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**ASSESSING LINGUISTIC COMPETENCES THROUGH ICT
IN UNIVERSITY STUDY OF FRENCH**

533.01 UNIVERSITY PEDAGOGY

**ABSTRACT
of the PhD thesis in Education**

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CONCEPTUAL GUIDELINES OF THE RESEARCH

Relevance and importance of the research topic is determined by the quality standards of the educational system in the Republic of Moldova, which are formulated in the education policy documents of the Republic of Moldova, requesting educational offers be adjusted to the knowledge needs of educational agents and to the challenges of contemporary society: globalization, digitization, technologisation etc. The digital age has generated premises for the complex enhancement of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the process of teaching-learning-evaluating foreign languages.

In the field of professional training of foreign languages teachers, national and international educational and linguistic policies (*The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova, The National Curriculum Reference Framework, Digital competence standards for teachers in general education, ICT competency standards for teachers – UNESCO, The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, etc.) promote two priority key-competences: communication in the foreign language and digital competence. The communication competence in the foreign language is approached from the following perspectives: linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic and (pluri/inter) cultural. The linguistic competence includes lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonetic and orthographic knowledge and skills, specific to the system of a language, regardless of the sociolinguistic value of its variations and the pragmatic functions of its achievements [10, p. 17]. From this perspective, the “Education-2020 Strategy” configures three basic pillars: access, relevance, quality [48, p. 3], assigning the educational system the mission to ensure the good use of the individual potential of the personality in the process of lifelong learning. The key competences for lifelong learning represent the combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the social context [42]. In a knowledge-based society and in an increasingly interconnected world, this adds value to the labor market and is a major factor in innovation, productivity and competitiveness, contributing to social cohesion and giving subjects flexibility and adaptability, satisfaction and motivation. The acquisition of key competences represents the direct contribution to the valorization of the principles of equality and access for all, given the fact that they are interdependent, focusing on critical thinking, creativity, initiative in solving problems, taking decisions, constructive management of feelings.

The full use of ICT in the evaluation of linguistic competence involves the formation of digital competence through digital literacy, which implies possessing professional skills necessary for the implementation of ICT in their teaching-learning-evaluating process. The use of ICT tools in the process of language teaching-learning-evaluating generates multiple formative effects to validate students' communication competences.

The description of the situation covered in the research and identification of research problems. The analysis in evolution of the concepts "evaluation", "competence", "linguistic competences", "ICT" carried out by local and foreign researchers in the field of education sciences, didactics, general linguistics, psychology, sociology, philosophy helped to establish the theoretical landmarks regarding the theory and the evaluation methodology elucidated in investigations by such scholars as: C. Cucuș [19], P. Lisievici [30], M. Manolescu [31], D. Potolea [40], T.I. Radu [41], M. Bocoș [4] etc. Notions on alternative and complementary evaluation were found in the works of I. Cerghit [13]. An essential tribute to the concept of "competence" was discovered in the works of the following authors: V. Guțu [27], Ph. Perrenoud [36, 37], C. Bourguignon [5], G. Boutin [6], J.P. Bronckart [7], M. Butlen [9] etc. The critical angle of the competence-based pedagogical approach is treated by the authors: M. Crahay [18], A. del Rey [22], N. Hirtt [28] etc. The investigation of the competence-focused curriculum in our country was mainly done by the researcher V. Guțu [27]. Aspects of the competence-based approach in university pedagogy were researched by C. Chauvigné [14], S. Constantin [16]. General notions in the field of language teaching were quoted from authors such as: P. Martinez [32], J.P. Cuq [20], M. Minder [33]. A. Ardelean, O. Mândruț [1] wrote with reference to the didactics of skills training. The methodology of evaluation in terms of competence pedagogy is found in the works of: N. Bucun [8], G. Scallon [44], X. Roegiers [43] etc. The description of competence evaluation framework in pre-university education was made by researchers L. Pogolșa [39], N. Bucun [8]. The valorization of problem situations in the evaluation of students' competencies was made by the researchers: F.M. Gerard [25], C. Partoune [35]. Some aspects of the evaluation through the portfolio (digital portfolio) were revealed by the authors: D. Berthiaume [2], R. Bibeau [3] etc. The pedagogy of the project in the evaluation of competences is found in: R. Farr, B. Tone [23]. The functionality of the competency assessment grid was described in detail by the authors R. Côté, J. Tardif [17]. The effectiveness of

using ICT in education is described by S. Făt, A.V. Labăr [24], A. Globa [26], B. Houot [29].

The theoretical landmarks of the research relate to: *the meanings, the functions, the strategies, the operations, the stages, the methods and the techniques of evaluation* – C. Cucuș [19], P. Lisievici [30], M. Manolescu [31], D. Potolea [40], T.I. Radu [41], M. Bocoș [4]; *trends and perspectives of the competence-based approach in French language teaching* – V. Guțu [27], Ph. Perrenoud [36, 37], C. Bourguignon [5], G. Boutin [6], J.P. Bronckart [7], M. Butlen, J. Dolz [9]; *principles and strategies for assessing linguistic competence* – N. Bucun [8], L. Pogolșa [39], G. Scallon [44], X. Roegiers [43], R. Côté, J. Tardif [17]; *the specifics of assessing the linguistic competences through ICT* – A. Bulat [53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 63, 70, 71], S. Făt, A.V. Labăr [24], A. Globa [26], B. Houot [29] etc.

In the process of modernization and adaptation to new cultural and socio-economic realities by promoting the aspirations of European integration in reference to lifelong learning, educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova are increasingly oriented towards capitalizing on the offers provided by modern information industries and technologies. On this regard, ICT tools are widely used as a basic means in the study of foreign languages, due to the access they give to the abundance of multilingual information. In this context, the study of the topic is important from the perspective of the current trend of integrating ICT in higher education, in order to solve modern pedagogical problems, determined by the need to optimize the university instructional-educational process in relation to labor market needs, in line with the demands of the information society that have generated **the research problem** consisting in insufficient capitalization of the methodological opportunities of ICT resources for the assessment of linguistic competences in the initial training of French language teachers.

The purpose of the research involves the establishment of theoretical landmarks, the elaboration and validation of *the Technological Model of LC assessment by means ICT* of students in the university study of French.

To achieve this goal, the following **research objectives** have been established:

1. to determine the theoretical landmarks regarding the assessment of linguistic competences through ICT in the context of university teaching-learning;
2. to interpret the methodological opportunities of assessing linguistic competences through ICT as a pedagogical concern in higher education;

3. to conduct the experimental study of the degree of ICT capitalization in the process of evaluation of students' linguistic competences;
4. to elaborate, implement and validate the experiment *Technological Model of LC assessment by ICT* of students in the study of the French language;
5. to estimate the efficiency of the methodology represented by the *Technological Model of LC assessment by ICT*.

