

## SERBIAN AND ENGLISH BACHELOR STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ONLINE TEACHING: FUTURE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract.** *This research investigates the attitudes of future teachers of Serbian as the mother tongue and English as a foreign language (EFL) regarding online teaching during the coronavirus pandemic. Although teaching has continued in virtual classrooms, university teachers have encountered numerous challenges related to teaching the invisible generations: motivation, interaction, and the role of students in online classes, as well as the functionality of methods, techniques, and online tools. The conducted research shows that future teachers of Serbian as the mother tongue and future EFL teachers perceive online teaching as an alternative or a supplement to traditional teaching applied in specific social circumstances. During the period of a year and a half, their attitudes towards online teaching have changed, ranging from acceptance to indecisiveness, and including an inclination to return to traditional classrooms. It should be stated that the bachelor students studying Serbian accepted this way of teaching to a higher degree than the EFL bachelor students. A statistically significant difference is evident in the respondents' replies with respect to their field of study, but not with respect to the respondents' gender or the current year of study.*

**Key words:** *online teaching, Serbian as the mother tongue, EFL, students' attitudes*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The historical development of education so far has shown that changes in the teaching process have always been in compliance with the objective circumstances of a society. Sometimes these changes were slow, and sometimes relatively rapid, which was directly determined by the needs and goals of the educational system. Rapid changes often occurred at

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regular intervals, such as one month, three months, six months, twelve months, etc. These changes were usually visible only to experts in pedagogical, didactic and methodological fields, and they involved conducting detailed preparations and following pre-established procedures. In recent times, most changes have been caused by the implementation of modern information and communication technologies, which are recognized as an opportunity to modernize teaching and adapt it to the current moment in civilization development. The coronavirus pandemic has significantly changed the manner of teaching and learning across the entire world – traditional classroom lessons have been substituted with online teaching overnight. With the purpose of contributing to the global prevention of coronavirus transmission, all institutions of education, including universities, have adopted this (modern) mode of teaching (Ali, 2020), which has in turn altered teachers' and students' perception of online teaching. Online teaching was defined as conventional learning in a novel (virtual) environment at the end of the twentieth century (Mioduser et al., 1999; Dehoney & Reeves, 1999). However, today it implies not only the use of the internet, but also the application of advanced information and communication technology (ICT) to adapt teaching materials and methods to each individual student, the simultaneous participation of a large number of students, the efficient use of the allotted time (Suresh et al., 2018; Kim, 2020), asynchronous and synchronous communication through e-mails, forums, audio and video conferences (Anwar & Adnan, 2020; Kim, 2020), as well as the use of electronic interactive platforms and tools for creating a virtual learning environment (Novaković & Božić, 2020; Nash, 2020; Novaković, 2021). The main components that determine the character of online teaching are the following: 1) content (goals); 2) tools and resources; 3) particular tasks; and 4) the interconnectedness and reciprocal influence of the aforementioned elements (Rapanta et al., 2020).

The sudden switch to online teaching has created completely new conditions at universities and led to a change in the way university teachers work, bearing in mind their important role in the development and stability of society (Kulikowski, 2021). Although teaching has continued almost unimpeded by the Covid-19 pandemic, since it has shifted to virtual classrooms and internet platforms, university teachers have encountered various challenges, the most important being low student attendance and interaction with teachers and colleagues online (Coman et al., 2020). This same challenge has been noticed at the Department of Serbian Language and the Department of English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš. Namely, the university teachers have been experiencing the same problems daily: students' low motivation, their reluctance to participate actively in online classes and restrictions in testing students' understanding of the acquired knowledge. What is questioned is whether the students attend lectures as active participants or as merely passive visitors without being motivated to join in. This is the crucial issue this paper aims to resolve. The established research problem involved interconnected questions related to the quality of online teaching: 1) How to motivate students to be more active in class? 2) How to test students' active listening and understanding in class? 3) How large of an impact do the integrated functions of virtual classrooms (class recording, digital whiteboard, breakout rooms, etc.) have on students' behaviour and active participation?

The paper is composed of five sections. After introductory considerations, an overview of the previous research on the issue of students' attitudes towards online teaching in the time of the pandemic is given. The research methodology is explained in detail in the third section, while the obtained results are analysed quantitatively in the fourth section. The fifth section presents the most important conclusions and recommendations for improving online teaching.

