

Impact of study abroad on use of internal modifiers in requests:

A comparative study of Ghanaian French Learners in France and Benin

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INTRODUCTION:

Requests are an integral part of our daily lives. Drew & Couper-Kuhlen (2014:1) describes requests as "the most basic and widespread activity of social interaction".

Given the face-threatening nature (Brown & Levinson, 1987) involved in making this speech act, the speaker may want to modify the impact of it by employing particular modification devices that have been classified into two types: internal and external.

According to Sifianou (1999:158), internal modification devices refer to those linguistic and syntactic elements that appear within the same request act in order to mitigate or intensify its force.

Example: Can you **please** open the door for me?

Here, **please** is an internal modification device (politeness marker), mitigating the illocutive force of the request.

RESEARCH FOCUS:

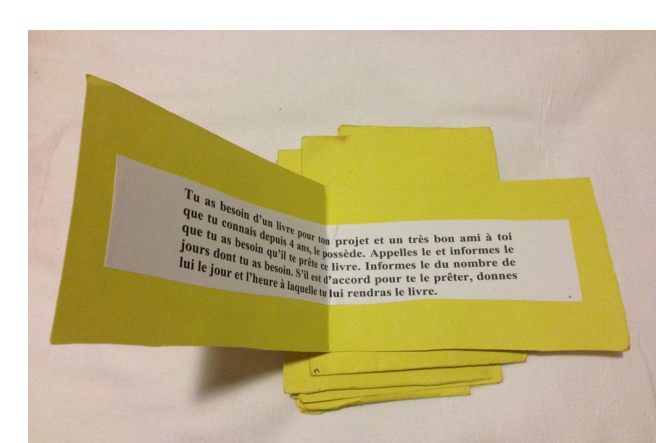
- Study abroad and language variation
- Native speaker use of internal modifiers
- Learner use of internal modifiers before and after study abroad

METHOD:

- A longitudinal study
- Oral DCTs conducted before and after study abroad (August 2016- June 2017)

