

Analysis of Written and Oral Expression Difficulties Among Learners in Secondary Schools in the Public Schools of the Prefecture of Kozah (Togo)

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Abstract: This study explores the difficulties of written and oral expression among secondary school learners in the public schools of the prefecture of Kozah in northern Togo, with the aim of highlighting the imbalance between linguistic, sociolinguistics and pragmatics skills of learners in French as a second language learning situations. In order to achieve this objective, an approach focused on communicative competence has been adopted. The data collection focused on semi-structured interviews, observation of teaching sequences and analysis of written and oral productions of students. The results demonstrated that there is a scarcity of interactions in French outside the school setting. In addition, teaching practices that are not very focused on expression, the lack of appropriate resources, and emotional blockages hinder the development of language autonomy. These combined factors delay the development of learners' communicational competences. In addition, the analysis revealed that the sometimes, transmissive pedagogical approach does not promote spontaneous expression or linguistic creativity. The result is a low appropriation of linguistic tools and an excessive dependence on prescriptive models. These findings have significant implications in the process of acquiring learners' written and oral skills. This study presents a redesign of didactic devices for the benefit of an action-oriented pedagogy that values authentic production and interaction in class, in accordance with the principles of the Skills-based Approach, highlighting the urgency to rethink pedagogical practices in order to create more authentic, interactive and differentiated learning situations.

Keywords: *Communicative Competence; Written and Oral Expression; French as a Second Language; Action-Oriented Pedagogy; Linguistic Skills.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Written and oral expression constitute a fundamental pillar in the development of language skills among learners. These two dimensions of communication are not only essential for academic success, but also for future social and professional integration (J-P. Cuq & I. Gruca, 2005). In the context of secondary education, the first cycle in particular, students are called upon to strengthen their ability to produce structured speeches, coherent and adapted to various communication situations. However, in public schools of the prefecture of Kozah (Togo), where French is learned as a second language, many teachers, during our various interviews, attest that learners struggle to express themselves with ease and clarity, both orally and in writing. These difficulties are manifested by a lexical poverty, an insufficient mastery of grammar, a confused organization of ideas, a

frequent hesitation in speaking or even a lack of fluidity. This observation questions the root causes of these gaps: do they stem from basic linguistic deficiencies, a lack of motivation, poorly adapted pedagogical practices, or even broader sociocultural factors (C. Noyau, 2017)? These questions are part of a broader perspective of communicative competence as defined by D. Hymes (1972), which includes not only linguistic knowledge, but also sociolinguistic and pragmatic dimensions.

In this perspective, this article proposes to analyse the difficulties of written and oral expression among secondary school learners in Kozah (Togo), by adopting a multidimensional approach. The study is based on the observation of teaching sequences, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, as well as the analysis of oral and written productions of learners. The objective is

to highlight the factors that hinder the development of communication skills and to identify their implications for teaching/learning French as a second language. This work thus intends to contribute to a better understanding of the obstacles encountered by students in a multilingual area, while suggesting didactical tracks in line with the principles of the Skills-based Approach (X. Roegiers, 2000; C. Puren, 2009).

The article has 4 fundamental sections. The first section concerns theoretical and methodological approaches. The second presents the results of the analyses. The third focuses on the factors that explain written or oral difficulties manifested by learners in learning situations. The fourth evokes the discussion and the perspectives to be undertaken to face these difficulties.

II. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

The theoretical and methodological approach underlying this analysis is addressed in this section.

➤ *Theoretical approach*

Written and oral expression is central to the learning of French as a second language, because it constitutes the culmination of the process of appropriation and the means by which the student updates his/her linguistic knowledge. According to L. Dabène (1994), language competence is always actualized in interaction, and it is in the discourse that learners' achievements and shortcomings are revealed. The mastery of these two skills thus relies on an articulation between several components: lexicon, grammar, morphosyntax, but also the ability to organize ideas and adapt them to varied communication situations.

