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Thème :

**L'ENSEIGNEMENT ET LA RECHERCHE DANS LE CONTEXTE DE LA COVID-19 :
NÉCESSITÉ D'UNE REDÉFINITION DE STRATÉGIES**

ACTES DU COLLOQUE

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Premières Journées d'Etudes Scientifiques (en visioconférence)

26 – 27 mai 2021

Thème : L'enseignement et la Recherche dans le contexte de la
COVID-19 : Nécessité d'une redéfinition de stratégies

SOUS LE PARRAINAGE DE

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L'UNIVERSITE D'ABOMEY-CALAVI*

1. Contexte et justification

La pandémie de la COVID-19 a indubitablement induit des changements radicaux et profonds dans nos habitudes de vie et dans nos relations interpersonnelles. Pour contenir cette pandémie, la plupart des pays ont adopté des stratégies de confinement total ou partiel, de couvre-feu ou de restrictions dans les déplacements de personnes. Les regards sont désormais tournés vers les écoles et universités en raison de leur forte implication dans la recherche et l'éducation, la formation et la socialisation de la personne humaine. Plusieurs écoles et centres de formation ont été fermés, des congés et vacances scolaires/universitaires ont été anticipés et la reprise n'a eu lieu que timidement.

En raison de cette pandémie, le monde de l'éducation en général et celui de l'enseignement supérieur en particulier connaissent actuellement de grands bouleversements en termes de comment trouver les meilleures méthodologies et stratégies d'enseignement-apprentissage qui conviennent aux directives d'endiguement du virus qui a déjà, faut-il le rappeler, contaminé ou tué de

millions de personnes dans le monde. La massification des effectifs dans les formations universitaires classiques telles que les lettres, les langues, les sciences juridiques, les sciences économiques et de gestion, les sciences physiques, les sciences mathématiques et biologiques font craindre une contamination accrue si le virus venait à s'introduire dans nos amphithéâtres.

Heureusement, la vie continue malgré tout et l'enseignement et la recherche dans nos universités et centres de formation le doivent aussi pour assumer la postérité et la prospérité intellectuelles et économique aussi bien que le développement de nos pays. Il s'établit alors une crainte objective par rapport au respect des gestes barrières établis dans nos universités et centres de formations au regard des grands rassemblements en raison du manque d'infrastructures dans certains de nos lieux de formation. Un changement de paradigme dans la formation et la recherche s'avère donc nécessaire.

Plusieurs méthodes de recherche et stratégies pédagogiques aux moyens des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication (TIC) ont été innovées. Il s'agit désormais de l'introduction et de la formation au E- teaching/learning, des cours à distance, de la redynamisation des Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC), de l'utilisation des réseaux sociaux comme canal de transmission du savoir, etc. En matière de recherche, les rencontres scientifiques, autrefois organisées en présentiel sont de plus en plus virtuelles avec l'utilisation des outils tels que Zoom, Google meet, Microsoft team, etc. comme moyens d'interaction.

Les difficultés rencontrées dans la mise en œuvre des stratégies et méthodes d'enseignement en période de la COVID-19 amènent les enseignants- chercheurs et chercheurs à repenser la recherche et la pédagogie universitaires pour ne pas briser la chaîne de la transmission du savoir dans l'espoir que la vie redevienne normale dans les jours à venir. Les *Journées d'Etudes Scientifiques* sont donc l'occasion d'explorer les synergies actuelles en termes de pratiques d'enseignement et de recherche pour une meilleure adaptabilité.

2. Objectifs

2.1. Objectif général

Ces Journées d'Etudes visent à susciter des réflexions et partage d'expériences chez les enseignants-chercheurs et chercheurs sur les meilleures approches et stratégies à adopter ou à expérimenter pour un enseignement supérieur inclusif

et respectueux du droit des étudiants à un enseignement de qualité d'une part, aussi bien que la réorientation de la recherche en cette période critique de la pandémie de la COVID-19, d'autre part.

2.2.Objectifs spécifiques

Il s'agit pour les participants de :

- mener des réflexions dans le sens des conduites à tenir pour des cours en ligne réussis dans leurs matières respectives ;
- partager les expériences et expertises de l'utilisation des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication comme support de transmission du savoir ;
- analyser de façon critique la problématique de recherche et de l'enseignement/apprentissage des langues dans un système de cours à distance.
- Conduire des activités de recherche en ligne, seul(e) ou en équipe.

