A NEW APPROACH TO THE DYNAMICS OF SPEECH

Until fairly recently, psycholinguists and linguists have tended to provide an understanding of language without due concern to the situation in which it was spoken; it is as though they have largely considered context to be a static given. Such a viewpoint is rather surprising when most of us could recount instances during a day when our style of speech has changed. For instance, we are aware how often our speech becomes grammatically less complex with our children, that we tend to speak more formally, enunciate more precisely with our superiors, talk more slowly for foreigners, and so forth. Indeed, the nature of the setting, the topic of discourse and the type of person to whom we are talking all interact to determine the way we speak in a particular situation. In many ways, sociolinguistics emerged as an attempt to fill this yawning gap in the language sciences and it has made a tremendous impact on psycholinguistic theory in the last decade. For example, people are now looking at language development not only with an emphasis on how children acquire rules of grammar (their linguistic competence), but also on the process which enables them to use these rules appropriately in different social situations (their communicative competence). Such thinking has also made a contribution to foreign language dearning tech-

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niques as educators seem more aware that if people are to become really skilled in another language they should not only know the grammatical rules for its use but the social ones as well.

Sociolinguistics has been defined as that multidisciplinary science which seeks to discover the social rules or norms that explain and sustain language behaviour. Certainly it has made great strides in informing us when, how and on which linguistic levels we modify our speech in a given context. Little attention, however, has been paid to *why* we do this. The explanatory power of sociolinguistics in this respect has mainly been, as the definition would lead us to expect, in terms of norms and rules. Admittedly, there are many explicit, and sometimes strong implicit social norms which dictate how we should speak appropriately, particularly in bi- and multilingual societies. Yet when such analyses appear to be the only ones available, it gives an impression of the speaker as a kind of "sociolinguistic automaton." Just as developmental psychology moved away from considering children as mere victims of their environments to thinking of them as reactive beings often selecting their own inputs, so too should sociolinguistics at least reconsider its view of speech as essentially malleable only by situational constraints. What of people's moods, motives, feelings and loyalties, do not these more intra-psychic events also shape our verbal output? I believe that by highlighting such factors as interpersonal attitudes, intentions and so forth we can give sociolinguistics a new lease on life and possibly direct it towards a richer theoretical base having applied implications.

Therefore, by drawing upon social psychological theory, I derived a conceptual framework called "accommodation theory" which may be flexible enough ultimately to cope with speech diversity in a wide range of contexts. A basic postulate of the theory is that people are motivated to adjust their speech styles, or *accommodate*, as a means of expressing values, attitudes and intentions towards others. It is proposed that the extent to which individuals shift their speech styles toward or away from those of their interlocutors is a mechanism by which social approval or disapproval is communicated. A shift in speech style toward that of another is termed "convergence" and is considered often a reflection of social integration, whereas a shift away from the other's style of speech represents "divergence" and is considered

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often a tactic of social dissociation. Let us deal with each of these speech shifts in turn.

CONVERGENCE

When two people meet each other the first time there is a tendency for them to become more alike in their languages, pronunciations, speech rates, pause and utterance lenghts, vocal intensities, the intimacy of their self-disclosures, nonverbal behaviors, and so forth. In short, to converge. Indeed, many interpersonal speech shifts traditionally viewed as rule-governed, for example, adult-to-child, young-to-old, male-to-female, and speech to foreigners can be subsumed under an accommodation rubric. Moreover, the vast literature on language and dialect assimilation among immigrant groups into an alien dominant culture can also be viewed in such a fashion. In all these cases, people may be converging their speech to how they believe others in the situation would best receive it. It is my view that this phenomenon may profitably be considered a reflection (often non-conscious) of a speaker's or a group's need for social integration or identification with another. Let us examine convergence more closely by means of three social psychological processes.

