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University Students and Their Attitudes toward Online Learning of Language for Specific Purposes

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This study presents the results of quantitative research conducted among university students of tourism studies regarding their attitudes toward the teaching approaches in their online language courses for special purposes online courses (LSP) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our main goal was to analyse the attitudes of university students from two Slovenian tourism faculties towards the online teaching approaches in the LSP courses provided by the Faculty of Tourism at Brežice (FTB), and the Faculty of Tourism Studies-Turistica at Portorož (FTT). Four research hypotheses were put forward aiming at the students' attitudes regarding their gender and affiliation, their self-evaluated technological knowledge, and their attitudes toward the foreign language lecturers' teaching methods and approaches. 468 students completed the survey, 66 of whom were from FTB and 75 from FTT, who had responded to an anonymous online survey and the results of the quantitative study are as follows: respondents had evaluated their technological knowledge as well as the teaching approaches used by foreign language lecturers fairly positively. As for gender and LSP teaching methods and approaches, no evidence was found that students' attitudes were statistically significant, as did the affiliation and the self-evaluated knowledge of tools for remote LSP learning. The findings imply that LSP teachers might want to adopt a common strategy for online foreign language teaching nationwide and provide a commonly accepted, equally motivating, and safe teaching environment.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, foreign language online teaching approaches, language for specific purposes, students' attitudes, tourism sector, university

INTRODUCTION

The tourism and hospitality industry has become a social and economic force on a global scale. Negotiating, engaging with foreigners, and general communication are important skills for students who wish to work in either the tourism or hospitality industries. Therefore, English language proficiency is essential for those pursuing

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careers in this industry. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), LSP or Language for Specific Purposes has become much more widespread with the popularity of educational psychology. LSP students have different requirements and interests from other types of students, which has influenced their motivations for learning and the effectiveness of their schooling. This has led to the evolution of LSP courses which address the learners' needs and interests. Therefore, LSP is becoming more important for students engaged in the Tourism and Hospitality industries. Educators need to understand their students' strengths, weaknesses, needs, and learning styles. Both teachers and students have issues with EFL or English as a Foreign Language. Some of these problems arise from teaching methodologies (Kannan, 2009). Many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers focus on grammatical rules rather than practicing communicative language, which often does not sit well with some learners and is according to Nunan (2004) rather ineffective. Generally speaking, good foreign language (FL) competencies are one of the most important qualifications required in the tourism sector (Davras & Bulgan, 2012; Miškulin Čubrić, 2000). English-mediated classes, which goes for all classes delivered in any foreign language, may inspire learners to acquire the target language more accurately and faster (Krashen, 1995), for the instructor does not focus on teaching language proficiency, they rather aim at delivering the content of the class. It is therefore clear that the main purpose of the English or other foreign language-mediated classes in the Department of Tourism is to gain awareness of the target language through English or some other foreign language.

By introducing computers into FL learning and teaching, computer-assisted language learning, and due to the growing use of the internet, FL learning has become more accessible to all who wish to and have the opportunity to learn. Since the area of research on computer-assisted online FL learning is relatively recent, various terms have been used referring to the issue of online learning and there seems to be little agreement on the terminology used (Erarslan & Topkaya, 2017; Gluchmanova, 2015, 2020; Moore, Dickson-Deane & Galyen, 2011). Terms such as distance learning, distance education, online instruction, online training, e-learning, asynchronous vs. synchronous learning as well as web-based education are some of the more popular terms recently used in instructional and technological contexts (ibid.). All of the aforementioned terms are sometimes covered by "e-learning", "online learning" or "distance learning", all of which are interchangeably used in the current study and indicate any learning activity which is provided with the help of technology.

METHOD

Research questions

According to literature review, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1. There are statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods concerning their affiliation (Faculty of Tourism Studies – Turistica, UP, Portorož vs Faculty of Tourism, UM, Brežice).

Hypothesis 2. There are statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes toward LSP teaching methods concerning their gender.

Hypothesis 3. There are statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes toward LSP teaching methods concerning the self-evaluation of their technological knowledge.

Hypothesis 4. There are statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods concerning their evaluation of teaching methods adopted by lecturers.

Research design

This study has been carried out by applying a quantitative research paradigm. It employed a survey design to measure the university students' attitudes regarding the teaching approaches and methods used in their online LSP course during the COVID-19 pandemic. The paradigm consists of a descriptive and causal-non-experimental method of empirical pedagogical research. The students have responded to a 17-item online questionnaire to elicit data for the study.

Gathering of data and the research sample

Importance was given to the anonymity and confidentiality of the research; hence no personal data are disclosed. The survey was made available on the online service provider 1ka.si. Due to contact restrictions and in line with the COVID-19 pandemic regulations at the time of the survey (February through May 2021), was exclusively available online to avoid crowded lecture rooms and the potential spread of the Sars-Cov-2 virus. University foreign language teachers who teach LSP courses in various faculties in Slovenia were encouraged to motivate their students to complete the survey utilizing the snowball approach, which consequently led to 328 completed surveys.