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☞ Livres

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Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1985). *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-semiotic Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

☞ Articles

Sahgui, N.P. (2017). Représentation socioculturelle de la dot chez les Fulbés de la commune de Matéri. *RESILAC : Revue des Sciences du Langage et de la Communication*, 4(1), 392-412.

Wenden, A.L. (1998). Metacognitive knowledge and language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 19, 515-537. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/19.4.515>

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A THEORY-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE COVID-19 CONTEXT: AN INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Until the recent past, a great deal of the request for distance courses stemmed from their ability to provide access to individuals who are motivated to learn or improve proficiency in another language, but are geographically isolated or restricted by work, schedules, and/or other considerations. Today, the current virtual realities are no more the same. In fact, the covid-19 pandemic has laid down its constraints in the educational arena and has made distance teaching and learning almost compulsory. It is then important to think of how face-to-face courses especially those related to foreign language acquisition can get successfully replaced by the distance ones. Thus, this article aims at scrutinizing foreign language learning theories to find out different methods, strategies and techniques of distance teaching and learning that can validly replace classrooms teaching and learning practices. It further seeks to make recommendations in the light of the explored theories. To reach such goals, the article uses the qualitative research method to collect secondary data. The research has arrived at impressive results. Among several others elaborated on in the findings and recommendations section of this article, distance teaching and learning courses ought to be designed to meet the learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner interactions.

Key-words: Collaborative input, Covid-19, interaction, learning, teaching

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has brought several changes basically in human interpersonal relationships. The observance of the barrier gestures namely that of the one meter social distance between two people has drastically decreased the size of classrooms in schools and colleges all over the world. Some developed countries have certainly been able to cope with the situation by building more classrooms. But in Africa and especially in Benin where there was paucity of classrooms before the pandemic broke out, the case has just got worsened. Owing to the dire shortage of classrooms, and the incapacity to manage the plethora of students with the social distance measure imposed by the pandemic, some private schools as well as state ones have closed

their doors. At college as well, with the crushing number of students, some lecture theaters are kept closed as they can no more contain the plethoric number of students of the first and second years with the gesture barriers still in strict observance. In a nutshell, the covid-19 has brought terrible disruption in the educational systems of many countries on the planet. Face to face classes have all of a sudden made room for virtual ones in almost every country.

As a consequence, online courses have increased in popularity although widely criticized and perceived as being of lower quality and having less value than face-to-face courses (Allen & Seaman, 2015). In Benin my country the higher education, as a stopgap measure to the disruption brought to the higher educational system, has tried the e-learning which has unfortunately proved to be a virtual failure. Meanwhile, knowledge transmission has to keep going despite all these challenges twisted by the sanitary precautions in view to avoid the spread of the pandemic. As a lecturer of English as a foreign language I've thought of distance teaching and learning as one way out to the problem. As a result, this article explores the linguistic interactionist theories of foreign language learning to suggest successful methods, strategies and techniques for distance teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. The study further aims at making recommendations not only to the government, but also to the legal and educational bodies for their implementation to the benefit of the educational system as a whole and to that of the learners in particular.

1. Methodology

The research has appealed to the qualitative research methodology to collect secondary data within the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning theories. The qualitative method drawn on has served not only to survey the existing data relating to EFL distance teaching and learning theories but also to probe the relevance of their implementation within the Covid-19 context. It has further allowed to gather the most appropriate methods, strategies and techniques of effective distance courses designing for better online learning for the ongoing covid-19 period and even after. The interpretation of patterns and meanings in the collected secondary data via the qualitative method have finally inspired to derive suitable recommendations to government, legal and educational bodies for more challenging educational systems within the Covid-19 pandemic period in particular.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Under this subsection, a number of theories on distance teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have been appraised and related scientific publications revisited.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Constructivist Theory on Distance Teaching and Learning

