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## Analysis of pedagogical platforms for students' oral French (FLE) skills in Kazakhstan

This article examines the current problems of the development of higher education in Kazakhstan during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for the improving oral speech in the French language through educational platform. Accordingly, we offer the results of a scientific and analytical survey on the use of educational platforms. This qualitative survey was conducted among students and teachers of the Sorbonne-Kazakhstan Institute. Methodological basis of the research is exploratory survey which provided the opportunity to identify the importance of the development of oral speech, effective platforms, and educational sites to learn French from distance. The results of the surveys are given in the form of graphs by percentage ratio and in the form of table. In the scientific and discursive part of the article, we offer information from real conferences in the pedagogy field. The results of this research work are dedicated to teachers who teach French as a foreign language.

**Keywords:** pedagogical platforms, distance education, COVID-19, scientific questionnaire, pedagogical analysis, oral speech, French Foreign Language (FLE), francophones.

### Introduction

In 2020, with the advent of COVID-19, as many countries in the world, Kazakhstan opted for distance education and experienced, the importance of implementing distance learning in the education system of Kazakhstan in global practice. According to the statistics of the Ministry of National Economy in 2020, 604345 students were isolated (this is the total number of students for 2019–2020), of which 321643 girls (or 53.2 %). The share of students enrolled in Kazakh is 65.2 %, Russian is 30.2 % and English is 4.6 %. All university professors, 44,188 people, were also isolated.

During the pandemic, 129 higher education institutions were closed, including 41 state universities, 84 private universities and 4 foreign universities [1].

These higher education institutions, students and teachers have been forced to use massively educational platforms, information technology and social networks to ensure their safety, the ability to work productively and to stay connected with the outside world despite physical isolation.

Distance learning in higher education institutions is carried out in several forms:

- through different online and academic platforms: Moodle, Zoom, Dokeos, etc.
- via e-mail: Mail.ru, Gmail.com, Outlook.office.com, etc.
- via social networks: Facebook, Skype, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc.

The minister of Education and Science, Askhat Aimagambetov, in his speech on the analytical portal of multimedia «informburo.kz» expressed his opinion on the massive introduction of pedagogical platforms in the higher education system:

*«Speaking of our fellow teachers, not everyone is 100 % proficient in information and communication technologies, not everyone can use them. There are senior teachers. But I would say that it depends not so much on age, but on the habit of constantly using these technologies. We prepared in advance for the distance format as much as possible. We knew in advance that one of the most important issues would be the issue of computer competence: will our teachers be able to use both the internet platform and other systems to support feedback and help students during the educational process».*

*(«Если говорить о наших коллегах-педагогах, не все на 100 % владеют информационно-коммуникационными технологиями, не все могут пользоваться. Есть возрастные педагоги. Но я бы сказал, что это не столько зависит от возраста, сколько от привычки постоянно использовать эти технологии. К дистанционному формату готовились заранее, насколько это было возможным. Мы заранее знали, что одной из самых главных проблем будет как раз вопрос ИТ-компетентности: смо-*

гут ли наши педагоги использовать и интернет-платформу, и другие системы, чтобы поддерживать обратную связь и помогать студентам во время образовательного процесса».)