Research instrument

The research coauthor, prof. Eva Podovšovnik, Ph. D., is credited with the forming of the original questionnaire targeting university students' attitudes regarding their online learning during the outbreak of the pandemic. The original questionnaire comprised of two parts, each aiming at different stakeholders, the first part focused on university lecturers and the second on university students. The latter was taken up by the coauthor of this study and adapted it. Consequently, a 16-item instrument (see Table 1 for the list of items) was drawn up and used in the online survey which aimed at university students' attitudes towards their technological know-how, perceived foreign language teaching methods and approaches used in the LSP online course concerning their gender and affiliation (Faculty of tourism studies-Turistica Portorož, University of Primorska vs Faculty of tourism Brežice, University of Maribor) and their gender. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is at $\alpha = 0.8$, which confirms the reliability of the research instrument. Pearsons' correlational coefficient (see Appendix 1) among pairs of statements about the attitudes towards LSP teaching methods show no multicollinearity ($r < 0.8$).

Table 1
List of items: attitudes towards LSP teaching methods

ITEM	Abbreviation
LSP online teaching tools can be adapted to any particular form, regardless of the typology and number of students.	A1
LSP online teaching tools' users are provided with help in case they run into trouble.	A2
LSP online teaching tools enable users to access different communication channels (audio, video, text).	A3
LSP online teaching tools enable a flexible use of their functions (the possibility of multiple tasking, and access to different functions based on diversification).	A4
In my opinion, all users can make use of LSP online teaching tools.	A5
In my opinion, LSP teaching tools are accessible to students with special needs.	A6
Even when offline, LSP online teaching tools retain their functionality as well as content.	A7
LSP online teaching tools have the capability of integrating learners by using synchronous and asynchronous communication.	A8
LSP online teaching tools are used by university professors to check their students' attendance.	A9
Most university professors seem familiar with the use of LSP online teaching tools.	A10
Most university professors seem to have basic knowledge of LSP online teaching tools.	A11
By using LSP online teaching tools university professors can actively control the learning process.	A12
Online teaching of LSP has modified my attitude towards my university professor.	A13
The choice of LSP online teaching methods and approaches has had a significant impact on my learning outcome.	A14
I am familiar with the use of LSP online teaching tools.	A15
I have basic technical/digital competencies concerning dealing with LSP online teaching tools.	A16

Data analysis

The data were statistically analysed employing descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, mean values, and standard deviation of mean). The data was processed using SPSS IBM Statistical Package version 26. Factor analysis was used to linearly reduce the number of variables. Linear regression was used to test research hypotheses.

Presentation of the sample

Among respondents, 80 (59.3 %) were female and 55 (40.7 %) were male students of tourism. 75 (53.2 %) studied tourism at the University of Primorska, while 66 (46.8 %) studied tourism at the University of Maribor. The average age of respondents was 25.66 years (SD = 6.81 years).

FINDINGS

Firstly, respondents were asked if they used new technologies for studying during the Covid-19 pandemic. Multiple responses could be chosen. See Figure 1 for results.

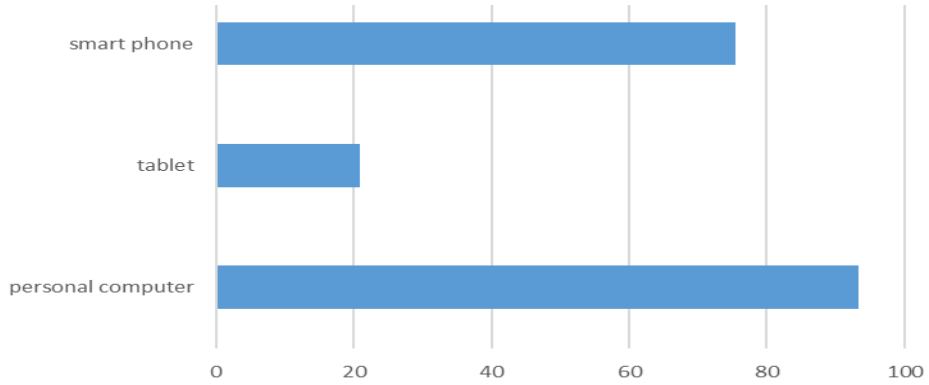

Figure 1
Distribution of new technologies used during the Covid-19 pandemic (in %)

Based on the results shown in Figure 1, almost all respondents (93.3 %) used personal computers, 75.4 % of respondents used smartphones, and just 20.9 % of respondents used tablets for studying during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alt text: Figure 1 is represented by a bar chart showing the percentage of students using different technologies for studying during the Covid-19 pandemic. Personal computers were used by 93.3%, smartphones by 75.4%, and tablets by 20.9% of respondents