In this perspective, the study is based on communicative competence as described by D. Hymes (1972), which, beyond linguistic dimensions, integrates sociolinguistic, pragmatic and cultural dimensions, essential for effective communication. According to the author, a speaker's competence is not limited only to linguistic competence (grammar, syntax, vocabulary). To communicate effectively, one must also know when to talk, who to talk to, where to talk, and how to speak according to the social and cultural situation. Thus, D. Hymes (1972) deeply renewed the reflection on language learning and use by introducing the notion of communicative competence. Contrary to the Chomskyan vision which limited competence solely to mastery of linguistic structures, Hymes emphasizes the idea that "it is not enough to know how to form correct sentences; one must also know when, where and with whom to use them" (D. Hymes, 1972, p. 281). In other words, communication cannot be understood outside its social and cultural context. The learner must therefore develop, in addition to their linguistic knowledge, the ability to adapt their speech to the situations, interlocutors and socio-cultural norms that frame the exchange. This conception paved the way for later models, notably that of Canale and Swain (1980), who specified the components of communicative competence. In the Togolese school context, particularly in the prefecture of

Kozah where the survey is done, this theory allows for analysing how pedagogical practices, sociolinguistic contexts and affects influence the appropriation of the French language among learners. M. Canale and M. Swain (1980) specify this model by identifying four components: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic competence. These dimensions are particularly relevant in the context of French as a second language, where learners in learning situations must navigate between the language of schooling and their mother tongue despite themselves.

Furthermore, teaching French as a Second Language (FSL) in secondary education in Togo is part of the paradigm of the Skills-based Approach (APC), which aims at integrating knowledge into authentic and contextualized tasks (X. Roegiers, 2000). In this perspective, the difficulties of both written and oral expression cannot be reduced to isolated linguistic errors. They rather reflect an overall insufficiency in the acquisition or appropriation of communicative competence and a low exposure to real communication situations (C. Puren, 2009). Thus, the present work adopts a theoretical posture that links the contributions of applied linguistics (D. Hymes, 1972; M. Canale & M. Swain, 1980), the didactics of FLS (J-P. Cuq & I. Gruca, 2005; C. Noyau, 2017), and the principles of CPA (X. Roegiers, 2000), in order to analyse in a multidimensional way the obstacles encountered by learners of secondary school of Kozah.

➤ *Methodology*

The present study is based on a field survey carried out with a sample of 60 French teachers and 155 lower secondary learners in five public schools in the prefecture of Kozah (Lycée Kara-sud, Lycée Dongoyo, Lycée Atéda, Lycée Pagouda and Lycée Kara 1). The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation of teaching sequences and analysis of written and oral productions of students. With a qualitative and descriptive analysis method, the objective is to identify the most frequently encountered difficulties and to understand their origins from class practices and the sociolinguistic context. It should be noted that this area constitutes relevant land because French is the second language there. It is mainly used as a language of schooling and little practiced in daily interactions. According to J-M. Van der Maren (1996), qualitative research allows access to the representations, practices and experiences of educational actors in their natural setting.

Three data collection techniques are used: direct observations of course sequences, in order to describe teaching practices of written and oral expression (A. Blanchet & A. Gotman, 2015); semi-structured interviews with teachers and learners, allowing to gather their perceptions of the difficulties and learning conditions; an analysis of students' written and oral productions, to identify the types of errors, recurring gaps, and strategies employed. For this purpose, the data collected are subjected to a thematic content analysis (L. Bardin, 2013), in order to highlight the main explanatory factors of the difficulties encountered. Students' productions are examined according to linguistic criteria (lexicon, grammar, syntax), discursive (organization,

coherence) and pragmatic (adequacy to the communication situation).

III. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The results that inform this study are focused on four fundamental points, namely the results from classroom observations and interviews with teachers, the analysis of written and oral productions, explanatory factors and some approaches to solutions.

