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"I UNDERSTOOD YOU, BUT THERE WAS THIS PRONUNCIATION THING…": L2 PRONUNCIATION FEEDBACK IN ENGLISH/FRENCH TANDEM INTERACTIONS

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Abstract

The role of corrective feedback (CF) in L2 development has been the topic of much discussion in SLA literature (see for example Sheen and Ellis 2011 for a recent overview). Researchers have focused their attention on CF provided either by language teachers or by fellow L2 learners, whereas relatively little is known about phonetic feedback offered in a non-institutional setting during peer-to-peer native/non-native interactions as is the case with tandem language learning. Tandem language exchanges represent a special learning environment, as each participant takes turns being the native and the non-native side of the dialogue. Thus, in contrast to the typical L2 learning setting, the hierarchical structure between the participants is fluid: the expert-novice power relationship evolves as the meeting progresses and the conversation switches from one language to the other.

In order to see how the distinguishing characteristics of tandem learning (such as solidarity and reciprocity) shape the process of L2 phonetic development in their own specific ways, we collected an English-French Tandem Corpus as part of the SITAF project (***S****pécificités des* ***I****nteractions verbales dans le cadre de* ***T****andems linguistiques* ***A****nglais-****F****rançais)*, launched at the University of Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3 in October 2012. We gathered linguistic data – both video and audio recorded – from face-to-face conversational exchanges held by 21 pairs of undergraduate students, with each 'tandem' consisting of a native speaker of English and a native speaker of French. The dialogues and reading passages were recorded on two occasions separated by a 3-month interval.

The present paper offers a preliminary analysis of L2 pronunciation feedback on several renditions of the same text (*The North Wind and the Sun*), given to the French speakers by their English tandem partners. The passage was produced by each French participant three times: (1) during the 'monitored' reading, which was supervised by the English-speaking partner and which led to (2) the 'second reading' in the course of the first recording session, and then (3) the 'final reading' performed during the second recording session 3 months later.

Data analysis will allow us to address the following questions relating to the study of phonetic corrective feedback:

- What is corrected by the native-speaking partner (henceforth NS)? Segmental or prosodic errors? Phonemic or allophonic deviations?
- What is the corrective strategy adopted by the NS? Is it explicit correction, recast, or elicitation?
- What is the learner's uptake after receiving feedback?

We hope that our data brings a valuable and fairly unique contribution to SLA research, helping to establish which errors get corrected and how it may have implications for setting priorities in L2 pronunciation teaching.

Keywords: Tandem learning, L2 pronunciation, Corrective Feedback (CF), French learners of English

1. Introduction

This paper aims at presenting the preliminary results of work in progress on phonetic corrective feedback provided in the course of tandem interactions between native French and native English partners. This project was carried out in the framework of a junior researchers project entitled SITAF (***S****pécificités des* ***I****nteractions verbales dans le cadre de* ***T****andems linguistiques* ***A****nglais-****F****rançais)*, which was launched at the University of Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3 in October 2012. The SITAF research team is made up of ten members specialising in different but complementary research areas: phoneticians and phonologists, L1 and L2 acquisition specialists, didacticians and gesture specialists. Our Tandem Corpus aims to gather linguistic data, both verbal and non-verbal (with video recorded sequences), from conversational exchanges held by twenty-one French/English tandem pairs of undergraduate students at University Sorbonne-Nouvelle Paris 3. In the framework of a language tandem, the native speaker is the main provider of target-language input (*positive evidence*, see part 1) and occasionally is the provider of feedback on the partner's incorrect output (*negative evidence*). However he/she is not a professional teacher who has expert practice in teaching and correcting language features, which raises the following questions: Does the specific communicative setting of tandem interaction entail instances of corrective pronunciation feedback? If so, when, in what form and how often is phonetic feedback provided?

Corrective Feedback (CF) has been researched quite extensively when applied to learners receiving feedback from a language instructor in the formal environment of the classroom (Lyster and Ranta 1997, Mackey 1999, 2006, Gass 2003, Lyster *et al*. 2013). A lot of experimental research has looked into the strategies and effects of CF regarding grammatical development (*e.g.* Mackey 2006[1],), whereas the field of phonetic CF remains underrepresented (Lyster et al 2013[2]). What is more, very little is known about CF received in more informal learning contexts, as exemplified by the informal conversation with a native speaker of the target language in a language tandem

[1] In Mackey (2006), the target forms studied were questions, plurals and the past tense.

[2] Lyster et al. (2013: 22) *"Whether conducted in laboratories or classrooms, CF research has focused to a great extent on grammatical targets, reflecting the preoccupation with grammatical development in the study of SLA*". They only mention two of their studies (Sato & Lyster 2012), in relation to phonological CF (the acquisition of /ɹ/ and the development of fluency by Japanese learners of English).

exchange. This paper contributes to giving a new insight into the issue of pronunciation feedback, which, if evidenced at all during tandem interactions, might be different from that described for traditional language instruction.