In the following, respondents were asked to evaluate their technological knowledge and the teaching methods and approaches used by their LSP lecturers. In both cases, respondents were asked to use a scale of 1 (no knowledge at all) and 10 (complete knowledge). Descriptive statistics can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of self-evaluation of technological knowledge of respondents and evaluation of teaching methods and approaches used by foreign language lecturers

	Self-evaluation of your technological knowledge	Evaluation of teaching methods and approaches used by lecturers
Mean	7.27	8.91
Std. Deviation	2.284	1.383
Skewness	-0.919	-1.408
Kurtosis	0.092	1.741
r	0.135 (p = 0.131)	

Results presented in Table 2 are as follows: respondents reported their technological knowledge being above average (if 5 is considered average knowledge, M = 7.27, SD = 2.28), while they evaluated the teaching methods and approaches used by their lecturers on an even higher level (M = 8.91, SD = 1.38). In both cases, skewness (-0.92 for self-evaluation of their technological knowledge and -1.41 for the evaluation of teaching methods of their lecturers) and kurtosis (0.09) for self-evaluation of their technological knowledge and 1.74 for the evaluation of teaching methods and approaches used by their lecturers) show a distribution close to normal. Pearson's correlational coefficient was computed to investigate the association between the self-evaluation of respondents'

technological knowledge and the evaluation of the teaching methods and approaches used by their lecturers ($r = 0.14$, $p = 0.13$). Results do not support the association between both evaluations.

In the following, respondents were asked to evaluate their agreement with statements regarding their attitudes towards LSP teaching methods, on a scale from 1 (do not agree at all) to 10 (completely agree). Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Descriptive statistics for the agreement with statements about respondents' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
A1	8.08	1.711	-1.107	1.261
A2	7.26	2.125	-0.795	-0.060
A3	7.37	2.255	-0.691	-0.463
A4	6.86	2.218	-0.201	-0.797
A5	5.23	2.948	0.107	-1.402
A6	3.92	2.816	0.673	-0.997
A7	5.32	2.272	0.006	-0.376
A8	5.91	1.915	-0.319	0.099
A9	7.95	2.478	-1.160	0.202
A10	7.52	2.067	-0.878	0.134
A11	6.48	2.448	-0.450	-1.024
A12	7.86	2.100	-1.240	0.924
A13	5.61	2.777	-0.014	-1.459
A14	5.38	2.767	-0.081	-1.324
A15	6.31	2.497	-0.195	-1.044
A16	6.17	2.560	0.036	-1.192

Results presented in Table 3 show that on average respondents mostly agree with the statement that LSP online teaching tools can be adapted to different situations ($M = 8.08$, $SD = 1.71$). Thus, we can conclude that respondents agree with this statement, nevertheless, they also agree that LSP online teaching tools are also used by lecturers to control the students' attendance of the lectures ($M = 7.95$, $SD = 2.48$), that lecturers can use LSP online teaching tools to actively control the learning process ($M = 7.86$, $SD = 2.1$), that most of the lecturers seem familiar with the use of LSP online teaching tools ($M = 7.52$, $SD = 2.07$), that LSP online teaching tools enable users to access different communication channels ($M = 7.37$, $SD = 2.26$), that LSP online teaching tools' users are offered necessary help if requested ($M = 7.26$, $SD = 2.13$), that LSP online teaching tools enable flexible use of their functions ($M = 6.86$, $SD = 2.22$) and that most lecturers seem to have basic knowledge of LSP online teaching tools ($M = 6.48$, $SD = 2.45$). Respondents do not agree ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 2.82$) with the statement that LSP teaching tools are accessible to students with special needs. In all other cases, the agreement seems to be average ($5.23 < M < 6.31$). Skewness ($-1.24 <$ Skewness < 0.67) and kurtosis ($-1.46 <$ Kurtosis < 1.26) show distribution close to normal, for all the included statements. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.8$) points to a reliable measurement instrument. Pearsons' correlational coefficient (see Appendix 1) among pairs of statements about the attitudes towards LSP teaching methods show no multicollinearity ($r < 0.8$). There were 2 statements (namely, Online teaching of LSP has modified my attitude towards my university professor, and the choice of LSP online teaching

methods and approaches has had a significant impact on my learning outcome) having just a few statistically significant correlations with the other items. Hence, they were excluded from further statistical analysis. All the other previously mentioned statements about the attitudes towards LSP teaching methods other than the two mentioned above were used in further statistical analysis.

In order to reduce the number of statements, factor analysis (principal axis factoring) was used. Results are presented in the following (see Appendix 2). Bartlett's test of Sphericity (CHI-square = 480.7, $p < 0.01$) confirms the adequacy of selected items for using factor analysis. Final commonalities are higher than 0.3, supporting the importance of the selected items for the concept of attitudes towards LSP teaching methods. The initial solution shows 4 factors with eigenvalues higher than 1, explaining 68.16 % of the total variance. The Scree diagram supports the existence of 1 or 3 factors. Yet, no clear solution could be identified upon checking factor scores on all factors.

