Timeline as a Means of Digital Representation of Theoretical Material

Abstract. The article depicts the use of Timeline innovative online technology based on the theoretical course “The History of the English language” or “Lingua country-study” for students of linguistic specialties. Often in studying theoretical courses modern students have difficulties with tasks related to understanding the cultural and historical context, establishing causal links between historical and linguistic phenomena, remembering social and cultural events. Timeline technology is a description of the sequence of events that occurred in chronological order. This article describes how to use Timeline technology in classrooms, from creating a particular Timeline to testing it in the learning process. In the research given examples and tasks have been analyzed besides the effectiveness of improving theoretical knowledge of the 2nd year students using the platform moodle.enu.kz was detailed. At the end of the course, a survey was conducted in this platform and determined that the Timeline technology contributes to the effective solution of problems, such as the boring presentation of theoretical material, the difficulty in perceiving the authentic text of the old-English period, meets the requirements of distance learning, and moreover is aimed at creative-cognitive and communicative learning of foreign languages.

Key words: online program, timeline, motivation, foreign language teaching

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Introduction

Nowadays the study of linguistic and sociocultural processes in their joint interaction is highlighted. It is obvious that it is impossible to consider language phenomena without establishing the conditions and boundaries of the history, culture, economy, social development in the society.

The globally integrated world has been rapidly changing and has been requiring various skills and abilities that cause to reconsider the concept of foreign language education.

The Language is the most important means of communication in a national community which is closely connected with cognitive, psychological, personal peculiarities.

The concept of “language” is usually used in two meanings:

Language in general as an abstract representation of a single human language - a certain class of iconic systems;

A specific language as a real sign system used to communicate in a certain society in a particular period of time [1, p. 46].

The history of every language cannot be considered without the history of its people. The

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connection between the history of the language and people is bilateral relations which are preserved by
the ancient national traditions, ethnographic habits, personal names, events, customs, habits, and
historical works.

Kunanbayeva S.S. determines that a person’s competence is formed in the process of education
and is a characteristic of the intellectual and professional development of a person [2, p. 56].
Competences as systemic qualitative new formations are a characteristic of the teaching quality and
high level of specialist training.

Ethnographers and culturological scientists deal with linguistic facts and data when studying the
lifestyles, traditions, and customs of a definite nation. In each language the perception of the world is
cut through various historical and linguistic facts.

Hence, language is one of the tools that have been preserved throughout the times for many
generations. They studied reference books that link to the national history, language, and culture, as
well as the influence of culture on language showing the national mentality and spiritual values of this
ethnic community. The linguistic world is in many ways like the logical image of the nation human
mind.

Nevertheless, teaching and learning the course “History of the English language” tends to be a
negative and boring experience, limited mainly and simply to reading the comprehension of long pages
devoid of timelines and visual materials [3, p. 93–107].

Decades ago, Alvin R. Sunseri stated that “Educationists continually charge that history is useless
and dull, repetitious and tedious, and should be replaced by courses more concerned with present
problems” [4, p. 127-129]. Students, from their point of view, “tend to view history as static facts to be
memorized” [5, p. 672-695]. Cynthia Hartzler-Miller also suggests such a practice as historical inquiry,
but its use does not flourish due to the lack certain knowledge and beliefs among the teachers which
make it possible to adopt alternative approaches [5, p. 672-695].

What makes history subject less interesting in the classroom is that we, the teachers, are mentally
not read to revise the whole lesson at home. Teaching is teaching when learning takes place and in
history like subject only notes are copied by our students everywhere [6].

The teaching methodology reflects the attitude of the teacher to the purpose of teaching history,
and their motivation in turn affects their methods. As a result, perception of history by youth becomes
questionable [7, p. 17-22].