The observations carried out in the public establishments of the prefecture of Kozah reveal that the French teaching remains mainly structured around a transmissive logic. The emphasis is largely on learning and memorizing grammatical rules (subject-verb agreements, adjective, participle, etc.) and performing written exercises focused on the reproduction of models, to the detriment of free expression and linguistic creativity. This primacy of normative writing certainly reduces the possibilities offered to learners to mobilize and use language as a communication tool in various real-world contexts.

Regarding the oral learning, practices observed are restricted on a daily basis to reading aloud activities or the mechanical repetition of sentences dictated by the teacher. Thus, such activities, even though necessary for the acquisition of correct pronunciation, do not promote either spontaneous speaking or the construction of communicative interactions between learners and teachers. Thus, learners are deprived of opportunities to appropriate French as the language of daily communication and not only as a school language.

These findings join the criticisms made by several researchers who emphasize the very mechanical and magisterial nature of French teaching of in sub-Saharan Africa. D. Moore (2006) highlights the weight of a frontal pedagogy, based on the teacher, which leaves little room for the student as an actor in his learning. Similarly, I. Diallo (2011) observes that in many African contexts, the teaching/learning of French as a Second Language is reduced to a prescriptive and normative approach, far from authentic communicative practices.

In addition, observations show that teachers, due to the lack of continuous training and appropriate teaching resources, struggle to diversify their methods. Communicative activities, such as role plays, debates or collective projects, are rarely integrated into the learning sequences, whereas they are recommended by the Skills-based Approach (X. Roegiers, 2010). The absence of such devices prevents learners from acquiring and developing genuine pragmatic and interactional skills, essential for oral and written expression.

These results suggest that the principles governed by CPA in French teaching in the institutions observed remain locked into a traditional school logic, even mechanical, where

success is measured more by grammatical conformity than the ability to communicate effectively.

➤ *Results from the Interviews with Teachers*

The interviews conducted with teachers made it possible to identify several explanatory factors for the difficulties of written and oral expression in the public establishments of the prefecture of Kozah. First of all, teachers point out the scarcity of interactions in French outside of school. According to the latter, in daily life, students mainly use their mother tongue, which limits their exposure or impregnation with French and, consequently, their opportunity to develop natural communicational skills. This observation corroborates the work of C. Noyau (2017), who points out that the acquisition of French as a second language in a school context strongly depends on the quantity and quality of contacts with the language outside the institutional framework. In the absence of regular language practices in French as a second language, students are unlikely to consolidate their lexical, grammatical, and discursive acquisition and mastery.

Then, the interviews reveal the presence of emotional blockages from students. Thus, the fear of making mistakes in front of their peers or the teacher constitutes a real blockade to speaking, limiting spontaneity and initiative in oral interactions. These psychological aspects join the observations of E. Horwitz (2001), for whom language anxiety constitutes a major obstacle in second-language learning like French, affecting oral performance and limiting active engagement in classroom activities.

Finally, teachers mentioned a lack of suitable educational resources, including audio-visual materials and interactive activities that could stimulate written and oral expression of learners. The lack of contextualized teaching materials and tools promoting interaction prevents the implementation of authentic communicative tasks, yet essential in the action-oriented approach (C. Puren, 2009). Teachers find that this limitation constrains their pedagogy and reduces the opportunities for students to develop language autonomy and creativity in the use of French as a second language.

These results emphasize that student difficulties are not solely related to language deficiencies, but result from a combination of linguistic, emotional and contextual factors. They therefore confirm the need for a more dynamic and interactive pedagogical approach, focused on communication and action, in order to create favourable conditions for the appropriation of language and the development of both oral and written skills.

➤ *Analysis of Written and oral Productions*

The examination of written and oral productions of secondary school students in public schools of the prefecture of Kozah reveals significant difficulties at several levels of communicative competence.

