

Fluency Markers in the Speech of Non-Native English Speakers before and after Going on Erasmus

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Becoming more fluent after studying abroad

TRADITIONAL ASSUMPTIONS:

- Students who study abroad are those who will become most proficient in their second language of choice (L2).
- Study or stay abroad is necessary in order to reach native-like language proficiency.

STUDYING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

- Oral proficiency consists of three areas:
 - Complexity
 - Accuracy
 - Fluency
- Fluency \neq language proficiency

FLUENCY

- Productive (temporal variables, repair phenomena, etc.)
- Perceptive (accent, lexical diversity, etc.)
- Non-verbal (gestures, looks, etc.)

Researching fluency and study abroad

RESEARCH QUESTION

- Does the production of performance phenomena, namely repeats, false starts and self-corrections, change after a study stay?

RESEARCH FINDINGS SO FAR

- Speakers' productive fluency generally improves (measured by speech rate and mean length of runs)
- Little research done on repair/performance phenomena (repeats, false starts, self-corrections)

Data and methodology

- 7 speakers were interviewed before and after their Erasmus stay, the interviews were recorded and transcribed
- Repeats, false starts and self-corrections were identified and tagged in the transcriptions according to Gráf (2017)
- After tagging, the transcriptions were analysed in AntConc

Interviewee ID	Sex	Location of Erasmus	Length of stay
A	F	England (Crewe)	1 semester
B	M	England (Winchester)	1 semester
C	F	England (Sheffield)	1 semester
D	F	Ireland (Limerick)	1 semester
E	F	England (Canterbury)	1 semester
F	M	Scotland (Stirling)	1 semester
G	F	England (Birmingham)	1 semester

Table 1. Participants of the study

Results

- The relative frequencies (amount of performance phenomena per 100 words) of repeats and self-corrections have decreased, while the false starts rate has plateaued. (→ **figure 1**)
- Overall, the self-corrections rate lowered post Erasmus, the repeats rate is lower with the exception of 2 speakers, and the false starts rate changes vary speaker to speaker. (→ **figure 2**)