As the scientist noted, many students graduate without a really high level of foreign language
proficiency. Their language skills are not enough for professional activities. Not only can they not use
the language as a tool, they also do not have a clue about how the language functions, laws according
tо it works. In isolation from the linguocultural aspect, a foreign language differs little from
Latin - it is divorced from cultural characteristics that affect the quality of communication. Language is
integral to the history of a nation, its traditions and social structure. That is why the study of the history
of a language is as important as the knowledge of its grammar [8, p. 1012–1018].

Halyavin argues that, in the current setting, the teaching of history is declining overall [9, p. 155].
According to him the paradox is that with increasing access to information, there is no increase in
professional skills among students - the most active part of Internet users. The previous forms of
control of student knowledge - essays, various kinds of abstracts of literature and so on - have become
completely meaningless. Students quickly learned to find it all on the Internet and pass it off as their
own labor. Moreover, the value of the teacher himself as a carrier and source of information has
decreased. According to Halyavin, now information needs to be generated, not gust handled as a text.

Using a timeline of events for a new topic may seem like an impossible challenge, but when
provided with context clues that can help students connect events to other occasions, it can be a useful
tool to introduce new material. This fact can also be useful to assess student learning at the completion
of a unit (Classroom Applications - Teaching with Timelines).
Timeline is a basic tool for studying time periods or time-bound topics spanning centuries and eras. Timeline helps students in understanding the chronology of historical events.

Timeline is a common tool for students to use in the various studies to gather information and to create to demonstrate their knowledge [10, p. 230–236]. The Internet is full of free tools with excellent features for creating timelines, which, undoubtedly, seem powerful and visual instruments for educational purposes. Timelines allow to stress and explain the crucial aspects of the working process or present the stages of the progress in the chronological order. Teachers often use the benefits of a timeline during their classes.

During literature review we explored for usage in the lecturing the course English History for university students 6 timelines that were found free on the Internet.

1. Office Timeline (“Free Timeline Makers That Save You Hours of Work”) is one of the most professional tools for creating timelines and Gant diagrams online. Thanks to PowerPoint integration, it becomes possible to include timelines created directly to the PowerPoint slides. Office Timeline allows to import files from other platforms and tools such as Excel or Microsoft Project.

2. Sutori (“Sutori”) is famous for its possibility to use videos and pictures for creating any stories that are especially useful for historical events’ representation. Sutori enables exchange in social nets such as Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter и Google Plus. It also lets its users include audio- and video files in the timelines for more efficient and effective cooperation and interaction.

3. MyHistro (“Geo-Located Interactive Timelines with a Social Twist”) is one of the most innovative free tools for creating timelines. It can serve as a platform for elearning or for designing maps as well. MyHistro allows not only to include photos, videos, and texts but also to mark their location on Google maps. As Sutori, it provides its users with ease exchange in such social media as Facebook and Twitter. One its great function is its availability to be used on IOS and Android.

4. SmartDraw (“Flowchart Maker Org Chart Maker Drawing Program Floor Plan Creator”) is another powerful and effective tool for creating timelines with a large set of ready-made templates for all tastes. SmartDraw automatically rearranges the events every time its user makes changes in his/her timeline. It also allows exporting timelines in Word format.

5. Timeline JS (“Timeline JS” - https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline) is the open source with a few functions and highly appreciated as one of the most interactive free instruments for creating timelines. There are also ready-made templates that can be transformed and advanced by more experienced users, who can use various multimedia from Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo, Vine, Dailymotion, Google Maps, Wikipedia, SoundCloud, Document Cloud, etc. Timeline JS supports 40 languages; so, teachers can remove all barriers and use this tool for multilanguage projects.

6. Tiki-Toki (“Toki Timeline Maker: Beautiful Web-Based Timeline Software”) – is a program for creating beautiful interactive timelines and sharing them in the net. This instrument is the only one that allows watching its timelines in the 3D on the Internet.

The criteria for choosing one program for lectures and practical classes we considered the following:

1 free online application
2 easy to connect with Youtube video, Quizlet, MS Teams, etc.
3 demonstrate and share with peers
4 easy to work in distance learning.