The hypothesis of the research. The evaluation of linguistic competences in the university study of the French language through ICT will improve significantly and become a personalized and individualized process, if: the theoretical landmarks regarding the evaluation of the linguistic competences in the context of university teaching-learning will be determined; the methodological opportunities of assessing linguistic competences through ICT in higher education will be interpreted; the degree of use of ICT in the assessment of students' linguistic competences will be studied experimentally and the effectiveness of the methodology represented by *the Technological Model of LC assessment by ICT* in the university training of students for communication in French will be demonstrated.

The methodology of scientific research. The investigation was conducted based on theories, concepts, rules, principles in the field of education sciences, university didactics, communication sciences, sociology of education and values of communication in foreign language, promoted in educational policy documents and language policies: (a) The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova [15], "Education 2020" [48], ICT Competence Framework for Teachers - UNESCO [49], Digital Competence Standards for General Education Teachers [47], (b) normative documents on university training of French teachers: The Framework-Plan for Higher Education [38], The Reference Framework for University Curriculum [12], The National Curriculum for Foreign Language [21], CEFRL [10, 11] etc.

The research methods applied in carrying out the investigation and the experiment include scientific documentation, analysis and synthesis, theoretical modeling, comparison, theoretical generalization method, pedagogical experiment, testing, processing and interpretation of experimental data, questionnaire, case study, analysis of students' activities.

The novelty and scientific originality of the research lies in identifying the current theoretical perspectives of the pragmatic enhancement of ICT in the process of teaching-learning-evaluating the French language; specifying and revealing the meaning of the basic concepts - "assessment", "competence", "linguistic competences", "assessment of linguistic

competences", "ICT" tools, analyzed in the context of establishing the methodology for assessing linguistic competences in the university study of French and highlighting scientific approaches and guidelines on the use of ICT; discriminating the levels of development of students' linguistic competences, formulating assessment criteria and indicators for assessing the level of development of LC of students; description of *the LC Assessment Reference Framework by ICT in the university study of the French language*.

The scientific problem solved in the research consists in determining the theoretical foundations of LC, the elaboration and experimental validation of *the Technological Model of ICT evaluation of LC* of students, by elucidating the methodological opportunities of improving French language didactics in higher education that contributes to the development of university teaching in the context of the information society.

The theoretical significance of the research is supported by the analysis, specification, delimitation and interpretation of conceptual framework of assessment through ICT at the level of specific criteria and indicators; interpretation of scientific guidelines on ICT, difficulties in using ICT tools in the study of French; elucidation of methodological opportunities for improvement of French language teaching in higher education.

The applicative value of the paper consists in the elaboration and experimental validation of *The technological model of linguistic competences assessment through ICT* in the university study of the French language. The theoretical-applicative fundamentals (inserted in the model) implemented and validated within the carried pedagogical experiment have contributed to the increased efficiency of communication competences development, generally, and to improving the process of assessing linguistic competences through ICT, particularly. At the same time, *The Assessment Reference Framework of language competences, the Evaluation Rubrics, the Indicators for assessing the proficiency level of linguistic competences, the Matrix for linguistic competences development using the interactive digital textbook e-FLUX* can be effectively applied not only in the teaching-learning-evaluation of French, but also in the study of other foreign languages at university level and for the continuous training of teachers. The theoretical and methodological benchmarks of the research can serve as theoretical support in the elaboration of methodological guides and course notes.

The implementation of scientific results was carried out by means of experimental researches during French courses at „Ion Creanga” Pedagogical University, through the implementation of the theoretical-applicative

fundamentals elaborated and structured in *The technological model of linguistic competences evaluation through ICT* in the study of French, participation in national and international scientific conferences, scientific publications, specialized books in French and hands-on activities with French students.

Approval of research results. The research results were discussed and approved during the meetings of the *Romance Philology* Department, the Teachers' Council of Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, the tutorial committee of the Doctoral School *Theory of Education*, methodological seminars and French courses.

The main ideas and the results of the theoretical and experimental investigation were promoted and discussed within international and national conferences, colloquia, trainings, seminars, discussion forums and workshops organized by „Ion Creanga” Pedagogical University, AUF Chisinau, the Association of French Teachers of Moldova, Continuing Training courses organized by the Continuing Education Centre of "Ion Creanga" SPU.

Publications on the thesis research topic. The research corresponds to and is an integral part of the scientific research directions of the Romance Philology Department of "Ion Creanga" SPU. The research results were reflected in **20** scientific theses, including: 3 in specialty magazines [50, 51, 52], 8 in the publications material of international and national conferences [53, 54, 55, 56, 59, 62, 65, 67], 3 in the scientific almanacs of doctoral students and competitors: [60, 63, 66], 4 in the materials of the scientific conferences of professors and researchers [57, 58, 61, 64], 2 specialty books: „J'étudie et je pratique la grammaire française" [68], „Le verbe français: exercices et évaluations" [69] and **4** other pieces of intellectual property [72, 73], among which: „*e-Flux: Manual digital interactiv de studiere a limbii franceze*" – registered within the State Agency on intellectual property, Certificate No. 6292, 2019 [70]; „Gold Medal for *Manual digital interactiv de studiere a limbilor străine*". Romania, 2019 [71].

Volume and structure of the thesis. The thesis contains: introduction, three chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, bibliographic sources (222 sources), 31 appendices. It contains a total of 156 body text pages, 43 figures and 24 tables.

Keywords: evaluation, competence, linguistic competence, the evaluation of linguistic competences, ITC instruments, digital competences, didactics of the French language.

THE THESIS CONTENTS

The introduction includes the topicality and importance of the research problem, the description of the research situation, the problem, the purpose and objectives of the research, the novelty and scientific originality of the research, the theoretical-applied significance of the research, the approval and implementation of the research results, the summary of thesis sections.

Chapter 1, **Theoretical landmarks of ICT assessment of language competences in higher education**, contains the epistemological study of the researched problem and highlights the essence and content of the basic concepts: "assessment", "competence", "language competence", "assessment of language skills", "ICT tools".

In this chapter, the history and the evolution of theories on linguistic competences and their evaluation through ICT were analysed in detail, which enabled the development of the following theoretical tools: *The evolution of the term "competence", Competence structure, Structure of communication competence in French, Taxonomy of communication competences according to CEFRL, Meanings of assessment, Functions of assessment, Classification of assessment strategies, Formative assessment versus normative assessment, Assessment stages, Advantages of using ICT in the French language course etc.*

The theoretical approach went on to the identification and analysis of linguistic competences in specialized literature, the presentation of taxonomies developed by researchers, with the analysis of methods and strategies for assessing linguistic competences through ICT. The epistemological study allowed us to establish the theoretical landmarks on which the practical ones will be determined and elaborated. Reference names in the conceptualization and establishment of theoretical landmarks are: V. Guțu [27], C. Cucuș [19], N. Bucun [8], L. Pogolșa [39], P. Lisievici [30], M. Manolescu [31], D. Potolea [40], T.I. Radu [41], M. Bocoș [4], S. Făt, A.V. Labăr [24], Ph. Perrenoud [36, 37], C. Bourguignon [5], G. Boutin [6], J.P. Bronckart [7], M. Butlen, J. Dolz [9], G. Scallon [44], X. Roegiers [43], R. Côté, J. Tardif [17], B. Houot [29] etc.