The first part of the article will present the Tandem Corpus after having described how language tandem exchanges set a specific environment for L2 learning in general and L2 phonetic corrective feedback in particular. The key issues of which pronunciation features get corrected and how during the exchanges of the Tandem Corpus will be addressed in parts two and three, respectively. Finally, part four will raise the question of the effectiveness of pronunciation CF received during these same language exchanges.

2. Tandem learning: studying the implications for L2 pronunciation and collecting the Tandem Corpus

2.1 The acquisition of L2 pronunciation in tandem

O'Rourke (2005: 434) defines tandem learning as: "*an arrangement in which two native speakers of different languages communicate regularly with one another, each with the purpose of learning the other's language*". Tandem learning therefore represents an interesting and special form of language learning which often complements the more traditional instruction learners get through classroom teaching of the L2. The pedagogical benefits of tandem interactions for L2 learning have been pointed out in previous research.

First, contrary to the more traditional and hierarchical relation between a teacher and a learner the relation between tandem participants tends to be symmetric. Solidarity and role reversibility are at the basis of tandem learning. Indeed, the two participants will, in turn, construct two roles throughout the conversation exchange depending on which language is spoken: the role of the learner in the L2 and of the expert[3] in their L1. The native speaker is not expected to function as a teacher but rather, as an empathising peer taking part in maintaining a friendly, comfortable relationship which is not as face-threatening as, and more reassuring than, interacting with a teacher/assessor. This will be an essential factor in reducing the learners' inhibition about expressing themselves orally or to overcome their embarrassment at meeting pronunciation difficulties or having a foreign accent.

Tandem learning is also based on mutual assistance, learner commitment and learner motivation. Tandem participants generally sign up freely for such programs showing their genuine motivation to learn their partner's L1 but also to get to know "*their interlocutor as an individual*" (O'Rourke, 2005: 434).

[3] These roles are obviously idealised concepts rather than realities. The native speaker is considered by their tandem partner as a trustworthy representative of the target language and target language community and culture. This does not obviously mean that the native speakers effectively possess full mastery of their mother tongue or culture. One might doubt that such a skill is attainable anyway (see Kramsch 2003).

In addition to these positive socio-affective and psychological factors, during tandem interactions, learners are also exposed to very valuable L2 spoken input provided by the native speaker. Its quality lies in the fact that it is authentic and embodied input. Sufficient and quality exposure to L2 oral input is a well-known requirement of pronunciation learning. Through synchronous oral interaction, tandem partners get exposed to native input both in the form of what is called "positive evidence" (Long 1996, Gass 2003[4]) *i.e.* information on what is acceptable in the target language, but also "negative evidence" of the L2, *i.e.* information on what is unacceptable expressed through feedback on erronous learners' output. The latter type of evidence will be referred to in this article with the term "corrective feedback"[5] or CF. CF can be direct (explicit) or indirect (implicit).

In addition to this verbal evidence about the target language, through face-to-face tandem, participants also have access to useful non-verbal cues. Indeed, body gestures and facial movements enable partners to better interpret their interlocutor's message, to identify or express instances of communication breakdowns, to make on-line interactional adjustments, etc. As far as pronunciation is concerned, the fact that the participants are literally positioned face-to-face allows for gestural or facial elicitation of what the target pronunciation should sound and look like (simultaneously). Indeed, participants have direct visual access to some of their native interlocutor's articulatory gestures (lips, jaws, possibly the tongue), which can be very valuable visual support for French learners to grasp the two renditions of the interdental fricatives <th> in English, for instance (see examples in parts 2).

Despite all the pedagogical benefits for the acquisition of L2 pronunciation listed above, language tandem also has some drawbacks which researchers have underlined (see Brammerts and Calvert 2002). The main limitation is that, in face-to-face oral tandem, the spoken input is ephemeral and is therefore highly demanding on the learners' attention and memory skills. The positive socio-affective factors mentioned above might in some instances also act negatively on L2 pronunciation learning. Many tandem participants will naturally focus on content and smooth communication, task completion rather than form accuracy. Some native speakers will tend to develop a tolerance to errors or erroneous pronunciation in the speech of their tandem partner (Brammerts and Calvert 2002, 2003) and will minimise expression and comprehension problems, simply because it might feel socially awkward to point to errors in your peer's output.

By and large, however, we believe the benefits of tandem learning largely outweigh these limitations.

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[4] Gass (2003: 225) defines positive evidence as comprising "*the set of well-formed sentences to which learners are exposed*" and negative evidence as "*the type if information that is provided to learners concerning the incorrectness of an utterance*".