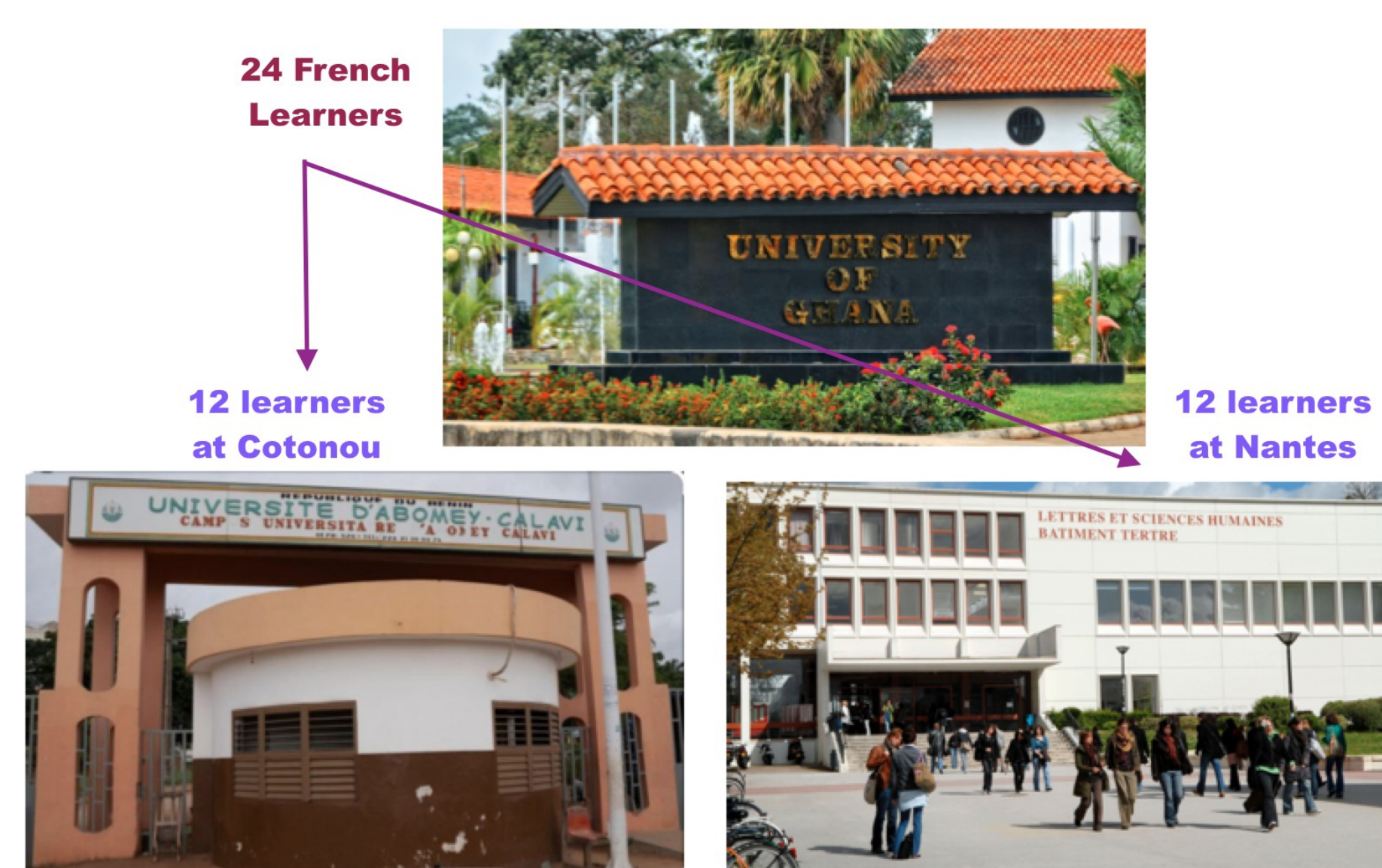
8 ORAL DCT SITUATIONS

- ◆ Asking your Vice Chancellor how to get a scholarship (sit 1)
- ◆ Asking a secretary for information (sit 2)
- ◆ Asking a cashier to change your ticket (sit 3)
- ◆ Asking for directions from a man on the street (sit 4)
- ◆ Asking a friend to lend you a book (sit 5)
- ◆ Asking a friend to take a walk with you after a bad day (sit 6)
- ◆ Inviting a friend to a party (sit 7)
- ◆ Inviting a friend to a restaurant (sit 8)



◆ Data was audio recorded by iTalk recorder and transcribed by Partitur Editor (Exmaralda)

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:



- Average of 22 years
- Completed 3 years of formal French learning at the University of Ghana
- Embarked on a 10 month study abroad in Nantes (France) and Cotonou (Benin)
- ◆ A control group of 12 Nantes natives and 12 Cotonou natives

ANALYSIS:

6 types of internal modifiers (2 lexical, 2 morphosyntaxique, 1 zero use, 1 comb)

1. Politeness marker (POLI) : Use of the politeness marker *s'il te/vous plaît* (please).

Examples:

a) **S'il vous plaît** je veux demander le processus pour faire une demande de bourse (CL1, sit 1)
 (Please I want to ask about the process of asking for a scholarship)

b) **S'il te plaît** j'ai besoin de ton livre est-ce que tu peux me prêter? (NL9, sit 7)
 (Please I need your book, can I borrow it ?)

*ALL EXAMPLES ARE EXTRACTED FROM DATA AND MAY HAVE SOME ERRORS

2. Downtoners (DOWN) : Use of words/expressions that reduce the force of the request.

Examples :

c) Je veux faire une promenade à la mall et tu veux aller avec moi pour s'amuser un **peu** (NL10, sit 8)
 (I want to go for a walk at the mall and do you want to go with me to have **a little** fun)

d) Est-ce que tu es un **peu** libre pour qu'on peut se faire un promenade à la plage (CL7, sit 8)
 (Are you **a little** free for us to take a walk at the beach?)

