the dictionary, for example, “word creation”, “sound images”.

One more important issue is related to the visibility and combination of visual and auditory sequence. From our point of view, the presentation which is backing up the lecture should include a small number of slides. Their content is: 1. The main idea mentioned above; 2. Its revelation through the listing of features;

3. Reasoning through texts or chunk of texts mentioned in the lecture, and short comments related to them;
4. Brief conclusion.

In our opinion, the combination of the verbal definition of the generalizing idea and its duplication on the slide will facilitate its understanding and mastering. The texts of the works of literature are an integral part of the visual sequence, as this helps the student to correlate the comments made about this text with their own perception. Oral reading, causing an emotional response, does not always allow a student to comprehend the text.

Conclusion

Thus, the modern educational situation requires special attention to the development of video lecture content. This is especially important in teaching literary history academic disciplines within higher philological education.

The problematic aspects of this process are the criteria for the selection of information, the clarity of structuring, and the manner of presenting the material.

For better adoption of the lecture material in the format of a video lecture, well-conceived criteria for the selection of information are needed. The first criterion is associated with the formulation of one idea that summarizes the entire large literary history material, which is supported with examples picked up in either chronological or comparative aspects. The second criterion is the selection of the most representative material of any national literature to demonstrate the common processes taking place in different literatures.

The manner of presentation should combine elements of academicism and adaptation of the material to the perception of a wide audience.

Supporting a video lecture with presentation slides should be concise and contain information which allows students to correlate the provisions of the lecture with their own perception of the material.

The results of the survey lead to confirmation of the hypothesis about the preference of a blended format for lecture courses and the demand for changes in the methods and techniques of presenting material in video lectures.

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