[5] See Lyster and Ranta (1997) and El Tatawy (2002) for a discussion on the terminology and its interchangeability (corrective evidence, negative evidence, negative feedback, repair, focus-on-form).

2.2 The English/French Tandem Corpus

Twenty-one pairs of participants were recruited through an online questionnaire available on our university website. It aimed at providing information about the participants' language profile (self-assessed proficiency level, language background) and their general interests to ensure tailored pairing up of the participants. All participants volunteered freely for the tandem program and later organised their meetings autonomously. They met between 2 and 23 times with a mean frequency of 12 meetings over a three-month period (February-May 2013). None of the speakers was bilingual in the other language[6].

The 21 native French speakers (labelled *F01>F21*) were all undergraduate students[7] in English studies for the most part. Their proficiency level varied from upper-intermediate to advanced. The 21 native English speakers (labelled *A01>A21*) were exchange students at our university and represented a range of dialectal variety (American, British, Irish, Australian). Their proficiency level in the target language was certainly more varied than that that of our French speakers because it was highly dependent on the length of their stay in France at the start of the experiment and on the age when they started learning L2 French (which was less homogeneous than that of the French learners of English).

We recorded the tandem pairs at two points in time: the first session in January/February 2013 was organised about a week after the participants' first face-to-face encounter at the introductory meeting, and the second recording session was scheduled three months later in April/May 2013.

The technical set-up used for the two recording sessions was the university recording studio where tandem partners were seated face to face. We used 3 cameras (one in the direction of each participant, and one capturing the general interactional frame), and 2 microphones positioned 10 cm above the speakers' heads. The individual footage of the two speakers was then edited to appear both in the same video frame.

More details about the speakers' profiles, recruitment method and experimental design can be found in Horgues and Scheuer (2014, forthcoming).

To prompt interaction between tandem participants, the speakers were first recorded performing two semi-spontaneous speech tasks: two games eliciting argumentation and story telling. The uses of French and English were clearly separated with an instructed switch after 30 mins. The games were then followed by a reading task whose objective was to collect controlled, hence directly comparable speech data for all speakers. The reading passage, *The North Wind and the Sun* (see appendix 1), and its French version, were selected. The choice of this particular reading passage was motivated by the reference to the numerous phonetic studies having previously used it to explore phonetic variation in English (native and non-native varieties), and also because its French version is used for similar purposes in French phonetics as well. However, we are well-aware that this passage was initially designed to elicit phonemic variation and that in that respect, it is not the best suited for the analysis of some suprasegmental features like

[6] Although some speakers were bilingual in another language (*e.g.* Guadeloupean French, Algerian Arabic, Costa Rican Spanish).

[7] From the first to the third year of the degree.

intonational focus, the prosodic marking of information structure, etc. This will have to be taken into account when considering the speech features studied (part 2).

Only one section of the corpus speech data will be used at this stage in our analysis: the various renditions of the reading passage in L2 English. Upon monitoring the two recording sessions, we informally observed that the reading task (where the learners are more naturally more focused on form than communication) entailed a higher frequency of CF than spontaneous game-like activities. Therefore the results presented in this study are limited to this particular speaking style and would have to be compared with more spontaneous speech in further analyses.

Below are the details of how the reading task in L2 English was performed during the two recording sessions (see fig. 1)

- in the first session, the French speakers performed what is called the first or "*monitored*" reading which encouraged interaction and feedback from the native interlocutor, and for which the instructions explicitly said:
  Please read the following text twice:
- *once with your tandem partner helping you especially if he/does not understand what you are saying or if your reading is unclear*
- this reading was then immediately followed by a second and (hopefully improved) reading, "*second reading*" during which the tandem partner was no longer supposed to intervene:
- *and then a second time on your own (no interruption)*
- in the second session, 3 months later, the same speakers were simply asked to read the same passage (with no specific instruction as to the monitoring). This corresponds to the "*final reading*".[8]

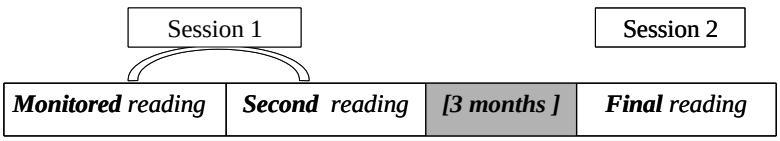

Figure 1: The L2 reading task in Tandem Corpus (The North Wind and the Sun)

Let's now turn our attention to the focus of CF in this reading task, *i.e.* the types of errors the native English partners tended to correct.

3. What was corrected?

The basic statistics on the corrective feedback provided by the English participants about their French partners' performance on the reading task are presented below (see also fig. 2):

[8] After the learners performed their final readings in the L2, all speakers also read the text in their mother tongue. This L1 control data was not used for the specific research question studied in this article, but it will be analysed in further studies.