Today, online distance courses are more and more increasing in popularity worldwide although they are extensively criticized and perceived as being of lower quality and having less value than face-to-face courses (Allen & Seaman, 2015). Such a state of affairs confirms the prediction that “distance learning will soon become the hottest education fad in decades” (Gonzalez, 1997, p. 8). As a matter of fact, much of the request for distance courses stems from their ability to provide access to individuals who are motivated to learn or improve proficiency in another language, but who are geographically isolated or restricted by work, schedules, and/or other considerations. Contemporary thought about distance learning calls for courses to be designed in ways that go after the constructivist philosophy whereby learners are seen as constructors of their own knowledge through active participation in the learning process, using computers as a problem-solving tool (Lapp, 2000; Passerini and Granger, 2000). It is argued that this type of learning is based on ample interaction in the learning process that allows students to resolve cognitive quandaries through concrete experience, collaborative discourse, and reflection. In the same vein, Garrison (2009) contends that online distance learning has “the potential to bring students together and engage them collaboratively in purposeful and meaningful discourse through the creation of sustainable communities of learners” (p. 97). This reflects a collaborative constructionist approach, consisting of interaction among learners with teacher guidance, as opposed to instructivism, or teacher-centered learning (Garrison, 2009; Gerstein, 2013).

2.1.2. The Innatist Theory on EFL Distance Teaching and Learning

Different values are placed on the role of interaction by EFL theories theorists. As a matter of fact, Krashen’s (1994) theory became a predominant influence in both foreign language teaching practice and later theories. Indeed, Krashen (1994) postulates that foreign language learning is determined by the amount of comprehensible input, that is, one-way input in the foreign language that is both

understandable and at the level just beyond the current linguistic competence of learners. In fact Krashen's (ibid) scaffolding theory is referred to as $i+1$ Similarly to Vygotsky's (1962) "zone of proximal development". Viewed as an innatist perspective, this theory maintains that a foreign language is acquired unconsciously in a manner similar to the acquisition of a first language. Actually, for Krashen (1996), acquiring language is predicated upon the concept of receiving messages learners can understand. Teachers can make language input comprehensible through a variety of strategies, such as linguistic simplification, and the use of realia, visuals, pictures, graphic organizers, and other current ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) strategies.

2.1.3. Interactionist Perspective on Foreign Language Distance Teaching and Learning

If for Krashen (1994) only one-way comprehensible input is required for foreign language learning, others take an interactionist position acknowledging the role of two-way communication. Indeed, Pica (1994) and others assert that conversational interaction facilitates foreign language learning under certain conditions. According to Light brown and Spada (1999), "When learners are given the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities they are compelled to 'negotiate for meaning,' that is, to express and clarify their intentions, thoughts, opinions, etc., in a way which permits them to arrive at a mutual understanding. This is especially true when the learners are working together to accomplish a particular goal (p. 122). Pica (ibid) goes on to say that negotiation is defined as "modification and restructuring that occurs when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility" (p.495). Such modifications, may involve linguistic simplification as well as conversational modifications like repetition, clarification, and conformation checks to gain understanding.

Lightbrown and Spada (1999), interactionist theorists, apply Vygotsky's (1962) socio-cultural theory of human mental processing to define the role of interaction in foreign language learning. They argue that foreign language learners gain proficiency when they interact with more advanced speakers of the language, for example, teachers and peers. Modeling, repetition, and linguistic simplification as Scaffolding structures used by more proficient speakers are believed to provide support to learners, thus enabling them to function within their zones of proximal development.

Although theorists adhering to interactionist thought consider both input to, and input from, the learner as important, output is often viewed as secondary. However, Swain (1995) in her “comprehensible output hypothesis” asserts that output is also critical and hypothesizes that it serves four primary functions in foreign language learning: 1) enhances fluency; 2) creates awareness of language knowledge gaps; 3) provides opportunities to experiment with language forms and structures; and 4) obtains feedback from others about language use. Comprehensible output assists learners in conveying meaning while providing linguistic challenges; that is, “. . . in producing the L2 (the second, or target language), a learner will on occasion become aware of (i.e., notice) a linguistic problem (brought to his/ her attention either by external feedback or internal feedback). Noticing a problem ‘pushes’ the learner to modify his/ her output. By so doing, Swain and Lapkin in Chapelle (1997, p. 2b) state that the learner may sometimes be forced into a more syntactic processing mode than might occur in comprehension”. From this perspective, comprehensible output plays an important role in interaction. In a nutshell, interactionists elaborate upon the innatist notion of comprehensible input explaining that interaction, constructed via exchanges of comprehensible input and output, has at least an enhancing effect when meaning is negotiated and support structures are used.