Accommodation theory has as its basis research on similarity-attraction which, in its simplest form, suggests that as person A becomes more similar to person B, this increases the likelihood that B will like A. Interpersonal convergence through speech then is but *one* of the many devices a person may adopt in order to become more similar to another. Specifically, it involves the reduction of linguistic dissimilarities between two people in terms of their dialects, pause lengths etc. Since increasing similarity between people along such an important dimension as communication is likely to increase interpersonal attraction as well as predictability and mutual intelligibility, convergence perhaps reflects a speaker's desire for social approval. Thus, if one accepts the notion that people find approval from others satisfying, it would not seem unreasonable to suppose that there may be a general tendency for people to converge to others in many social situations. It follows then that the greater the speaker's need to gain another's

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approval or attraction, the greater the magnitude of convergence there will be. Many factors could affect the intensity of such a need, including the probability of future interactions with another, the extent of his or her social power over you, recollections of previous convergences from that person. Of these, the dimension is perhaps the most crucial determinant and can be illustrated by the linguistic relationship between Puerto Ricans and Blacks in New York City. The latter consensually hold more power and prestige than the Puerto Ricans and as such it is not surprising to learn, from an accommodation perspective, that Puerto Ricans assimilate the dialect of Blacks far more than vice-versa. In similar vein, a friend of mine humorously speculated that amongst the groups most converged towards, beautiful women must rank high in most societies. However, it is more likely, generally, that women converge more than men, given the different values traditionally associated with their roles in society.

In like manner, it has been shown that the more one desires another's approval, the more similar his speech will sound to yours. This was demonstrated recently in an experiment conducted with Knud Larsen and Harry Martin. We contacted 73 people by telephone and they agreed to partake in a supposed English department survey on literature; they were randomly assigned to either a control or an experimental group. All informants reported to an examination room located in the joint Psychology-English departments building at Oregon State University. Upon arrival, each person was greeted by one of four advanced undergraduate students who were in our employ. The informants sat at a large table faced by a tape recorder and a comfortable office-style chair. The assistant played the tape recording which included instructions and a poem read by a person with a lisp. After listening to this, the people in the control group were instructed to evaluate the performance of the reader including aspects of his speech. This was the end of the procedure for them except for a debriefing as to the true purpose of the investigation. However, when individuals in the experimental condition had listened to the tape recording, they were told the following: "(Informant's name), the person who read the poem is Dr. Henderson from the University of Oregon. He is on campus today and will review your reactions to the poem with you. He is in the office down

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the hall and you will meet him in just a moment. Before he arrives, however, we would like your perceptions of Dr. Henderson, in particular how you see his speech as compared to your own." They were then administered the same questionnaire as given to the control group.

It was found that individuals who anticipated interaction with this higher status person perceived the reader to have less of a lisp and sound more similar to themselves than those in the control condition. Therefore, accommodation theory holds that the greater your desire for another's approval, the more similar his voice will appear to yours even when it includes a speech *defect*. Indeed, this *perception* of a reduced language barrier between oneself and another no doubt facilitates the convergence process since the latter will appear a more attainable target towards which to shift. Needless to say, it does not imply that individuals in our experiment would start speaking with a lisp to that person if they had actually met him. Convergence will only occur towards a given linguistic feature if it is socially acceptable and the speaker has the repertoire available which will enable him to do this realistically. For example, someone reared in a private school environment where prestige pronunciations and a rigid syntax were enforced may not have enough verbal flexibility to allow him to converge say to a working class speaker. If however he does desire his approval he may well converge to him on some *non*-linguistic level, and this is an issue to which I shall return later.

Accommodation theory also relies upon notions of social exchange in that in order for convergence to come about, it should incur more potential rewards for the speaker than costs. Such rewards could include a gain in the listener's approval as already mentioned, while the potential costs could include expended effort or a loss of personal (and sometimes, cultural) identity. However, the *specific* rewards that accrue may depend on the particular level (or levels) on which convergence takes place.

Let us consider pronunciation, and imagine the context of a job interview in which the candidate has a less prestigious accent than his interviewer. One would predict that the prospective employee in this situation would shift his accent more in the direction of his interviewer than vice-versa, because of their rel-

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ative needs for each other's approval. Studies in many cultures have shown that the more prestigious the accent you possess the more favorably you will be perceived on *certain* dimensions. This is particularly true in Britain where "standard"-accented speakers (i.e., those with non-localized yet not "affected", BBC-type speech) are viewed as far more intelligent, self-confident, industrious and determined than regional-accented speakers even by the latter themselves. In addition, what one actually has to say will often be considered more persuasive and of a better quality than had it been voiced in a less standardized accent. Hence the rewards for our applicant converging to the interviewer (termed, upward convergence) would not only include his being more comprehendible to, and liked by, the interviewer but that what he appears to be and what he says will be more favorably looked upon.

