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Exploring comprehensibility, intelligibility and accentedness in a French context: Influence of informal learning on pronunciation

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Context
 French learners of English (FLE) ⇔ acquire linguistic elements (vocabulary and grammar) from informal exposure to authentic language materials (TV series, films, music, games) (Toffoli & Sockett, 2010; Sockett, 2014).
 Informal activities impact pronunciation (Yibokou, 2019, 2023).

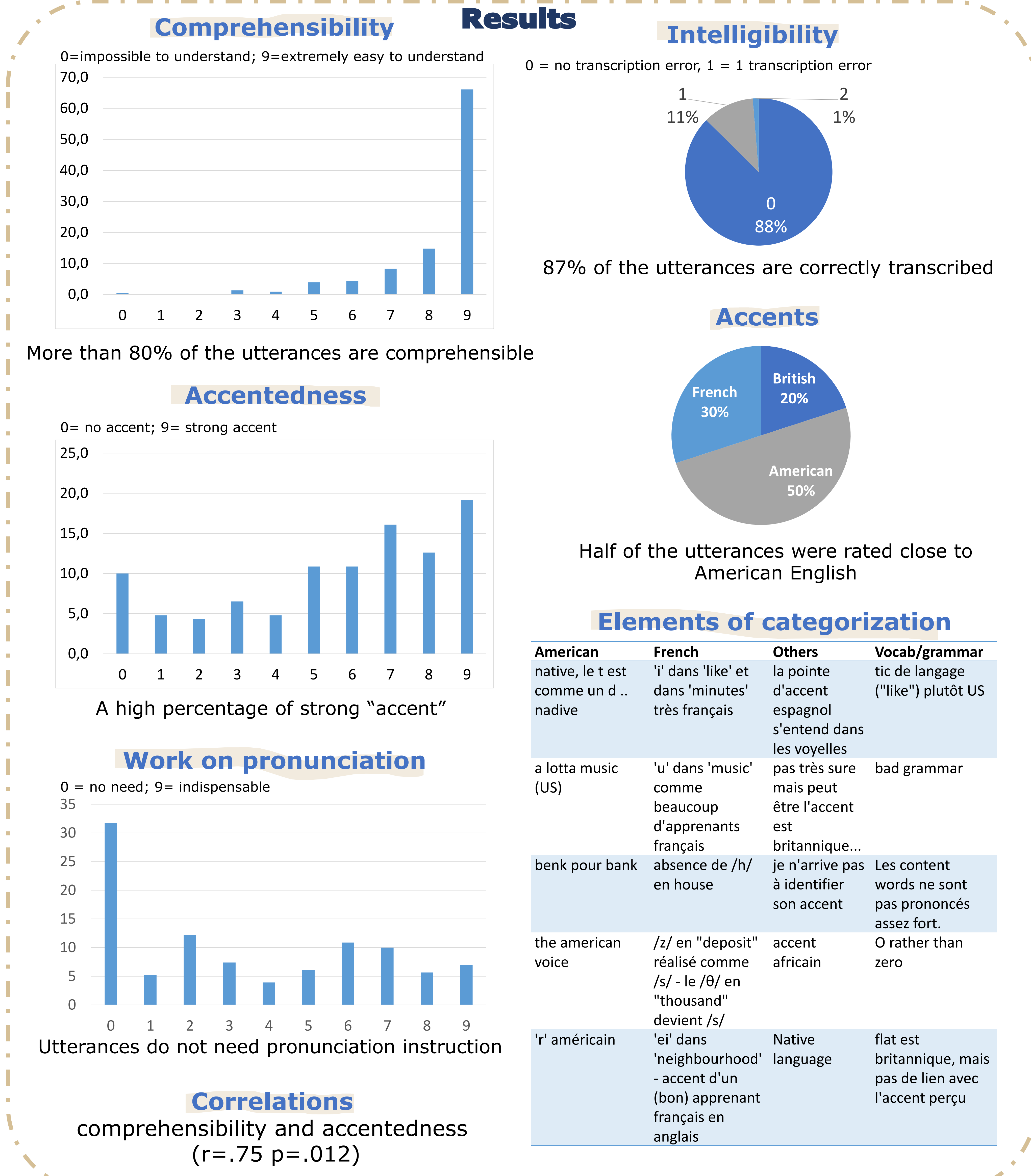
Research question
 To what extent the pronunciation of FLE is comprehensible, intelligible, and accented.

Method

- Speakers: 10 French students, non-linguistics specialists
 - ✓ Level (CEFR): A2 to C2
 - ✓ Age: 19 to 28
 - ✓ Oral diaries & interviews over a year (2021-22)
 - ✓ Activities: Music, movies, TV series, internet videos, oral interaction, games
 - ✓ Time spent: 100 to 400 hours
 - ✓ Exposition mode: Original version (OV), OV Caption, OV Subtitles
- Raters: 23 English teachers ("non/native")

Materials & Procedure

- 10 speech samples from semi-naturalistic utterances
- 2 distractors: one American accent speaker and one British accent speaker
- 1 warm up question
- 1 Listening test performed through LimeSurvey
- Between 45 min. & 1,5 h.



Discussion

- Pronunciation of FLE is comprehensible and intelligible with the perceived "strong accent".
- French "accent" seems to be less comprehensible and more accented.
- Evidence of pronunciation closer to "American accent".
- Informal learning could be contributing to enhancing comprehensibility, intelligibility and "native-accentedness" in FLE.
- Acquisition happens through full (learner) autonomy: in the absence of explicit pronunciation instruction and following their own choice.
- Based on the notion of learner agency (Miras, 2020), teachers could draw learners' attention to the potentials of informal activities.
- Reflection on how teachers can help students to be more comprehensible and intelligible despite their accent (Gordon & Darcy, 2019).

Limits

- Results per speaker to see individual "scores" and differences.
- Results for teachers ("native" vs "non-native") to see if important difference in rating and factors underlying (background).
- Experimentation ambitious (too long)?