The study of the history and approaches of competence-based language learning, the theory and methodology of didactic evaluation, offered the opportunity to formulate a personal definition for the evaluation of linguistic competences. In our opinion, the assessment of linguistic competences involves the appreciation of the mobilization of knowledge, skills and attitudes on lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological, orthographic and orthoepic level in complex communication situations, spontaneously, based on an assessment grid. The use of ICT tools will significantly improve the

assessment of linguistic competences, this process becoming a personalized and individualized one.

Chapter 2, *The methodology for assessing linguistic competences through ICT in the university study of the French language*, focuses on the basics and contents of educational policies and practices of evaluation the linguistic competences of French students through ICT. The chapter also describes the praxeology of methodological conceptual elaboration of the *Technological model of linguistic competences assessment through ICT in the study of French*, (Fig. 2.1) as the result of studying the theoretical references that were implemented at “Ion Creanga” State Pedagogical University in the process of teaching French.

The chapter analyzes and presents the university teaching technology for evaluating the linguistic competences through ICT, as well as the *Reference framework of assessing LC through ICT*, which enabled the elaboration of the theoretical tools: *Learning outcomes and competences developed within French language courses, the final learning product and evaluation strategies in French language course, The portfolio - product, process and progress evaluation, The graphic representation of the problem, and a few Screenshots: the interactive-digital textbook e-Flux’s interface, Editing the digital textbook, Resources for the interactive-digital textbook e-Flux etc.*

The methodological research was based on identifying and establishing the importance of ICT tools in teaching-learning-evaluating of French language, learning environment, teachers digital skills, students’ availability and access to ICT tools, and the advantages of using ICTs in the process of LC evaluation. Reference names in establishing methodological landmarks are: V. Guțu [27], C. Cucoș [19], M. Manolescu [31], I. Cerghit [13], Ph. Perrenoud [36, 37], C. Bourguignon [5], G. Boutin [6], J.P. Cuq [20], N. Bucun [8], G. Scallon [44], X. Roegiers [43], J.P. Bronckart [7], R. Bibeau [3], F.M. Gerard [25], C. Partoune [35], R. Côté, J. Tardif [17] etc.

On the basis of a preliminary investigation which had the aim of justifying and confirming the problem and the final outcome, we carried out a study consisting in the analysis of basic documents that relate to the field of Educational Sciences and language policies (The Code of Education, The reference framework of the university curriculum, The study plans, National Curriculum 2010-2018, CEFRL), aimed at identifying the peculiarities of evaluating the linguistic competences. We also investigated the opinion of students and university teachers (a 52-people sample) regarding the use of ICT tools in the educational process, on the availability and accessibility of ICT

tools usage in the process of teaching-learning-evaluating. The preliminary stage of the pedagogical experiment showed that the evaluation of LC through ICTs represents a complex process, which involves several strategically interconnected components, influenced by multiple factors. In this regard, we have developed *The technological model for assessing students' LC through ICT*, which circumscribes in the peculiar features of university teaching strategy and which structures and combines methods, procedures, techniques etc. based on a system of specific principles [34, p. 87].

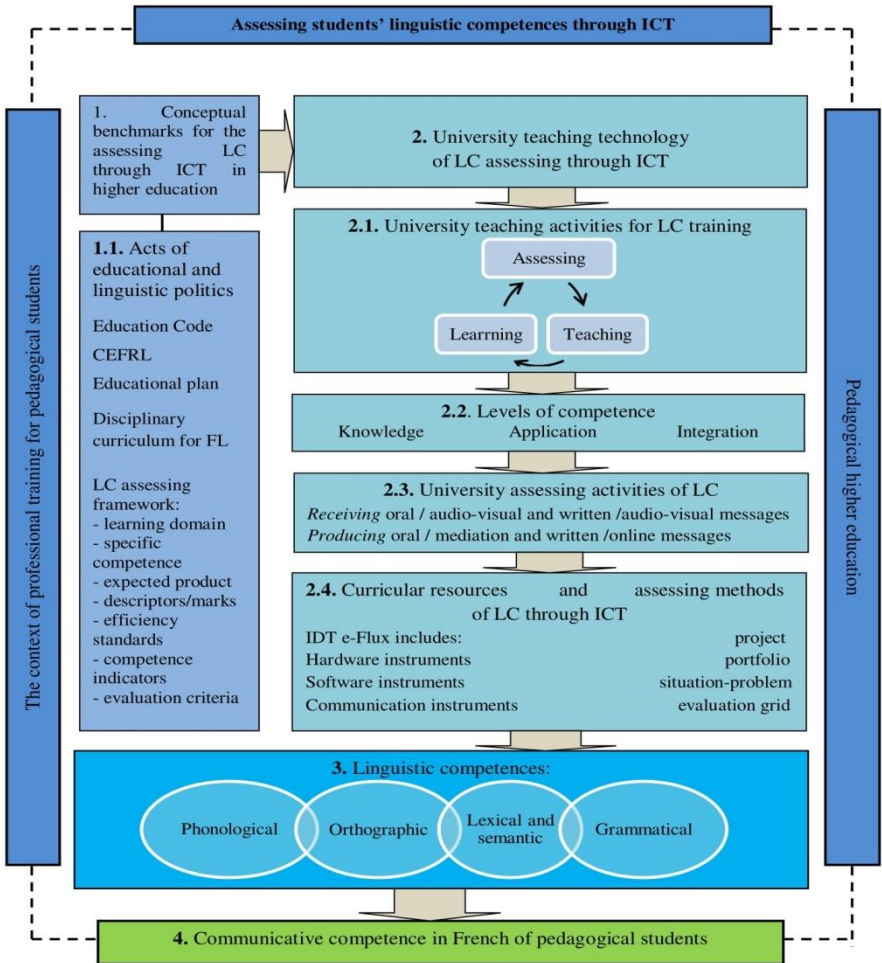


Fig. 2.1. Technological model for assessing LC through ICT

The chapter ends with the description of the interactive digital textbook *e-Flux* – the product of our research, which represents the interactive digital version of the classical textbook for learning French – *Flux. Méthode de français: Phonétique/communication* [Solcan, Guzun] intended for beginner students.



Fig. 2.2. Screenshot of IDT *e-Flux*

e-Flux is a flexible educational software. All textbook resources - audio files (mp3), video (mp4), images (png, jpeg, bmp, etc.), documents (doc, pdf), electronic presentations (ppt, pps), tests of various types (true / false, multiple choice, gapped text, etc.), electronic dictations, internal and external links - are editable. The process of inserting / modifying the resources of the textbook (Fig. 2.3) is simple and is done through the drop-down menus and dialog boxes.