- **Lexical Difficulties**

The productions show a notable lexical poverty, characterized by a frequent use of passwords such as «faire» or «dire», and by direct borrowings from mother tongues or transposition. This lexical limitation limits the ability of students to nuance their statements and express complex ideas with precision. According to D. Dorota (2023), a rich and structured lexicon is essential to facilitate the fluidity and efficiency of communication, as it allows the learner to build an interconnected network of notions and semantic relationships. For example, a student who does not have the word “convaincre” will use “faire comprendre” or he will replace “exprimer son opinion” with “dire ce qu’il pense”, thus showing the difficulty of using precise vocabulary adapted to communication situations.

- **Grammatical and Syntactic Difficulties**

On the grammatical level, productions reveal recurring errors, notably tenses concordance, faulty agreements, and frequent omission of determiners. Moreover, in oral, these errors frequently result in incomplete or poorly articulated sentences, often influenced by the structure of the learners' mother tongue. L. Dabène (1994) points out that these interferences are recurrent among second-language learners. It translates a need for high exposure and integrated practices to consolidate grammar.

For example, during a storytelling exercise, a student describes a past action by saying « Hier je vais à l'école et je joue au foot » instead of « Hier je suis allé à l'école et j'ai joué au foot ». This confusion between past and the present tenses reveals not only a misunderstanding of the rules of concordance but also the persistent influence of the verbal structures of his first language. Also, a student can produce a text in which he will write « Les élève s'amuses sur les banc dans classe », which involves several grammatical errors: a faulty agreement between the subject and the verb « les élève s'amuses instead of Les élèves s'amusent » ; plural concord « les banc instead of les bancs », or even the omission of the determiner « dans classe instead of «dans la classe ». These errors reflect an incomplete assimilation of morphosyntactic rules, often linked to the predominance of simplified structures in the mother tongue. At the oral level, the omission of determinants is a phenomenon that predominates.

- **Discursive Difficulties**

Student productions reveal an unclear organization of ideas, the absence of logical connectors, and frequent digressions in the speech. Students experience enormous difficulties in structuring their texts or speeches in a precise, concise and therefore coherent manner, which affects the clarity and relevance of their messages. J-P. Cuq and I. Gruca (2005) indicate that the mastery of textual coherence and the progression of ideas is crucial for the development of written and oral expression in a second language. For example, during a written expression session, learners were asked to write a narrative text about "a traditional festival in their village". The majority of the collected productions present a succession of ideas without logical articulation. For example « Il y avait de la musique. Les gens dansaient, criaient. Le chef aussi est venu. Nous avons mangé beaucoup jusqu'à la

nuit tout le monde est rentré ». This type of production reveals an absence of textual coherence (temporal logical connectors, non-respect of the narrative structure: initial situation, unfolding, denouement) with juxtaposed sentences. It echoed during the class speech. Furthermore, orally, they have difficulty in making a coherent speech of more than two minutes without groping about the choice of words and connectors. They generally resort to the interjection 'uh...' or even take long pauses, silences.

- **Pragmatic Difficulties**

On the pragmatic level, students show problems with adapting speech to the context (contextualization), with a limited use of polite formulas and a register sometimes inappropriate for the communication situation. Reason why, D. Hymes (1972) insists that communicative competence includes the ability to adjust speech according to social, cultural and situational codes. For example, during a simulated classroom dialogue, a student addresses the teacher by saying « donne-moi la craie ! ». It should be noted that although the request is understandable, it remains inappropriate from a social and pragmatic point of view, because this register used is too familiar. The form of politeness and choice of register ensure respectful and contextualized communication, which gives « pourriez-vous me donner de la craie s'il vous plaît ? ». These difficulties show that learners have not yet integrated in a homogeneous way the dimensions of communicative competence as described by M. Canale and M. Swain (1980), which include grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic competence. Current teaching, focused on memorization and reproduction, does not allow students to develop sufficient linguistic autonomy or effectively mobilize their knowledge in authentic communication situations (P. Lightbown & N. Spada, 2013).

IV. EXPLANATORY FACTORS

The documentary analysis also made it possible to highlight a series of interdependent factors that explain the difficulties in written and oral expression among secondary school learners. These factors relate to linguistic, cognitive, and affective dimensions, pedagogical and sociocultural.