- we observed 108 instances (tokens) of CF across the three readings in the two recording sessions;
- 103 of them (*i.e.* 95.4%) regarded segmental errors;
- of those:
  - 58.3% related to vocalic errors (*e.g.* 'wind' /ˈwɪnd/ incorrectly rendered as */ˈwaɪnd/, 'sun' pronounced *[ˈsɜn])
  - 25.2% concerned consonantal errors (*e.g.* 'obliged' commonly pronounced with a medial [ʒ] or [g]);
  - 16.5% involved 'mixed category' errors, *i.e.* when the NS's intervention targeted both a vocalic and a consonantal realisation at the same time (*e.g.* 'closely' rendered as *[ˈklɒzli]);
- the remaining 5 instances of CF (*i.e.* 4.6%) regarded suprasegmental matters, which in our case were limited to lexical stress (*e.g.* 'considered' pronounced 'CONsidered').

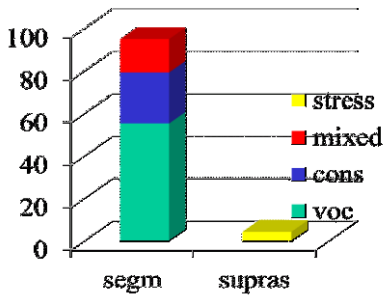

Figure 2: Instances of corrective feedback

A couple of acknowledgements are in order here. Firstly, even the few examples of CF given above reflect considerable variation among the tokens in terms of the nature of the error being corrected, which might call for a number of separate treatments in the future. For example, certain erroneous pronunciations arose (presumably) from incorrect phonemic representations of particular lexical items, whereas some others pointed to potentially more important, global problems, *i.e.* imperfect realisations of particular English phones across the board. 'Wind' mispronounced */ˈwaɪnd/ illustrates the former, and /ʌ/ rendered as [ɜ] (as in *[ˈsɜn] for /ˈsʌn/) the latter category. Secondly, the fact that nearly 60% of all instances of CF pertained to vowels, and just over 25% to consonants, does not in itself prove that vocalic errors are more serious than consonantal ones: it could simply mean that vowels are targeted more often because they are mispronounced more often than consonants. Either way, our results tend to highlight the pre-eminent position of vowels in the course of L2 pronunciation teaching and learning.

Another key question to be addressed in the context of error typology regards the reasons why certain phonetic deviations (vocalic and consonantal alike) attract native speakers' attention whereas some others are ignored, as far as CF goes. Although the motivations underlying the individual decisions to correct or not to correct are ultimately complex and subjective, it stands to reason that they are grounded in certain overarching considerations such as intelligibility or impression of a strong foreign accent.

While it can be argued that any mispronunciation has the capacity for miscommunication, mistakes that result in actual or potential lexical confusion – or simply compromise intelligibility – will naturally rank higher in this hierarchy. Therefore, errors that involved (near) minimal pairs were naturally expected to be CF magnets in our study. This can be illustrated with the following examples: [ˈzen] for 'then', 'cloak' pronounced like 'clock', or the almost archetypal 'hungry' for 'angry' substitution (which indeed led to genuine communication breakdown during *A09-F09* conversational exchange), as well as the rendition of 'blew' as [ˈbliː] by speaker *F04*, which was simply not understood at all by the native listener (see part 4). This tendency – *i.e.* to correct errors that result in one lexical item morphing into another – does not seem to merit an in-depth analysis here: after all, the primary purpose of language is communication, and if communication is in danger of being inadvertently hindered, the native speaker is justified in feeling compelled to intervene.

In view of the above considerations, what is perhaps more interesting is precisely instances of corrective feedback when intelligibility was *not* at stake. Some native speakers indeed showed a stronger, or at least longer, reaction to pronunciation errors that did not – by their own admission – impede communication than to those that did have the potential for lexical confusion. To paraphrase the comment which features in the title of our paper (made by speaker *A02*), there were certain "pronunciation things" that the native English participants were not ready to ignore even though they were able to understand everything that was being said. The erroneous rendition of the <th> could serve as a prime example in this context. This virtually proverbial and remarkably widespread error in L2 English speech has received a lot of attention from SLA researchers and EFL practitioners alike, for a whole array of reasons. To name but a few, Brennan and Brennan's (1981) classic study of foreign accent in the English of Mexican immigrants to the US showed no relationship between the frequency of this phonetic deviation and accentedness ratings. Similar results were reported in Scheuer (2002) for Polish learners of English. In another influential volume, Jenkins (2000) states in no uncertain terms that substitutions of other consonants for the English dentals are inconsequential to international intelligibility, which means that these consonants should not be prioritised in teaching English as a Lingua Franca. These findings would seem to point to the conclusion that 'th' mispronunciations, frequent as they may be in L2 speech, do not necessarily deserve the high standing that is sometimes accorded to them in EFL pronunciation instruction.