## 2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Virtual or online teaching, which is considered to be the main mode of teaching today due to the coronavirus pandemic, has posed numerous challenges and opened many questions of technological, pedagogical and social nature (Ferri et al., 2020). These include the functionality of electronic interactive platforms and integrated tools, decreased interaction between teachers and students (Yusuf & Al-Banawi, 2013; Sintema, 2021), insufficient experience in online teaching (Hasan & Han, 2020), long hours in front of the computer, internet access, requirement of a reliable computer (Lockee, 2021), economic and social issues related to student life, insufficient social contact with peers and insufficient knowledge necessary for virtual learning (Colman et al., 2020). Both teachers and students have been forced to adapt to the new conditions (Lassoued et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2020). Teachers have started designing and teaching online courses, no matter if they supported computer-assisted teaching and learning before the virus outbreak or opposed it bitterly. Teachers with some previous knowledge, i.e., with digital competences, have coped with the new situation more easily than teachers belonging to the so-called digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001), who were never willing to accept computer-assisted teaching and learning as effective, believing that better instruction could not be achieved by the use of the modern ICT (Novaković, 2021). Despite belonging to the generation of digital natives, students themselves have had difficulties in transitioning from conventional learning to online learning (Coman et al., 2020). The rapid transformation of online teaching from an alternative mode of teaching into the main one has forced educational institutions to provide training for their teaching staff to help them acquire skills and competences necessary for designing teaching curricula for online learning and teaching. Moreover, numerous scholars and educators have secured further assistance from diverse teachers' associations on social networks in publicly distributing large amounts of information related to the organisation of online teaching and the use of online tools and teaching material. These resources provide additional support to teachers when adapting to a new manner of teaching, learning, and developing digital competences in the online environment (Maksimović & Dinić, 2016).

Although online learning has been already implemented into the curricula of almost all educational institutions, it should be emphasised that a single unique pedagogical approach to this manner of instruction does not exist (Pokrel & Chhetri, 2021). A large number of education levels and academic courses requires the application of various teaching methods (Doucet et al., 2020). Numerous investigations have found a positive impact of online learning on the quality of teaching and on academic achievement (Baby & Sridevi, 2018; Lapitan et al., 2020). However, certain studies have shown that online learning does not actually contribute to the same or better academic results in comparison to conventional classroom teaching and learning (Galy et al., 2011; Thomas & Rogers, 2020; Omodan, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Kulikowski, 2021), particularly due to reduced motivation and interaction, as well as increased frustration during online classes (Dhull & Sakshi, 2017; Yusuf & Ahmad, 2020). Certain authors frequently discuss the issue of either increased or decreased motivation in both teachers and students during the Covid-19 pandemic (Alawlameh et al., 2020; Mishra et al., 2020; Bojović et al., 2020) whereas others emphasise the difficulty in establishing adequate student interaction in classes (Kulikowski, 2021). Academic achievement has always depended on the relationship between teachers and their students (Zhou et al., 2018; Yao et al., 2020). The abrupt switch in the manner of teaching has imposed large changes on university teachers, who

have a significant influence on social progress and stability (Kulikowski, 2021). Therefore, this paper examines students' attitudes regarding motivation and the quality of interaction in university teaching at the Department of Serbian Language and the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš (the Republic of Serbia) with the purpose of determining if there is a statistically significant difference in the responses of future teachers of Serbian as the mother tongue and future EFL teachers.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research aims and objectives

This paper examines the attitudes of bachelor students of Serbian language and bachelor EFL students in order to analyse online university teaching from the perspective of future teachers. Assuming that online teaching will have become the basic mode of teaching and instruction by 2025 (Shailendra et al., 2018), it is essential to resolve the aforementioned questions and offer viable solutions to university teachers at philological departments whose students demonstrate low motivation for active involvement in online classes. Therefore, this paper examines students' attitudes on the issues of motivation and quality of interaction in their Serbian and English studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš (the Republic of Serbia), in order to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between the attitudes of these two groups of future teachers.

#### 3.2. Research tasks

The established aims and objectives determined the following research tasks:

- 1) To examine the students' attitudes towards the quality of interaction in online classes,
- 2) To examine the students' motivation for active participation in classes,
- 3) To examine the students' attitudes towards the integrated functions of virtual classrooms (the quality of audio and video connection, class recording, digital whiteboard, breakout rooms, etc.) and their impact on the students' willingness to be active participants in classes,
- 4) To determine a possible statistically significant difference in the responses provided by the two groups of future teachers regarding online teaching.