➤ **Linguistic Factors**

Language gaps are a primary source of barriers. Many students show limited performance both orally and in writing since they do not have a sufficiently varied and precise vocabulary to express complex ideas. Often the syntax is awkward, with poorly constructed or incomplete sentences as well. To this are added recurrent grammatical errors, notably in the agreement of verb tenses, the concordance of tenses or the use of pronouns (H. Besse & R. Porquier, 2000). Furthermore, the influence of mother tongue can induce negative interference, especially when the linguistic structure of this one differs strongly from the target language (T. Odlin, 1989). The lack of familiarity with certain registers of language (formal/informal) or discursive genres (narrative, presentation, argumentation) aggravates these difficulties (J-P. Bronckart, 1996).

➤ *Cognitive and Affective Factors*

On the cognitive level, learners of secondary 1 are in the midst of building their capacities for abstract reasoning and organizing ideas like any learner at this age. However, written and oral production requires planning, logical structuring and sustained attention, given that skills are still being developed at this age (J. Piaget, 1972; L. Vygotsky, 1978). The difficulties encountered are partly explained by these cognitive constraints to organize a coherent speech and develop a clear argumentation.

From the emotional point of view, fear of making mistakes, lack of self-confidence, and performance anxiety are major obstacles, particularly in speaking (E. Horwitz, 2001). These phenomena are accentuated when the school environment values little trial and risk-taking. In addition, low intrinsic motivation or a negative perception of the language taught can lead to gradual disengagement, thus limiting opportunities to apply and consolidate linguistic achievements (Z. Dörnyei, 2001).

➤ *Pedagogical Factors*

Teaching practices play a central role in the development or hindrance of expressive skills. When pedagogical approaches are limited to repetitive exercises or uncommunicative school tasks, students struggle to transfer their knowledge into situations of authentic expression (D. Moore, 2006).

The scarcity of opportunities to speak in class, the inadequacy of formative feedback, or even evaluation focused on grammatical errors at the expense of meaning and clarity of the message contribute to maintaining difficulties (P. Black & D. Wiliam, 1998). Moreover, in often heterogeneous classes, teachers sometimes lack the time or training to individualize their support, which limits the possibility of meeting the specific needs of each student (X. Roegiers, 2000).

Thus, methodological choices and pedagogical organization appear as determining factors of success or failure in the development of written and oral expression skills. A pedagogy based on the learner and communicative action seems necessary to overcome these obstacles.

➤ *Sociocultural Factors*

Finally, the sociocultural context in which learners evolve strongly influences their relationship to language. Students from low-literacy or non-French-speaking backgrounds do not always have access, at home, to rich linguistic models or regular reading and writing practices (P. Bourdieu, 1997). This lack of a favorable linguistic environment limits the natural acquisition of French and hinders the development of language autonomy.

The symbolic status of language taught can also play a determining role. When it is perceived as a school language, disconnected from everyday life, or imposed by the institution, it loses in attractiveness and motivation for learners (L. Filliettaz, 2001). The absence of exposure to living and contextualized uses of language whether through

media, social interactions or school projects reduces opportunities for incidental learning, essential for consolidating language skills (S. Krashen, 1982).

Thus, the sociocultural context constitutes a major determinant of the appropriation of French as a second language and partly explains the difficulties of expression observed in the establishments of the prefecture of Kozah.

V. DISCUSSION AND PERSPECTIVES

The analysis of learners' written and oral productions highlights a series of difficulties that intersect and reinforce each other. Lexical poverty, marked by the recurrent use of passwords and borrowings from mother tongues, limits the precision and richness of expression. This linguistic constraint directly impacts the grammatical and discursive structuring of the texts: errors of time concordance, faulty agreements or even absence of logical connectors reflect a partial mastery of rules and a low integration of language skills. These findings are in line with the analyses of L. Dabène (1994), for whom lexical deficit constitutes a major obstacle to the development of coherent and relevant discourses. These findings are reinforced by classroom observations, interviews with teachers and the analysis of students' productions, which also point to the repetition of decontextualized exercises as an aggravating factor.