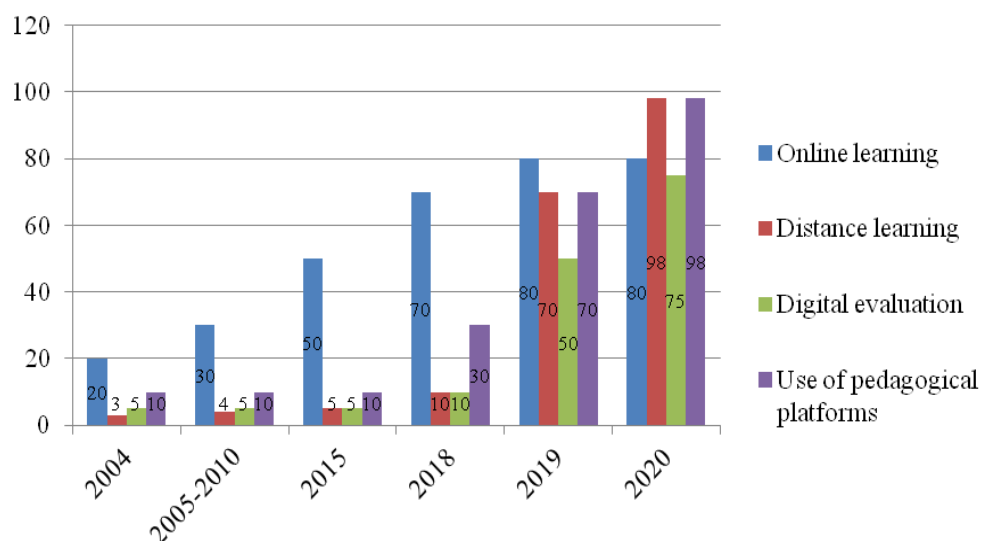


Figure 1. Evaluation of ICT use during quarantine

**Introduction of distance learning in Kazakhstan.** Online learning is an important factor for the reform and improvement of the national education system in accordance with international requirements. Providing this type of education should be considered as an urgent task. Moreover, this is one of the main aspects of State Policy, fully consistent with the strategic goal of making Kazakhstan one of the thirty most competitive countries in the world, set by the first president Nursultan Nazarbayev.

There are enough forces, resources, and highly qualified specialists to achieve this goal.

According to research by UNESCO analysts for 2007, the literate population of Kazakhstan is 99.5 % and we are in 11-th place among 177 countries of the world [2].

The year 2019 is declared the «Year of Youth», and Nursultan Nazarbayev, at the opening ceremony, said:

*«In terms of the Literacy Index (Education Index) of the population, Kazakhstan ranks 15th in the world among 155 countries, and in terms of youth education, our country is in 9th place. Given the fact that our country is preparing for a more advanced technological and digital future, it is extremely important for us to follow the latest trends in education. Kazakhstan should give its young people the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure the success and prosperity of all. Distance Learning offers many possibilities. In the United States, a third of the 20 million university students study online, and we are just beginning, so there is a need to expand the scope of distance education in our country»[3].*

As stated by the Human Development Index (Education Index), Kazakhstan has risen from 93rd to 73rd place in 12 years. This indicates that the population of the Republic is ready for the introduction of new educational technologies based on modern advances in scientific and technological progress, primarily information and telecommunications technologies [3].

On the other hand, the introduction of high-quality distance education technologies and open education is also a solution to an important social problem. Indeed, Kazakhstan has a large territory with a low population density, a significant part of it lives in villages far from cities, regional centers, and districts. The schools are small and some correspond only to the primary level. With the advent of small farms and livestock farms in remote pastures, family groups are formed that prevent children from attending school. Moreover, people with disabilities have difficulties in obtaining education [4, 9–11].

Similar problems are observed in vocational education: colleges and universities are concentrated mainly in large cities, where the teaching staff is highly qualified while on the outskirts there is a shortage of specialists [5, 91–110].

These social problems violate certain constitutional rights of certain categories of citizens and discriminate against them on the basis of their place of residence and physical health. Understanding this, the state seeks opportunities and takes all measures to solve these problems.

Currently, in the most of universities, elements of distance learning have been introduced. Electronical and educational resources are created and implemented in the form of electronic training systems, virtual laboratories and simulators, electronic textbooks and pedagogical platforms in the form of Moodle [6].

Today, almost every university has its own representative office on the global Internet, which allows to introduce elements of distance learning. However, there are some universities which have difficulties with distance learning problem, due to the lack of a sufficiently developed resource base and highly qualified specialists.

The most advanced universities are Satpayev University, Serikbaev East Kazakhstan Technical University, Atyrau University of Oil and Gas, Karaganda Technical University, Karaganda University of Kazpotreboysuz, Auezov South Kazakhstan University, Abai Pedagogical University, which were the first to introduce distance education.

The main role in the field of computerization of education lies with pedagogical and management personnel. In accordance with the strategic objectives, it should be focused on the widespread use of information technology in all professional activities. We recommend introducing courses on the methodology of Education based on information technology for the training of teachers of secondary, technical, vocational, and higher education.