To determine a potential statistically significant difference in the respondents' answers considering the year of study and gender.

#### 3.3. Research methods, techniques, instruments and sample

The paper was based on the theoretical analysis method and the content analysis technique. The method used in the empirical part of the paper was the descriptive method together with the survey and scaling techniques. Detailed qualitative and quantitative empirical investigations were conducted with the purpose of examining the students' attitudes towards their motivation for active involvement in online teaching.

A questionnaire with an assessment scale (abr. QASOT – questionnaire, assessment scale, online teaching) was constructed for the purposes of this research. The instrument

was divided into three parts. The first part contained a questionnaire related to the basic social and demographic facts about the respondents – the study programme, the year of study and gender. The second part of the instrument contained a questionnaire comprising seven open-ended questions that examined interaction in online classes during the Covid-19 pandemic. The third part of the instrument was the Likert-type scale with twelve items (1 – strongly agree, 5 – strongly disagree), which was used to examine the level of motivation of the future teachers of Serbian and the future EFL teachers for online university teaching. The students expressed their opinions regarding the aforementioned issues by selecting a statement of their own choice. In order to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the respondents' statements considering the independent research variables, the following parameters were taken into consideration: frequency (f), percentage (%), arithmetic mean (M), standard deviation (sd), parametric statistics (t-test and F-test). The obtained data were analysed by SPSS 21.0 and they were described, explained and presented in tables and graphs.

### 3.4. Data collection

The empirical research was conducted from May 20th to May 25th, 2021. The data were collected online. The Google questionnaire was emailed to the respondents. The time set for the responses was twenty minutes. The permission for conducting this research was obtained from the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš. The sample consisted of ninety-seven students (eighteen males and seventy-nine females). Forty-six respondents were bachelor students of the Department of Serbian Language and fifty-one of them were bachelor students of the Department of English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš. The respondents had been attending university lectures online by means of the Google Meet virtual classroom since the virus outbreak. Also, the respondents were bachelor students of all four years of study (Table 1).

**Table 1** Number of respondents

Bachelor Studies, Serbian Department				Bachelor Studies, English Department			
Year I	Year II	Year III	Year IV	Year I	Year II	Year III	Year IV
8	10	14	14	22	13	7	9

## 4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the obtained results shows that the future Serbian and EFL teachers perceive online teaching as an alternative to conventional teaching and not as its replacement, which is the reason why they experienced it merely as a “temporary mode of teaching”. Even though students stated that they were eager to start attending online classes, what they actually faced was “the other side of the coin”.<sup>1</sup> The following are the obstacles that influenced the majority of the respondents to change their opinions related to online teaching:

<sup>1</sup> The response of one student is particularly worth mentioning. Namely, this student stated that online teaching did not live up to his expectations upon enrolling in the bachelor studies.

- 1) inability to stay focused during online lectures (“Our focus lasts as long as an average YouTube video”);
- 2) exhaustion owing to sitting (or lying) for long hours (“We feel exhausted, and it seems like days have no end in sight”);
- 3) limited social interaction (“I can’t remember the last time I talked to my colleagues about important life issues”);
- 4) anxiety followed by a lack of motivation (“As time goes on, I feel more and more scared, and worried about my health and my results at the Faculty”);
- 5) technical problems occurring despite advanced digital equipment (“It is really frustrating sometimes that despite the latest technology, I have a problem establishing a normal relationship with my colleagues and professors”);
- 6) excessive workload (“You can’t imagine how much material I get from my professors. And I attend six courses”);
- 7) insufficient time for revising content due to a tight schedule (“The online environment has influenced an increase in the dynamics with which we get acquainted with the content”);
- 8) lack of “face-to-face communication involving physical contact” (“Online teaching introduces avatars instead of people”);
- 9) lack of teacher-student and student-student interaction (“I still haven’t gotten to know my colleagues”);
- 10) monotony and routine settling in (“Each class is like the previous one”).