At the discursive level, the lack of clear structuring and textual cohesion reveals that students have not yet acquired a truly fully functional discursive skill. As emphasized by J-P. Bronckart (1996), mastering the genres of discourse is essential for producing texts adapted to academic and social requirements. This weakness is also linked to a pragmatic fragility: learners struggle to adapt their language according to communication situations, which confirms the observations of J. Gumperz (1982) and D. Hymes (1972) on the importance of sociocultural dimensions in language use and in the development of communicative competence.

It also appears that these difficulties are not only due to language gaps, but reflect an educational approach often too focused on decontextualized and mechanical exercises. As shown by R. Ellis (2006), grammar or vocabulary teaching becomes more effective when it is linked to authentic communicative tasks that require functional mobilization of knowledge. In other words, the failure of learning stems partly from discrepancy between didactic practices in force and real needs of learners.

These results are in line with those observed in other African and Francophone contexts where lexical poverty and discursive difficulties have been regularly reported as obstacles to the acquisition of FSL (M. Djibo, 2013). These observations suggest that success in FSL depends not only on formal teaching of grammar or vocabulary, but also on the integration of activities that promote cognitive and pragmatic engagement of students. Thus, teachers must design contextualized, diversified and interactive activities that allow simultaneous development of vocabulary, syntax, textual cohesion, and adaptation to communication contexts.

However, some limitations of the study should be noted. The sample size, concentrated on public schools in the Kozah prefecture, limits the generalisation of the results to other regions or types of schools. Also, the evaluation of oral/written productions is partly based on qualitative observations, which can induce subjectivities in the interpretation of the results.

For a future projection, it would be relevant to conduct longitudinal studies in order to monitor the evolution of lexical and discursive skills over the coming years. Furthermore, experimental research could evaluate the impact of innovative didactic practices, integrating authentic tasks and digital technologies, on the consolidation of language skills. Finally, exploring the influence of sociocultural and family factors on FLS learning would allow for proposing pedagogical strategies that are better adapted to local contexts. Therefore faced with the difficulties noted, several didactic avenues can be considered in order to strengthen the written and oral expression of learners in Togolese school context.

➤ *Progressive and Contextualized Lexical Enrichment*

It is essential to propose lexical activities much more integrated into authentic communication situations (role-playing, debates, stories of personal experiences, theatres, tales, etc.). According to P. Nation (2001), the acquisition of vocabulary is favoured by repeated and varied exposure to words in significant contexts, which allows for overcoming mechanical memorization.

Similarly, L. Lafontaine and C. Dumais (2014) insist on the importance of a spiral progression in lexical teaching, where words are revisited regularly in diverse tasks, so that students can establish links between lexical units and develop a better mastery of collocations and language registers. This approach aligns with the principles of the Skills-based Approach (X. Roegiers, 2010), which values the integration of linguistic knowledge in solving authentic problem situations. The development of lexical competence cannot be limited to mechanical learning of decontextualized word lists. Therefore, in order for secondary school learners to easily and truly appropriate the vocabulary, it is necessary to integrate it into real and meaningful communication activities. Lexical enrichment must thus be part of a progressive approach (from simple to complex, from familiar to specialized) and contextualized (anchored in communication situations close to the experiences lived by the students, that is to say the Togolese context).

Finally, lexical enrichment must also be accompanied by a reflexive work on language. Learners may be led to observe the use of words in different contexts (narrative texts, descriptions, argumentative, oral interactions) and to compare the nuances of meaning related to them. According to B. Laufer (2017), this lexical awareness is a key factor in the appropriation of vocabulary, as it pushes the student to go beyond passive knowledge of words to develop an active and functional mastery.