2.1.4. Collaborative Control Theory

In response to the need for increased interaction in distance learning, the concept of control (Garrison & Baynton, 1987), or collaborative control (White, 2003), has gained attention. Collaborative control refers to interaction among the instructor and learners to negotiate and manage the learning process (White, 2003). It entails independence, proficiency, and support (Anderson & Garrison, 1998; White, 2003). Independence is the learner’s freedom to make choices about what, when, where, and how to learn; proficiency involves the skills and abilities to be a successful learner (e.g., motivation, confidence, strategy use), and support consists of resources that enable content mastery and course completion (e.g., supplemental materials, tutoring, technical help).

Drawing upon the above, teachers, lecturers, as well as language instructors should design distance foreign language learning courses to provide interaction that favors negotiation of meaning where interactive and collaborative input generate comprehensible output.

2.2. Literature Review

2.2.1. A Brief Overview of Foreign Language Learning Theories

This section explores foreign language learning theories and researches that have provided guidance for designing most appropriate distance language courses of high quality for the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. As a matter of fact, one such theory is the four-strand framework, or balanced language course, which identifies the elements needed for language acquisition (Nation, 2001). These consist of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, deliberate language study, and fluency development. Learners need opportunities to attend to meaning as they encounter the language in reading and listening; convey meaning in writing and speaking; focus on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation; and practice the language with familiar content and structures to gain confidence and automaticity (Nation, 2001; Gass, Behney, & Plonsky, 2013). Almost similarly, the interactionist foreign language learning theories, assert that two-way interaction is critical in learning a second language (Pica, 1996). Interaction must consist of “comprehensible input” (Krashen, 1994), which allows the message to be understood, as well as “output” (Swain, 1995), which provides opportunities for expression and negotiation of meaning.

In other respects, Moore and Kearsley (1996) uphold that distance educators should provide for three types of interaction: a) learner-content, b) learner-instructor, and c) learner-learner. In fact, the distance educator’s major role as regards the first kind of interaction, viz. the learner content interaction, according to Moore and Kearsley (1996) is to present appropriate content and to promote interaction between this content and the learner in ways that will cause the learner “to construct knowledge through a process of personally accommodating information into previously existing cognitive structures” (p.128). For that purpose, textual materials can be used to present subject matters via distance learning. Moreover, audio and video recordings, computer software, radio and television broadcasts, and interactive media such as CD-ROM and videodiscs can, as well, be used. Actually, Learner-content interaction occurs only when learners understand the content. As a consequence, a critical design feature for foreign language learners should include comprehensible input. In that sense, Creed and Koul (1993), among several others, developed two models namely the concurrent model and the integrated model. Both models make the meaning of text more accessible in materials for non-native speakers. To be specific, components of the concurrent model include attention to vocabulary selection,

text form and rhetorical structure, and learner support. The integrated model on the other hand calls for the use of illustrations, explications, and a variety of genres to provide motivation and increase accessibility.

2.2.2. Exploring Researches in Relation to Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

Diaz-Rico and Weed (2002) suggest that teachers find out about the cultural background of students. Furthermore, implications of page design and visual representations should be considered in course design. More to the point, Davis (as cited in Boyle, 1995) maintains that audio and videocassettes provide comprehensible input for beginners and thus may mitigate anxiety. The use of multimedia may provide additional support for comprehension and also accommodate different learning styles.

Software programs that have inherent learner-content interaction, such as one described by Chapelle (1997) in which the computer acts as a participant while learners construct questions about past actions to solve a crime mystery are also welcome to establish the learner-content interaction. The computer responds to moves and queries, asking for clarification when it does not “understand.” Computer-assisted language learning activities of those kinds have pragmatic and linguistic objectives structured into tasks to allow second language learners to learn while doing. As a result, distance foreign language course designers should plan for interaction which results in the use of targeted language objectives, allowing learners to practice not only new forms, but also functions, and structures.

Chapelle (1997) described another software program which uses hotspots that learners click to find out the meanings of idioms. Input is made comprehensible thanks to this technique and may also cause learners to notice form, which is beneficial in language learning. One may integrate in distance learning applications in addition to the above software program, other computer-assisted language learning practices, such as signaling errors when they occur and highlighting forms.