A 3-factor solution was explored in the following. In this case, 60.55 % of the total variance is explained. At first, no rotation was used (see Appendix 3). Later, a Varimax rotation was used (see Appendix 4) and Oblimin rotation (see Appendix 5). As a result, no clear solution could be found. A single-factor solution was then explored (see Appendix 6), in which 32.53 % of the total variance could be explained. In this case, there are 2 items with low factor loadings (LSP online teaching tools can be adapted to any particular form, regardless of the typology and number of students, and Most university professors seem familiar with the use of LSP online teaching tools). We decided to omit those two statements from further statistical analysis.

In the follow-up, a 12-item factor solution was computed, resulting in 3 factors having eigenvalues higher than 1 and explaining 63.54 % of the total variance. The 3-factor solution (see Appendix 7) shows no clear solution; thus, a single-factor solution was examined (see Table 4). In this case, 37.45 % of the total variance was explained.

Table 4
Single-factor solution (12 items)

Factor Matrix[a]

	Factor
	1
A3	0.371
A4	0.625
A5	0.522
A6	0.648
A7	0.642
A8	0.533
A9	0.600
A10	0.288
A11	0.424
A12	0.345
A15	0.783
A16	0.796

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
a. 1 factor extracted. 5 iterations required.

The result of the factor matrix presented in Table 4 shows that all the items have positive high (<0.3) factor loadings. Thus, this factor solution was saved for further statistical analysis.

In the last part of the paper, the research Hypotheses 1 (There are statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods concerning their affiliation.) and 2 (There are statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods concerning their gender.) were tested, using linear regression (ENTER method was performed). Gender, University of studies (Primorska versus Maribor), self-evaluation of technological knowledge, and evaluation of teaching methods and approaches used by lecturers, were used as independent variables. The factor of attitudes towards LSP teaching methods was used as a dependent variable. In this case, 43.2 % of the total variance is explained. The regression model (see Appendix 8) was proven to be adequate ($F = 14.28$, $p < 0.01$). Results can be found in Table 5.

Table 5
Regression coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1(Constant)	-0.988	0.796		-1.241	0.218
University (Primorska = 1, Maribor = 0)	-0.407	0.167	-0.218	-2.431	0.017
Gender	0.088	0.170	0.047	0.522	0.603
Self-evaluation of your technological knowledge	0.265	0.042	0.568	6.297	0.000
Evaluation of teaching methods of lecturers	-0.101	0.064	-0.140	-1.573	0.120

a. Dependent Variable: attitudes towards LSP teaching methods (factor, students of tourism)

Results presented in Table 5 show that there are statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level in agreement with statements about the attitudes towards LSP teaching methods, by affiliation ($B = -0.41$, $p = 0.02$) and self-evaluation of respondents' technological knowledge ($B = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$). Respondents from the University of Maribor and those who highly evaluated their technological knowledge agreed more with the statements about the attitudes toward LSP teaching methods. In comparison, the students from the University of Primorska and those with a lower evaluation of their technological knowledge.

DISCUSSION

The study focuses on the attitudes of university students from two Slovenian faculties of tourism studies regarding the online tools used by their foreign language lecturers for their Language for Specific Purposes course, concerning the gender of university students, their affiliation, and their self-reported technological expertise. Due to the circumstances at the time of the survey carried out in the period from February to May 2021 (which corresponds to the second general lockdown in Slovenia) the gathering of data and the survey itself were conducted exclusively online by administering the online survey tool by 1ka.si. Results presented in Figure 1 show that almost all respondents (93.3 %) used personal computers, 75.4 % used smartphones, and just 20.9 % used tablets for their online LSP course during the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents could

choose from multiple answers, which is the reason for the high percentage numbers, be it concerning computer use for online lessons or concerning the use of smartphones. Besides, there are other considerations, such as the closure of students' halls of residence, during which almost all students were asked to take online lessons from home. That coincided with the general lockdown, during which many people were asked to work from home. It inevitably caused issues with working space at home, with the internet, and with learning opportunities. The situation was, of course, much better in the Winter/Spring of 2021 compared to the first general lockdown of Spring 2020 which took many people un- or underprepared. By Autumn 2020, many schools and higher education facilities stepped up their efforts to ensure that their online courses were of equal quality as their in-presence teaching, internet have been actively involved in setting up broadband Internet connections throughout Slovenia, offering wireless Internet options to reach as many citizens as possible. In this way, even low-income families with university-going students would have access to Internet services that would enable quality learning at home. Moreover, the lessons learned from the past year stricken with COVID-19 concerns, restrictions, and lost opportunities may have contributed to the attitudes of university students toward tourism that we sought to investigate.