3. Conditional (COND) : Use of the conditional tense.

Examples:

e) Je **voudrais** savoir le prix d'une chambre pour un semestre dans votre établissement (NL2, sit 2)
 (I would like to know the price of a room per semester in your establishment)

f) Je **voudrais** utilise cet opportunité de parler avec vous à propos de le bourse (CL9, sit 1)
 (I would like to use this opportunity to talk to you about a scholarship)

4. Imperfect (IMP) : Use of the imperfect tense.

Examples:

g) Je **voulais** demander c'est comment pour faire une demande de logement du coup (NN1, sit 1)
 (I **wanted** to find out how to apply for accomodation)

h) Je **voulais** savoir combien **était** le prix pour un semestre (NN10, sit 2)
 (I **wanted** to know how much the price **was** for the semester)

5. Combination (COMB) : Use of 2 different internal modifiers.

Examples :

i) **S'il vous plaît** je **voudrais** savoir le prix d'une chambre pour une un semestre (CL7, sit 2)
 (Please I **would** like to know the price of a room per semester)

j) Je **voulais** savoir **s'il vous plaît** où se trouve la faculté de droit (NN10, sit 4)
 (I **wanted** to **please** know where the law faculty is situated)

6. Zero use (ZERO) : No use of internal modifiers

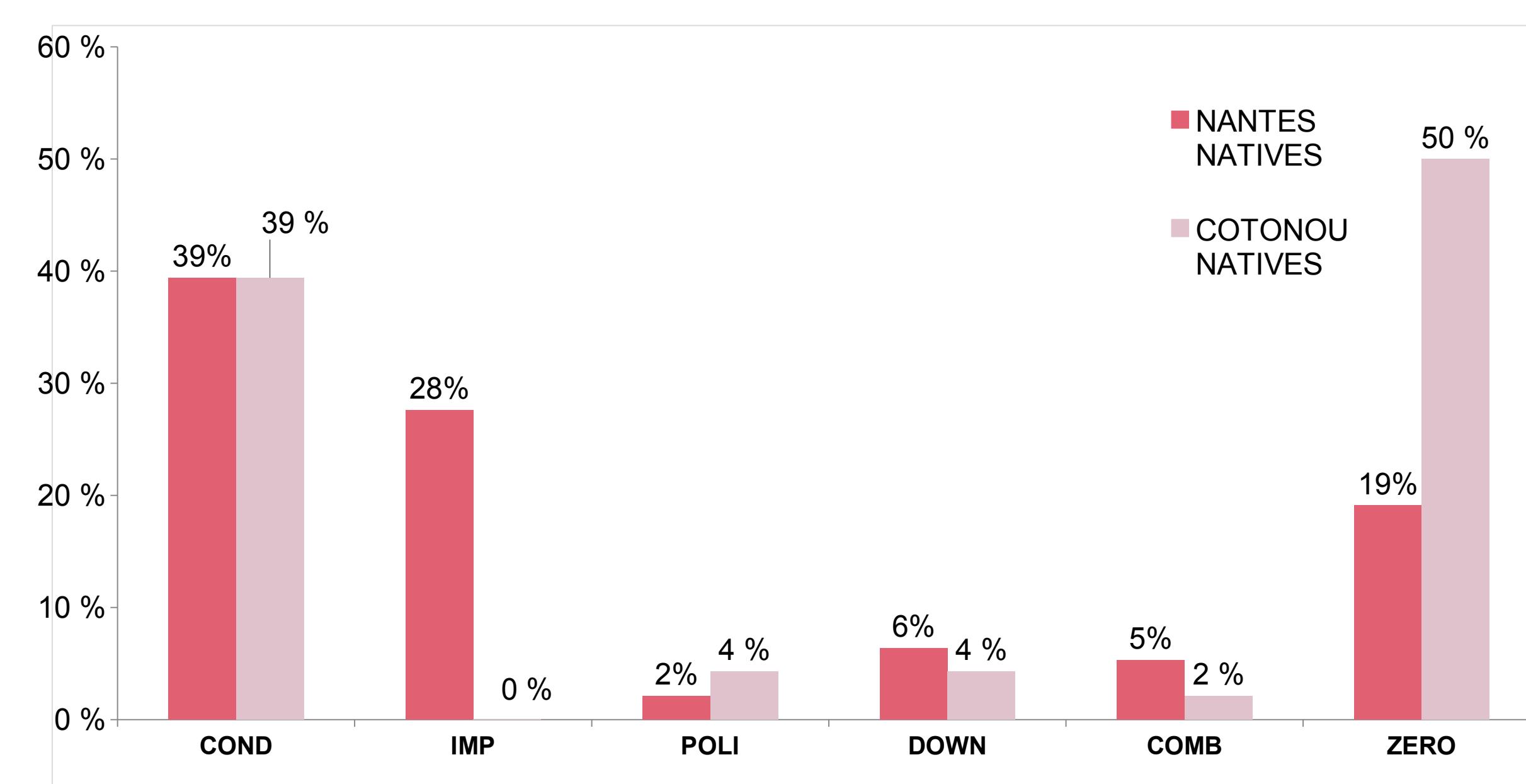
Examples :