As far as the second type of interaction that distance educators should provide is concerned viz. the learner-instructor interaction, Moore and Kearsley (1996) argue that it is essential for most learners in distance learning environments. Indeed, the instructor’s role in this kind of distance interaction is to present content in such a way as to maintain the learners’ motivation and interest, while

assisting them as they interact with the content. The instructor's responses to learners' application of content offer constructive feedback concerning learners' achievement of instructional objectives and are therefore very important.

Creed and Koul (1993) recommend that the instructor help to make linguistic features and content understandable. In fact, in distance learning, the instructor should act as a facilitator, providing guidance and support while presenting content in ways that encourage commitment. Such strategies as repetition, comprehension checks to name but a few can be used in learner-instructor interactions to negotiate meaning.

Lamy and Goodfellow (1999) designed a distance online course. A goal of their online course was to discuss language and learning strategies. As a result of this emphasis, their findings indicated that learners engaged in what they termed reflective conversations. Via their online course, they encourage students to "talk about words," which did provide adequate control while allowing learners certain freedom. More to the point, they interrupted on occasion to re-focus students on form, a practice that, according to Chapelle (1997), causes learners to notice form without interfering with the overall communicative goal. Because of this input, Lamy and Goodfellow (ibid) believe that students viewed instructors as experts who modeled language use, which they hypothesized would encourage learners to practice these terms and phrases.

Also known as the interlearner interaction (Moor and Moore and Kearsley 1996: 131) the Learner-Learner Interaction in distance learning is one that occurs between one learner and other learners, alone or in group settings either with or without the real time presence of an instructor and which may, according to them, be more stimulating and motivating. Therefore, different types of learner-learner interaction should be conscientiously planned to address learning goals. Such interactions include inter-learner discussion which can promote reflection about content, and group settings which are suitable for other types of collaborative tasks.

In other respects, a lot of researchers think that computer-mediated interaction for foreign language learners has beneficial features. Warschauer (1998) for example believes it is less threatening than face to face interaction and may encourage risk taking while allowing students to set their own pace. In the same vein, Lamy and Goodfellow (1999) argue that it allows learners to have access to their texts, which can be later analyzed. They added that it can also give an equalization effect on participation. According to Warschauer (ibid) computer-

mediated interaction has greater syntactical and lexical complexity than face to face exchanges. He further finds following Krashen (1985) that computer-mediated interaction is more beneficial than oral exchanges for the reason that the extended time to process and view language increases the possibility that learners will monitor and edit their speech, resulting in interlanguage of higher quality. On the contrary, Blake (2000: 132) contends that computer-mediated interaction is similar to face to face interaction, and is “without the temporal and spatial constraints imposed by the classroom”.

Still about computer-mediated interaction, asynchronous computer-mediated-interaction is thought to be better for encouraging meta-linguistic reflection, as it gives learners more time to think about their own and others’ messages (Lamy and Goodfellow, 1999). Based on their study, both researchers argue that reflective conversation “. . . that is, computer-mediated asynchronous discussion around language topics and language-learning issues” (p. 43), should be integrated in the design of distance foreign language courses. According to them, it is very useful because it facilitate not only foreign language acquisition (FLA), but also meaning negotiation as well as strategy use and attention to form. Lamy and Goodfellow (1999) further consider that learners’ effectiveness in asynchronous chat settings, depends on their ability to produce texts that are well formed and unambiguous not only linguistically but also as pieces of interactive discourse . . . [and] move the topic on in a way that takes account of what precedes and creates curiosity for what might follow, that is, that contains the combination of familiarity and unpredictability typical of “contingent interaction (p.54). Obviously, beginners of FLA will find it hard to get involved in asynchronous chat settings. For that reason linguistic and pragmatic goals together with the learners themselves should be taken into account by designers of distance language learning courses while planning interaction tasks between learners.

3. Discussion of Findings and Recommendations

3.1. Discussion of Findings

From the above reviewed literature and FLA theories, distance teaching and learning strategies as well as techniques can be drawn upon for the successful teaching of English as a foreign language despite the social restrictions due to the ongoing covid-19 pandemic period all around the world.

