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Students' Attitudes towards Using Microsoft Teams Platform in English Language Instruction[2]

Extended summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced teachers and students to exchange their traditional classrooms for the virtual space and transfer to online learning. This can be beneficial to a certain extent, as online learning and e-learning platforms encourage students' participation and motivation, support learners' autonomy, and promote collaborative knowledge construction. In addition, e-learning platforms improve students' interaction, offer better control over content and the time spent learning, and provide instant feedback. However, besides the obvious advantages of online learning, there are also potential challenges since foreign language learning requires close social interaction between students and teachers. Thus, a positive attitude towards online learning is of the utmost importance to the effective online educational process.

This study aims to determine the English foreign language students' perception of using the *Microsoft Teams* platform and its accompanying tools and applications during one semes-

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ter. The study explores the functionality and usability of this learning platform for the development of language skills. For the purpose of this research, a sample wqs engaged which consisted of fifty-five first-year students of the Faculty of Technical Sciences at the University of Novi Sad. During one semester, the students used the following tools and applications on the *Microsoft Teams* platform: 1) *OneNote Notebook* and *Chat* for the development of writing skills where *OneNote Notebook* was used for collaborative writing and *Chat* for everyday communication; 2) *News* for the development of reading skills, where students were given authentic texts to read and analyse; 3) *Microsoft Stream* and *Speech Recognition* for the development of speaking skills, where *Microsoft Stream* was used for uploading the short students' videos and *Speech Recognition* for recording and transcribing the students' dialogues; 4) Sharing the Screen for the development of listening skills, where students were given short videos to listen to during the class.

At the end of the semester, in June 2021, the data were collected using a paper-and-pen questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended and open-ended questions regarding the students' use of the *Microsoft Teams* platform and its tools, functions, and applications during one semester. The statistical analysis of data was conducted using the IBM SPSS statistic software package. The basic measures of descriptive statistics were used to analyse respondents' attitudes towards *Microsoft Teams* platform. The data collected from open-ended questions were analysed using content analysis.

The results of the research indicate that most respondents have developed a positive attitude towards the use of the *Microsoft Teams* platform and its tools and accompanying applications. In addition, they have found this platform and its applications interactive, innovative, simple, and effective in the development of language skills. Most respondents also have emphasized the functionality, reliability, and simplicity of the platform and its tools. Apart from the advantages, some respondents also identified technical disadvantages, such as strong internet connection required, synchronization problems, and video uploading difficulties. Based on all of the above, it can be concluded that the potentials of the *Microsoft Teams* platform in foreign language teaching are great, and offer, in addition to a simple and functional interface, the opportunity to improve language skills in an innovative, interactive, and creative environment.

Keywords: applications, foreign language teaching, online teaching, online learning platform, students' attitudes

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