Yet, in spite of its apparent status as being inconsequential to communication and relatively indifferent to the strength of perceived foreign accent, this type of error was singled out for correction – and sometimes even mini-speeches – by several of our native English participants. For example, speaker *A13* commented on his French partner's renditions of <th> as [s] in the following way: " 'North', with a 'th' at the end. That's probably a tricky one, but, really, get the /θ/: 'north' /…/ Again, I completely understood you, but /…/". In much the same vein, although as if speaking on behalf of native English speakers in general, participant *A15* reassured his partner as follows: "The only suggestion that I could make for you was the /θ/ sound /…/ I mean I… we could completely unders I'm sure… I could completely understand you, and everyone else could, but… erm… instead of [zi] it's /ˈðiː/".

It is perhaps worth noting that the authors of the "I understood you but" comments appeared at a loss to justify their preoccupation with this pronunciation problem. Naturally, no such justification was demanded of them. As usual, a variety of motives may have driven their decision to focus on the 'non-th's. Errors involving interdentals are relatively easy to spot and point out, as their place of articulation lends itself to simple description and demonstration. Consequently, the correctors may have felt fairly confident about offering advice on how to rectify this particular kind of mistake. On the other hand, this insistence on the accurate pronunciation of the dental fricative could be interpreted as the native speaker's attempt to correct an annoying – rather than communicatively confusing – error. This ties in with Markham's (1997: 101) observation that *"[c]uriously, the more negatively judged errors are ones which do not cause lexical confusion /.../ – they are simply non-native pronunciations –,* [sic] *whereas the more acceptable errors can cause lexical confusion."* Further support for the notion that dental fricatives may belong in the 'annoying' category comes from the questionnaires that our participants were asked to fill in on completion of the recording sessions. These provide invaluable insights into young native speakers' beliefs about and perceptions of a French accent in English, as well as into those aspects thereof which they find irritating and/or detrimental to intelligibility. 8 out of the 21 subjects explicitly mentioned 'th's in this context, and half of them (4) went as far as branding this type of mistake as annoying without necessarily hindering comprehension.

4. How was it corrected?

In spite of the fact that tandem exchanges represent a unique learning environment, where the power structure is symmetric and fluid, within each given task one participant was clearly the novice and the other one the expert, who was therefore – implicitly or explicitly – expected to provide assistance and guidance without souring the friendly atmosphere. In a recent state-of-the-art article, Sheen and Ellis (2011: 606) conclude that *"[l]earners almost invariably express a wish to be corrected"*, although CF is a highly complex issue where no overall ideal strategy might necessarily be identified.

Corrective feedback provided by our native English participants indeed took different forms, as a function of the gravity of the error and – presumably – the personal preferences of the corrector, or the rapport between the tandem partners. In the present analysis we will be distinguishing just three categories of CF: explicit comments or explanations, recasts, and clarification requests (see *e.g.* El Tatawy 2002). Needless to say, certain instances of feedback represented complex cases where more than one corrective strategy was used at a time, for example when a recast was immediately followed by an explicit comment. In such cases we aimed to identify the dominant strategy and we labelled the CF token accordingly. The overall statistics, graphically presented in fig. 3, look as follows:

- Recasts accounted for 61.1% (60 out of 108) of all instances of CF across the three readings in the two recording sessions. Lyster and Ranta (1997: 46) define this – generally implicit – corrective strategy as one involving *"the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error"*. A classic example from our corpus is provided by the following exchange between speaker

A17 and speaker *F17*, who previously pronounced the word 'obliged' with an [i] vowel. The NS supplies the correct pronunciation of the word, without explicitly stating that the NNS's rendition was erroneous. The strategy seems to work, at least for the time being:
A17: Obliged.
F17: Obliged.
A17: Obliged. Yeah.
F17: OK.

- Explicit comments represented 25.9%, *i.e.* 28 tokens. These included short statements such as "wind, not [ˈwaɪnd]" (speaker *A11*), but also slightly longer descriptive sequences such as the ones regarding <th> (speakers *A13* and *A15*) mentioned in section 2.
- The remaining 13% (14 cases) were requests for clarification or repetition. To quote a somewhat extreme example, speaker *A16* reacted to her partner's rendition of one of the sentences (which was erroneous in more ways than one) by exclaiming *"Whoa, read that again!"*

