MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS FOR REMOTE LEARNING ON THE EXAMPLE OF FRENCH LANGUAGE CLASSES AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

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Purpose: The most important goal of the article is to present the results of a study on the motivation to learn French among students of Romance philology and to indicate the role the state should play in implementing appropriate solutions that will improve distance education.

Design/methodology/approach: A survey method was used to collect empirical material among students. A survey questionnaire was used in the study.

Findings: Motivation affects our efficiency, concentration and memory. Regardless of the form of learning, we should look for appropriate motivators that will make it easier for us to acquire knowledge and thus achieve our goal. However, the aspect of distance education discussed in the article is closely related to the role of the state, which plays an important element in the entire learning process.

Practical implications: Adapting the education plan to the existing situation, as well as to the students' abilities, and monitoring the teaching process by the teacher. It is also extremely important for the teacher to stimulate his or her motivation, which has an impact on the learner's motivation. The variety of exercises that make the remote lesson more attractive also turns out to be crucial. On the other hand, it is necessary to support the lecturers themselves by organizing training, workshops and courses for them to acquire/expand technical and IT skills or to acquire knowledge adequate to the existing remote working conditions. As the study shows, the provision of broadly understood psychological assistance by specialists also plays an important role in the discussed issue of distance learning.

Social implications: Drawing the respondents' attention to the need to establish and maintain direct interpersonal contacts. Moreover, realizing the important role the state plays in providing the infrastructure necessary for distance education, and thus in counteracting the phenomenon of digital exclusion among students and lecturers, as well as in ensuring safety against threats - cybersecurity.

Originality/value: The article is addressed to lecturers, teachers and state authorities. Difficulties faced by students during distance learning and proposals to increase their motivation were presented.

Keywords: motivation, motivating, emotions, role of the state, remote education.

Category of paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

"The ability to learn gives you an edge in life"

Brown, Roediger, McDanie (2016, p. l4)

Motivation is a concept with many different meanings, but most often it is defined as a state of human readiness to take a specific action. Motivation to learn can be defined as a state or factor that makes us want to learn and acquire new knowledge. Motivation to learn combined with the right learning methods guarantees lasting success.

The purpose of this article is to reflect on the issue of students' motivation to learn during remote education and the role of the state in this process.

Learning a foreign language remotely can be difficult and require a lot of motivation. Therefore, it was decided to examine Romance philology students and check what factors influence their motivation as well as whether distance learning causes them stress. Collaboration with other learners and your lecturer is very important and can help you overcome isolation and nausea, as well as gain support and feedback. The originality of the considerations is created by the combination of developing motivation to learn a foreign language among students remotely, emphasizing the mission of the lecturer and the role that the state should play in providing help and support.

During the study, attempts were made to obtain answers to the following research questions: What are the effects of remote learning compared to stationary learning? What are the preferred forms of work in language classes that students miss the most in remote learning? What is the relationship between the level of acquired knowledge and the lack of interpersonal contacts in the class group? What is the level of satisfaction with remote classes? What is the level of motivation for language learning remotely in relation to learning in the traditional mode, i.e. stationary?

Research hypotheses were also developed:

H1: Learning a language is more effective in the stationary form and brings better results than teaching remotely.

H2: Direct contact of students with groups and the teacher has a great impact on the level of knowledge acquisition.

H3: Students feel greater satisfaction from learning a language on a full-time basis, which also translates into their greater motivation to learn.

H4: During distance learning, students have problems with proper time management due to the great freedom/independence in managing their time.

H5: The level of perceived stress during on-site or remote classes is comparable and is closely related to the personality of each student.

The study was also aimed at checking the level of stress and coping with time management during remote learning.

At the end, the most important conclusions and recommendations resulting from the analyzed topic are presented.

2. The role of the state in distance education

The role of the state in remote education is a very important topic, which we could experience especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The state should support distance education by providing appropriate technological infrastructure, tools and platforms for distance learning, financing educational projects and programs, promoting cooperation between domestic and foreign universities, and ensuring the quality and availability of teaching materials.