### *Experimental*

Kazakh National Pedagogical University named after Abai is a large pedagogical university in Kazakhstan, which concludes various international contracts and projects every year. In 2017, the Erasmus+ (plus) teacher exchange program provided one grant for the Institute Sorbonne-Kazakhstan at Abai KazNPU. Participants of the program should have provided the presentation of a scientific project, a scientific idea for the development of the French language for non-francophones. As researchers of Abai KazNPU, we were interested in this project. Considering the fact that Kazakhstan is not a francophone country, we decided to work on the development of students' oral skills through pedagogical platforms.

As our scientific idea was accepted by Erasmus (+) and awarded with grant to the first author of the article, the project found new ideas in the walls of the Abai University. The most experienced year for our project was 2020. During the pandemic (COVID-19), we analyzed the real picture of the use of pedagogical platforms for oral French skills at the Institute Sorbonne-Kazakhstan.

– First, on 10/10/2018, Institute Sorbonne-Kazakhstan was organized an international forum dedicated to new innovative education. In this forum, we had the chance to meet lecturer, educational coordinator English Economics Ms. Cécile CORMIERE, who created the pedagogical platform at the University of Bordeaux. This educational platform presents the types of exercises of a foreign language that develop such skills as: «oral comprehension and oral production». It develops a model of the mechanism of oral comprehension and oral production of a specialist's foreign language, including motivational, objective, nouns, procedural, technological elements, as well as criteria for assessing the professional and personal qualities of a specialist. That is, the idea was to go to Bordeaux, and remotely through the pedagogical platform of the University of Bordeaux, to develop the oral communication of ISK students, or to get access to the platform, while being in Kazakhstan and work on the same competencies.

– Secondly, the University of Aix-Marseille in the person of didactician Ms. Fatima Chnane-DAVIN suggested that we make an analysis of the development of oral speech in the ISK, which would bring a clear picture of the problem. This method was joined by Abai KazNPU, which, for its part, provided a place for research (the Sorbonne Institute-Kazakhstan) and a pedagogical platform at the Abai Center for Distance Education Technology. This method for us was closer, which had an international connection, bilateral cooperation. The theory writing and presentation of the project took place in France, but the research part has a point in Kazakhstan. Next, we provide analyses of our methodological work.

#### ***Method of analysis of the teachers exploratory survey of the Institute Sorbonne-Kazakhstan.***

The exploratory investigation took place between October 20, 2018 and January 1, 2020. Its double objective is to identify the use of pedagogical platforms by teachers of French as a foreign language and to resign the names of these platforms.

The survey is carried out on the basis of the Google program, which offers ready-made questionnaire templates and automatically calculates the results in the form of graphs. The survey includes four questions related to our scientific work.

The objective of the Institute Sorbonne-Kazakhstan (ISK) survey is to identify whether French language teachers use educational platforms, what kinds of platforms are mainly used for the development of French-language skills.

For this, we have prepared three simple questions on the situation of pedagogical platforms at ISK:

- Do you use ICT in French Language teaching?
- Do you use educational platforms, if so which ones?
- Is it possible to develop oral communication skills using pedagogical platforms?

In October of 2018, on the basis of this scientific work we created our exploratory survey among teachers who teach French at the Sorbonne-Kazakhstan Institute. The survey started on October 20, 2018 and closed on January 01, 2020. The duration of the survey was 15 months.

Figure 2 shows that nearly 54 % of the teachers often use ICT, the next 35 % use it in case of special need, and the remaining 11 % never use it in French classes.