The most striking were the responses provided by a number of the students who stated that online university lectures represented “an obnoxious substitute for real (mode of) studying”, “reflection of cruel reality”, “foolishness” and “an enforced mode of teaching” or “force majeure” that entailed taking exams and midterm tests in “inhuman conditions” and with “poor results”. In other words, after a year and a half of attending online classes, students began to experience them as a “video tutorial on YouTube”, losing the “feeling of studying” and “spiritual closeness with peers.” Six EFL students and two Serbian students emphasised their distress related to their future teaching profession because of the disturbed social interaction in online learning and teaching. Contrary to this, some students considered online teaching to be a “new experience” with a number of advantages, such as no additional living costs (paying rent and bills, as well as necessary textbooks), absence of peer pressure in the classroom and unlimited access to all teaching materials on various collaboration platforms. The last of the mentioned advantages influenced the responses of twenty-five students who regarded virtual teaching as a supplement to traditional teaching. Students with disabilities saw online teaching as an ideal means of overcoming their everyday difficulties related to coming to the faculty, whereas students who had to retake the courses they had failed described virtual teaching as an opportunity to continue their studies along with their other engagements (mostly family obligations).

The quality of interaction with university teachers, teaching associates and colleagues was described as rather poor by sixty-one respondents, who stated that online teaching impaired interaction since it was “strictly formal”, “restricted” and “enforced”. Moreover, the respondents carefully observed their teachers’ performance and differentiated between those who stimulated interaction in the virtual environment and those who did not make that effort. The students highlighted the following techniques for stimulating interaction in online classes:

- 1) attendance tracking (random or respecting the official list of students enrolled in the course);
- 2) posing (interesting) sub-questions;
- 3) presentation of students' term papers and homework;
- 4) bonus points for prerequisite activities;
- 5) practical assignments in classes.

As many as 80% of the respondents believed that various (and practical) tasks and activities would be essential for better interaction in online classes, while a negligibly small number of students regarded online PowerPoint presentations as efficient as those presented in a traditional classroom environment. One point appears to be particularly worth noticing. Namely, not one student mentioned the use of online teaching resources and modern multimedia teaching tools, which was a paradox since these means are expected in online teaching. The students recognised the interaction with their colleagues as an important segment of virtual teaching, emphasising that it was considerably limited to merely texting one another, which made them "feel very bad" and hope that "they would soon go back to lecture halls".

The quantitative analysis yielded a range of versatile responses provided by the future teachers regarding their attitudes towards online university teaching. The minimum and maximum numbers of the respondents' answers prove that their attitudes ranged from agreeing to disagreeing (Table 2).

**Table 2** Descriptive statistics of the respondents' answers

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)
I attend online classes regularly.	97	1.00	5.00	4.2474	1.07074
Online teaching is easier to follow than traditional classroom teaching.	97	1.00	5.00	2.6598	1.35313
I participate actively in online classes.	97	1.00	5.00	3.6598	1.26562
The teacher wants to hear my opinion in class.	97	1.00	5.00	3.5258	1.17343
I am given the opportunity to ask the teacher to explain something that I do not understand.	97	1.00	5.00	4.4124	1.03835
I understand the materials covered in online classes.	97	1.00	5.00	4.0722	1.03327
The teacher adapts teaching methods to the virtual environment.	97	1.00	5.00	4.2165	1.00236
I frequently turn on my microphone whenever I want to state my opinion or answer a question.	97	1.00	5.00	3.4742	1.37001
Turning on the microphone requires turning on the webcam.	97	1.00	5.00	1.4021	.70208
I prefer in-call messages to using the microphone.	97	1.00	5.00	3.2062	1.33805
The teacher uses breakout rooms to organise teaching in groups.	97	1.00	5.00	2.4536	1.45072
Digital whiteboard is more functional than the traditional classroom blackboard.	97	1.00	5.00	2.4021	1.26376
Total	97				