As far as the students' gender and their attitudes teaching methods used by the university lecturers are concerned, the results do not show enough evidence to confirm the research hypotheses (2 and 4). The result regarding H 3 (There are statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods concerning the self-evaluation of their technological knowledge.) is encouraging if put into perspective. Over the last two decades, several discussions on teaching approaches in higher education have taken place in Slovenia as well as abroad. The students' "active learning" (Gradišek & Polak, 2021, p. 288) has always been the centre of those discussions, especially in the field of teacher training (Marentič Požarnik, 2001; Bluma & Kiefer, 2005). The analyses of competencies concerning, for example, future teachers have been emphasizing the importance of ICT skills (Tancig, 2006; Peklaj, 2010). It was during the COVID-19 pandemic that everyday use of ICT had become central and the single most important feature of students' and teachers' personal as well as professional lives, even though online learning had forced ICT upon all stakeholders in the pedagogical process. However, it was unlikely that all teachers and students had managed to fully develop their ICT competencies, although there had been an abundance of in situ training for staff and students as well. The introduction of online teaching ICT was too rash for a proper critical reflection to be made concerning the attitudes towards its use (Šimenc, 2021, p. 15). In the research carried out by Gradišek & Polak (2021) at the end of the summer term of the academic year 2019/2020 regarding the insights into the learning and examination experience by the university students, the result regarding the attitudes towards the teaching methods were not as negative as one might have expected. It would appear that despite all the difficulties caused by the closure of pedagogical institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, and again in the Winter to Spring of 2021, not many issues with online learning were reported. Other problems came to the fore, such as technical issues, virtually inaccessible study literature, and the like. Concerning our research that was carried out

at the end of the Winter term of the academic year 2020/2021 the technical issues were no longer the focus of the students' concerns, instead, the focus had shifted to the teaching methods in their online language courses.

Interestingly, up until the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers regarded students' use of ICT devices during their lessons as distractions (mobile phones used for messaging and game playing under the desk during lessons, for example) and rarely made meaningful use of them. This perception has changed dramatically during the pandemic, in fact, mobile devices and different ICT channels, such as Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, e-mail, and similar, have become crucial. For successful online learning and teaching, both students' and teachers' perceptions of online teaching methods are important, because the students' attitudes have a direct impact on their learning and motivation (Ali, 2020). Another important factor in online teaching and learning is the access to internet services that many take for granted. Nevertheless, more than 1.5 billion students (from preschool onwards) were left without access to in-presence learning (UN News, 2020, 21/4/2020). Yet, regardless of the well-meant attempts of governments to replace in-presence learning by introducing online learning employing the internet and computers, more than half of those students, more than 800 million, did not possess a computer and almost as many did not have access to internet services (Kodelja, 2020, p. 45). The efforts to subsidize the acquisition of ICT were stepped up in the period between May and September 2020, to prepare for eventual new lockdowns in Autumn and Winter 2020/2021, which eventually happened. Yet, in Winter of 2021 institutions and students were better prepared and equipped. Therefore, missing ICT was no longer an obstacle, which meant that students could concentrate more on their foreign language learning.

As far as gender differences are concerned the results of our research showed no statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes towards the LSP teaching methods applied by their lecturers. Relevant studies have pointed to the existence of gender differences concerning learning style preferences (Chuang, 2009; Wehrwein et al., 2007; Lau & Yuen, 2010; Choudhary et al., 2011; Middleton et al., 2013). For instance, Lau and Yuen (2010) who used the 'Gregorc Style Delineator' found that gender factors do affect the learning style preferences of students. Other studies, however, found no significant gender difference in LSP. For example, Zokaee, Zaferanieh, and Naseri (2012) studied the impacts of perceptual learning style and gender on Iranian undergraduate English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners' choice of vocabulary learning strategies and found no statistically significant differences. We have merely stated some of the relevant studies in the field, of course, there may be others, yet few studies have aimed at differences in attitudes of university students towards their LSP online course in tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic concerning gender and none in the Republic of Slovenia, hence we cannot confirm Hypothesis 2.

Concerning differences in attitudes towards the students' LSP online course based on their affiliation (Faculty of Tourism Studies –Turistica, University of Primorska, Portorož vs Faculty of Tourism, University of Maribor, Brežice) the results of our research have confirmed Hypothesis 1, which assumed statistically significant differences. As shown in Table 5, respondents from the Faculty of Tourism Brežice,