■ occasionally ■ never ■ frequently

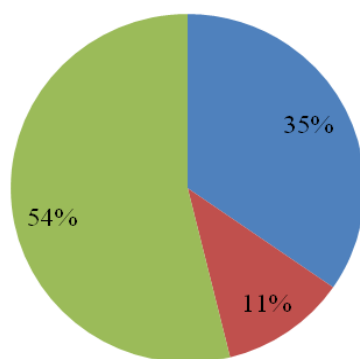


Figure 2. Exploratory survey of teachers's use of ICT in French classes

Table 1

**Use of 17 pedagogical or educational platforms**

№	Platform name	Type of platform	Number of teachers using these platforms at ISK
	Zoom	communication	26,00
	TV5 Monde	educational	20,00
	Moodle	pedagogical	20,00
	Irgol.ru	educational	18,00
	Google classroom	pedagogical, software for creating exercises	18,00
	Ifcinéma.com	pedagogical	17,00
	Podcastfrancaisfacile.com	educational	16,00
	Le point du FLE	educational	15,00
	Bonjourdefrance.com	pedagogical	10,00
	Bonjour du monde	educational, software for creating exercises	8,00
	Ifprof.com	pedagogical	6,00
	Espace ATENA	pedagogical	4,00
	Les Zexperts	pedagogical	4,00
	Ticsenfle.blogspot.com	educational	3,00
	Learning apps	pedagogical.	2,00
	Quizlet	educational, software for creating exercises	2,00
	MOOC	pedagogical	2,00

Table 1 reveals that teachers use 17 educational or pedagogical platforms. The most used educational site is Irgol.ru (69.23 %) followed by TV5 Monde (76.92 %). 100 % of teachers use the Zoom communica-

tion platform, almost 77 % use University Moodle, and 69.23 % of teachers practice the Google classroom pedagogical platform. Figure 3 illustrates the use of 17 pedagogical and pedagogical platforms as a percentage.

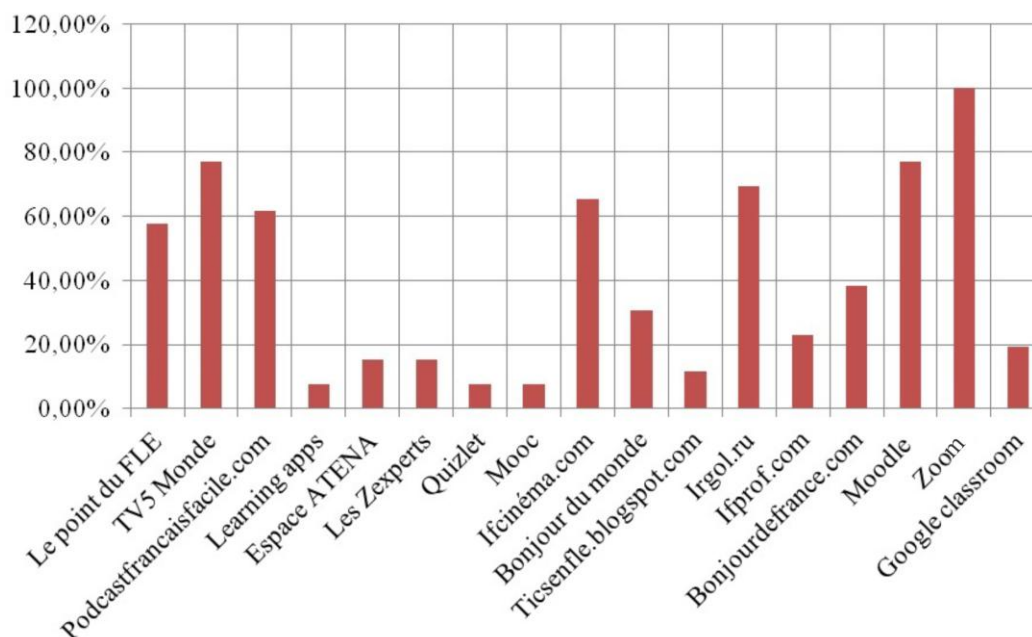


Figure 3. The use of 17 educational and pedagogical platforms as a percentage

As our research is based on the Moodle educational platform, the third question concerns its use to develop oral communication skills. We find that 92 % of teachers consider Moodle a valuable platform for the development of oral communication, 4 % think that it is impossible to develop oral communication skills, and for the remaining 4 % everything depends on the instructions developed by the teacher (Figure 4).