Poland's accession to the European Union resulted in the need to adapt the Polish educational system to the European system. The European Union has always cared about education issues and its desire was to build an information society, the so-called knowledge society. A significant step was the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty (February 7, 1992), where Article 126 referred to the issue of education for the first time, and moreover, to remote education. The article contains the following provision: "(...) The community should cooperate in order to create a high-quality educational system by supporting and animating cooperation between members (...) The aim of the community's activities is: (...) - encouraging the development of distance learning" (Różewski, Kusztina, Zaikin, 2023, p. 16). As society enters the globalization zone, the entire system and educational organizations need a new way of operating, and thus a mission and its implementation (Różewski, Kusztina, Zaikin, 2023, p. 12).

"Open and Distance Learning is a concept of teaching organization in European Union universities. Its basic idea was presented in the Bologna Declaration. The implementation of each concept regarding a new way of organizing the functioning of the social system requires a precise analysis of the structure of the future system as an object of management" (Różewski, Kusztina, Zaikin, 2023, p. 12). In Poland, legal regulations regarding distance learning can be found in the Act on the Education System, the Act - Law on Higher Education and the Regulation of the Minister of Science and with universities, student organizations, academic teachers and other stakeholders to ensure an effective and fair system of remote education.

E-learning in education

Distance learning has many advantages, such as work flexibility and time saving and money, but also many disadvantages, among which the lack of contact with other students and lecturers, technical and organizational problems, low quality of teaching materials or lack of support from lecturers should be distinguished. Many students emphasize weaker motivation to learn (Table 1).

Table 1.
*Selected advantages and disadvantages of distance learning*

Advantages	Defects
Availability of learning regardless of time and space constraints.	Lack of sufficient technological facilities that do not keep up with the needs and expectations of training participants.
Individualization of learning pace.	No "live" teacher-student contact.
Efficiency of the educational process.	Shortage of properly prepared teaching staff.
Lower learning costs (no obligation to accommodate, travel, etc.).	In some countries, there are still no regulations allowing the recognition of diplomas obtained in the process of distance education as a formal confirmation of the acquired qualifications.

Source: Distance learning in selected European countries, https://orka.sejm.gov.pl/WydBAS.nsf/0/E44171B2451A3C20C12585F4003EF0FD/$file/4.1_Organizacja%20pracy%20szko%C5%82y.pdf, p. 515. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31268/d.dziewulak.2020.01.

Research on education during the Covid-19 pandemic points to a significant increase in the use of digital solutions by teachers at all levels of education. This form of teaching is not only a challenge for students, but also for lecturers who should not only find themselves in the new reality, but also be creative in creating curricula while supporting and motivating students to learn.

3. Motivation

Motivation is at the heart of success in the learning process. Motivation to learn determines the readiness of an individual to direct his/her activity and conduct towards the reception of knowledge and maintaining this attitude at the right intensity for a certain period of time (Müller, 2004, p. 76). For psychologists, motivation is the orientation of views and the need to perform a specific action (Myers, 2005, p. 497). Motivation refers to factors explaining the totality of reasons and needs used in an activity (e.g. online self-education) that activate, determine or regulate individual behavior (Dassler, 2004, p. 97).
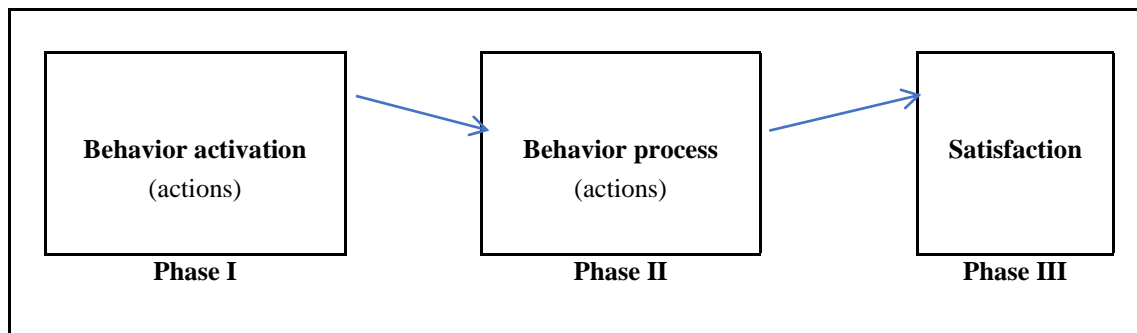
Figure 1. Phases of motivation.

Source: Król, Ludwiński, 2014, p. 318.

