Accommodation Theory

Giles/Powesland

Till Ovenbeck

Factors influencing the choice of language and speech style

- the person to whom someone is talking
- the topic
- the setting

Accommodative Behaviour

- At least one member of an interractive dyad tends to adopt the speech patterns of the person to whom they are talking (=convergence)

- Convergent behaviour / convergence
- Divergent behaviour / divergence

The Accommodation Model

- Process of speech accommodation: a reflection of a speaker's desire for social approval from the listener

- It is only employed when <u>rewards</u> are available for the sender ($\rightarrow$ the receiver's approval)

The Accommodation Model

- The effects of convergence/accomodation:

- sender is perceived as more similar to the receiver

- The more his style reflects that of the receiver, the more easily his message will be understood

Bilingual Accommodation, Quebec, Giles et al (1973)

- A French Canadian speaker
- English Canadian listeners

- French (no accommodation)
- Mixture (partial accommodation)
- English (full accommodation)

The more the FC accommodated, the more favourably he was perceived by the EC listeners; and the more willing the ECs were to accommodate to him (return communication in French)

- Two bilinguals,
- equally proficient in E and F,
- one being a member of the English speaking community, the other of the French

- Two bilinguals of different background,
- One with equal proficiency
- The other with unbalanced proficiency

Attribution of Motives & Intentions

Heider (1958): evaluation of a person's behaviour in terms of motives and intentions that are attributed to his actions

- The one perceiving considers three factors:

  - the other's ability

  - his efforts at accommodating

  - external pressures

Simard, Taylor, Giles

- EC speaker and FC listeners
- Three major conditions:

- 1.) FC listeners know that EC
  - is able to speak both languages
  - is not under external pressure to do so

2.) "no information" condition

  - FC listeners <u>not</u> aware of speaker's ability

  - not aware of whether external pressures
      are involved

3.) FC listeners know that external pressure
      was put on the EC to use one particular
      language

Limitations of the Accommodation Model

Difficulties when trying to apply the model to real life: no automatic gain of approval through accommodation. Examples:

- English-speaking European talking to an East-African official

- Tough man seeking favour of very feminine lady

Accommodation Through Accent

Accent repertoire: two components

  1.) continuum of accent usage:

      - standard pronunciation (acrolect)

      - regional pronunciation (basilect)

  2.) effectively mimicking an accent
     (purpose: entertainment)

Accent Convergence

- <u>Upward accent convergence</u> (basilect → acrolect)

- <u>Downward accent convergence</u> (acrolect → basilect)

- <u>Asymmetrical:</u> one converges, the other does not
- <u>Symmetrical:</u> one upward, the other downward

Accent Divergence

- <u>Upward accent divergence:</u> desire to appear superior in social status, competence, etc.

- <u>Downward accent divergence:</u> down-to-earthness, toughness, emphasizing ethnic identity

Accent Divergence

- <u>Symmetrical:</u> both want to dissociate

- <u>Asymmetrical:</u> only one wants to dissociate

- <u>Pursuit manoeuvre:</u> convergence and divergence

Limitations Of The Convergence – Divergence Model

- Similar to those of the accommodation model

- Motivation not in total isolation to other determinants → context of interaction

Limitations of the Convergence-Divergence Model

- Convergence-divergence model and accommodation model employ only a dyadic interactional situation

- Real life: often more than two people involved in interaction

Limitations

- For the speaker the group can be:

- A single addressee + audience
- Several addressees + audience
- Plurality of addressees

- → Possible conflict for a speaker (for example with regard to accent change) when more than one listener

Literature

Giles, H. and P.F. Powesland (1975) *Speech Style and Social Evaluation,* London: Academic Press.