Ultimately, progressive and contextualized lexical enrichment is not only about increasing the stock of known words, but also about getting learners to use the lexicon in an appropriate, varied and effective way in authentic communication situations.

➤ *Reinforcement of Grammar in Context*

The reinforcement of grammar in French as a Second Language (FSL) class should not be limited to a simple mechanical transmission of rules or isolated transformation exercises. This gives a static character to learning. Such a practice, unfortunately still very present in schools, often leads to declarative knowledge disconnected from the real use of the language (H. Besse & R. Porquier, 2004). To go beyond this limit, it is recommended to favour an inductive approach, where learners gradually discover grammatical regularities from authentic media (narrative texts, press articles, excerpts from dialogues). This approach allows more to give meaning and expressiveness to learning and to show how grammar works in daily communication. Reason why, R. Ellis (2006) insists on the importance of integrating grammar into communicative tasks that require the learner to consciously mobilize a given grammatical structure. For example, instead of memorizing agreement rules from the past tense, students may be led to tell a lived experience using past tenses, which leads them to manipulate structures in a functional and contextualized way.

Moreover, the interactional approach of M. Long (1996) recalls that the negotiation of meaning in communication situations promotes grammatical correction: when learners are faced with misunderstandings, they are encouraged to adjust their speech and reformulate, which strengthens the appropriation of the rules. In this logic, the teacher no longer plays only a role of transmitter, but that of facilitator who guides students towards a metalinguistic reflection rooted in usage. Finally, X. Roegiers (2001) puts forward the idea that integrated learning where grammar, vocabulary and discursive skills develop simultaneously in problem situations, corresponds better to the principles of the Skills-based Approach (APC). This integration avoids the fragmentation of knowledge and promotes a more sustainable mastery of grammatical structures.

➤ *Development of Discursive Competence*

The improvement of discursive competence in secondary school learners involves explicit and progressive work on the structuring of texts. Indeed, written and oral production cannot be reduced to a juxtaposition of sentences. On the other hand, it must require a rigorous and coherent organization of ideas and an ability to respect the characteristics specific to types of school discourse (narrative, description, explanation, argumentation). As J-P. Bronckart (1996) points out, mastering the genres of discourse is a decisive and crucial step in enabling learners to access the complex language uses expected in schools.

The introduction of textual patterns (such as narrative structure with initial situation, complication and resolution, or argumentative structure with thesis, arguments and conclusion) can also usefully promote awareness of logical

organization of texts in order to reproduce them autonomously by learners. These tools give students concrete guidelines to plan and articulate their productions. In this perspective, logical connectors (for example "d'abord", "ensuite", "par conséquent", "en revanche") must be worked on systematically, because they play a fundamental role in textual and discursive progression and coherence. (S. Chartrand, R. Blain & D. Simard, 2015). In addition, several works on French didactics (J. Dolz & B. Schneuwly, 1998; Y. Reuter, 2000) emphasize the importance of a progressive learning of discursive genres through didactic sequences integrating reading, analysis and production. These approaches allow students to familiarize themselves with discursive models and gradually internalize their rules of organization. Finally, oral training, particularly through debate and presentation activities, also contributes to the development of discursive competence by habituating learners to structure their remarks in order to convince or explain.

Thus, strengthening discursive competence does not only concern isolated grammatical or lexical work, but requires an integrated approach that articulates the mastery of textual genres, the use of connectors and the gradual construction of discourse coherence.

➤ *Taking into Account the Pragmatic and Sociocultural Dimension*

The development of communicative competence by learners cannot be limited to the acquisition of grammatical or lexical structures as suggested by Chomskyan thought. On the other hand, it must include the ability to adapt one's speech to diverse communication situations. This involves taking into account both pragmatic dimension (uses related to communication intentions, language acts) and sociocultural dimension (social norms, language registers, interactional rituals). In this sense, it is essential that teachers clearly expose learners to rich and varied situations, where the rules of politeness, formal and informal uses, as well as differences in registers are explicitly worked on and used. For example, role-playing activities simulating a conversation with a teacher, a classmate, or a person of authority can allow students to grasp the nuances of adapting speech. J. Gumperz (1982) insists that communicative competence is inseparable from mastery of the social conventions specific to each linguistic community. This approach also joins D. Hymes (1972), who defines communicative competence as the ability to use language appropriately according to social and cultural context. By integrating these aspects into classroom practices, teachers give students the tools to go beyond a simple linguistic correction and access to more authentic and effective communication.