An experiment with Kathryn Farrar suggests that such a speech shift is not only likely to affect the employer's attitudes, but his *behavior* towards the applicant as well. A female interviewer located a lower middle class housing estate in the London region and knocked on people's doors asking if the woman of the house would help in a survey on the consequences of inflation for the household. She asked housewives if they would answer a short questionnaire she would leave with them for a few hours in as much detail as they could; the vast majority agreed to cooperate. On the basis of a rigorous pre-test, had been able to substantiate that the interviewer was genuinely able to speak in both a standard (BBC-type) accent and in a mild, London (Cockney) accent. Therefore, the interviewer addressed half the housewives at random with a standard accent and the other half with a London accent. Nevertheless, the interviewer at all times used exactly the same words and attempted to maintain the same personality, mannerisms and interest in the proceedings throughout. After the questionnaires had been collected and analysed, it was found that housewives wrote 49% more on their forms when the interviewer's accent was standard rather than regional, and that this increased amount was reflected in the greater number of themes presented in the former condition. Interestingly, the interviewer's dress style also affected the informants' responses. Those housewives addressed by a standard-accented, smartly-dressed (e.g., skirt and fasionable shoes) interviewer wrote in a formal manner

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whereas those interviewed by the same woman dressed casually (e.g., jeans and plimsoles) speaking with a standard accent wrote in a very informal colloquial manner (as measured by nominal-verbal indices). Similarly in other studies, we have found that high school students when asked for their views on a certain topic wrote considerably more to a standard, than to a regional accented lecturer, and that live theatre audiences filled out more questionnaires during a performance interval when a request was made over the loudspeaker system in a standard rather than local regional accent. The pervasive social influence of prestige accents in England can also be gauged from the following. In October 1976, Jennifer Williams and I undertook an exploratory examination of the speech used in TV advertisements on our local commercial station in the south-west of England. Out of the 100 different commercials randomly selected at peak viewing time, we found 83% had principal characters and/or "voice talkovers" as male standard-accented voices and a further 6% as female standard accented. In fact, non-standard accents were only heard at all in 15 commercials, and of these five were foreign. Extending these findings to our job situation, it seems likely that our applicant is much more likely to obtain the employer's "help" by upwardly converting towards him than if he retained his less standardized speech patterns.

One could also imagine situations (such as an industrial dispute in a small family-owned firm) where there might be a greater need on the part of the employer to win his workers' approval now than vice-versa. In this case, the employer might be more prone (within the realistic limits of his repertoire) to shift *his* accent in the direction of the workers (i.e., downward convergence) than would they to him. More generally, often a shift like this is undertaken to reduce embarassment between people of differing statuses and so as to prepare a common basis for the communication of ideas and feelings. Therefore, mutual adjustments in speech frequently occur where upward convergence from one person is complemented by downward convergence from the other.

Much work testing some of the above assumptions about convergence has been conducted in the bilingual setting of Quebec since this speech shift can easily be measured as the use

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of one language or another (i.e., French or English). As we shall see, even bilingual convergence is not such a simple all-or-none process, but can take on a number of different forms. In the first study with Don Taylor and Richard Bourhis, we derived two predictions from the theory: the greater the effort in convergence perceived from a speaker the more favorably he will be evaluated by the listener, and the more he will converge back.