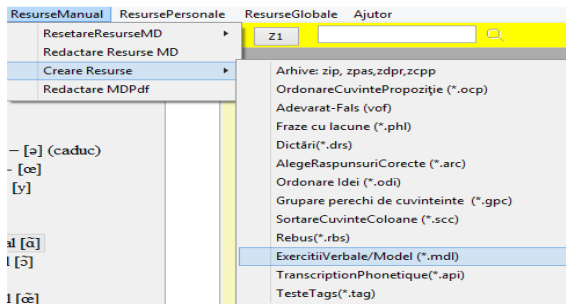


Fig. 2.3. Screenshot Creating IDT *e-Flux* resources

The administrator-user (teacher) can create and insert interactive activities both in the pages of the textbook and in its fields. The alterations made to the resources of the textbook are immediately noticeable by the

appearance/disappearance of specific icons. The changes made to the textbook resources are saved and can be used on subsequent openings of the e-book. The simple user (pupil/student) can utilize any resource in the textbook at their own pace - performing tasks (lexical, semantic, phonetic, grammatical, spelling, etc.) and documenting the results in the textbook files. All the activities of the pupil/student are registered and can be consulted by the teacher or any other people (e.g. parents) with the right of administrator.

The main idea of the software product for the development of digital textbooks of the 2.0 generation. was to implement and promote a new concept in the development of interactive digital textbooks by the the final user's (teacher or student) possibility of customizing the interactive and static content included in the printed textbook in PDF format. It is not a compulsory requirement that the user (teacher or student) who performs the customization has advanced programming knowledge.

Chapter 3, **The praxiological framework for the implementation of the technological model for ICT assessment of LC in the university study of the French language** presents the pedagogical experiment through which the technological Model for LC assessment through ICT was applied and approved and contains the theoretical-applicative foundations of the process.

The determination and formulation of the problem, the purpose and the strategy of the research allowed us to outline some essential **objectives** which served as starting points for the development of the expected investigative approach: investigating the views and attitudes of students and teachers on the use of ICT in the process of assessing linguistic competences; investigating students' attitudes towards the need to develop digital competences in the academic training process; identifying and establishing the effectiveness of the use of ICT in the process of assessing language skills in the study of the French language; determining the optimal ICT tools for assessing language skills in the study of French by students; elaboration of methodological tools, of the tests that will be applied in the stages of diagnosis and control of the pedagogical experiment; corroboration, elaboration and validation of interactive strategies for assessing linguistic competences through ICT.

In carrying out the pedagogical experiment, we applied scientific observation, conversation, questioning of students and university teachers, case study, study of products of student activities, analysis and synthesis, interpretation of experimental data, testing of linguistic competences and the *before and after* research method.

The experimental part of the research founded on the theoretical and methodological landmarks of the research took place within "Ion Creanga" State Pedagogical University. The study sample was represented by 107 subjects, including 92 students and 15 university teachers from the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures.

The pedagogical experiment comprised three stages: diagnosis, training and control. **The diagnosis stage** was carried out in the first semester of the 2018-2019 academic year and was based on the assessment of students' linguistic competence based on test 1 (Fig. 3.1), which covers the three areas - knowledge, application, integration – as well as identifying the opinion of university teachers regarding the use of ICT in the evaluation process.

The testing of the initial level of students' linguistic competence was done through ICT, namely with the help of the interactive digital textbook. The interactive activities that form the core of the digital textbook internal resources were the basis for the test.

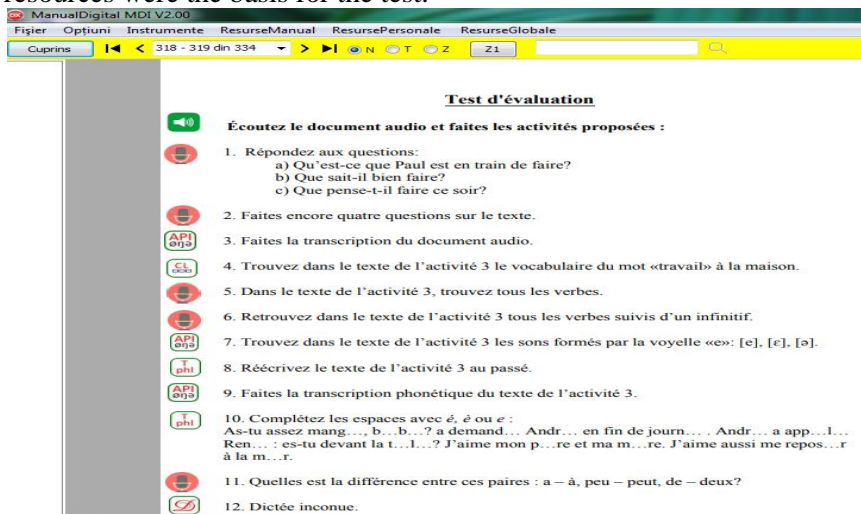


Fig. 3.1 Screenshot of the ICT language proficiency test

The test results, at the initial stage, showed that 20 subjects achieved the minimum level, which constitutes 21.7% of the experimental sample; 53 subjects recorded the average level, which represents 57.6% of the sample, and the advanced level was recorded by 19 subjects, i.e. 20.6%.

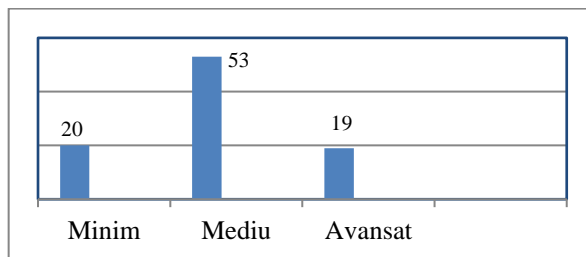


Fig. 3.2. Test results 1: initial level of linguistic proficiency (diagnosis stage)

The results of test 1 were directly influenced by the fact that the use of ICT tools is, for some students, an impediment in achieving their academic path, and overcoming this barrier will be one of the objectives of the training experiment, namely by training and/or developing students' digital competence.

At the stage of **the training experiment**, curricular contents were capitalized according to *the indicators for evaluating linguistic competences*, elaborated in accordance with CEFRL; the *Reference Framework for the assessment of students' LC* in the process of learning the French language, described in Chapter II, was used; a training program for students focused on the formation and/or development of digital competence was implemented along with the basic training program provided by the French language curriculums; the *interactive digital textbook e-Flux* was implemented. The latter enabled the use of ICT tools in the assessment for all communicative activities - reception (oral and/or written) and production (oral and/or written) - and for all the components of the linguistic competence: lexical, semantic, grammatical, phonological, orthographic and orthoepic, as components of the technological model for assessing LC through ICT. The application of *the Technological Model for the assessment of linguistic competences through ICT* (Fig.2.1) involved the assessment of LC through various activities of oral and/or written reception and oral and/or written production, performed permanently through ICT.