k) Je veux savoir le process pour gagner un bourse (CL12, sit 1)
 (I want to know the process involved in winning a scholarship)

l) Quel est le processus pour demander une bourse (NL8, sit 1)
 (What is the process of getting a scholarship)

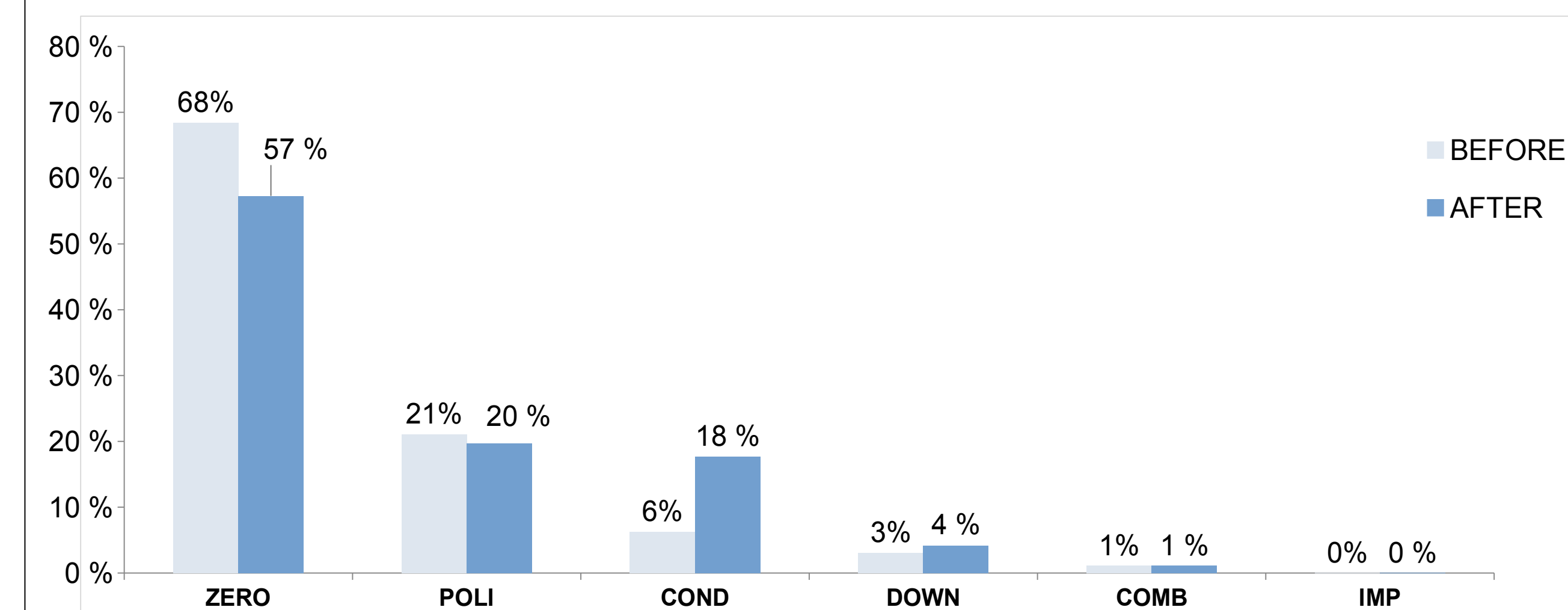
RESULTS:

1A. USE OF INTERNAL MODIFIERS BY NANTES NATIVES AND COTONOU NATIVES

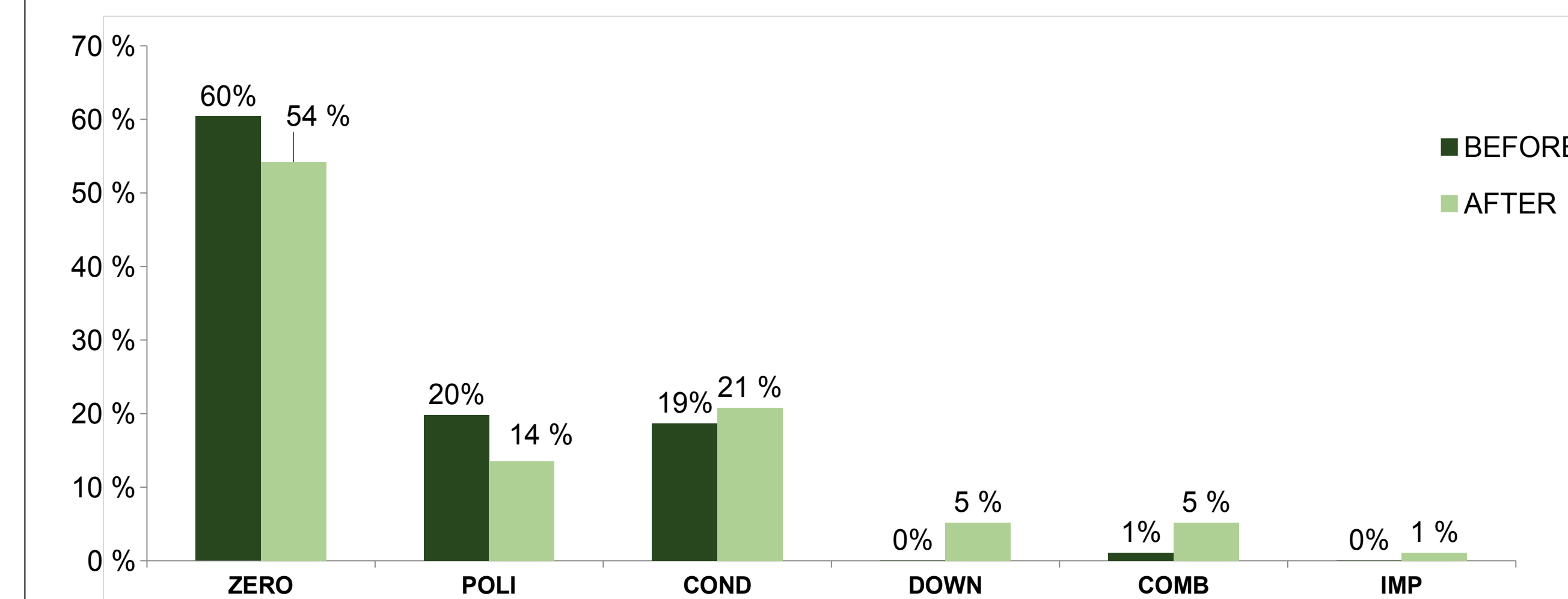


USE OF INTERNAL MODIFIERS BY L2 FRENCH LEARNERS

1B. USE OF INTERNAL MODIFIERS BY NANTES LEARNERS (NL) BEFORE AND AFTER STUDY ABROAD



1C. USE OF INTERNAL MODIFIERS BY COTONOU LEARNERS (CL) BEFORE AND AFTER STUDY ABROAD



DISCUSSION:

• Native use of internal modifiers

Nantes Natives make use of the Conditional tense, the Imperfect tense and Zero use whereas Cotonou Natives make use of the Conditional tense and Zero use.

• Learner use of internal modifiers before and after study abroad

1. Before study abroad, the Nantes Learners make use of the Zero use and Politeness marker. After study abroad, they make use of Zero use, Politeness marker and Conditional tense.

2. Before study abroad, the Cotonou Learners make use of Zero use, Politeness marker and the Conditional tense. After study abroad, they make use of Zero use, Politeness marker and the Conditional tense.

CONCLUSION: Do learners reflect native pattern use after study abroad?

Only stay in Nantes seem to have an effect on use that reflects native pattern use through the use of the conditional tense.

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