Motivation consists of three phases, which are presented in Figure 1. The first factor is the so-called "motivation", it triggers readiness to act, i.e. it triggers certain behaviors. Then a choice is made, a certain way of behavior that is to lead to the effect - the result (phase II). In the last, third phase, there is satisfaction or lack of it. This is of course a very simplified scheme of motivation, but it illustrates it in a very clear way.

According to Professor Zimbardo, "Motives are internal dispositions to behave in a certain way, although they are influenced by various factors, both internal and external" (Zimbardo, 2017, p. 5). Many of our motives are a combination of biological and psychological needs. External motivation includes external stimuli provoking the body to action - for students, grades are one of the strongest external motivators, for working people, money can be such an incentive (Zimbardo, 2017, p. 7).

There are huge deposits of motives in man, located in his consciousness. According to Professor Szuman (1959, pp. 145–158), the ease or difficulty of learning motivation is based on the four-factor theory of development and depends on:

1. our capabilities and properties - they have a genetic basis,
2. our activities change with age,
3. the environment in which we live, which affects us and to which we adapt,
4. how we are brought up and how and what we learn.

Our motives to act depend on the interaction of the factors mentioned above and on the learning process. Describing the mechanisms of shaping motivational behaviors in terms of achievements, the role of emotions should also be emphasized. So the question arises, what are emotions? Generally speaking, it is a subjective mental state - a state of some kind of displacement, disturbance, regardless of its source. Many studies show a significant relationship between emotions with achievements. Examples of such emotions include: curiosity, anxiety, shame, anger, boredom, or generally positive or negative affect. It is important to be able to assess which emotions play a special role in understanding achievement motivation (Gasiul, 2018, p. 262). Figure 2 illustrates the theory of value control through achievement emotions.
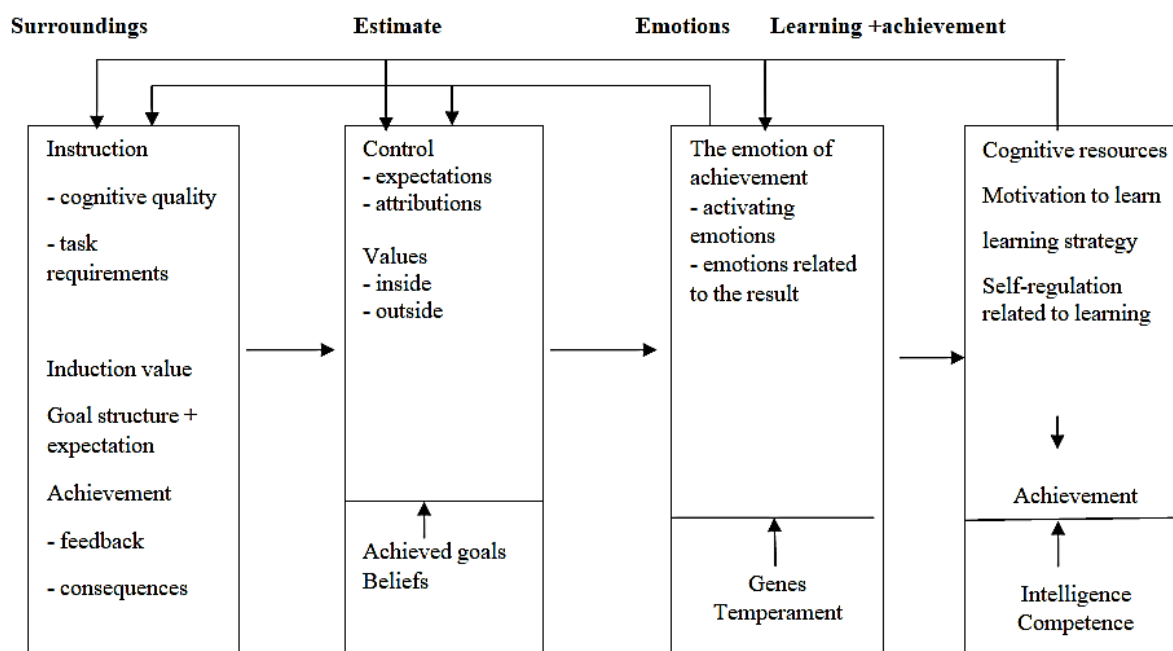
Figure 2. The theory of value control by the emotions associated with achievements.

Source: Gasiul, 2018, p. 264.

Achievement motivation requires consideration of many explanatory variables. In general, it can be said that the final criterion and the basis for explaining the motivation of achievements are simply the so-called "I" motifs (Gasiul, 2018, p. 264).