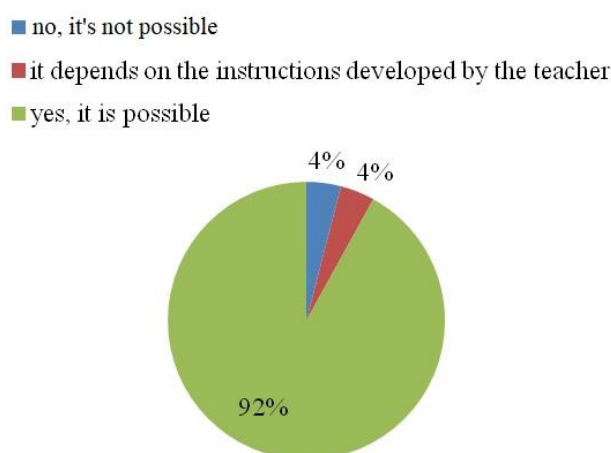


Figure 4. Ability of Moodle to develop oral skills

In total, the evaluation of our research determines that not all pedagogical platforms are used. In our surveys at ISK, we found that the practice of teaching was not based only on the use of pedagogical platforms and a communicative approach, but also on oral teaching in the classroom.

Moreover, the initial approach and face-to-face teaching method used by teachers were theoretical and did not take into account the reality of the field. Indeed, on this ground several nationalities meet in French Foreign Language class, which can induce ethnic factors. This parameter cannot be neglected, since its use is already widespread in the teaching of other subjects in Kazakhstan (Concept de politique linguistique de la République du Kazakhstan // Concept du 11/07/1996 n° 3186). It can also determine the discursive strategies of teachers [7; 103–108].

**Method of analysis of a research survey among ISK students.**

An important point to highlight is that in 2018 the Sorbonne Institute, which is part of the Abai National Pedagogical University of Almaty, for the first time introduced the digital pedagogical platform Moodle to help in the acquisition of oral communication skills. About 55 Kazakh students in economics, for whom French is a foreign language, participated in this pilot project.

The goal of creating this educational platform was to develop students' oral communication above all: in fact, oral skills are a strong indicator of a student's knowledge of a foreign language — in our case, French.

This experiment on the use of pedagogical platforms began in November of 2018 and ended in March of 2020: in 17 months, we were able to create our own Moodle-based university platform, and we conducted lessons there focused on the development of oral communication skills in French language.

By tracking and analyzing student interactions with our platform, we were able to determine how often it was used [8].

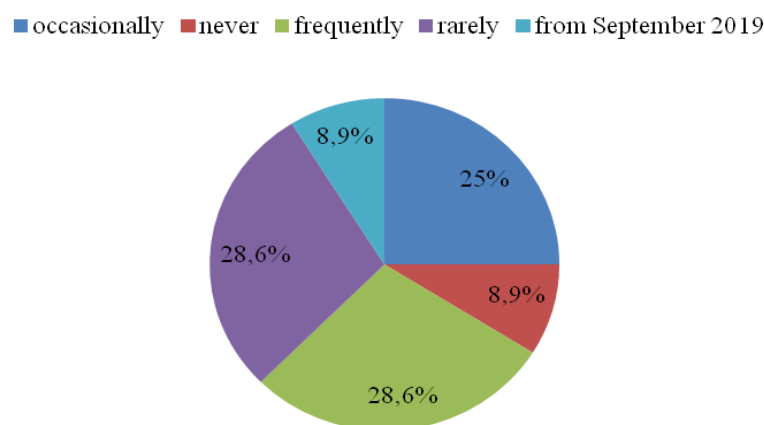


Figure 5. Distribution of students according to their use of the platform

According to Figure 5:

- 28.6 % of students have always used our platform, without interrupting the experimentation, doing all the exercises introduced by the teachers.
- 25 % used it occasionally: they only did the exercises they liked.
- 28.6 % used it very rarely, due to technical problems, their reluctance to work remotely, or their lack of motivation.
- 8.9 % started using it late, as they did not immediately adapt to distance learning.

The next 8.9 % did not even log into the network.