According to all the above-mentioned criteria the most appropriate was Sutori, so we decided to choose Sutori for its easy interface with simple tools and possibility to export timelines in pdf format.

We filled our timeline with the most significant historical events that influenced the English language development.

Sutori is a tool on the online classroom that creates learning resources with photos, videos, quizzes and provides assignments and presentations. It offers a free version without advertisements.
Methodology

The main object of the experimental teaching was to ask students to create a Timeline to promote cooperative learning and to develop historical and linguistic knowledge. We tried to consolidate working methods and required tools in order that students engaged with their learning process and develop transversal skills requested by university. These skills were in the subject syllabus: a) theoretical knowledge, b) responsibility skills, c) communicative skills, d) creative skills, e) teamwork.

The specific objectives were that students:
- Learn to be respectful and critical of the books, journal, internet publications,
- Create texts, images, graphics in cooperative way and share them,
- Improve their oral and written communication,
- Develop team groupwork,
- Search information on the internet, and be able to filter it critically,
- Develop learning skills in digital context to construct a critical citizenship.

The experiment was designed to be implemented in two academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. After the first year, we assessed and made a reflection about the initial implementation and the students’ acceptation. This innovative experience carried out by 2 teachers, was implemented in a subject of two University of the country. It was a compulsory subject of both Universities.

The participants of the experimental teaching were the second grade University students of the specialty “Foreign languages: Two foreign languages”.
- The total number of the students were 72.
- The duration lasted spring term for 15 weeks, from January till May 2020, 2021.
- There were 6 groups of pre-intermediate and intermediate language levels.
- The age was mostly 17-19 years old.

The Timeline was presented during online lesson on the screen of the computer. The teacher shared link with students. It was up to the type of the lesson.

Currently the educational trajectory has changed in coronavirus pandemic situation during academic years as 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. Distance education has become a result of the Covid-19 pandemic these years. Online teaching and learning have played an indispensable role in the education programs.

Hence distance learning is aimed at active interaction of all components of the learning process as well as learning objectives, content, methods, forms of teaching, teaching aids using special tools, Internet technologies and other means through online communication between teacher and student.

Distance learning is a form of learning based on information technology in teaching. As Kazakhstani scientists define: Modern distance learning consists of two main components: the first is the information transmission environment (television, radio, systems of information and communication tools, mobile phones); the second is the necessary methods and methods of information exchange [11, p. 75].

So, the proposed Timeline technology was introduced as an interactive learning tool with graphical depiction of events in chronological order that allowed learners to create story chronicles that included photographs and documents in pandemic distant teaching. It gave students complete control over how they presented their theme, with many options available to use. The participants identified causal relationships between events, classified similar events or camp elements of different times.

Most interestingly the timeline offers the ability to combine many online programs in one platform. Teacher mixes media, various links, slide shows, images, photos in one presentation.
Students are greatly enjoyed using many interactive interfaces promoting their motivation to learning dull theoretical material.

The historic periods of the History of the English language were chosen according to the syllabus. The events were chosen by the thorough analysis of the scientific literature on the raised issue accounted for 49 sources, 32 of which were written in English since we have been exploring the history of the English language development. We also tried to make our timeline as interactive as possible to engage as many people as possible into the study of the most crucial and significant historical events that had a great impact on developing the English language.


The Timeline was prepared as a text for reading comprehension. The class was reading a book “Legends of King Arthur”. Students summarized for each part and did tasks in oral and written forms. All these events contributed to the English language changes and development. For example, The Great Vowel Shift affected the long vowels of the English language [14, p. 7-14], while Shakespeare invented such new words as ‘laughable’ (1596) and ‘moonbeam’ (1600) that entered all English dictionaries. For each event, we chose the text, the video, and the picture because we wanted that our timeline could serve as an electronic book to become aware of the history of English.