Achievement motivation is related to our desires, values and goals, as well as our perception of our own capabilities and risk of failure (openstax.org). Achievement motivation can have various sources and manifestations. Some of them include: striving for perfection, i.e. using all one's abilities and skills, striving for prestige, recognition - climbing the social ladder or striving to show one's advantage, dominance, constantly comparing oneself with others.

To sum up, motivation depends on many factors, and above all on individual needs and goals we are aiming at. Speaking of motivation, let's never forget about the emotions that accompany it.

4. Empirical research

4.1. Research tool

The survey method was used to collect empirical material among students. The study used a questionnaire containing 10 questions. The study was conducted among students who participated in classes conducted remotely using the MS Teams platform for three semesters and who started studying Romance philology in the academic year 2019/2020.

4.2. Study participants

The study was conducted on a group of 37 students of the second year of Romance philology full-time undergraduate studies at the Pedagogical University of Krakow. It concerned learning French as part of Practical French classes conducted remotely. The students covered by the study study this subject 6 hours a week, which gives 180 hours a year. Classes are conducted at B2 level. The respondents, apart from French as the leading language, indicated the simultaneous learning of other foreign languages: English (17 people), Spanish (7 people) and Italian (3 people). The respondents included 32 women and 5 men.

4.3. The research results

The essence of the study was to collect information on foreign language education in virtual reality from the learner's perspective. It mainly concerned classes in practical learning of French, which were conversational in nature and shaped all language competences in a comprehensive way.
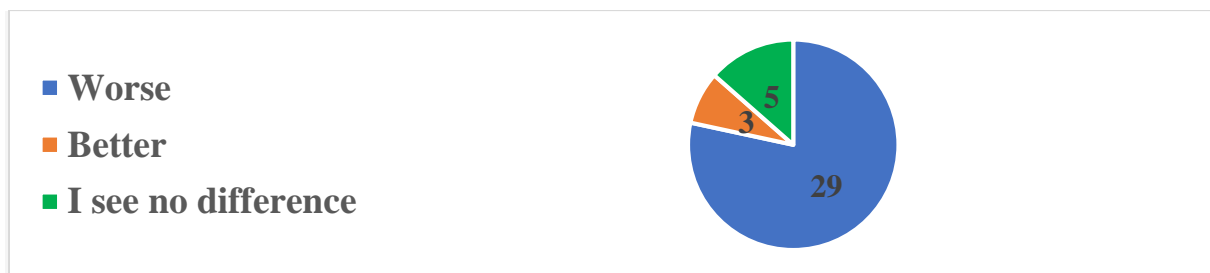

Figure 1. The level of effectiveness of remote language learning compared to stationary learning. Source: own study.

The opening question of the survey was: "What are the effects, in your opinion, of remote learning compared to stationary learning?". The answers received here allow us to observe that for 78% of the respondents, remote learning brings worse results than stationary learning. 8% of respondents hold the opposite opinion, while 14% of respondents see no difference in this regard. The significant decrease in the effectiveness of learning knowledge in remote learning, emphasized by students, will also be confirmed in the answers given to the questions that will be quoted and discussed below.

At the same time, the hypothesis was confirmed H1: Learning a language is more effective in the stationary form and brings better results than teaching remotely.
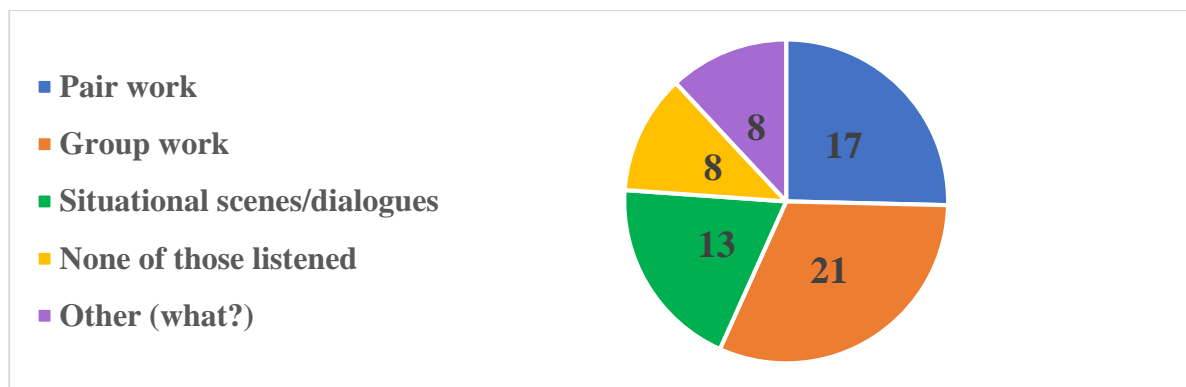
Figure 2. Forms of work preferred by students, which they miss the most in remote learning in PNJF classes.