The process we carried out at the training stage was realized with the help of teaching ICT tools, endorsed by experts in education, described in Chapter 2. Of course, the basis of all training activities was, as a methodological benchmark, *the Reference Framework for the assessment of LC*. It was also the basis for the development of the interactive digital textbook e-Flux, used in the French course. The investigation of the use of the digital textbook in the study of French regarding the assessment of

students' linguistic competences allowed a comprehensive research of students' knowledge, skills and attitudes, analyzing the influence of changes caused by this practice on their academic behavior. The research managed to convince us that new technologies are part not only of students' social daily lives, but also of the modern education system.

Interactive digital textbook e-Flux, as well as the printed textbook *Flux. Méthode de français: Phonétique/communication* [Solcan], is structured in 16 course units, which, as a rule, include the following types of activities, specific to the field of modern language study: exercises based on audio, video and image sequences; exercises for correct reading of texts, dialogues and poems; gap-filling, multiple-choice and true/false exercises; dictations (of known and unknown words, phrases, texts); phonetic transcription exercises. These types of activities cover all aspects of linguistic competences: lexical, semantic, grammatical, phonological, orthographic and orthoepic (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Linguistic proficiency assessment matrix using the interactive digital textbook e-Flux

Teaching unit	Linguistic competences covered			
	Phonological component	Lexical and semantic component	The grammatical component	Orthographic and orthoepic component
Leçon 1/[a – a]. Décrire une personne. «Ma famille»	Exercices d'entraînement des sons [a- a]; Amusement sonore; Virelangues; Lecture du dialogue, du poème; Lecture du texte «Ma famille»; Dictée.	Vocabulaire: décrire une personne; Mécanismes pour obtenir une information sur une personne, une chose.	Articles indéfinis – articles définis. Complétez les blancs par l'article indéfini, défini ou contracté.	Complétez les vides avec: a, â, à, as.
Leçon 2/[e]. Décrire les objets. «Ma maison»	Exercices d'entraînement du son [e]. Amusement sonore; Virelangues; Lecture du dialogue, du poème; Faites la transcription phonétique des phrases ci-dessous; Lecture du texte «Ma maison»; Dictée.	Décrire un objet, le logement, localiser dans l'espace. Complétez les blancs par les mots qui manquent de la liste ci-dessous.	Prépositions de lieu : à, au, à la, de, du, de la, chez etc. Complétez les blancs par les prépositions de lieu.	Complétez les vides avec: é, er, ez, ai. Classez les mots dans le tableau selon la prononciation de «x».
...

During the **control stage**, test 2 was applied. The aim of the test was to establish the final level of linguistic competence proficiency through ICT tools. Given the fact that we used the *before and after* method, we applied the same test as at the diagnosis stage with the only difference of using items of an advanced level of difficulty.

The results of test 2 at the control stage (Table 3.2) showed that 52 out of 92 students have developed linguistic competences at the advanced level of proficiency in French and 40 students at the intermediate level.

Table 3.2. Results of t2 (control stage)

Level	Nr. of students	%
Advanced	52	56,52
Medium	40	43,47
Minimum	0	0
Total	92	100%

The data in the table above show that the students scored better in test 2 than in test 1 (diagnosis stage). This can be accounted for the direct access to authentic models of communication in French, students possibility to access the material taught whenever they need and to self-assess at each stage of the learning process.

At the initial stage of our research, according to the indicators of appreciation of LC, we found out that the possession of linguistic competences corresponded, mainly, to the minimum and average levels. This result was mainly due to the curriculum based on a traditional model of LC development, which does not integrate ICT tools, using traditional means of teaching-learning-assessment. At the control stage, however, the results recorded (Figure 3.11) are mainly of advanced and intermediate level, this being mainly due to the curricular modernisation, by integrating ICT tools in the process of assessing linguistic competence.

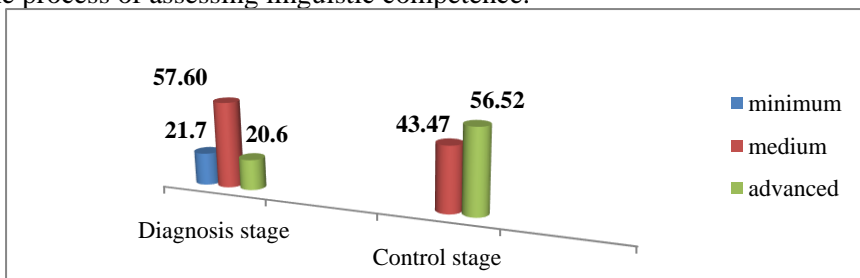


Fig. 3.3. Comparative values of linguistic (diagnosis and control stage)

The difference between the results from the initial stage and the control stage is due to the usage of ICT tools at all stages of the instructional process - teaching, learning, evaluation. The access to authentic teaching sources, offered by new technologies, allowed the students to become aware of their own abilities in terms of identifying, assimilating and integrating new knowledge in fluent communication in French.

During the control phase, two questionnaires were applied to the students. One of the questionnaires was addressed to all students of the experimental group, and aimed at identifying the impact of LC assessment through ICT on their academic progress. The results of this questionnaire highlighted the fact that most of the students surveyed liked ICT assessment. This type of assessment required more skills, more training and effort, which will ensure a memorization of the studied material for a longer period of time. Among students' frequent answers, we find: *“it is easier to work on the computer than to write by hand; it is a good way to evaluate oral production as well; it was a new method of evaluation for me; I learned how to make a PowerPoint presentation correctly; it forms the necessary skills for the future; it was good training for the graduation thesis; it is an interactive, interesting, captivating method; the grade was objective; it is a different way of expressing knowledge; I had the opportunity to express myself orally; there is the possibility of self-assessment; we are not pressed for time; it is more efficient ”*.

The evaluation rubrics proposed by the teacher disciplined the students to strictly follow the established criteria, which, inevitably, also developed new skills for them: *“it was a concrete working plan, with clearly delimited steps; it was like a guide; the assessment was correct and objective”*

The students established the differences between the two types of assessment. In traditional assessment, students *“learn by heart; only written expression is assessed; requires less preparation time, but is more difficult; it is trivial; can't change anything; causes fear.”* On the other hand, evaluation with the help of ICT tools *“requires more skills; we seek, we work harder; oral expression is also assessed; it is more efficient, but requires more time for preparation; develops linguistic competences; it is more interesting; it is more objective; develops the ability to filter information; it is individualized, in connection with the needs of each student; it is something new, captivating and special; it is personalized and involves more individual work; we can change something, etc”*

Unanimously, the students appreciated this type of evaluation and they are even open to continue this evaluative approach, because *“in the century we live in we have to adapt to new technologies; they train us as modern teachers; through this method, all language skills are highlighted; it is more interesting; it’s modern; I paid more attention to the process; it’s not boring.”*

The second questionnaire, dedicated to students who worked with the interactive digital textbook e-Flux, proves that this was an absolute novelty for them. The students used an interactive digital textbook exclusively at the “Ion Creanga” Pedagogical University, namely during the French course. All the students surveyed were more motivated to study French with the help of the digital textbook. This result also had a positive impact on their academic success, given that 78.38% of the students involved in the questionnaires confirmed this, 16.21% are undecided and only 5.4% do not acknowledge the merit of the digital textbook in improving the academic results.