Discussion

In order to reach the objectives mentioned above each group of students has to be distributed the tasks to create a Timeline on the given theme. The Timeline was demonstrated online in the board to the 2d year students at the University with the help of site Sutori.com. The theme and content were carefully examined, checked beforehand, detailed facts and key data were shown. Students followed the link and learnt various events, pictures, videos, diagrams, photos according to the definite period of time in the history of the English language. Students made comments, wrote the complete responses on the sticky note, and placed on the TimeLine board.

They have to summary texts, present investigations, critical analysis of events, presentation of case studies, presentation of real experiences, video, short films clips, documentaries, historical movies, westerns, quizzes, tests, tasks.

It was proposed the universal working algorithm with Timeline demonstration.

a) theoretical overview of the definite period of the History of the English language
b) significant events, personalities, places, dates, etc
c) creation Sutori timeline in groups
d) public presentation of Sutori timeline
e) comments and evaluation

Because of each group had to create a Timeline and share it, the learning was an active and dynamic process considering the different learning styles of students and the different digital skills. The material of all tasks was public on the online platform moodle.enu.kz and all the class could participate in other publications and edited the comments. Evaluation and co evaluation were used to assess the tasks. Particularly the cooperative work.

The Moodle survey was named as “Can timeline make English language history more interesting to learn?” https://moodle.enu.kz/mod/feedback/view.php?id=25517. The questionnaire was published
on the Moodle platform to examine the practical implementation this digital technology in teaching foreign language. The aim was to determine whether the Timeline as a means of digital representation to make lessons on the History of the English Language more interesting and livelier.

Results

Every lesson was proposed as evaluation processes to know the impact of the innovative experience on student learning. Co-evaluation where each group was asked to assess three different Timelines from the same group. The students were asked to check the quality of the texts, the constancy of the entries, the formality, the links, historical significance. This evaluation had a formative purpose, and it was in group.

Students observed the history of Old English Period, for example, with accordance to the dates. Students properly worked with each date in this period, checked in open-ended questionnaire and passed the test. Moreover, a link of TimeLine was attached in the chat and students saved their works in PDF format and shared the link. Generally, from lesson observation, for presentation theoretical materials it took 20-30 minutes and 20 minutes were devoted to Timeline completion and its discussion.

Figure 1 demonstrates the representation of the beginning of our timeline in a part of the New English Period at the first point (Figure 1).

![Modern English timeline](image)

Figure 1. The Initial Point of Modern English Period on our Timeline

Figure 2, in turn, represents how the event “The Great Vowel Shift” looks like on our timeline (Figure 2).
The overall volume of our timeline accounted for about 60 pages in the pdf format that is not too good in our opinion because people, especially, students, do now like to read much due to their clip-thinking [15, pp. 289-292]. Therefore, our current stage of work is to shorten the timetable in its textual part.

However, even now, we can still ensure that such a timetable has great potential to attract people familiar with the history of English, because technologies such as timetables make the learning process more comfortable and usable.

The following several figures display some more students’ timelines created within the subjects mentioned-above (Figure 3-5).
Figure 3 – The Modern English Period

Figure 4 – William Shakespear Time
Results

After our experimental teaching with the help of online platform moodle.enu.kz we had conducted a survey with 8 key items as open questions. The main purpose of the survey was to define if timeline could make English language history more interesting to learn and changed boring theoretical materials into creative and entertainment learning.

The Moodle survey was named as “Can timeline make English language history more interesting to learn?” https://moodle.enu.kz/mod/feedback/view.php?id=25517

This self-evaluation was based on eight questions about experimental learning done through the Timeline. This consisted of a questionnaire survey where students individually were asked about usefulness of the Timeline for the language acquisition of the different skills as reading, writing, listening, speaking.

The survey was published on the Moodle platform to facilitate their completion as much as possible.