The results of the quantitative research showed that the bachelor students of both departments attended online classes regularly ( $M = 4.24$ ). Yet, their responses related to the statement that attending online classes was easier than attending traditional classes ranged from disagreement to indecisiveness ( $M = 2.66$ ), which indicates that the future teachers made a distinction between these two modes of teaching, endorsing the traditional one. Several studies conducted in the last fifteen years have proved that there are no significant differences between online teaching and conventional teaching in regards to efficiency (Schoenfeld-Tacher et al., 2001; Bernard et al., 2004; Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006; Driscoll et al., 2012). However, the students' opinions about their own participation and engagement in online classes ranged from indecisiveness to agreement ( $M = 3.66$ ). The identical results were obtained by Conan et al. (2020). This finding indicates that not all students are prepared to participate actively in online classes. Students' participation partly depends on teachers' willingness to offer them the right opportunity, which is one of the crucial tasks that a teacher has in the virtual environment (Yengin et al., 2010; Rapanta et al., 2020). The students' responses related to this issue ranged from indecisiveness to agreement ( $M = 3.53$ ). The students, though, strongly agreed with the statement that their teachers provided enough time for their questions ( $M = 4.41$ ), as well as with the statement that their teachers adapted the teaching methods to the virtual environment ( $M = 4.22$ ), which enabled them to understand the materials covered in online classes ( $M = 4.07$ ).

In regards to the use of the microphone to engage in class discussions, the students' attitudes ranged from indecisiveness to agreement ( $M = 3.47$ ). Contrary to this, the students strongly disagreed with the statement that turning on the microphone required turning on the webcam. This global phenomenon of the invisible presence might be explained by various reasons of social, psychological or personal nature. Studying the problem of the invisible generations, Gherhes et al. emphasise that this kind of student behaviour could be caused by anxiety, diffidence, securing privacy and personal space or the possibility of another person entering the student's room. (Gherhes et al., 2021). Bedenlier et al. assume that this behaviour is caused by the desire to retain the homogenous group (Bedenlier et al., 2020). Although the students stated in the open-ended questions that they preferred writing in-call messages to speaking using the microphone, the quantitative results showed fluctuations in their responses related to the use of these two integrated functions of virtual classrooms and online teaching platforms ( $M = 3.21$ ), where in-call texting is characteristic of asynchronous (and not synchronous) communication (Fedynich, 2013). Also, the students disagreed with the use of breakout rooms ( $M = 2.45$ ), whose functionality in teaching was analysed by Saltz and Heckman (2020), as well as with the statement that the digital whiteboard was more functional than the traditional blackboard ( $M = 2.40$ ).

The attitudes towards online university teaching expressed by the bachelor students of Serbian and by the bachelor EFL students were analysed with the purpose of detecting statistically significant differences. All the items on the assessment scale were grouped into the dependent variable called "online teaching", where the students' general responses were examined regarding the study programme, gender and year of study.



**Table 3** Differences in the participants' responses based on their study programme

	Study programme	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	t-test	Degree of freedom (df)	Significance
Online teaching	Department of the English Language and Literature	51	38.0588	8.98980	-2.47	75.73	0.02
	Department of the Serbian Language	46	41.5870	4.55864			

A statistically significant difference in the participants' responses about online teaching depending on their study programme was identified by means of the t-test ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p = 0.02$ ). The research results show that the future teachers of Serbian as the mother tongue ( $M = 41.59$ ) valued online teaching more than the future EFL teachers ( $M = 38.06$ ). Actually, teaching methods and instruction modes practiced at these two departments (Department of Serbian Language, educating teachers of Serbian as the mother tongue, and Department of English Language and Literature, educating teachers of English as a foreign language) differ considerably, which is the reason why the EFL students presumed that online teaching did not supply university teachers with the appropriate tools necessary to apply the traditional classroom model in the virtual environment.

However, the respondents' statements did not differ significantly with respect to gender, although female students valued online teaching more highly than their male counterparts (Table 4), which is also confirmed by the results of the research conducted by Cuadrado-Garcia et al. 2010.

**Table 4** Differences in the participants' responses based on their gender

	Gender	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	t-test	Degree of freedom (df)	Significance
Online teaching	Males	18	36.5556	10.86940	-1.47	19.63	0.16
	Females	79	40.4557	6.24869			

The ANOVA test was used to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the future teachers' responses with respect to the year of study (Table 5).