Source: own study.

Looking at the evaluation of the forms of work in PNJF classes favored by students of Romance studies, it should be stated that group work is one of those that they miss the most due to the introduction of remote classes (56%). The next are: work in pairs (45%) and role-plays/situational dialogues (35%). Among those not mentioned by the interviewee, and indicated by the respondents as "other", the answer "written papers" is repeated. This state of affairs allows us to see how important it is for students in language education to develop communication skills, while improving speaking, listening, understanding, memorizing or learning from each other, interacting, discussing, negotiating (Brown, 2001; Ortega, 2007). Similar conclusions can be drawn referring to the question: "Does the lack of direct interpersonal contacts within the PNJF class group affect the level of knowledge acquired by you?".

The chart below shows that for 78% of all respondents, the lack of direct interpersonal contacts has an impact on the level of knowledge acquired by them. Those who do not notice a difference in this process account for 14%, while for 8% of those interested, such a relationship does not matter. However, it should be emphasized that peer relations, in addition to the teacher-student relationship, affect the quality of education, becoming its key component (Pyżalski, 2020, p. 117). Thus, these relations become present in the educational space.
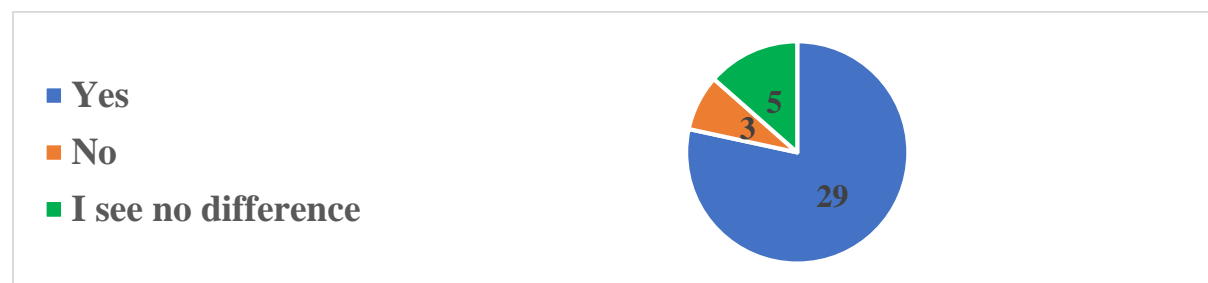
Figure 3. Relationship between the level of acquired knowledge and the lack of interpersonal contacts in the PNJF class group.
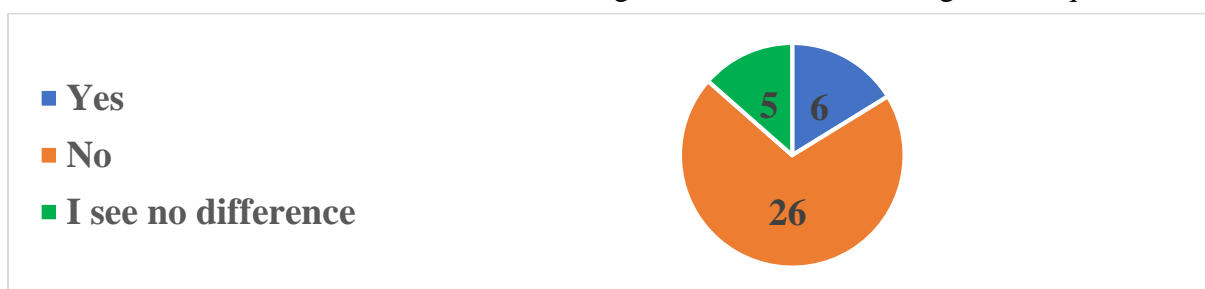
Source: own study.

The hypothesis was confirmed H2: Direct contact of students with groups and the teacher has a great impact on the level of knowledge acquisition.