After our experiment the students were asked about this experiment, and the results are as follows (Figure 6):

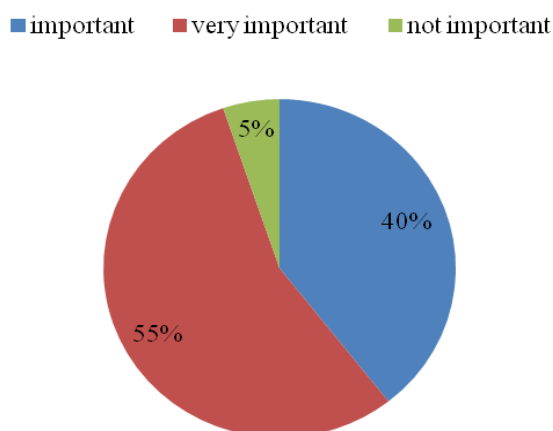


Figure 6. Students' use of the pedagogical platform

88.7 % believe that pedagogical platforms are effective for the development of oral skills in the French language, and on the other hand, the remaining 11.3 % believe that their use is ineffective for the development of oral communication.

Therefore, our mission is to discover the conditions of their effectiveness in the development of oral communication through educational platforms.

At the same time, during the same period, 55 students of the same year, from 12 Central Asian nationalities participated in the following questionnaire:

- How often do you use the internet in learning French?
- How often do you go to the university website?
- What pedagogical platforms do you know?
- How often do you use pedagogical platforms in learning French?
- How do you evaluate your technological skills on Moodle?
- Is it important to use educational sites and platforms to acquire additional skills?

The aim of this survey was to identify the problems students faced when teaching and learning French. The analysis revealed that the students of the Institute had various difficulties, including:

- the lack of know-how in the search for the necessary documents,
- the lack of knowledge, in autonomy, with video, audio, and other documents,
- non-use of francophone platform resources,
- insufficient skills of oral communication.

The results of this survey made it possible to conclude that students should be guided in their work to develop oral communication, and provided with the necessary conditions to eliminate the problems encountered.

#### ***Scientific discussion of methods and results.***

The meeting to discuss this project was held in 3 stages, on September 21, 2018, September 21, 2020, and January 19, 2021. The first stage of the discussion was held online, the participants were researchers of Abai KazNPU and members of the CLE (Cognition, Language, Education) laboratory. At this stage, we saw the first negative statements in the direction of our project. Director of the research unit ADEF (Apprentissage, Didactique, Évaluation, Formation) Jacques GINESTIE considered that our project is not fully completed, and there is a lack of a specific project hypothesis.

«*The project hypothesis has not been developed, it needs to be finalized or stopped*», Jacques Ginestie. However, owing to a lot of positive opinions, we continued to work.

The second stage was on September 21, 2020, 3 members of the CLE laboratory (Cognition, Language, Education) Marjolaine CHATONEY, Fatima CHNANE-DAVIN, Jean-Pierre CUQ were debated. At this stage, our project found its way, the context was fixed.

«*The project is interesting, developing, I see that the authors of the project are also in great development*», Jean-Pierre CUQ.

The third stage of the discussion was held on January 19, 2021. The work was presented by the first author of this article, in France at the University of Aix-Marseille. The discussions were members of ADEF. The meeting was held online, at this level we prepared a full analysis of the research survey. The work has reached its goal, that is, the platform was created on the basis of Abai KazNPU, the survey was made and the analyses were discussed. During the discussion, an Italian member Lello ROMANO lab advised us to remove the Zoom platform from the project. He believes that Moodle already has its own video platform for student communication.

#### ***Results and Discussion***

The impact of the pedagogical platforms made available to teachers on their action in the classroom and also their influence on the teaching of the French Foreign Language. We also differentiated pedagogical platforms, educational, and pedagogical sites. Thus, the practices observed during exploratory surveys are more related to methodologies other than the communicative approach.

According to our analysis, the introduction of pedagogical platforms in higher education institutions in Kazakhstan has increased by 100 %.

28.6 % of students often use pedagogical platforms and 25 % use collaboratively. All these actions illustrate that almost 60 % of students still use pedagogical platforms, especially Moodle and Zoom communication platform. Regarding the Francophonie or the cultural aspect of the French language, over 90 % of students and teachers opted for TV5 Monde. For consultation in terms of grammar, they mainly use Irgol.ru.