Indeed, distance learning requires courses to be designed in ways that go after the constructivist philosophy (Lapp, 2000; Passerini and Granger, 2000) whereby learners are seen as constructors of their own knowledge through active participation in the learning process, using computers as a problem-solving tool. Conversely, such FLA scholars as Pica (1994) and others argue that conversational interaction facilitates foreign language learning more quickly than computer mediated interaction. In that regard, Light brown and Spada (1999), stated that “when learners are given the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities they are compelled to ‘negotiate for meaning,’ that is, to express and clarify their intentions, thoughts, opinions, etc., in a way which permits them to arrive at a mutual understanding. Contrarily to Pica (1994) as well as Light brown and Spada (1999), Warschauer (1998) believes that computer-mediated interaction for foreign language learners has beneficial features. For Warschauer (1998) computer-mediated interaction is less threatening than face to face interaction and may encourage risk taking while allowing students to set their own pace. In the same vein, Lamy and Gooddfellow (1999) argue that it allows learners to have access to their texts, which can be later analyzed. According to Warschauer (ibid) computer-mediated interaction has greater syntactical and lexical complexity than face to face exchanges. He further finds following Krashen (1985) that computer-mediated interaction is more beneficial than oral exchanges for the reason that the extended time to process and view language increases the possibility that learners will monitor and edit their speech, resulting in interlanguage of higher quality. Blake (2000) views the issue from a different perspective. For Blake (2000: 132), computer-mediated interaction is similar to face to face interaction, and is “without the temporal and spatial constraints imposed by the classroom”. From the above discussion, it clearly appears that computer-mediated interaction courses can validly replace face to face interaction ones in the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic period. As a result teachers as well as lecturers should be encouraged to design courses following that model.

Knowing that language acquisition is predicated upon the concept of receiving messages learners can understand as advocated by several FLA theories theorists, teachers/ lecturers, while designing their distance courses, should make language input comprehensible through a variety of strategies, such as linguistic simplification, the use of realia, visuals, pictures, graphic organizers, and other current ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) strategies like using technology to garner motivation and students’ motivation and teaching students

basic principles in foreign language acquisition. In the same vein, in order to allow learners to arrive at mutual understanding, teachers should design their distance courses in a way that get learners involved in meaningful activities that compel them to 'negotiate for meaning,' that is to say to express and clarify their intentions, thoughts, opinions, etc.

Learners need opportunities to attend to meaning as they come across the language in reading and listening; convey meaning in writing and speaking; focus on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation; and practice the language with familiar content and structures to gain confidence and automaticity. As upheld by FLA theorists, distance educators should provide for three types of interaction i.e. learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner interaction.

To achieve the first type of interaction, distance educator's should present appropriate content and promote interaction between this content and the learner in ways that will cause the learner, according to Moore and Kearsley (1996) "to construct knowledge through a process of personally accommodating information into previously existing cognitive structures" (p.128). In that regard, audio and video recordings, computer software, radio and television broadcasts, and interactive media such as CD-ROM and videodiscs can, as well, be used. At this point, two models are to be included while designing distances courses for comprehensible input namely the concurrent model and the integrated model. As a matter of fact, components of the concurrent model include attention to vocabulary selection, text form and rhetorical structure, and learner support. The integrated model on the other hand calls for the use of illustrations, explications, and a variety of genres to provide motivation and increase accessibility. For the integrated model to operate, distance course designers should find out about the cultural background of students. Indeed, the use of multimedia may provide additional support for comprehension and also accommodate different learning styles. Moreover, to establish the learner-content interaction Software programs with hotspots that learners click to find out the meanings of idioms or computer-assisted language learning activities with pragmatic and linguistic objectives structured into tasks to allow foreign language learners to learn while doing should be developed. Additionally, other computer-assisted language learning practices, such as signaling errors when they occur and highlighting forms are to be appealed to in distance language learning.

The learner-instructor interaction should also be favored by all means in the distance learning courses preparation. Also referred to as “Collaborative control” (Gar-rison and Baynton 1987, White 2003), the learner-instructor interaction is very important to negotiate and manage the learning process. The instructor’s role in this kind of distance interaction is to present content in such a way as to maintain the learners’ motivation and interest, while assisting them as they interact with the content. Here, distance instructors should act as facilitators, providing guidance and support while presenting content in ways that encourage commitment. They added that strategies like repetition, and comprehension checks can be used in learner-instructor interactions to negotiate meaning.

Finally, to favor the learner-learner interaction, asynchronous computer mediated-interaction has been recommended as it encourages not only meta-linguistic reflection at the level of the learners but also allows these ones to have access to their texts, and analyze them afterward.