A request was made at McGill University for bilingual English-Canadian (EC) students to participate in an experiment. They were randomly assigned to one of four stimulus conditions but in such a manner that their self-reported French-speaking skills were matched across groups. The students were told that it had been hoped that a face-to-face situation could have been created for them to speak with French-Canadians. However, due to the enormous difficulties involved in transporting French-Canadians (FCs) to McGill University and EC students to l'Université de Montréal at convenient times for all, taped messages were being used. They were told that bilingual FC students had made recordings at l'Université de Montréal in which they had been describing a picture for bilingual EC students. They were told that they would each hear one of these FC bilinguals, and from his taped description were expected to draw the picture he was talking about. The informants were assured that the quality of their drawing was completely unimportant as we just wanted to see if the message had been effectively communicated. They were then provided with paper and pencil and told to draw the picture as the speaker was describing it. The experimenter turned on the taperecorder when subjects were ready, but *apparently* did so a little too far back on the tape (and apologized) as the FC speaker was heard receiving his instructions in French. He could be heard being told that his recipient would be an EC bilingual, and was then heard to enquire of the experimenter which language he should use for his audience. The experimenter asked (in English) whether he could speak English—the reply was affirmative (also in English)—and told him he could speak in the language of his choice. The purpose of this procedure was to ensure that the EC listeners were made fully aware that the speaker was known to be a FC bilingual, that they were aware of the fact that their speaker knew that they themselves were bilingual, and that they

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knew their speaker's language form was the result of a conscious choice on his part.

Members of all groups heard the same description of a very simple harbour scene composed in such a manner that another person could draw it while listening to the description. Each group heard the same male FC bilingual student read a different version of this passage: (1) totally in French, (2) mixed French and English, (3) fluent English but with a distinct FC accent, and (4) non-fluent but comprehensible English that contained many pauses, speech disturbances and a few grammatical errors. It was thought that descriptions (1) to (4) would be considered by EC bilinguals as reflecting a series of messages increasing with regard to their effort in perceived convergence. After drawing the picture from one of these, students were presented with a questionnaire on which they were required to rate their reactions to their speaker and his performance. They were then presented with a similar picture to the one they had just drawn, and asked to describe this one for the same FC bilingual whom they were told would draw it the following week. The informants were handed a microphone and were tape recorded being given their description. This completed, they were asked to fill in another short questionnaire about their performance.

The results supported the predictions in that the greater the amount of effort in convergence a speaker was perceived to put into his message the more favourably he was perceived. More specifically, the non-fluent English speaker was viewed as the most considerate and concerned about bridging the cultural gap between English- and French-Canadians, and more people converged back to him by use of French in their descriptions than any of the other speakers. In all though, we identified 14 types of convergence some of which included no French at all. These convergent messages ranged from returning the description totally in French, to returning it in 50% French, to providing just the salutation and benediction in French, to expressing an intention in English on tape of slowing down speech rate so that the FC could understand him better. Most of the messages to the non-converging FC were presented back to him simply in English without any verbally-expressed regrets for doing so.

Cross-cultural interaction in a *realistic* context however suggests

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the need for an elaboration of accommodation theory. In the above experiment, the EC listeners were fully aware of the speaker's bilingual skills and that he had voluntarily chosen to speak the language he adopted on tape. In everyday life we are often unaware of the background to a convergent or non-convergent act. For instance, when a person has shifted his speech towards us we cannot always be sure he wanted to make the effort to reduce the dissimilarities himself or that he was under pressure from elsewhere to do so. As yet, such attributed motives have not been taken into account, and this is where our third social psychological theory comes into the picture.

Recent developments in causal attribution processes may provide useful guidelines for an extension of the theory. It has been suggested that we understand a person's behaviour and hence evaluate the person himself in terms of the motives and intentions that we attribute as the cause of his actions. It has been proposed that a perceiver considers three factors when attributing motives to an act—the other's ability, his effort, and the external pressure impelling him to perform in the manner in which he did. In order to illustrate these factors in operation, Fritz Heider has given the example of someone rowing a boat across a stream where the perceiver's evaluation of the actor will depend on the perception of the actor's *ability* to row, the amount of *effort* exerted and *external* factors such as the wind and the current prevailing at the time. The implication of this for the present context is that a listener can attribute convergence and non-convergence each in a variety of ways.

In a follow-up study with Lise Simard and Don Taylor, we found that the mere *perception* of convergence was not itself sufficient to engender positive feelings in the recipients. Listeners who attributed the motives behind another's convergence to them as a desire to break down cultural barriers (so-called "internal" attribution) perceived this act very favourably. However, when this same shift towards them was attributed externally by other people to some pressures in the situation forcing the other to converge, such positive feelings were not so readily evoked. Similarly, when non-convergence was externally attributed to situational pressures which demanded own-group language, negative attitudes were not as pronounced as when the behaviour was

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internally attributed to a lack of effort on the part of the speaker.