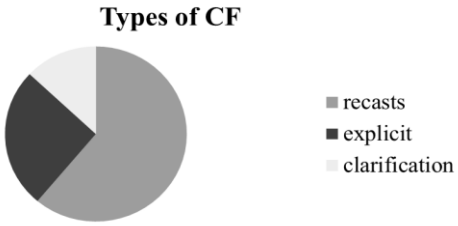

Figure 3: Instances of CF: corrective strategies

The fact that recasts proved to be the form favoured by our participants comes as no surprise. By its very nature, a recast is indirect and non-threatening, and therefore ideally suited for the type of peer-to-peer interaction where neither party particularly wishes to emphasize their dominant position. However, this indirectness comes at a price: corrections in the form of recasts are not always easily made sense of by the recipient, especially if more than one item is being corrected at a time. This is evident first and foremost in cases of automatic phonetic processes, such as the intervocalic intrusive (sandhi) [h], which is a common feature of French-accented L2 English speech. The following extract from the *A18-F18* interaction provides a good illustration of this problem (the sections in bold indicate the erroneous pronunciations picked up on by the native speaker):

F18: Then the North Wind blew **h**as hard as he could but the more he blew the more clo**[z]**ely did the traveller fold his cloak around him.
A18: /…/ BLEW AS HARD
F18: [silence]
A18: Blew as hard as he could.
F18: OK, blew **h**as hard as he could.
A18: <u>AS</u> hard.
F18: [laughing] As hard as he could.

A18: And closely.

F18: Closely. Je recommence: The North Wind blew **h**as hard as he could but the more he blew the more clo**s**ely did the traveller fold his cloak around him.

Evidently, it took as many as three recasts on the part the *A18* speaker (which, however, was by no means a record number) to finally bring about an h-less rendition of *as* in her NNS partner, which, alas, proved to be a rather short-term improvement.

Having explored the scope and modalities of CF during the tandem interactions, we are now turning our attention to the key issue of its effectiveness.

5. The effect of pronunciation CF during tandem exchanges

In this paper, we are very cautious when using the term "learner uptake" which often appears in the literature on CF. Indeed, learner uptake[9] typically refers to the learner's immediate response after receiving feedback from a professional provider of CF (*i.e.* typically a language teacher), and generally in a formal setting (*i.e.* the classroom), which is clearly not the case in the tandem setting.

At this stage in the analysis, we have looked at the French learners' uptake following feedback their English partner provided during the *monitored reading* (session 1). The idea is to see whether, and to what extent, erroneous pronunciation pointed out by the monitoring partner is subsequently modified positively (*i.e.* repaired) by the learner. French learners' uptake, or response to feedback, was studied at three points in time.

a) immediately upon receiving feedback (session 1)
b) during the second reading directly afterwards (still session 1)
c) during the final reading (session 2).

While carrying out the auditory analysis of the modifications the learners applied to items they had received feedback for, we realised that we needed to account for two types of learner's repair:

- total repairs: when an error pointed out by the tandem partner was fully repaired at one point in time. For example, *F04* had initially mispronounced *wrapped* as *[ˈrept], but then correctly modified it to [ˈræpt] immediately implementing her partner's (*A04*) CF.
- partial repairs: to refer both to cases where i) one item occurs several times in the reading passage (eg. *wind, cloak)* and is not repaired systematically, or where ii) the erronous pronunciation pointed out by the English-speaking partner is not totally attended to or repaired. An example of this is the term "closely" for which the French learner (*F12*) seemed to be unable[10] to attend to the correction of both

[9] For Lyster and Ranta (1997: 49): "*Uptake, in our model refers to a student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance (this overall intention is clear although the teacher's specific linguistic focus may not be*)*"*. Mackey (2006: 407) reports a slighlty different definition by Ellis *et al.* (2001): "*in which the learner utterance was optional and could occur not only after feedback, but also after any interlocutor utterance that provided information about a linguistic feature*".

[10] Immediate uptake, first session.

the unvoiced fricative /s/ (which she incorrectly realised as voiced[11]) *and* the diphthong at the same time. Her various attempts at repetition show that she can only repair one of these features at a time. This appears to be an illustration of the cognitive overload the learners are faced with. It also raises the question of their (in)ability to grasp the focus and the scope of their correcting partner's feedback.

The percentages[12] of repair at these 3 points in time (horizontal axis: *immediately, 2nd reading, final reading*) are presented in the 3 bars of the graph below (fig. 4). Total repairs appear in solid black, and partial in checked grey.