We decided to try timeline as a technology to make English history lessons more interesting and livelier.

The goal of the timeline application was to turn the English history lesson into the interesting event of instruction.

In Figure 6 we can see the results of Moodle survey where Students are shortened as S1, S2, .., Sn. Every answer is coloured in different way. We chose randomly only answers of 18 students because this Figure 6 would be overloaded with data. The criteria were 100%.

The results of survey questions were illustrated in Figure 6 in different colors:

The survey had also a rubric with giving student’s feedback after finishing experimental teaching via Timeline. Table 1 shows the Legend for the Figure 6 (Table 1).
Table 1 – The Legend for the Figure 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Colours</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Can the Timeline check the subject knowledge?</td>
<td>blue</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have the Timeline turned out to be interesting and motivational?</td>
<td>orange</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Was creating Timeline time-consuming?</td>
<td>grey</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Were you more enthusiastic in working via TimeLine?</td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>How many disadvantages of using Timeline?</td>
<td>indigo</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>In what percentage do you know about Sutori?</td>
<td>green</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>How many advantages of using Timeline?</td>
<td>dark blue</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>How much have the timeline affect your interest in learning the history of the English language?</td>
<td>brick</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can timeline make English language history more interesting to learn

Figure 6 – The results of MOODLE survey
So as the survey had shown that mostly students evaluated the different options of Sutori app in 70%, 75%, 80%, 90%. We consider that answers were globally positive. The improvement of oral skills and proactivity and participating to reach the expected results had the highest result.

The relation between theory and practice was the less punctuated, this topic was always difficult to develop in an academic university class.

From two open questions we obtained qualitative valuations about the Timeline experience.

The questions were Pros and Cons about the Timeline implementation and creation in collaboration with another students.

Regarding the Cons most of the participants were coincident. Some considerations were about organization and dedication, some students mentioned difficulties to e-meet together, or some of them pointed out the different effort devoted by the different members of the group. Most of them thought was a con when they could not choose the partners of their group. They highlighted the lack of time and teaching experience to transform the academic task in the Timeline. Students also saw some problems because they recognized that did not have enough technical knowledge to develop a proper Timeline, most of them had ever created it before. Some of the comments of the participants had to be in consideration for the help to develop digital skills.

The pros could be summarized as the student said their motivation in reading historical documents and books had grown significantly. Participants were encouraged to share their knowledge with peers. Most of them had concluded that this teaching improved their cooperative skills being more efficiently working in group. Finally, they pointed out that the Timeline allowed them to see the English history in a critical pit of view and interesting.

Many participants stated that creation of the Timeline helped them to interiorize the theoretical and historical concepts and understand better the material explained at the lecture.

Complicated information such as plans, events, projects, are better understood when visualized. Timeline has become an essential tool for quickly visualizing and communicating collaborative works, plans, roadmaps in a way that is easy to understand and to remember.

The students’ answers were as follows (style and punctuations remained):

“The idea of presenting history by utilizing Sutori was really helpful. I was motivated and interested in such presentations. The design of a platform, video, bright colored pictures and questions were really effective in learning history”.

“It was interesting for me and motivational to look for significant information about Brexit and its impact on the English language. History is not my cup of coffee and I am not an expert. But this task helped me to plunge into history.”

“It was easier for me to remember the events, dates, names visually using pictures and video”.

“Timeline helps me to keep track of the order of historical events, as well as other events happened in the world at the same time”.

“Sutori keeps me interested in content through the wide range of communication and interaction features available. It contains dozens of photos, interactive videos.”

“Demonstration boring historical material in Timeline presentation easily affected my learning of the history of the language”.

Thus, it was important to mention that our objectives were quite optimistic. We proposed that the Timeline could improve the commitment in their learning and their knowledge perspectives.