A good example of this process operating naturally was an incident related to me by an American friend in Montreal. As a newcomer to this largely French-speaking city, he retained United States license plates on his car. His lack of French in asking for petrol at garages tended by French Canadians was treated benevolently; he was considered to be an American visitor and therefore not obliged to know the language. After a few months, it became necessary for him to display Quebec number plates and then his lack of French became a distinct disadvantage at these same garages. He was now judged to be an English Canadian and his use of English deemed an insult. The inconsistencies that can arise between speakers' actual intents and those attributed to them by listeners can be difficult to eliminate in competitive or conflict-ridden encounters.

DIVERGENCE

Thus far, we have considered convergence as an active process while non-convergence has assumed a more passive, subordinate role considered only from the perspective of a decoder. This latter orientation is unfounded particularly given that non-convergence (or speech maintenance) can be used by ethnic groups as a symbolic tactic for maintaining their identity and cultural distinctiveness. This was exemplified a little while ago when for the first time the Arab nations issued their oil communiqué to the world not in English but in Arabic instead. Likewise, one witnesses the efforts of many ethnic minorities throughout the world attempting to maintain their own language varieties as an expression of cultural pride, e.g., the Quebecois, Basques and Catalans. Moreover, it may well be that under certain conditions, people not only want to maintain their own speech style, but wish to *emphasize* it in interaction with others. In such cases, speakers wish to accentuate the differences between themselves and others, perhaps because of the others' outgroup membership, undesirable attitudes, habits or appearance. This process of social dissociation I have called "speech divergence" is the opposite of convergence in that it involves speakers modifying their speech away from

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their interlocutors and increasing the communicative distance between them. If both participants of a dyad are similarly dissociatively motivated then they may be symmetrical in their efforts towards progressive divergence.

To the extent that divergent strategies are probably adopted most often in dyads where the participants derive from different social or ethnic backgrounds, the incorporation of ideas from Henri Tajfel's theory of intergroup relations and social change provides an appropriate context within which to consider divergent shifts more generally. Tajfel has suggested that when members of a group interact with members of another, they compare themselves on dimensions which are important to them such as personal attributes, abilities, material possessions, and so forth. He suggests that these "intergroup social comparisons" will lead individuals to search for, or even create, dimensions on which they may be seen to be positively distinct from a relevant outgroup. The perception of such a positive distinctiveness by the ingroup will contribute to their feelings of an adequate social identity. In other words, people experience satisfaction in the knowledge that they belong to groups which enjoy some superiority over others. Given that language spoken is for many people an important subjective dimension of, and objective clue to, social and ethnic group membership, it can be argued that in certain intergroup encounters, individuals might search for a positively-valued distinctiveness from an outgroup member on linguistic dimensions they value highly; a process we have called "psycholinguistic distinctiveness."

A study by David Parkin can be used to demonstrate this putatively. He found that members of adolescent societies and groups in Nairobi felt a need to make themselves distinct from each other by a *claimed* use of English and Swahili respectively, even though their language behaviour appeared objectively very similar. However, perhaps the example *par excellence* of psycholinguistic distinctiveness at an objective behavioural level, is speech divergence. By diverging and emphasizing their own social dialect or language, members of an ingroup can accentuate differences between themselves and the outgroup on a salient and valued dimension of their group identity.

Richard Bourhis and I designed an experiment to demonstrate

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the use of *accent* divergence among Welsh people in an inter-ethnic context, and to investigate the conditions which would facilitate its occurrence. The study was conducted in a language laboratory where people who valued their national group membership and its language highly were learning the Welsh language; only 26% of Welshmen can speak their national tongue. During one of their weekly sessions, Welshmen were asked to help in a survey concerned with second language-learning techniques. The questions in the survey were verbally presented to them in English in their individual booths by a very English-sounding speaker who at one point arrogantly challenged their reasons for learning what he called "a dying language with a dismal future." Such a question was perceived by them to threaten their feelings of ethnic identity, and the informants broadened their Welsh accents in their replies as compared with their answers to a previously-asked, emotionally-neutral question. In addition, some informants introduced Welsh words and phrases in their answers while one woman did not reply for a while and then was heard to conjugate Welsh vergs very gently into the microphone. Interestingly, even when a neutral question was asked of them beforehand, informants emphasized their Welsh group membership to the English speaker in terms of the content of what they said to him in their replies (called "content differentiation"), demonstrating that psycholinguistic distinctiveness can occur in many different forms.