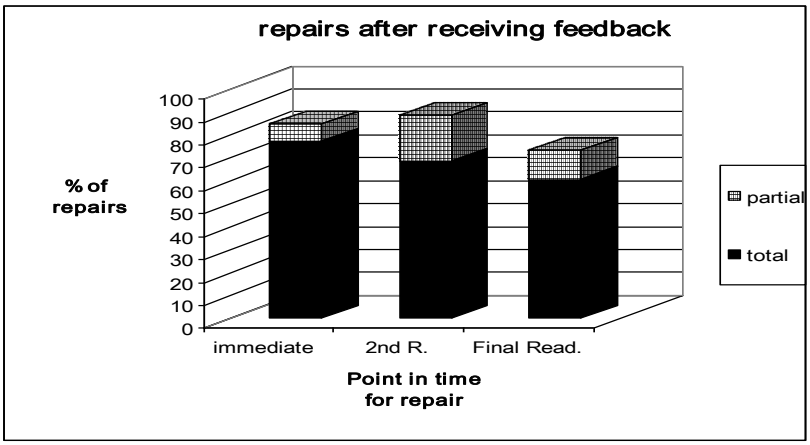

Figure 4: French learners' repairs after receiving pronunciation CF from their English-speaking tandem partners

	moment of repair		
type of repair	*immediate*	*2nd Read.*	*final Read.*
partial	7.6	20.2	12.6
total	77.2	68.4	60.7
both types	84.8	88.6	73.3

Table 1: Percentages of repair at 3 points in time (21 French speakers of L2 English)

A few general trends emerge and contribute to giving an insight into the uptake perspective (fig. 4 and table 1 above):

[11] Certainly under the phonotactic influence of L1 French where, in an intervocalic environment, <s> is systematically voiced /z/, and where the unvoiced form /s/ has to be indicated by a variation in spelling <ss>.

[12] Calculated in relation to the number of errors pointed out by the English-speaking partner during the *monitored reading* (*i.e.* potential repairs): overall a total 79 instances of CF provided by the 21 native-English speakers.

a) Globally, over two thirds of the errors pointed out by the tandem partner during the *monitored reading* then get repaired by the French learners during subsequent readings (either in same session or in the second session three months later). From an SLA perspective, this is a fairly encouraging result.
b) There is an overall degradation of the rate of all types of repairs over time between the two sessions (84.8% vs 73.3%)[13] but not within one recording session (84.8% vs 88.6%). This quantitative degradation of repair rate over the three-month period does not come as a surprise given the detrimental influence of decreasing memory trace over time.
c) More interestingly, there appears to be a qualitative degradation when looking at learners' delayed responses. Indeed, the number of *partial* repairs increased in the 2nd reading of the first session (20.2%) when compared to their rate immediately upon receiving feedback (7.6%). Accordingly, the number of *total* repairs dropped significantly between the two readings[14]. Correct instantaneous modification does not always lead to effective, complete repair even five minutes later. This observation underlines the loss of accuracy and the lack of permanency in the learners' uptake/ response to CF, which are certainly linked to the cognitive limitations of memory span and overload restraining the learners' performance.

These observations are in line with the results of previous research showing that *"the effects of corrective feedback are almost always gradual and cumulative rather than instantaneous and categorical*" (Doughty and Williams, 1998: 40, in El Tatawy, 2002: 15).

Let us emphasize that it is difficult to interpret the repairs occurring in the *final reading* (2nd session) as cases of actual *uptake* resulting from CF received in the first session three months earlier. Indeed, it was technically impossible to control the input the learners were exposed to in between the two sessions. Not only did the French learners attend English language classes but they also had access to other sources of English input to various degrees (TV films, personal interactions with their tandem partners, with other anglophones in Paris or during travels). For this reason, the positive (or negative) modifications occurring in the final reading cannot be interpreted as direct effects of CF received in the first session. Many factors other than CF might have come into play so the cause-effect relation cannot be established as it could be for the two readings of the first session.

Beyond these very general trends, it is interesting to start looking at individual learner differences when analysing repair in relation to received CF.

a) A few cases illustrate what could be called *consistent repair*, *i.e.* when an error is immediately repaired and then is systematically attended to in subsequent renditions over the two sessions. This was the case for *"wind"* initially mispronounced as *[ˈwaɪnd] but then corrected systematically by four French learners (*F01, F05, F15, F21*).
b) Other cases exemplify *non-permanent repair*: when an error was corrected in the first session (both immediately and in the second reading), but where the learner reverts back to the initial error 3 months later (2nd session). This time, *F04*

[13] The trend, however, fails to reach statistical significance (paired *t* test, p>.05).
[14] Paired *t* test, significant at p<.05.

illustrates a situation which, from a teacher's perspective, might seem rather frustrating. Indeed, this learner initially mispronounced the verb "blew" as *[ˈbliː], instantaneously received CF from her English-speaking partner[15], and fixed it to [ˈbluː] both immediately and then again in the second rendition of the reading passage. Her body language seemed to reveal that she seemed surprised at her own mistake, and seemed to fully take in her partner's CF about the correct pronunciation. However, in the final reading she fell back to her initial mispronunciation [ˈbliː], which her partner did not fail to pick up on again in her after-task remarks.

c) And conversely, cases of *late repair*: when the repair is delayed until the final reading (2nd session), and is either absent or incomplete (partial) in the first session. This situation is rather rare compared to the first two types of repair. *F02* provided an example with her cluster simplification of *–ed* at the end of *obliged* [əˈblaɪʤd > *əˈblaɪʒd]. This simplification led her partner (*A02*) to provide CF during the monitored reading[16]. *F02* seems to have disregarded this CF in the first session but only implemented it in the final reading. As previously mentioned, since other input influences cannot be factored out, it is not possible to consider this modification towards the target form to be the sole and direct consequence of CF received in the first session.

