The Specific Features of Language Online Courses

If we consider the needs of the online language courses vs. other online courses, it seems to me that the **online or blended format could actually enhance the language learning courses**, thanks to the new media resources and tools readily available online. In my opinion, while designing a language online or blended course, it is necessary to include a real-time communication component, using live webinars and video conferencing at least twice a week for better results. In addition, the use of a variety of audio and video resources to create videos and podcasts by teachers and students could make the progress more evident. I liked the idea of video presentations by students described in Chapter 3 of "Teaching Online: A Practical Guide" by Susan Ko and Steve Rossen (pp. 36-38) and implemented by Elda Buonanno in her Advanced Italian Conversation Class. I am going to try such presentation in the future.

I found that **the checklists are very useful** for evaluating the language online courses. I would add more specific questions about the use of **asynchronous** audio and video tools and resources, as well as online tools for practicing and drilling, vocabulary building and reviewing, and assessment of results. I would add a question about the availability of **synchronous** live webinars, video conferencing, live chat sessions that allow the learners and teachers to interact and collaborate with each other **creating a virtual community.**

In general, for online courses readily available to everyone, I would add a question about **aggressive ads** and constant intrusive prompts that push you to spend a lot of money to update the course settings/software.

Case Study

RussianPod101https://www.russianpod101.com/?src=gc_LearnRussian1_Search_russian%20learning%20online_21446868391_&gclid=CjgKEAjw2dqcBRC2q-LXjpfxjnQSJAAeYF5L40ZsqO1dfY47brlLxrMHrUe9ZNw2EsO1y81gXZyG0_D_BwE

I used **Quality Matters checklist to evaluate RussianPod 101**. Despite the intrusive advertisement and the fact that I had to pay $1 to access a free 7-day trial (the course costs $25 monthly) I was impressed with the sophisticated and innovative technical features of the course. It is **NOT a comprehensive college level Russian course.** It consists of a variety of video and audio (the majority) mini-lectures (1-6 min long) from complete Beginner to Advanced levels and includes special mini-courses on the alphabet, basic pronunciation, useful phrases while traveling, and idioms and proverbs (unfortunately, the ones that are the same as in English). Some cultural elements are brought in from the very

beginning. The vocabulary-building video lectures are particularly well-done, though the choice of vocabulary is strange (marine animals are the first introduced).

The course **did not receive good ratings on the checklist.** It doesn't state clearly-made **objectives. The course overview** is missing. Each series of mini-lectures uses a different good-looking Russian girl as a presenter instead of a teacher (better lectures use animation instead of pretty girls). As it is a compilation of lectures, their transcripts, well-done audio podcasts, flashcards, and vocabulary builders put together into the chunks of 20 or so and called courses, there is **no students' community or assessment.** Students are allowed to make comments after each lecture/lesson, and I saw a lot of comments. The most frequent complaint is "Where do I start?" It shows that **navigation, accessibility, and usability are not the best features of the program**, especially because no introduction overview is available. The quality of **Instructional materials** varies greatly from a good introduction to the Cyrillic alphabet and pronunciation to weird dialogues about dating or hobbies. T**he graphic and visual components** are impressive, but there is no learner support or learner interaction. The practice exercises are minimal and won't be enough to learn Russian.

Overall, it is a great supplement for a Russian teacher, who is willing to spend some time sorting through the material. The price of $25 per month could be unaffordable to many high school or college students.

Conclusions: In my future courses, I will try to prioritize comprehensibility, learning objectives, create a course overview, concentrate on building a vibrant learning student-centered community, create precise rubrics for assessment and measurement of progress, develop level-specific instructional materials, provide learner support, and prioritize accessibility and usability of my course. Though the innovative technology and tools are a necessity, they are not a goal in themselves.