It may well be that there is a hierarchy of strategies of psycholinguistic distinctiveness, some being more symbolic of social dissociation than others. Perhaps from both the perspective of ingroup encoder and outgroup decoder, putative, a few pronunciation and content differentiations may be considered as increasingly more intense, but nevertheless instances of low level psycholinguistic distinctiveness. Various forms of accent and dialect divergences, on the other hand, may be considered instances of stronger social dissociation. Verbal abuse, the maintenance of or switch to another language in the face of an outgroup speaker may be among the most potent forms of psycholinguistic distinctiveness, given their extremely overt, dissociative character.

The notion of *language* divergence was investigated by us and by Philippe Leyens in Belgium. Our study involved different

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groups of trilingual Flemish students (Flemish-English-French) being recorded in "neutral" and "ethnically threatening" encounters with a Francophone (Walloon) outgroup speaker. As in the previous study, the context of the interaction was a language laboratory, where participants were attending classes to improve their English skills. Many Flemish and Francophone students converse together in English, it being an emotionally neutral compromise between maintaining rigid linguistic distinctiveness, and acquiescing to pressures to converge using the other's language. In this experiment, the speaker spoke to students in English although indicating himself as a Walloon by means of distinctive Francophone pronunciations in that language. It was found that when the speaker demeaned the Flemish in his ethnically-threatening question, listeners rated him as sounding more Francophone (a process termed "perceptual divergence"), and themselves as feeling more Flemish, than when a neutral question was asked. This cognitive dissociation was manifest behaviourally at a covert level by means of muttered or whispered disapproval while the Walloon was speaking (tape recorded unknowing to the informants), and at an overt level through divergent shifts to own-group language (Flemish). However, this divergence only occured under certain specific, experimental conditions and then for only 50% of the sample. It was found that only when their own group membership and that of the speaker's was emphasized by the investigator, and when the speaker had been known from the outset to be antithetical to Flemish ethnolinguistic goals, did these listeners diverge in language when they spoke. In a follow-up study, however, language divergence into Flemish did occur for nearly 100% of the informants under these same conditions but only when the Walloon speaker himself diverged into French in his threatening question. Interestingly, the form of the language divergence in the first of these Belgian studies differed from that in the second. It was found that in the former, the ingroup replied to the outgroup threat first in English and then switched into Flemish. In the latter (more threatening situation), listeners replied in a directly divergent manner by a complete shift into Flemish. Language divergence then, like language convergence, can take on many forms and may of course be influenced by a number of factors not discussed here including the perceived

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legitimacy-illegitimacy of the intergroup status positions for in-group members.

Speech divergence can therefore be used as a tactic to maximize differences between groups on a valued dimension in search of a positive distinctiveness. The dynamic flux of relationships between dominant and subordinate groups where one strives to assume distinctiveness over the other, undoubtedly is reflected in their speech behaviour and as such might be a potentially important dimension to explore for an understanding of language change across generations. It is important to stress, however, that psycho-linguistic distinctiveness *vis à vis* a competing outgroup does not in itself mean that a group has achieved a satisfactory social identity. This might be particularly true in situations where economic and power disparities still exist between in- and out-groups. The only way eventually to restore a group's social identity in such a case might be through direct intergroup competition.