Students also pointed out that they had improved the skills to search relevant information, to summarize and structure the facts. The Timeline work allowed them to improve time management, organization planning, collaboration works. What were more students tried to be creative and competitive in drawings, searching links, making graphics and schemes, doing good photos, etc.
Conclusion

Lesson preparation is always time consuming and each work with innovative platforms takes enough time to prepare for the class. Working with timeline, it did not take much time in principle. Generally, it covered 30-40 minutes for a high-quality lesson planning with different tasks.

Sutori is handy in usage and economizes time in highlighting the most important events from the history of the English language to pick up the crucial information and people, to be concrete and straight to the point.

Finally, we concluded that the timeline board had more advantages than the disadvantages. Firstly, it is time effective to create the presentation on it and construct the chronological events in easy way. The most important advantage is the simplicity to do it and provides numerous opportunities to include quizzes for checking knowledge. Secondly, the Sutori is a free platform and there are no commercials. Thirdly, Sutori is the best way to present information in a remote classroom.

Sutori multimedia app can be downloaded in PDF and can be enriched with texts, multiple-choice questions, images, video, forums, audio, and “Did you know?”.

Sutori was very useful in organizing collaborative activities for students in online grouping work, for instance, doing projects, research paper, sharing presentations. Participants easily added Google docs, different apps as Quizlet, Kahoot, Socrative, Testmoz.

Disadvantage was that it liked like Google website and not so preferable for creating timelines. Setting up a quiz was a bit confusing, and the help of menu did not answer the question. The free version had some limitations and did not include student tracking and progress that was crucial for assessment.

Sutori interactive platform can be used only for educational purpose but not for personal ones. Moreover, Sutori timeline is a tool which aids teachers and learners.

During studying the English History many teachers know that tasks related to understanding the cultural and historical events, establishing cause and consequences relationships between cultural phenomena and events are significantly difficult. To effectively solve these problems, it is useful to include the implementation of TimeLine technology in the educational process.

Timeline is a graphical description of the sequences of events that occurred in chronological order. It is a brilliant idea to visualize the English history individually according to the era, epoch, period, an artistic style, or a cultural phenomenon.

Earlier this technique was also very popular among teachers, but they did it by their hands. Teachers glued together sheets of paper with pictures, dates, images, self-portraits, photos, etc, and depicted a timeline on them. Bur nowadays with the innovative IT technologies it is possible to use ICT tools to work with the chronology [16, p.3].

We use Timeline technology at the Course of the History of English language in University so that to vividly imagine the era in which that events occurred. Moreover, to compare the historical period with the events in the world. Besides, it promotes to the generalization and systematization of theoretical knowledge.

Educators find timelines a useful strategy for a variety of educational purposes. It can be enlarged with recording events from a legend and speeches of historical leaders in a sequential format.

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Аннотация. В статье рассмотрено использование инновационной онлайн технологии Timeline на материале теоретических курсов «История английского языка» и «Лингвострановедение» для студентов языковых специальностей. При изучении теоретических курсов современных студентов особенно затрудняют задания, связанные с пониманием культурно-исторического контекста, установлением причинно-следственных связей между историческими и лингвистическими явлениями, социально-бытовыми и культурологическими событиями. Технология Timeline или временная линия, представляет собой описание последовательности произошедших событий в хронологическом порядке. В данной статье описана методика применения технологии Timeline на занятиях от создания шкалы времени до ее апробации в учебном процессе. Приведены также примеры заданий по использованию временной шкалы и детально расписана эффективность улучшения теоретических знаний студентами 2 курса посредством использования платформы moodle.enu.kz. По окончанию курса проведен опрос в данной платформе и определено, что технология Timeline способствует эффективному решению проблем, таких как, скучная подача теоретического материала, сложность в восприятии аутентичного текста старого-английского периода, отвечает требованиям дистанционного обучения, нацелена на креативно-когнитивное и коммуникативное обучение иностранным языкам.

Ключевые слова: технология Timeline, мотивация, обучение иностранным языкам, теоретический материал

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