When asked to list some positive aspects identified in the process of using the digital textbook, the students were very generous in providing answers that outline the value of the digital textbook from their perspective: *“audio recordings of texts proved to be very useful for a correct reading; the digital textbook allows independent practice of dictations, which certainly increases the student's success; the digital textbook is an ecological alternative to the paper ones; it was easy to use, being accessible anywhere, just with the laptop at hand; you can always return to your own exercises and recordings, watching the progress; the traditional textbook (being very small) is not as accessible as the electronic one, where you can easily open any page and learn; the digital textbook is very convenient, it is interactive and more useful; it can be accessed online, no matter where you are; the digital textbook allowed me to use it regardless of my location, it is very convenient, it is interactive; the digital textbook can be shared with a colleague who does not have it; the digital textbook is much more compact than usual.”*

However, we do not neglect the other dimension of using the digital textbook and the negative aspects identified by students: *“not every student has a personal laptop; it would be good to have the mobile version of the manual; I encountered some technical difficulties along the way (some exercises did not work); probably, along the way, you may feel a bit tired of the computer; another problem could be the absence of electricity or the resistance of the computer battery; in unexpected moments, technical problems may occur; damaged vision and fatigue, caused by the technique*

used for a long time; it is in electronic format, which affects the eyes, causing fatigue; the digital textbook, if you don't have internet, you can't use it."

Still, unanimously, the students liked to work with the digital textbook and most of those surveyed would like all the classic textbooks to be replaced with digital ones.

The chapter contains graphical representations that show the dynamics and the final results of the investigation. They are analyzed and commented in accordance with the objectives of the pedagogical experiment and of the research as a whole. In accordance with the logic and purpose of the research, we found, developed and verified the level of linguistic competences through ICT in the university educational process in terms of cognition, application and integration.

The outcomes of the pedagogical experiment ensured the increase of the level of linguistic competences of the students, resulting in the improvement of the communication competence in French. Similarly, there was an increased interest of students in the use of ICT tools in the process of teaching-learning-assessment of linguistic competences, an especial interest of the students was the interactive digital textbook for studying French. The analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from the pedagogical experiment demonstrated the efficiency of using ICT tools in the process of assessing students' LC in the French language course. Thus, we conclude by stating that the good results obtained in the control stage were possible due to the technological model for assessing linguistic competences through ICT.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study of education and language policies (*ICT Competences Framework for Teachers - UNESCO, The Framework-Plan for Higher Education, The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova, "Education 2020" Strategy, The reference framework for university curriculum, The National curriculum for foreign languages, CEFRL* etc.) referring to the skills required for language teachers, reveals the idea that the integration of ICT in the study of languages generates the procedural reconsideration of the instructional approach. In this context, the assessment of language skills through ICT is a current trend in the optimization of the teaching process in higher education specific to language teaching in general and French in particular. The definition of theoretical concepts, the interpretation of the data for the pedagogical experiment led to the establishment of the following conclusions:

1. The analytical study of the researched scientific problem enabled the discrimination and delimitation of the meanings of the basic concepts of the research: "competence", "linguistic competence", "assessment", "assessment of linguistic competence", "ICT tools", the description of the evolution of the term "assessment of linguistic competence", generating the interpretation of scientific approaches to the methodology for assessing LC through ICT in the process of university study of French and led to: (a) the conceptualization and validation of indicators for assessing the level of development of students' linguistic competences, (b) the elaboration and capitalization of the Reference Framework for assessing linguistic competences.

2. The qualitative evolution of scientific research on competence-based assessment in higher education proves intense concerns of researchers for the identification of innovative educational practices of forming linguistic competences in students. In this respect, the pedagogical context of linguistic competences assessment by means of ICT tools was presented, the methodological opportunities for enhancing the use of ICT in university environment were described. The outcomes of the investigations at the preliminary and final stages of the pedagogical experiment conditioned the identification of theoretical-applicative foundations and the establishment of interactive and active-participatory didactic strategies and activities for the evaluation of linguistic competences through ICT tools, connected to the *LC Assessment Framework*, developed and experimentally validated.

3. The examination of experimental data regarding the usage rates of ICTs in the evaluation of students' linguistic competences and the analysis of university practices of ensuring the quality of evaluation strategies demonstrated the need for complex usage of ICT in evaluation, reasons from which was conceived, scientifically based and experimentally validated the Technological Model for students LC assessment by means of ICT represented by the educational software "Interactive digital textbook e-Flux". The educational software developed during the research is an innovation in the study of the French language (fact confirmed by the sample students in the questionnaire for assessing the impact of using the interactive digital textbook); the originality of the textbook derives from the exceptional chances for individual study that it offers. The software proved to be functional, efficient (78.38% of the surveyed students claimed the academic success they achieved in the study French was due to the use of the educational software). The basic concept of the software can be applied to

any foreign language and any discipline, thus being open for further development.

4. **The pedagogical experiment confirmed the formative value of the Technological Model for assessing linguistic competences through ICT, thus validating the conceptual and methodological foundations for ICT assessment in higher education** and describing the taxonomy of linguistic competences in the formation of the communicative competence in French for teacher-training students. The technological model for evaluating LC through ICT was experimentally validated by designing and implementing a system of pedagogical actions, undertaken in order to optimize the assessment of students' linguistic competences.

5. **The pedagogical experiment generated data that revealed the increase of the level of students linguistic proficiency** from 21.7% (diagnosis stage) to the decrease of the minimum level and from 20.6% (diagnosis stage) to 56, 52% (control stage) for the advanced level of linguistic proficiency, **which is due to the use of ICT tools** at all stages of the instructional process - teaching, learning, evaluation. The access to authentic teaching sources offered by ICT enabled the students to consolidate their communicative competence in French. The results of the research demonstrate the relevance of the research problem and its purpose and confirm the hypothesis of the scientific investigation.

6. **The scientific results obtained in the research**, which focused on determining and capitalizing on the theoretical-applicative foundations of communicative competence assessment through ICT, through the implementation of the *Technological Model for assessing linguistic competences* **contributed to solving the problem under study and confirmed the hypothesis of the scientific investigation**, by optimizing the process of assessing LC, significantly facilitating the personalization, individualization and efficiency of the assessment process. **From the perspective of viewing assessment as a process of regulation and self-regulation of learning**, the evolution of students towards learning self-evaluation as an element of metacognition with the aim of self-correction **that favors their autonomy in the university study of French** is outlined.