3.2. Recommendations

The implementation of the findings as presented in the foregoing subsection will certainly bring about a great revolution in the educational arena. Actually, the above findings also clearly show that responsibilities between distance language instructors and learners are shared for its successful acquisition. If the English language should continue to be taught in Africa and in Benin in particular with respect to all of the ongoing covid-19 pandemic health security measures the recommendation hereafter shouldn’t be neglected. Indeed, distance English language instructors have the larger part of the role to play in planning their various online distance courses appropriately as required by FLA theories elaborated on above. This goes without saying that they need to be adequately trained for the new teaching strategies and techniques. Training them implies investing in the educational system. Both the political and the educational bodies should accept to face and take up the financial challenge of the necessary training of the trainers without which it’s all pie in the sky to believe in achieving successfully distance teaching. Many developed countries are aware of this and have invested stacks of bucks for that purpose. Once they are trained, they need to be equipped with such distance teaching materials as software programs, computers, laptops, audio and video recorders, adequate computer software, as well as interactive media such as CD-ROM and videodisc to name but a few. Moreover there should be subsidies to help instructors afford all these necessary

unavoidable materials if FLA recommendation should be met for a successful distance teaching. Government; legal and educational bodies should use all the means at their disposal to make all this come true. The learner-content interaction establishment for example requires software programs with hotspots for learners. How is that possible when the educational environment is without the least internet connection? Governments have to do their best to make all educational areas high output hotspots to allow instructors to put their courses easily on the web and students to access them very easily. As it can be easily guessed, instructors' efforts in planning their distance courses according to FLA requirements and loading them online would avail to nothing if learners fail to have the least materials such as smart phones, computers or laptops to help them play, get connected, and access the courses. As a consequence, governmental and educational bodies should never lose sight of that reality. Learners' poor living conditions should be compensated by subsidies that allow them to buy any of the necessary material that enable them to really take part in the distance learning. Above all this it should be highly recommended that language labs be set up in every single university/school to host a reasonable number of learners at class time. I do believe that all this can be achieved with good will. In fact there shouldn't be any fear or doubt about that because as the proverb goes where there's a will, there's a way.

CONCLUSIONS

The present research work has investigated the theories of foreign language distance teaching and learning from an interactionist perspective within the Covid-19 pandemic context. In fact, the study has been motivated by the need to think of how distance teaching and learning courses can validly replace face-to-face ones especially those related to foreign language acquisition in the ongoing Covid-19 context despite its sanitary constraints requirements. To attain such an objective, the qualitative method has been appealed to. This research design drawn on has served not only to survey the existing data relating to EFL distance teaching and learning theories but also to probe the relevance of their implementation within the Covid-19 context.

It is true that with the advent of the covid-19, a lot of changes have occurred in the teaching environment. Such changes include among many others, the limitation of class attendance to a reasonable number that allows to avoid the spread of the contagious deadly disease, the wearing of face masks which has increased the silence of shy students in real classroom situation as it wears down

to talk while wearing these latter ones owing to the carbon dioxide to expel and breathe in at once. In addition, the learners' evaluation process has become sheer drudgery. Nevertheless, there shouldn't be any fear as concerns the fate of the teaching and learning of the English language as a foreign one. As a matter of fact lots of research findings show that despite all the changes as mentioned above English can still be taught and learned as a foreign language successfully if the recommendations together with the suggested techniques, strategies, and computer software programs advocated by FLA interactionist theories theorists are taken into account in planning the teaching and learning processes. Among several other recommendations made under the recommendations subsection of this article, distance foreign language instructors need to be adequately trained for the new teaching strategies and techniques. Moreover, they need to be equipped with such distance teaching materials as software programs, computers, laptops, tablets, audio and video recorders, adequate computer software, as well as interactive media such as CD-ROM and videodisc to name but a few. Governments as well as educational bodies have to do their best to make all educational areas high output hotspots to allow instructors to put their courses online easily, and students to access them very easily. Besides, Learners' poor living conditions should be compensated by subsidies that allow them to buy any of the necessary material that enable them to really take part in the distance learning.

As a rough rule of thumb, learners can be offered excellent opportunities to acquire English as a foreign language in both more flexible and accessible settings than traditional classrooms and language labs during the current covid-19 pandemic period, if distance foreign language course design and practice adhere to quality distance learning pedagogy and are driven by FLA theories.

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