University of Maribor, and those who have previously highly evaluated their technological knowledge agreed more with the statements about the items towards LSP teaching methods, in comparison to students from the Faculty of Tourism Studies Portorož, University of Primorska and those with lower evaluation of their technological knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused havoc all over the world, due to the coronavirus 193 countries were consequently forced to close (Kepic Mohar and Kovač, 2021, p. 29). Overnight all pedagogical institutions were forced to switch to online courses and teachers work from home. The respondents in our research reported their technological knowledge as being above average while at the same time evaluating the teaching methods and approaches used by their lecturers on an even higher level. It can be therefore stated that concerning the gender of students and the evaluation of university language teachers of LSP, no statistically significant differences were found. Based on such results, both Hypothesis 2 (There are statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods concerning their gender.) and Hypothesis 4 (There are statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods concerning their evaluation of teaching methods adopted by lecturers.) cannot be confirmed. This is an encouraging result which implies that in both faculties of tourism foreign language teachers' teaching methods and approaches were appropriately used in their online LSP courses. This further implies that there was no tangible impact of the pandemic on the LSP teachers' teaching methods and approaches and the way the university students perceived them.

As far as Hypothesis 2 (There are statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods concerning their gender.) is concerned, the results show no statistically significant difference in university students' attitudes regarding their online LSP course teaching methods and approaches. Such results are encouraging, since based on the results, university LSP lecturers managed to cater to both male and female students' needs and have managed to maintain a satisfactory level of learning motivation throughout the university closure. Previously, Metruk (2021) and Alomyan (2021) discussed the issue of female vs. male perceptions of language learning during COVID-19 and came up with an interesting result, namely that female and male students' perceptions of an effective foreign language lesson differ slightly, where male students attached greater importance to effective teachers who personalize their teaching to learners' needs, concerns, goals, and interests (Metruk, 2021, p. 712).In the same vein, a survey by Peker Ünal (2021) found a whole range of factors (p. 117) influencing female students more than the male ones (p. 119). As for the findings in his paper, Alomyan claims that no statistically significant gender differences could be detected based on the gender divide (p. 599).

As far as Hypothesis 1 (There are statistically significant differences in university students' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods concerning their affiliation (Faculty of Tourism Studies – Turistica, UP, Portorož vs Faculty of Tourism, UM, Brežice.)) analyses have come up with a significantly different result, as shown in Table 5. The

reason for such a result may lie in the choice of the LSP teaching methods and approaches used by the lecturers, which might have influenced the students' attitudes towards their LSP online course.

As far as the result of the students' self-evaluation of their technological knowledge the result obtained from the analyses points to the improved state in the field of the acquired ICT competencies (Hypothesis 3). Almost two years into the pandemic and online learning such results point to the fact that the hard work done in the pre- and during-pandemic times concerning the acquisition of ICT skills has paid off. Although critical observers of ICT gurus concerning issues with the improper use of ICT for pedagogical purposes, such as Kouppanou (2016), claim that modern digitalization automizes and standardizes languages and information respectively, thus poisoning and destroying the concentration, imagination, and the quest for values. It may be a justified critique since the online lessons are embedded in a certain timetable that needs to be respected, and any sidelining is frowned upon. That leaves the language teacher with repetition of certain algorithms and consolidation of certain patterns, which has nothing to do with deep learning (Kroflič, 2020, p. 33).

Considering such results, we may suggest that firstly, any future online LSP courses be held in such a way to cater to all students and that the course organizers first determine whether all students have equal access to internet services and sufficient ICT tools at hand. We would also recommend the following implementations:

1. Inclusive Online Learning Environments

Equal Access: Ensure all students have equal access to internet services and sufficient ICT tools before starting online courses. This can be achieved through partnerships with local organizations or government initiatives to provide resources to disadvantaged students.

Needs Assessment: Conduct thorough analyses to detect any bottleneck situations and address students' ICT skills and learning styles before the course begins.

2. Personalized and Interactive Teaching Methods

Personalization: Incorporate personalized teaching strategies, as male students often value teachers who tailor lessons to individual needs and interests. This can be facilitated through asynchronous interactions and feedback mechanisms.

Interactive Activities: Use digital tools to create interactive environments that foster engagement and motivation. This includes synchronous activities like small group discussions and asynchronous tasks that encourage collaboration and critical thinking.

3. Nationwide Strategies for LSP Teaching

Policy Development: Advocate for a nationwide strategy that outlines best practices for LSP teaching during future lockdowns or extended periods of online study. This strategy should address suitable teaching methods, technological infrastructure, and access to resources.

Collaboration: Encourage collaboration among educational institutions to share resources and best practices in LSP teaching, ensuring consistency and quality across different regions.

4. Teacher Training and Development

Professional Development: Support teachers through online training programs that focus on technological and pedagogical aspects of LSP teaching. This can include MOOCs and other online courses designed to enhance teachers' skills in using digital tools effectively.

Continuous Feedback: Encourage continuous feedback from students to improve teaching methods and adapt to changing needs during online courses.

5. Addressing Critiques of Digitalization

Balanced Approach: While leveraging digital tools, ensure that teaching methods do not solely rely on repetition and standardization. Incorporate activities that promote deep learning, creativity, and critical thinking.