In agreement with the theoretical and praxiological values of the research the following recommendations could be formulated:

For textbook authors:

The transformation of the classic French textbook into an interactive digital textbook will allow the pupils, students, teachers and parents in the

Republic of Moldova to profit of the multiple advantages offered by interactive textbooks.

For university teachers:

(a) In the training stage:

1. The development and the use of educational software for studying French – the interactive digital textbook e-Flux – and the application of this project in other university disciplines at “Ion Creanga” State Pedagogical University and at other universities.

2. The use of *The Technological Model for the evaluation of linguistic competences through ICT* and the use of university didactic technology for the evaluation of linguistic competences described in the research in the formation of communicative competence in foreign languages.

3. The elaboration of course materials and students guidebooks according to the proposed technological model, in order to improve the quality of the teaching-learning-evaluation process in foreign languages study at the university.

4. The development of linguistic competences in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2018), and the use of Appreciation Indicators of linguistic competences proficiency levels within the university course *French and communication* as well as in other studied foreign languages.

5. The motivation and the constant self-motivation of the students to use new technologies in the process of language teaching-learning-assessment

(b) In continuing education:

6. The introduction of the module *Assessment of linguistic competences through ICT in the university study of foreign languages* in the course *Didactics of languages* within the training programs for continuing development of pre-university and university teachers.

7. The use of the theoretical and methodological landmarks, the use of the Technological model of LC assessment through ICT for the elaboration of curricula guidelines, course materials, methodological guides for the continuing education of foreign languages and literatures teachers.

For Student-Teachers:

Experimenting with ICT tools and educational software in the process of language acquisition and development of linguistic competences should be a key-moment in the formation of the communicative competence in foreign language learning

The present research project provides opportunities for further and deeper study into the topic of using ICT in the process of foreign languages learning at pre-university and university levels, as well as in lifelong learning.

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ANNOTATION

Bulat-Guzun Ana

Assessing linguistic competences through ICT in university study of French.

PhD thesis in pedagogical sciences, Chisinau, 2020

The Structure of the thesis: introduction, three chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, 222 bibliography sources, 156 pages of text, 43 figures, 24 tables, 31 appendixes.

Publications related to the topic of the thesis: 24 scientific works.

Key-words: assessment, competence, linguistic competences, assessing linguistic competences, ICT, digital competence, French language.

Field of study: Theory and Methodology of Instruction (French language).

Research purpose: to determine theoretical-practical aspects, to develop and validate the methodology of assessing linguistic competences through ICT in learning French.

Research objectives: to determine the theoretical landmarks regarding the evaluation of linguistic competences through ICT in the context of university study of French; to interpret the methodological opportunities of assessing linguistic competences through ICT as a pedagogical concern in higher education; to study experimentally the degree of reevaluation of ICT in assessing students' linguistic competences; to elaborate, implement and validate experimentally the *Technological model for assessing students' linguistic competences through ICT in learning the French language*; to estimate the efficiency of the represented methodology as *Technological model for assessing students' linguistic competences through ICT*.

The scientific novelty and originality assume the identification of the theoretical utility and extension of the epistemic and pragmatic use of ICT in the process of the French language teaching-learning-assessing; the clarification and identification of the meaning of the basic concepts - „assessment”, „competence”, „linguistic competences”, „assessing linguistic competences”, „ICT” tools, analyzed in the context of establishing the methodology for the assessing of the linguistic competences in learning French and highlighting the scientific approaches and orientations regarding the use of ICT; revealing the development levels and indicators of students' linguistic competences, formulating assessing criteria; the description of the assessing criteria of the linguistic competences development through ICT.

The scientific results obtained in the research consist in determining the theoretical foundations of the linguistic competences, the development and experimental validation of the *Technological model for assessing students' linguistic competences through ICT*, by elucidating methodological opportunities of language didactics development and efficiency in French language teaching at university level, in the context of an informational society.

The theoretical significance of the research is supported by the analysis, specification, delimitation, and interpretation of the aspects of the conceptual framework for assessing students' linguistic competences through ICT; the examination and analysis of scientific guidelines in the context of the use of ICT, the difficulties of using ICT in studying the French language; the elucidation of the methodological opportunities to make teaching the French language more efficient at university level.

The practical value of the research consists in the elaboration and validation of the theoretical-practical fundamentals, structured in the components and instruments of the *Technological model for assessing the linguistic competences through ICT in learning French* which could be further applied for other undergraduate courses, as well as for teachers' continuing development.

The implementation of the scientific results was carried out through the experimental research steps at „Ion Creanga” SPU, during French lessons, by implementing the theoretical and practical fundamental elaborated and structured in the *Technological model for assessing the linguistic competences through ICT in learning French at university level*, including participation in national and international conferences, publishing scientific materials, grammar textbooks and carrying out practical activities with students.

ADNOTARE

Bulat-Guzun Ana

Evaluarea competențelor lingvistice prin TIC în studiul universitar al limbii franceze teză de doctor în științe ale educației, Chișinău, 2020

Volumul și structura tezei: introducere, trei capitole, concluzii generale și recomandări, bibliografie din 222 surse, 156 de pagini text de bază, 43 de figuri, 24 tabele, 31 de anexe.

Publicații la tema tezei. Rezultatele au fost publicate în 24 lucrări științifice.

Cuvinte-cheie: evaluare, competență, competențe lingvistice, evaluarea competențelor lingvistice, instrumente TIC, competență digitală, didactica limbii franceze.

Domeniul de studiu: teoria și metodologia instruirii (limba franceză).

Scopul cercetării: presupune stabilirea reperelor teoretice, elaborarea și validarea *Modelului tehnologic de evaluare prin TIC a CL* ale studenților în studiul limbii franceze.

Obiectivele cercetării: determinarea reperelor teoretice privind evaluarea competențelor lingvistice prin TIC în contextul predării-învățării universitare; interpretarea oportunităților metodologice ale evaluării competențelor lingvistice prin TIC ca preocupare pedagogică în învățământul superior; studiul experimental al gradului de valorificare a TIC în evaluarea competențelor lingvistice ale studenților; elaborarea, implementarea și validarea experimentală a *Modelului tehnologic de evaluare prin TIC a CL* ale studenților care învață limba franceză; estimarea eficienței metodologiei reprezentată de *Modelul tehnologic de evaluare prin TIC a CL*.

Noutatea și originalitatea științifică: rezidă în identificarea perspectivelor teoretice actuale ale valorificării pragmatice a TIC în procesul predării-învățării-evaluării limbii franceze; precizarea și dezvoltarea semnificației conceptelor de bază - „evaluare”, „competență”, „competență lingvistică”, „evaluarea competențelor lingvistice”, instrumente „TIC”, analizate în contextul stabilirii metodologiei de evaluare a competențelor lingvistice în studiul universitar al limbii franceze și al evidențierii abordărilor și orientărilor științifice privind utilizarea TIC; discriminarea nivelurilor de dezvoltare a competențelor lingvistice ale studenților, formularea criteriilor de evaluare și a indicatorilor competențelor lingvistice; descrierea Referențialului de evaluare a competențelor lingvistice prin TIC în studiul limbii franceze.