**Table 5** Differences in the participants' responses based on the year of study

	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	F-test	Degree of freedom (df)	Significance
First year	30	38.8333	6.30863	1.33	3	0.27
Second year	23	38.9130	10.07658			
Third year	21	42.5714	4.85357			
Fourth year	23	39.1304	7.38736			
Total	97	39.7320	7.41411			

The results showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the respondents' answers with respect to the year of study ( $p > 0.05$ ;  $p = 0.27$ ). It is worth

mentioning that the students of the third and fourth years of study were more appreciative of online teaching than their first- and second-year colleagues. The reason is obvious: the latter have never even entered the faculty building since the day they enrolled in their bachelor studies, nor have they attended a single in-person lecture. On the other hand, the students of the third and fourth years have already had this experience (still vivid in their memory), which influenced their appreciation of virtual teaching.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Teachers all over the world have encountered numerous challenges related to online teaching which requires systematic and continuous research with the purpose of improving teaching and its efficiency, as well as students' academic achievement. The conducted research shows the attitudes towards virtual teaching from the perspective of future teachers of Serbian as the mother tongue and future EFL teachers. The obtained results showed that the respondents perceived online teaching as an alternative or a supplement to traditional teaching, indispensable in the specific social circumstances ("Online teaching is an alternative to the traditional (classroom) type of teaching in specific social circumstances"; "It complements classroom teaching in normal life circumstances and replaces it in specific circumstances"). In the course of a year and a half, their attitude towards online teaching has evidently changed from agreement ("We are very satisfied because online teaching has proven to be a very successful way of learning") to indecisiveness ("In the given situation, I really don't know how we could organize courses in a better way, although there are a lot of good and bad sides") and eagerness to return to traditional classrooms ("Pure nonsense, we should start in-person classes as soon as possible"). Namely, students notice that this type of teaching goes towards a "monotonous repetition of classes", where "courses are very similar", despite the fact that they have a positive attitude towards interaction with their teachers and are adjusting to the online environment. A statistically significant difference is detected in the responses of the future teachers of Serbian and the future EFL teachers ( $p < 0.05$ ). The mother tongue students have a more positive attitude towards online teaching ("The nature of our courses allows us to conduct lectures and tutorials through online platforms"), while the EFL students believe that learning a foreign language requires direct contact with teachers and teaching associates ("Unless we hear and see the teachers and the teaching associate, we will not be able to master the foreign language completely"). However, there is no statistically significant difference between gender and year of study. Minor deviations in the responses provided by the students of the first and second years in comparison to the responses of the students of the third and fourth years of study are caused by the younger students' failed expectations and disillusionment with the current situation that conditioned the closure of the faculty building ("When I enrolled, I believed that I would listen to my teachers and teaching associates in the lecture halls. During online classes, I don't have a feeling that I'm attending a faculty, but a language course").

This is closely connected to the students' motivation to participate actively in classes. Namely, even though they attended online classes regularly, they stated that online teaching did not offer possibilities for interaction and that the teachers were solely responsible for encouraging and stimulating them to become engaged in class activities ("At the very beginning, it was interesting. However, over time, our motivation and

desire to participate in classes dropped. Now we only participate in classes where the teacher invests enormous amounts of energy"). According to the respondents, the most effective ways of encouraging interaction were attendance tracking, posing interesting questions, presenting students' term papers, a punishment and reward system and practical class assignments. The main paradox of university online teaching is the fact that the students did not recognise the function of online teaching resources and modern multimedia tools, which is very nicely summarised in one answer, "It seems to me that in (this) first phase of online teaching we did not understand its essence. Online teaching should be a hybrid form of learning, which means taking advantage of all the benefits that the application of ICT brings. Unfortunately, it seems to me that as a society we are not ready enough to use modern software tools and online resources in class. There are so many interactive materials available, especially in foreign language teaching, that we can use every day". Still, the analysis of the obtained results proves that the students, in general, had a positive attitude towards their teachers' engagement, appreciating their effort to adapt teaching materials and methods to the virtual environment. However, the students demonstrated reluctance towards the integrated functions of virtual classrooms, such as the microphone and webcam, and indecisiveness regarding the chat box, breakout rooms and digital whiteboards.