- More frequent
- Rarer
- The same

**Figure 4.** Peer help and distance learning.

Source: own study.

Citing further data, this time on peer support during remote education, the surveyed students note that in the realities of online learning, the use of peer support is more common compared to face-to-face learning, which is indicated by 46% of respondents. For comparison, 38% of them use such support just as often, and only 16% say that they do it less often. This situation may be caused by more frequent difficulties related to the correct understanding of the content transmitted via links, the student's sense of being lost or his lack of courage to ask questions.

- Yes
- No
- I see no difference

Figure 5. The level of satisfaction resulting from the implementation of classes in a remote form.

Source: own study.

Referring to another issue identified in the survey, i.e. the level of satisfaction resulting from the implementation of classes remotely, it should be noted that in the opinion of 70% of future Roman scholars, remote learning does not bring the same satisfaction as stationary learning, while for 16% of them online education is as rewarding as face-to-face. The difference is not noticed by 5 people (14%).


- Higher
- Lower
- The same
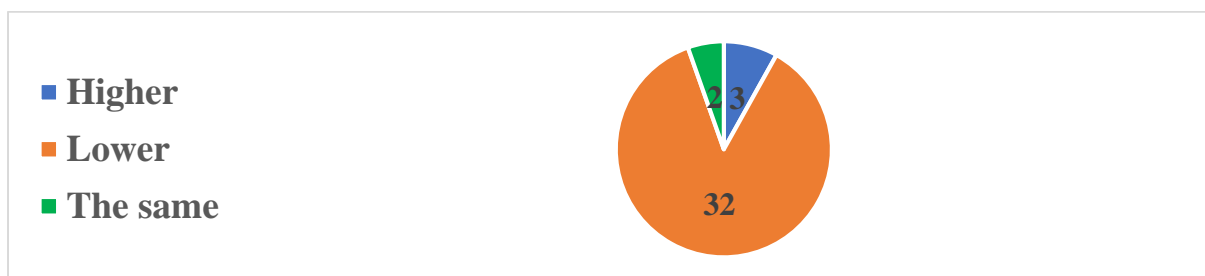
Figure 6. Comparison of the level of motivation for language learning remotely vs. Stationary.

Source: own study.

We are able to draw similar conclusions by looking at the answers given to the question: "What is your level of motivation to learn a language remotely in relation to learning in a traditional mode, i.e. stationary?". The graph above illustrates that the overwhelming majority of people (86%) state that the level of motivation for language learning remotely is lower than learning in the traditional mode. Few students observed a higher level of motivation to learn the language in a new form and these are 3 people (8%). The same level of motivation for both forms of learning is declared by 5% of the respondents.

As the study proves, also the stationary form of classes disciplined the students asked to prepare themselves and actively participate in PNJF classes to a greater extent (83%). Those who sympathized with remote education in this respect and those who do not see the difference in this regard account for exactly 8%.

The above answers confirm the hypothesis H3: Students feel greater satisfaction from learning a language on a full-time basis, which also translates into their greater motivation to learn.
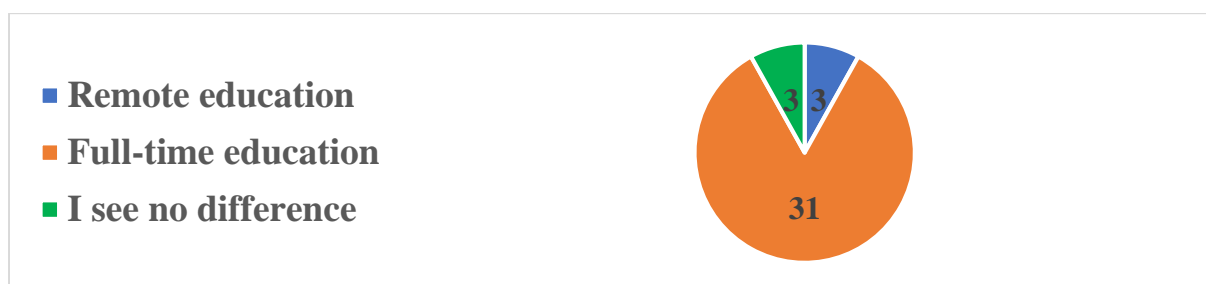
Figure 7. The level of discipline to prepare and actively participate in PNJF classes.
Source: own study.