Flexibility: Allow for flexibility in online lessons to accommodate different learning styles and prevent sidelining, ensuring that students can explore topics in depth without strict adherence to algorithms.

By implementing these strategies, educators can effectively adapt LSP teaching to the challenges posed by the pandemic while enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes.

Needless to say, this survey cannot be generalised due to the fact that it has been focused on the case of the Republic of Slovenia, nevertheless, the findings can be indicative for both domestic and international readers. Further, the data was gathered during COVID-19 which may have affected the students' attitudes, thus rendering the results less unbiased.

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The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Data availability statement

Data used for this paper is available upon request.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Correlations among agreement with statements about respondents' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13	A14	A15	A16
A1		1.519**	.078	-.151	-.207*	-.089	-.056	.090	.081	.170	.054	.194	-.047	-.029	-.197	-.061
A2	.519**		1.442**	-.080	.015	.125	.098	.259**	.228*	.230*	.197*	.201*	.041	.167	.188	.200*
A3	.078	.442**		1.314**	.398**	.370**	.192	.221*	.117	-.058	.272**	.086	.145	.173	.476**	.498**
A4	-.151	-.080	.314**		1.494**	.358**	.322**	.332**	.076	-.108	.184	.227*	.241*	.076	.337**	.282**
A5	-.207*	.015	.398**	.494**		1.635**	.242*	.338**	.144	-.189	.474**	.047	.184	.161	.464**	.454**
A6	-.089	.125	.370**	.358**	.635**		1.377**	.387**	.082	-.107	.422**	.089	.138	.147	.412**	.420**
A7	-.056	.098	.192	.322**	.242*	.377**		1.610**	.199*	.146	.159	.326**	.091	.073	.482**	.477**
A8	.090	.259**	.221*	.332**	.338**	.387**	.610**		1.315**	.152	.057	.222*	.081	.146	.400**	.384**
A9	.081	.228*	.117	.076	.144	.082	.199*	.315**		1.461**	-.173	.461**	.035	.085	.254*	.256**
A10	.170	.230*	-.058	-.108	-.189	-.107	.146	.152	.461**		1	-.046	.210*	-.020	.104	-.066	-.063
A11	.054	.197*	.272**	.184	.474**	.422**	.159	.057	-.173	-.046		1	-.013	.007	.095	.172	.257**
A12	.194	.201*	.086	.227*	.047	.089	.326**	.222*	.461**	.210*	-.013		1	.014	-.124	.320**	.267**
A13	-.047	.041	.145	.241*	.184	.138	.091	.081	.035	-.020	.007	.014		1.366**	.033	.088
A14	-.029	.167	.173	.076	.161	.147	.073	.146	.085	.104	.095	-.124	.366**		1	.246*	.246*
A15	-.197	.188	.476**	.337**	.464**	.412**	.482**	.400**	.254*	-.066	.172	.320**	.033	.246*		1.801**
A16	-.061	.200*	.498**	.282**	.454**	.420**	.477**	.384**	.256**	-.063	.257**	.267**	.088	.246*	.801**	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix 2

Factor analysis for 14 items of agreement with statements about respondents' attitudes towards LSP teaching methods.

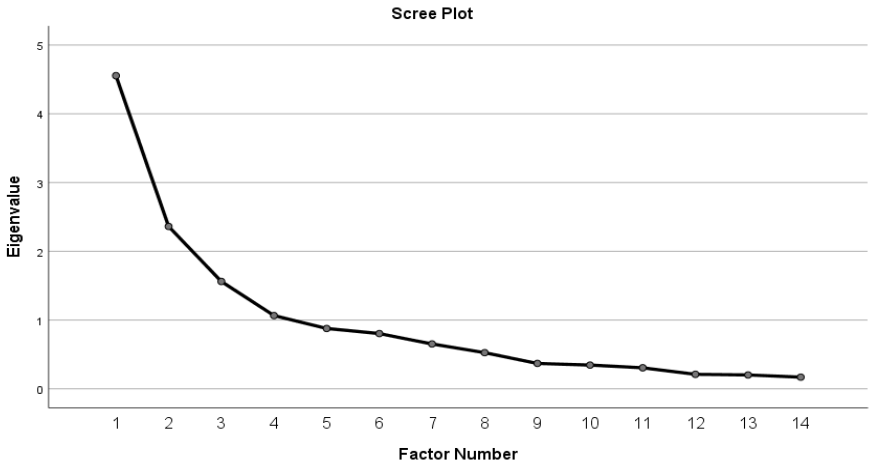
KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.732
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	480.699
	df	91
	Sig.	0.000

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
A1	0.460	0.595
A2	0.572	0.717
A3	0.631	0.686

A4	0.400	0.351
A5	0.650	0.700
A6	0.503	0.552
A7	0.541	0.387
A8	0.600	0.567
A9	0.578	0.546
A10	0.390	0.336
A11	0.525	0.573
A12	0.422	0.401
A15	0.702	0.821
A16	0.692	0.706
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.		

Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.554	32.529	32.529	4.176	29.826	29.826
2	2.362	16.869	49.398	1.886	13.469	43.294
3	1.561	11.152	60.550	1.167	8.333	51.627
4	1.065	7.607	68.157	0.711	5.076	56.703
5	0.877	6.265	74.422			
6	0.803	5.736	80.158			
7	0.652	4.658	84.816			
8	0.526	3.754	88.570			
9	0.369	2.636	91.207			
10	0.345	2.463	93.669			
11	0.305	2.180	95.849			
12	0.211	1.505	97.354			
13	0.201	1.437	98.791			
14	0.169	1.209	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.						



Factor Matrix[a]				
	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
A1	.036	.514	.538	.198
A2	.433	.434	.576	-.096
A3	.661	-.124	.368	-.313
A4	.513	-.123	-.242	.117
A5	.672	-.421	-.096	.250
A6	.645	-.201	.064	.302
A7	.530	.237	-.216	.061
A8	.639	.369	-.124	.089
A9	.331	.542	-.376	.031
A10	-.036	.556	-.135	.083
A11	.458	-.372	.266	.392
A12	.378	.470	-.154	.116
A15	.799	-.065	-.145	-.396
A16	.792	-.157	.001	-.233
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.				
a. 4 factors extracted. 10 iterations required.				

Appendix 3

Factor matrix of a 3-factor solution, no rotation (14 items).

Factor Matrix[a]			
	Factor		
	1	2	3
A1	.041	.483	.459
A2	.453	.457	.638
A3	.645	-.134	.355
A4	.517	-.141	-.253
A5	.661	-.425	-.097
A6	.633	-.206	.047
A7	.539	.221	-.229
A8	.650	.352	-.135
A9	.341	.538	-.380
A10	-.030	.568	-.153
A11	.435	-.341	.209
A12	.387	.457	-.168
A15	.764	-.080	-.096
A16	.785	-.176	.015
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.			
a. 3 factors extracted. 23 iterations required.			

Appendix 4

Factor matrix of a 3-factor solution, Varimax rotation (14 items).

Rotated Factor Matrix[a]			
	Factor		
	1	2	3
A1	-.142	.124	.641
A2	.251	.194	.849
A3	.666	.004	.342
A4	.493	.263	-.196
A5	.769	.040	-.185
A6	.656	.110	.043

A7	.345	.522	.013
A8	.392	.616	.178
A9	.008	.742	.014
A10	-.308	.477	.157
A11	.563	-.162	.076
A12	.108	.591	.158
A15	.698	.335	.010
A16	.773	.216	.058

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Appendix 5

Factor matrix of a 3-factor solution, Oblimin rotation (14 items).

Pattern Matrix[a]

	Factor		
	1	2	3
A1	-.139	.083	.640
A2	.257	.099	.840
A3	.680	-.089	.337
A4	.475	.239	-.222
A5	.771	-.016	-.199
A6	.656	.046	.028
A7	.311	.497	-.028
A8	.355	.574	.131
A9	-.046	.754	-.039
A10	-.343	.501	.128
A11	.583	-.225	.082
A12	.070	.578	.117
A15	.682	.274	-.022
A16	.767	.142	.034

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 12 iterations.

Appendix 6

Single-factor solution (14 items).

Factor Matrix[a]

	Factor
	1
A1	.024
A2	.380
A3	.630
A4	.518
A5	.645
A6	.639
A7	.531
A8	.627
A9	.303
A10	-.038
A11	.428
A12	.361
A15	.780

A16	.801
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.	
a. 1 factor extracted. 5 iterations required.	

Appendix 7

3-factor solution, no rotation (12 items).

Factor Matrix[a]			
	Factor		
	1	2	3
A3	.388	.167	-.421
A4	.687	-.255	-.553
A5	.520	-.003	.252
A6	.688	-.381	.345
A7	.646	-.219	.203
A8	.535	.307	.118
A9	.618	.424	.038
A10	.307	.580	.119
A11	.444	-.467	.135
A12	.363	.517	.077
A15	.763	.015	-.117
A16	.778	-.104	-.100
Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.			
a. 3 factors extracted. 25 iterations required.			

Appendix 8

Regression analysis.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.658[a]	0.432	0.402	0.72469781
a. Predictors: (Constant), evaluation of teaching methods of lecturers, University of Primorska, self-evaluation of your technological knowledge, Gender				

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	29.998	4	7.499	14.279	0.000[b]
	Residual	39.389	75	0.525		
	Total	69.387	79			
a. Dependent Variable: attitudes towards LSP teaching methods (factor, students of tourism)						
b. Predictors: (Constant), evaluation of teaching methods of lecturers, University of Primorska, self-evaluation of your technological knowledge, Gender						