Online teaching has been incorporated into educational systems all over the world, which means that the research conducted on its merits and benefits should contribute to its better understanding and improvement. Given the objective circumstances in which we currently live, we believe that online teaching will continue to be the dominant form of teaching for a long period of time. For this reason, it is necessary to determine specific recommendations in order to improve its quality. By analysing the attitudes of future Serbian and EFL teachers and their recommendations, we have selected some useful tips that will help teachers in their efforts to make their classes more interactive: 1) Use an electronic interactive platform to create virtual classrooms in line with the needs of the course and its nature. 2) Monitor the development of a software that could be used in classes and assess its functionality in the implementation of specific teaching tasks. 3) Use a variety of online tools to promote a more purposeful presentation of content, including electronic interactive whiteboards. 4) Insist on visual contact via a webcam. In order to set a positive example for their students, teachers are expected to use their cameras in their classes, as well as explain all the benefits of face-to-face communication in terms of the quality of interaction and teaching in general. 5) Organise classes so that students can join the conversation at any time via microphones or text messages. Students share the view that having support during a class is extremely valuable for understanding the content better. 6) Prepare electronic materials and share them with students through asynchronous virtual classrooms. 7) Organise classes in small groups using integrated functions of e-platforms (breakout rooms). 8) Adapt methods and procedures to work in the virtual environment in a way that will lead to the achievement of the pre-set teaching goals. It is especially important for teachers to avoid "reading from the PowerPoint presentation" in any way, which students recognize as an extremely non-functional procedure. 9) Engage students directly by calling on them. 10) Keep records of students' engagement in classes and reward them for their timeliness and dedication. 11) Approach your classes as energetically as possible in order to neutralize the limitations inevitable to online teaching. Students expect their teacher to be in a good mood, which will make them forget for a moment the harsh reality of the coronavirus

pandemic. 12) Behave responsibly in terms of teaching tasks, respecting the class schedule and the time that students have at their disposal.

### 5.1. Research Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This paper presented information and statistical processing of data on important issues of online teaching. Since the attitudes of students at two departments at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Niš were considered, the limitation of our study is reflected in a small research sample. Namely, the specific nature of the teaching profession implies a small number of students of Serbian and EFL at the respective departments. Future research should include conducting the same or a similar investigation which would involve larger groups of future Serbian and EFL teachers, as well as: 1) considering the attitudes of teachers employed in primary and secondary schools, and universities towards online teaching; 2) comparing the effectiveness of online teaching at the beginning of the pandemic and after a certain period of time; 3) considering the functionality of the most used electronic interactive platforms in teaching; 4) developing an electronic interactive software for online education.

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## STAVOVI BUDUĆIH NASTAVNIKA O ONLAJN NASTAVI NA OSNOVNIM AKADEMSKIM STUDIJAMA SRBISTIKE I ANGLISTIKE

*U radu su predstavljene rezultati istraživanja o stavovima budućih nastavnika srpskog kao maternjeg i engleskog jezika kao stranog prema važnim pitanjima nastave u onlajn okruženju tokom pandemije izazvane pojavom i širenjem virusa korona. Pandemija izazvana pojavom i širenjem virusa korona uticala je na promenu načina podučavanja i učenja u čitavom svetu – tradicionalni (učionički) vid nastave je preko noći zamenjen onlajn nastavom. Iako je korišćenje virtuelnih učionica omogućilo nesmetanu realizaciju nastavnog procesa, univerzitetski nastavnici su se suočili sa mnoštvom izazova i pitanja koja su postala aktuelna sa dolaskom nevidljive generacije (eng. invisible generations): pitanja motivacije, interakcije i uloge studenata tokom onlajn časova, kao i pitanja funkcionalnosti metoda, pristupa i onlajn alata. U radu je korišćena metoda teorijske analize sa tehnikom analize sadržaja. U empirijskom delu rada korišćena je deskriptivna metoda sa tehnikama anketiranja i skaliranja. Zahvaljujući pobrojanim metodama sproveli smo detaljna kvalitativna i kvantitativna istraživanja radi ispitivanja stavova studenata u vezi sa njihovom motivisanošću da aktivno učestvuju u nastavnom procesu. Sprovedeno istraživanje nam je pokazalo da budući nastavnici srpskog kao maternjeg i engleskog kao stranog jezika onlajn nastavu vide kao alternativu ili dopunu tradicionalnom vidu nastave u specifičnim društvenim okolnostima. Njihov stav o onlajn nastavi se tokom jednoipogodišnjeg pohađanja promenio od prihvatanja do neodlučnosti i želje za povratkom u učionice, pri čemu su studenti srbistike pokazali veći stepen prihvatanja ovog vida nastave. Zapaženo je da postoji statistički značajna razlika u odgovorima budućih nastavnika maternjeg i stranog jezika ( $p < 0.05$ ), dok takva razlika ne postoji između polova i godine studija.*

**Ključne reči:** onlajn nastava, srpski kao maternji jezik, engleski kao strani jezik, stavovi studenata