Exploiting the Potential of a Computer- Based Grammar Checker in Conjunction with Self-Monitoring Strategies with Advanced Level Students of French
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This article reports the study of Computer-Based grammar checker in an advance level French course.

French Grammar Checker is currently at the cutting edge of what is technologically possible. However, the use of French grammar checker with the Français Langue Etrangère (FLE) curriculum is much less common and is even discourage by some teachers.

There are two reasons for declining the use of grammar checker:

i) the lack of appeal of their English counterpart
ii) the concern that language learners may rely on the computer to take care of grammatical details.

The Use of Correcteur 101 at Monash University

Current grammar checker for French or any other languages, are restricted in their operation by their inability to perform semantic analysis. They function almost entirely on basis of surface level morphosyntactic relationship.

LeCorrecteur 101
This program proved to be good at detecting and correcting “low level error” (faute bêtes)

Initially, student were given two training session on the operation and required to proof read before submitting their composition. However, this unsupervised ad hoc usage had little discernible effect on the grammatical accuracy. For its pedagogical potential to be realized, this program needs to be better integrated into the curriculum.

In the second year, the program added correction exercises based on actual student composition. Study found that most error prone students made least use of the grammar checker. Improvement in grammar accuracy evidence in composition submitted as homework assignments only. It did not carry over to essays written under exam conditions.

The Result of Analysis undertaken in 1998

- Two-third of all mistakes were surface level morphosyntactic errors detectable by LeCorrecteur 101.
- Students failed to detect errors on their own but are able to pick out errors that were made salient.
- Through 1998, when the assessment parameters for all major written work changed to allocate 20% of the grade to morphosyntactic accuracy. The low level
errors were reduced by half. It acted as a strong incentive for students to use *Le Correcteur* 101 to reduce errors. (Extrinsic Reward)

- But still, there’s only a slight improvement on morphosyntactic accuracy of exam essay.

**Problems with Grammar Checker**

- Most students were unable to fully exploit the resources of *Le Correcteur* 101 without guidance.
- The computer algorithms rely heavily on the assumption of conformity with native speaker syntax. It is difficult to determine the base forms to use for syntactic analysis. The analysis may end up incomplete and no grammatical errors identified.
- It does not in itself lead to improvement in self-monitored writing.

**Input Processing Theory:** language learners attend to the transmission of meaning first. *VanPatten, 1996*

**CURRENT STRATEGIES**

- Aims to increase the saliency of morphosyntactic features through fuller integration of grammar checker usage into class activities and greater focus on active intervention in the writing process itself.

A new product introduced called *Antidote* replaced *Le Correcteur* 101 in 1999. It has overall a superior performance than *Le Correcteur* 101. It also has a simpler user interface and contains On-line dictionary and reference grammar.

Students required submitting two drafts using Antidote.

*First Draft*

- It intended to encourage students to submit essays as devoid as possible of self-correctable mistakes

Draft will return with 2 types of markups:

1) Residual low-level errors are highlighted
2) Other difficulties (max.20) are underlined without comment.

- No comments given allow students to analyze their own writing to discover what the problem is.
- Minimal correction helps to keep students’ “affective filter” down.

To prevent composition correction from becoming a totally negative experience, it also provide positive feedback on content, discourse structure, and vocabulary usage

After marked up first draft, session begins with an examination of morphosyntactic inaccuracies. It teaches students to make more effective use of grammar checker and the habit of carefully consider changes by the checker before accepting them.

**Result on Student Attitude**

- Less than half of class used Antidote to verify first composition, reasons are:
  - Just could not be bothered
• they think they could manage on their own or they think its too much effort.
• For second and third composition, increased from 67% to 87%. 100% usage in second semester.

Criticisms
• 42% of student complain that Antidote allowed mistake slip through undetected
• 39% flagging errors where non-existed
• There are discrepancies between student attitudes toward the accuracy of Antidote, mainly influenced by their expectation of what a grammar checker can do. The greater the expectations to the program, the greater the dissatisfaction with its limitation and less inclined students are to use it voluntarily.

Long term Benefit of Grammar Checker
• One-third of the student find improvement with greater grammatical accuracy in their writing using grammar checker
• Remaining two-third of the student only increase awareness of the need to systematically check for low level errors using grammar checker
• However, study shown there are only little long term affects on self-monitor for grammatical errors.

*Charts for quantitative analysis of error types are on p. 509-511 in the courseware.

Modified Pedagogical Strategies
The largest percentage of errors falls on the accent errors, gender and misspelling so focusing on the elimination of predictable, hence avoidable accent and gender mistakes had the potential to reduce low level errors by 25%.

Discussion
Real life classroom involves numerous variables which are difficult to specify and even harder to control. One of them would be the personal influence of the instructor and relationships with students play a significant role in pedagogical results.

As part of overall program to reduce morphosyntactic mistakes, the integration of grammar checker technology into the curriculum has proven very effective in improving the grammatical precision of submitted essays. From a practical standpoint, the important result is that improvement in grammatical accuracy are beginning to show themselves, both submitted homework and examinations.

Conclusion
The use of Antidote is continuing with increased emphasis on making students more aware of the need to work through partial analyses and to recognize that warnings of possible errors are not over corrections. We should have objective evidence that improvement is in fact directly related to the methodology used and not only simply the result of extraneous factor (attrition of weak students or cumulative exposure to the language).