In a number of situations a speaker might, with a mind to being intentionally ambiguous, attempt to converge with regard to one linguistic feature (speech rate, for example), while not converging, or even diverging on another (e.g., pronunciation). An example of this can be found in Montreal where on occasions French Canadian shoppers have been known to address Anglo-phone store assistants in fluent English while requesting the services of a Francophone assistant instead. This is an instance of convergence in terms of linguistic form, but psychologically the message content is of course one of social dissociation and divergence. The effect might be even more subtle than intimated here if one considers, as we do, that shifts in speech style can occur on two dimensions simultaneously; one for the benefit of the outgroup and another (not even perceived by the outgroup) for the benefit of members of the ingroup present as a covert expression of solidarity and defiance. Grace Holt provides us with an example of this phenomenon (which she calls "linguistic inversion") engaged in by Black slaves in the United States in the last century. The meaning of many phrases and words (e.g., "nigger") when said to a White meant something quite different, and even positive, among the ingroup than the outgroup would ever have attributed to it. In fact, Blacks often engaged in what would seem to Whites to be overtly convergent phrases that for other Blacks in the same

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situation would indicate covert divergence.

Finally and in complete contrast, however, simultaneous shifts away from and towards the other in a dyad can occur in ways that can be regarded as totally integrative for both participants. This occurs in many role-defined situations where a status or power discrepancy exists in a dyad such as between doctor and patient, employer and employee. The acceptance of the role differentiation by the participants will of course be manifest behaviourally. Someone entering an interaction where they accept a subordinate role will signal this by modifying his or her speech patterns in a complementary way to that of the other. Such speech shifts shall be called instances of "speech complementarity" and can be regarded as divergence in a simple descriptive linguistic sense, yet psychologically involve acceptance of the situation rather than dissociation. Classic examples of speech complementarity might be given by two young people out on a date. Each accentuate their respective masculine and feminine qualities by means of linguistic as well as nonlinguistic strategies. This does not, however, preclude the possibility of convergence simultaneously occurring on other linguistic dimensions. For instance, a woman may adopt a soft voice and certain paralinguistic and intonational features with an eligible bachelor lawyer, yet wish to gain his attraction, approval and respect by not only fulfilling her feminine role requirements but also by converging to his higher prestige dialect. Let us recall our previous example of a job applicant being interviewed by his prospective employer. Although the former is likely to be perceived favorably because of his convergent strategies, had he failed simultaneously to maintain his inferior role position by means of other verbal and nonverbal cues his overall performance may have been evaluated very poorly. Future empirical work will determine whether certain standard linguistic features are used as vehicles for speech complementarity whereas others are consistently adopted for convergence trans-situationally.

Conclusions

Acommodation theory is then concerned with explaining some of the processes underlying convergence, divergence and complemen-

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tarity. It is of course still a theory in development and cannot explain all interpersonal speech shifts in all verbal and socio-cultural contexts. Indeed, many other causal processes may be at work in some situations not mentioned thus far such as a norm for equity or the existence of altruism with respect to speech convergence. Nevertheless, further empirical explorations within the context of the theory may allow us to make more precise statements about when convergence, divergence and complementarity are operative, what factors (individual, social, cultural and temporal) influence the extent and nature of their occurrence, what their optimally-effective magnitudes and rates might be, and what the role of awareness is in these processes from both encoder and decoder perspectives. It is likely that an analysis of these phenomena may contribute to our understanding of interpersonal communication problems on the street, at home, and in many applied social and clinical contexts. In addition such an approach provides a new perspective for understanding, at an intergroup level, language-related conflicts which are currently proliferating across the world.

The value of considering speech shifts in social interaction in accommodation terms may also be found in its non-linguistic parallels. How often do we find ourselves laughing at others' tasteless humor, dressing according to their values, and sometimes even agreeing with their dubious statements? Indeed, the extent to which people engage in these activities may be gauged from a knowledge of their values and the extent to which they find these others significant enough to desire their approval. Some examples may clarify the issue. A little while ago, a famous English politician whenever visiting his constituency would change from his Rolls Royce to a Mini car before entering the community. This was a convergent tactic deliberately employed in an attempt to reduce the perceived dissimilarities between himself and the electorate. An anologue of the divergent paradigm might be a man returning in his Rolls Royce to the working class district where he spent his youth. This behaviour would be employed to symbolize to his old neighbours a dissociation from their way of life and the social distance he has travelled in the intervening years.

Sociolinguistic behaviour can have many parallels in everyday,

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nonlinguistic life and the links between them need to be further explored and the general psychological principles investigated. For as Eruing Goffman once said, "the image that emerges of the individual is that of a juggler and synthesizer, an accommodator and appeaser who fulfills one function while he is apparently engaged in another."

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