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## *Interactive Aspects of Online Foreign Language Teaching at Tertiary Level during Pandemic<sup>2</sup>*

### Extended summary

The development of the coronavirus-caused pandemic has entailed major changes in the teaching and learning process because the traditional on-site teaching has been replaced with online teaching. In order to make the teaching process operational, universities have provided teachers and students with platforms and tools for online teaching that enable different types of synchronous and asynchronous interaction. The aim of this paper is to determine the ways of achieving the most important forms of interaction in online teaching (student-teacher, student-student, and student-content interaction), their degree, and to point out some potential shortcomings. The research was conducted at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad during the academic year 2020/2021 and the participants were students who study French and Spanish as a compulsory or elective language. The research was conducted in the form of a survey and the obtained data were analyzed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative procedures. The results of the research showed that the combination of two distance learning platforms, one of which is synchronous and the other asynchronous, is the best solution for the development of all the above-mentioned forms of interaction. Also, based on the conducted analysis, it can be concluded that the majority of the students are satisfied with the way in which these types of interaction are carried out in a virtual environment. The role of teach-

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ers has changed significantly compared to traditional teaching and it is very complex. Teachers no longer just convey knowledge, but they are also mediators, facilitators, guides, associates, pedagogues, and psychologists. Given that the form of didactic materials has changed and become digitized, students are expected to actively engage in online teaching, both synchronous and asynchronous. When it comes to the first type of interaction, student-teacher, it should be noted that, in addition to e-learning platforms, email has been used extensively as a means of communication. Teachers demonstrated a high level of understanding towards students and the new situation and they were almost always available. This type of interaction has proven to be particularly suitable for both introverts and anxious people, as well as for students who are employed. When it comes to student-student interaction, students used the already known applications and social networks for mutual communication, both for group work in order to create certain tasks and for communication for other purposes. When it comes to student-content interaction, students easily accessed didactic materials that were available to them all the time. In addition, teachers suggested that they use other multimedia content available on the Internet as well. However, when selecting didactic materials, one should keep in mind the phenomenon of hyper-connection, student workload, and the fact that online lectures and consultations are held at a specific and limited time. Since the classes were not held in a traditional classroom and the students did not have an opportunity to communicate face to face with their subject teachers, some students reported feeling isolated and insecure, which presented them with additional difficulties during learning. Based on all the above, we give several suggestions in order to improve these three types of interaction and distance learning of foreign languages in general. Teachers should use maximum two platforms, one asynchronous (so that students can individually adapt to the acquisition of the new teaching content) and one synchronous (in order to communicate in real time). Additionally, it is necessary to encourage students to communicate more often with the subject teacher and other students in order to have a more active attitude towards learning and greater motivation. It is important that teachers adapt to the new circumstances and use the platforms and digital tools to achieve better teaching. Also, one should always be in step with the times and introduce innovations into teaching practice, taking into account the context in which the teaching is conducted and the needs of students.

**Keywords:** interaction, online teaching, French as a foreign language, Spanish as a foreign language, pandemic

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