Such results may be the result of, for example, the compulsion to stay in isolation, staying in one place all the time, lack of direct communication with other people or tiredness and weariness resulting from working for long hours, weeks and finally months in front of a computer screen. Organizational difficulties, which are presented in the chart below, may also be significant.
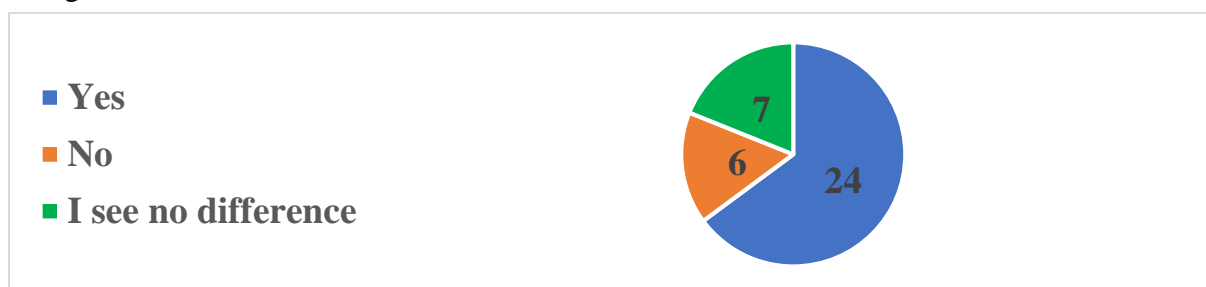

Figure 8. The level of difficulty regarding the time spent on independent work.
Source: own study.

Although remote education may be conducive to, for example, self-management of time dedicated to learning or independent work, future Romanists, when asked "has remote teaching caused you difficulties with the proper organization of time for independent work?" indicated,

in the majority, problems with the proper management of educational duties (64%). Only 16% of respondents did not experience such problems, and 18% of them did not notice any changes in this matter. As a consequence, the often mentioned benefits of remote learning, which include greater autonomy and flexibility of work, increased self-control or a largely personalized rhythm of professional activity, are not reflected in the majority of respondents.

At the same time, the hypothesis was confirmed H4: During distance learning, students have problems with proper time management due to the great freedom/independence in managing their time.

■ Yes, they increase
  stress level

■ Yes, they reduce stress
  level

■ No
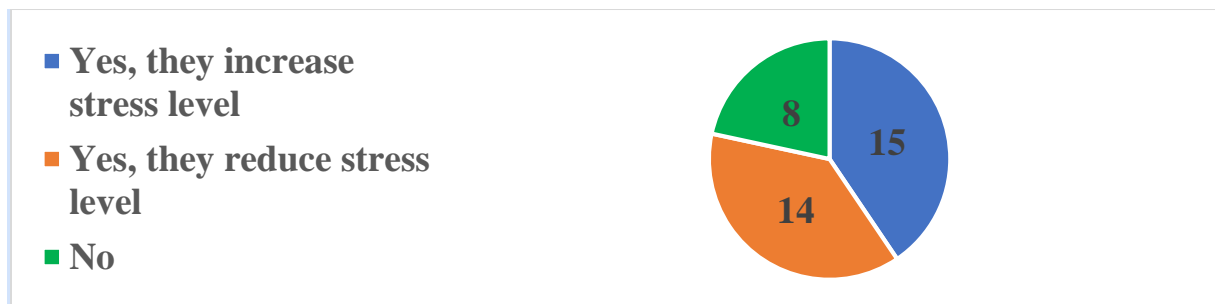
Figure 9. Influence of classes conducted remotely on the level of stress.
Source: own study.

Participants of the study, when asked whether "PNJF classes conducted remotely have an impact on the level of stress you feel?" declare that the vast majority of classes conducted remotely have an impact on the level of stress they feel, with 15 people (41%) of the opinion that this level has increased, and 14 people (38%) of the opinion that this level has decreased reduction. According to 8 respondents (22% - No), remote classes do not affect the level of stress they feel in any way. It should therefore be stated that students, regardless of the form of classes, are exposed to stress and related tensions related to university education itself (exams, credits, contact with lecturers, etc.). The answer refers to the previously mentioned emotions, the personality of each student. As in the case of emotions, when analyzing motivation, it is worth considering its four levels, i.e. predispositions, dispositions, states and processes.

The hypothesis was confirmed H5: The level of perceived stress during on-site or remote classes is comparable and is closely related to the personality of each student.