Rezultatele științifice obținute în cercetare constă în determinarea fundamentelor teoretice privind competențele lingvistice, elaborarea și validarea experimentală a *Modelului tehnologic de evaluare prin TIC a CL* ale studenților, prin elucidarea oportunităților metodologice de eficientizare a didacticii limbii franceze în învățământul superior care contribuie la dezvoltarea didacticii universitare în contextul societății informaționale.

Semnificația teoretică a cercetării este susținută de: analiza, precizarea, delimitarea și interpretarea cadrului conceptual al evaluării prin TIC a competențelor lingvistice la nivelul unor criterii și indicatori specifici; interpretarea orientărilor științifice privind TIC, a dificultăților de utilizare a instrumentelor TIC în studierea limbii franceze; elucidarea oportunităților metodologice de eficientizare a didacticii limbii franceze în învățământul superior.

Valoarea aplicativă a lucrării constă în elaborarea, argumentarea științifică și validarea experimentală a *Modelului tehnologic de evaluare prin TIC a CL* în studiul universitar al limbii franceze. Fundamentele teoretico-aplicative (inserate în model) valorificate și validate în cadrul experimentului pedagogic realizat au contribuit la sporirea eficienței dezvoltării competenței de comunicare, în general, și la ameliorarea procesului de evaluare a competențelor lingvistice prin intermediul TIC, în particular. *Referențialul de evaluare a competențelor lingvistice, Grila de evaluare, Indicatorii de apreciere a nivelului de dezvoltare a competențelor lingvistice, Matricea de dezvoltare a competențelor lingvistice prin utilizarea manualului digital interactiv e-Flux* pot fi aplicate nu doar în predarea-învățarea-evaluarea limbii franceze, ci și în studiul altor limbi străine la nivel universitar și pentru formarea continuă a cadrelor didactice. Reperetele teoretice și metodologice ale cercetării pot servi ca suport teoretic în elaborarea ghidurilor metodologice și a notelor de curs.

Implementarea rezultatelor științifice s-a realizat prin intermediul cercetărilor experimentale din cadrul UPS „Ion Creangă”, la cursurile de limba franceză, prin implementarea fundamentelor teoretico-aplicative elaborate și structurate în *Modelul tehnologic de evaluare prin TIC a CL* în studiul universitar al limbii franceze, inclusiv prin participarea la conferințe naționale și internaționale etc.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Булат-Гузун Анна

Определение уровней сформированности лингвистических компетенций посредством ИКТ в процессе обучения французскому языку в университетских учреждениях. Диссертация на соискание учёной степени кандидата педагогических наук, Кишинев, 2020

Структура и объём диссертации: введение, три главы, основные выводы и рекомендации, библиография из 222 источников, 156 страниц основного текста, 43 рисунка, 24 таблиц и 31 приложений.

Публикации на тему диссертации: в 24 научных работах.

Ключевые слова: оценивание, компетенция, лингвистические компетенции (ЛК), определение/оценивание уровней сформированности лингвистических компетенций (ОУСЛК), ИКТ (информационные и коммуникационные технологии) инструменты, цифровая компетенция, дидактика французского языка.

Область исследования: теория и методика преподавания (французский язык)

Целью исследования является определение теоретико-прикладных ориентиров, разработка и проверка экспериментальной методики по определению уровней сформированности лингвистических компетенций путем использования ИКТ в процессе обучения французскому языку.

Задачи диссертационного исследования: определить теоретические ориентиры оценивания лингвистических компетенций путем использования ИКТ в контексте преподавания-обучения в университетских учреждениях; интерпретировать методологические возможности оценивания уровней сформированности лингвистических компетенций с помощью ИКТ, как педагогическую проблему, в университетских учреждениях; экспериментально исследовать степени значения ИКТ при оценивании уровней сформированности лингвистических компетенций студентов; разработать, внедрить и экспериментально проверить *Технологическую модель определения уровней сформированности лингвистических компетенций у студентов при изучении французского языка по средством использования ИКТ*; оценить эффективность методологии, представленной в *Технологической модели определения уровней сформированности лингвистических компетенций по средством ИКТ*;

Научная новизна и актуальность исследования заключается: в определении текущих теоретических перспектив, значимости эпистемологического и прагматического использования ИКТ в процессе преподавания-обучения и определения уровней знания французского языка; в уточнении и раскрытии значения основных понятий - «оценивание», «компетенция», «ЛК», «ОУСЛК», «ИКТ» инструменты, анализируемых в контексте выявления модели по ОУСЛК в процессе обучения французскому языку в университетских учреждениях, и выделения подходов и научных рекомендаций по использованию ИКТ; в выявлении уровней сформированности лингвистических компетенций и показателей владения языком студентов, формулировании критериев оценивания и показателей сформированности лингвистических компетенций студентов; в описании Системы ОУСЛК используя ИКТ в обучении французскому языку в университетских учреждениях.

Научные результаты, полученные в ходе исследования, заключаются в определении теоретических основ лингвистических компетенций, в разработке и экспериментальной проверке *Технологической модели определения уровней сформированности лингвистических компетенций у студентов*, путем выяснения методологических возможностей рационализации преподавания французского языка в высших учебных заведениях, которые способствуют развитию преподавания в университетах в контексте развития информационного общества.

Теоретическая значимость результатов исследования подтверждается: анализом, уточнением, разграничением и интерпретацией концептуальной основы оценивания ЛК, на уровне конкретных критериев и показателей, используя ИКТ; анализом научных направлений связанных с исследованием новых технологий, с трудностями использования инструментов ИКТ при обучении французскому языку; выяснением методологических возможностей для оптимизации преподавания французского языка в университетских учреждениях.

Практическая значимость результатов исследования заключается в разработке и проверке экспериментально-опытным путем теоретико-прикладных основ, структурированных в компонентах и инструментах *Технологической модели по определению уровней сформированности лингвистических компетенций с помощью ИКТ при изучении французского языка*.

Внедрение научных результатов исследования было достигнуто посредством организации экспериментальных исследований, проведенных в Кишинёвском государственном педагогическом университете имени Иона Крянгэ, на занятиях французского языка, путем внедрения теоретических и прикладных основ, разработанных и структурированных в *Технологической модели по определению уровней сформированности ЛК с помощью ИКТ при обучении французскому языку* в университетских учреждениях, также представленные в работе результаты исследования нашли отражение в выступлениях на национальных и международных конференциях, в публикациях научных материалов, учебников/специализированных книг и проведении практических занятий с студентами, изучающими французский язык.

BULAT-GUZUN ANA

**ASSESSING LINGUISTIC COMPETENCES THROUGH ICT
IN UNIVERSITY STUDY OF FRENCH**

533.01 UNIVERSITY PEDAGOGY

ABSTRACT
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