Moreover, research in French second language teaching emphasizes that the lack of consideration for these dimensions can lead to misunderstandings or communication deemed inappropriate by native speakers (C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005). Hence the importance of including, in educational sequences, activities aimed at raising learners' awareness of cultural implicites and interactional rules.

Thus, French didactics in secondary school should promote pedagogical practices that combine linguistic learning and socio-cultural immersion, in order to prepare students for appropriate communication both in the school setting and in their daily lives.

➤ *Use of Multimedia and ICT*

The integration of multimedia supports and information and communication technologies for education (ICT) represents today an essential lever to diversify teaching practices in French as a second language classes. Audio-visual resources such as songs, film clips or plays, educational videos or even podcasts allow learners to get in touch with a more or less authentic, contextualized and varied French, which better promotes both lexical acquisition, familiarization with prosody and understanding of pragmatic uses of the language (P. Brett, 1997). Moreover, the multimodal richness of these media captures more attention and contributes to memorisation by simultaneously soliciting several cognitive channels (R. Mayer, 2001).

Moreover, interactive digital tools, such as online quiz applications, collaborative platforms or virtual learning environments, facilitate autonomy and encourage the active participation of students. According to C. Chapelle (2003), the use of technologies not only promotes increased exposure to the target language, but also reduces communicative anxiety by offering secure learning spaces, where error becomes a means of learning rather than a source of stigmatisation. This emotional dimension is essential, particularly in the African context, where speaking in French can be inhibited by psychological blockages related to the fear of expressing oneself poorly (C. Noyau, 2017). Thus, the use of ICT is fully in line with the action-oriented and communicative perspective of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001), which highlights the importance of significant and contextualised tasks. Placed at the center of the learning process, the student becomes an actor in their linguistic journey thanks to the interactivity and diversity of multimedia supports, which contributes to making learning more motivating, dynamic and relevant in real life.

In sum, the discussion highlights a tension between the demands of the educational system that expects coherent, grammatically correct and pragmatically appropriate productions and the current skills of learners, which remain fragmentary and insufficiently integrated. These findings highlight the urgency of a more integrated, contextualized and action-oriented approach to teaching French as a second language, both to meet students' immediate linguistic needs and to promote their academic and social integration.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study highlighted the difficulties of written and oral expression encountered by secondary school learners in public schools in the prefecture of Kozah (Togo). These difficulties stem from a lack of exposure to French in the extracurricular environment, pedagogical practices focused on reproduction and not conducive to interaction, emotional blockages hindering speaking, and lexical and discursive gaps limiting the quality of productions. The analysis shows that the development of communicative competence requires a renewed pedagogical approach, more action-oriented and interactive. Three recommendations can be made, namely strengthening of class practices focused on communication (prioritizing authentic tasks, collaborative projects, and scenarios that stimulate oral and written production; C. Puren, 2009) ; valorisation of the emotional aspect of learning (establishing a benevolent climate that reduces the fear of error and encourages speaking out; E. Horwitz, 2001); development of contextualized educational resources: produce materials related to local sociocultural realities, in order to generate interest and facilitate the reuse of French outside the school (D. Moore, 2006).

In summary, the improvement of written and oral expression in French as a second language in a multilingual area requires an articulation between a solid theoretical framework (communicative competence and APC), a contextualized pedagogy and consideration of psychosocial factors. Future research could explore the impact of innovative pedagogical experiments, such as interdisciplinary projects or the use of digital technologies, on students' language skills in a Togolese context.

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