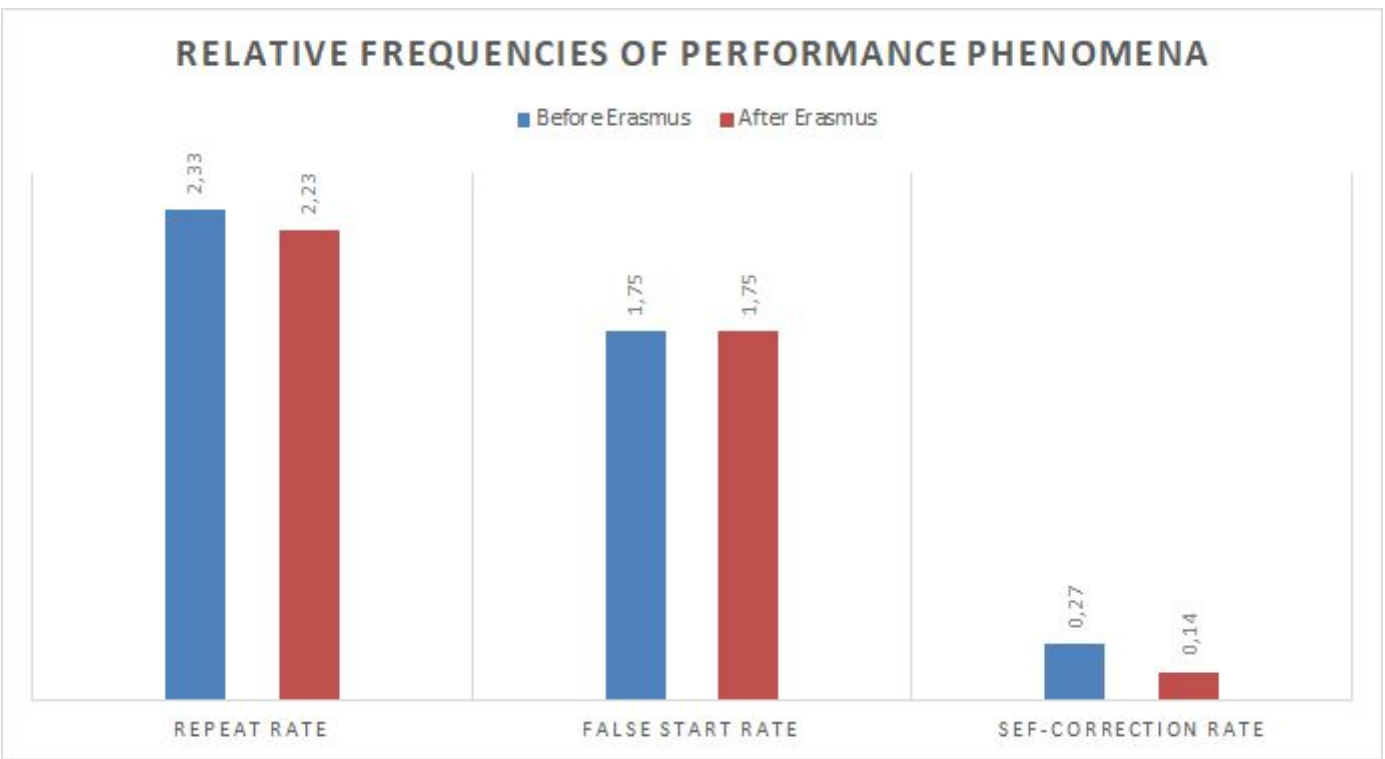


Figure 1. Repeats, false starts and self-corrections frequency rates produced by all participants before and after Erasmus

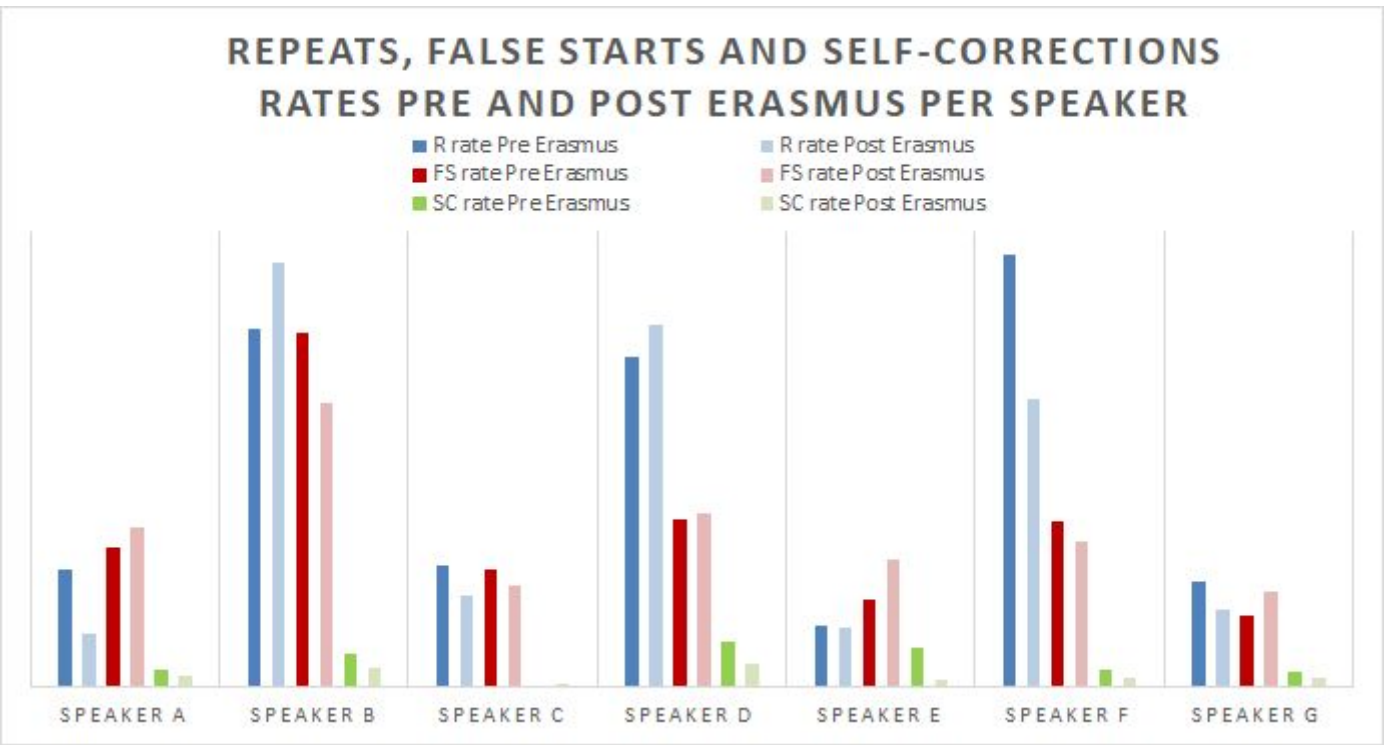


Figure 2. Rates of repeats (R), false starts (FS) and self-corrections (SC) produced by individual speakers before and after Erasmus

Discussion and conclusion

- The number of participants is small and so more general conclusions cannot be made.
- The production of performance phenomena is not necessarily a non-native like feature as native speakers use these phenomena too.
- It would be beneficial to compare the use of the phenomena between non-native and native speakers.
- Analysing other areas of productive fluency, such as speech rate, might shed more light on the overall changes to the speakers' fluency.
- In order to compare the oral proficiency of the speakers, examining the data according to the CAF model would help explain the changes occurring before and after the study stay.

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