Future research will aim at proposing more fine-grained analyses of error treatment sequences both from the correcting partner's perspective (solicited vs spontaneous CF, simple/complex recasts and other combined strategies) and the learner's perspective (subcategories of "needs repair" uptake following Lyster and Ranta 1997), and will include some attention to the contribution of non-verbal features on both parts.

6. Conclusion

By definition, language tandem partners do not provide as expert, accurate and systematic CF as professional language teachers are supposed to. Quite importantly, they are not expected to, either. However, the positive socio-affective and psychological assets attached to the tandem setting might compensate this failing by providing a non-threatening, comfortable and collaborative environment for learners. Reduced-stress levels are facilitative of L2 pronunciation learning. Although sometimes imperfect and insufficient, the CF provided by the language partners plays a part in raising the learners' awareness about the difference between their output and target form. Significantly, attention to form and noticing the gap have been described as essential steps on the way towards L2 development (Long 1996, Lyster and Ranta 1997, Schmidt 1990, Mackey 2006[17]). To improve the pedagogical benefits of language tandem programmes

[15] Whose comprehension was genuinely impaired by the learner's erroneous pronunciation, as shown by her clarification request inviting *F04* to rephrase: *"the more he....?"*.

[16] In the form of a recast "obliged" with hyperaticulation of the ending.

[17] Mackey (2006: 408): "*Attention and awareness in particular have been identified as two cognitive processes that mediate input and L2 development through interaction (e.g. Gass and Varonis 1994; Robinson 1995, 2001, 2003; Long 1996; Gass 1997, Mackey et al. 2000; Philip 2003). Long (1996), for example, claims that selective attention (along with the learner's*

developed in various educational institutions, we would therefore advocate providing the tandem partners with some awareness-raising training on the strategies necessary to provide and receive CF effectively in the course of autonomous tandem interactions.

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developing L2 processing capacity) mediates the L2 acquisition process. Negotiated interaction is claimed to be particularly useful in this regard, as the interactional feedback can help direct the learner' own interlanguage form (i.e. 'noticing the gap', Schmidt and Frota (1986), while at the same time providing the learners with opportunities to produce modified output. (Swain 1995, 1998, 2005). [...] Schmidt (1995, 2001) and Robinson (1995, 2001, 2003) argue that learners must conciously notice input in order for it to become intake. This claim is generally referred to as the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt 1990, 1993, 1995)."

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Appendix

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE READING PASSAGE

Note that the layout of the reading passage given to the participants was different from the one presented here. The text appeared horizontally and ensured no sentence was visually interrupted by line breaks (impact on prosodic phrasing).

.....……

(for the francophone participant). Read this instruction aloud.
Please read the following text twice:
- once with your tandem partner helping you especially if he/does not understand what you are saying or if your reading is unclear
- and then a second time on your own (no interruption).

The North Wind and the Sun
The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which of them was stronger, when a traveller came along wrapped in a warm cloak*.
They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveller take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other.
Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew, the more closely did the traveller fold his cloak around him; and at last the North Wind gave up the attempt.
Then the Sun shone out warmly, and immediately the traveller took off his cloak. And so the North Wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two.

(* a cloak is a type of coat)

.....……

(Pour le participant anglophone. Lisez cette consigne à haute voix)
Lisez le texte ci-dessous deux fois :
- une première fois avec l'aide de votre binôme qui vous aidera s'il/elle ne comprend pas ce que vous dîtes ou si la lecture n'est pas claire
- et une deuxième fois tout seul (sans interruption)

La bise* et le soleil
La bise et le soleil se disputaient, chacun assurant qu'il était le plus fort, quand ils ont vu un voyageur qui s'avançait, enveloppé dans son manteau.
Ils sont tombés d'accord, que celui qui arriverait le premier à faire ôter* son manteau au voyageur, serait regardé comme le plus fort.
Alors la bise s'est mise à souffler de toute sa force, mais plus elle soufflait, plus le voyageur serrait son manteau autour de lui; et à la fin, la bise a renoncé à le lui faire ôter.
Alors le soleil a commencé à briller et au bout d'un moment, le voyageur, réchauffé, a ôté son manteau.
Ainsi la bise a dû reconnaître que le soleil était le plus fort des deux.

(* ici la bise : un vent très froid *ôter : retirer/enlever)