■ Yes

■ No

■ I see no difference
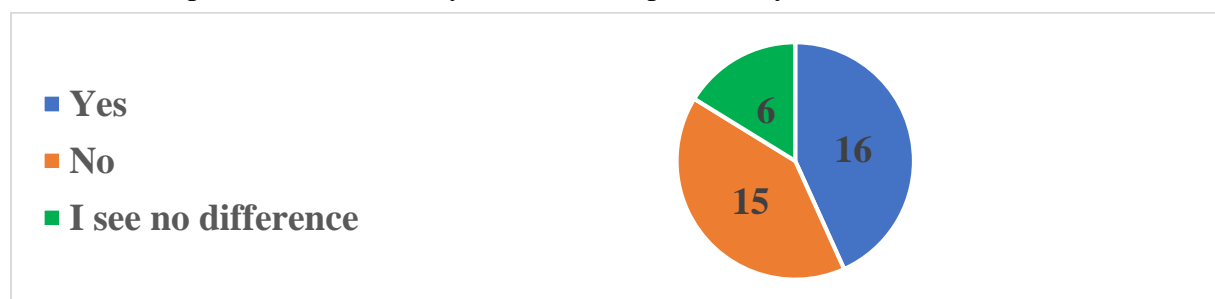
Figure 10. Comparison of the level of concentration in both forms of learning.
Source: own study.

When analyzing the impact of distance learning on the level of concentration of students during classes, it can be noted that there is a slight difference between those for whom this level increased (16 people (Yes) - 43%) and those for whom the level of this concentration is lower (15 people (No) - 41%). The difference in the level of concentration in relation to both forms of classes is not noticed by 6 respondents (16%).

The impact of distance learning on the level of student concentration may therefore depend on many individual and situational factors, such as personality, learning style, preferences, goals, expectations, home environment, quality of educational materials and methods, and availability of support and communication.

5. Summary

The conducted survey and analysis of the literature on the subject allowed to draw conclusions and present them in the form of recommendations:

1. The education plan should be adapted to the existing situation and the abilities of learners/students. Remote learning, and thus the student's work (learning, knowledge acquisition) should be adapted not only in terms of content, but also based on setting new goals and priorities in terms of learning outcomes. It should be remembered that the new requirements should be realistic and adapted to the students' abilities.

2. The lecturer should monitor the didactic process - follow the progress in acquiring the knowledge and competences of their students. The exchange of observations - a dialogue between the lecturer and the student - is very important. On this basis, you can react - modify the course of the education process and thus improve its quality.

3. Lecturer's motivation and attitude influence students' motivation. You can say that they are connected vessels.

4. With regard to the language, the form of study is also of great importance. According to the study, students are more motivated to learn the language in the traditional form, i.e. stationary. Direct contact with the teacher facilitates communication and building relationships with the group. Stationary reality also causes greater discipline in learning among students. At this point, it is worth considering how the lecturer can increase the level of student engagement during remote work. Certainly, the variety of activities, exercises and encouragement used by the teacher will change the attitude of the participants.

5. The support of lecturers - academic staff through training tailored to individual needs (technical and IT related, for example, to the use of distance learning programs, as well as soft skills) is also important. The lecturer himself faces the challenge of remote work. At the same time, he should be a mentor and support for the recipients of this learning process.

6. Providing broadly understood psychological assistance by specialists also plays an important role in the discussed issue of distance education. As for the teacher, it is crucial for him to pay attention to the emotional sphere of students, to show them support and understanding. Conversation and vigilance, which is difficult in remote education, are important and valuable. We should also think about more training, workshops, courses that will allow the teacher to acquire new knowledge adequate to the existing conditions and equip him with the appropriate tools for action.

7. Providing the infrastructure necessary for remote education and counteracting the phenomenon of digital exclusion not only among students, but also among lecturers revives on the occasion of e-learning. Remote education requires the guarantee of appropriate technical facilities (equipment/devices or Internet connection). In this case, the role of the institutions, and thus the state, is to ensure that all participants in such a learning process can work without interruptions. The state also has the obligation to ensure security against threats - cyber security.

It cannot be unequivocally stated that due to remote education, the entire generation that has to face remote teaching during the pandemic is at a loss Covid-19. It is necessary to take into account the individual characteristics of students, pupils, environment, where they are brought up. Parents and teachers also play important roles in this process.

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