According to our preliminary surveys, 90 % of Francophone students aspire to the development of oral communication and believe that it is necessary to rely on new technologies such as Skype, Zoom, Moodle. While 92 % of teachers consider that Zoom and Moodle were the most relevant for the development of oral communication of Francophone students. The choices are about the platforms Moodle, Zoom, Skype, TV5 World, and educational site Irgol.ru.

By conducting these surveys, we found that 88.7 % of students believe that pedagogical platforms help to learn French, and the remaining 11.3 % think that the use of pedagogical platforms is not effective for the development of oral communication. We have identified commonly used platforms such as Zoom and Moodle, but the TV5 Monde educational platform and the website Irgol.ru. are the most used ones.

### Conclusion

In the presentation of our exploratory surveys, we discussed the role of ICTs during the global COVID-19 crisis in Kazakhstan and according to our analyses, the introduction of pedagogical platforms in higher education institutions of Kazakhstan has increased by 100 %.

We have come to the conclusion that the use of pedagogical platforms in Didactics of French as a foreign language DFLE (Didactique du Français Langue Etrangère), although apparently well-structured, needs to be rethought from its use for the development of oral communication. It has not informed itself of the reality of the terrain in its design and therefore cannot fully meet its needs. We believe that classroom courses are not enough to develop students' oral communication, in this work we address that oral communication requires additional learning on pedagogical platforms. This problematization occurs within the framework of theoretical conceptualization, concerning both language and educational sciences.

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### Қазақстан жағдайында студенттердің француз тілінде (FLE) ауызша сөйлеуіне арналған педагогикалық платформаларды талдау

Мақалада COVID-19 кезеңінде Қазақстандағы жоғары білім беруді дамытудың өзекті мәселелері, яғни қашықтықтан оқыту кезеңінде педагогикалық платформалар арқылы француз тілінде ауызша сөйлеуді дамыту қажеттілігі қарастырылған. Сонымен қатар педагогикалық платформаларды пайдалану бойынша ғылыми-аналитикалық сауалнаманың нәтижелері ұсынылған. Бұл квалитативті сауалнама Сорбонна-Қазақстан институтының студенттері мен оқытушылары арасында жүргізілді. Мақалада екі аналитикалық сауалнама келтірілген, ол ауызша сөйлеуді дамытудың маңыздылығын анықтауға мүмкіндік береді, сондай-ақ, француз тілін үйренуде қашықтықтан оқытуға арналған тиімді педагогикалық платформаларды, білім беру сайттары анықталған. Сонымен қатар, мақалада пайыздық графика түрінде және кесте түрінде, квалитативті сауалнамалардың нәтижелері бойынша талданған. Мақаланың ғылыми-дискурсивті бөлігінде нақты конференциядан ақпарат ұсынылған және



педагогика саласындағы ғалымдарға сілтеме жасалған. Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері француз тілі оқытушыларына шет тілі ретінде қол жетімді болады.

*Кілт сөздер:* педагогикалық платформалар, қашықтықтан білім беру, COVID-19, ғылыми сауалнама, ауызша коммуникативті қатынас, педагогикалық талдау, француз тілі, франкофон.

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## Анализ педагогических платформ для устной французской (FLE) речи студентов в условиях Казахстана

В статье рассмотрены актуальные проблемы развития высшего образования в Казахстане в период COVID-19 и необходимость развития устной речи на французском языке через педагогические платформы во время дистанционного обучения. Кроме того, авторами предложены результаты научно-аналитического опроса по использованию педагогических платформ для развития устной речи казахстанских студентов. Данный качественный опрос был проведен среди студентов и преподавателей Института Сорбонна–Казахстан. Методологической основой статьи является качественное анкетирование, при котором выявлена важность развития устной речи. Кроме того, определены эффективные платформы и образовательные сайты для изучения французского языка при дистанционном обучении. Данные научной статьи и результаты качественного анкетирования проанализированы в виде графиков по процентному соотношению и в виде таблицы. В научно-дискурсивной части работы обсуждены материалы реальных конференций и приведены цитаты ученых в области педагогики. Результаты исследования будут доступны для преподавателей французского языка как иностранного.

*Ключевые слова:* педагогические платформы, дистанционное образование, COVID-19, научное анкетирование, устная речь, педагогический анализ, французский язык, франкофон.

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