# Linguistic Accommodation:  Sociolinguistic Observations on a Sociopsychological Theory

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In his 1973 paper Accent Mobility: a Model and Some Data, the social psychologist Howard Giles writes "if the sender in a dyadic situation wishes to gain the receiver's social approval, then he may adapt his accent patterns towards that of this person i.e. reduce pronunciation dissimilarities".  This Giles labels accent convergence.  He also points out that, in different circumstances - if, for example, speakers wish to dissociate themselves from or show disapproval of others - then the reverse process, accent divergence, may take place instead.

Linguists, I think, would also want to point out that convergence and divergence can take place at the grammatical and lexical levels as well.  And sociolinguists would want to observe that patterns of language use are also subject to modification; and that there may be very significant cross-cultural differences in the degree and nature of accommodation, as well as in attitudes towards it.

Language modification of this type is presumably part of a wider pattern of behaviour modification under the influence of and in response to others.  Behaviour modification, clearly, is of central interest to social psychologists, and of course language provides a very useful site for the study of this phenomenon.  Using language as data, Giles and his co-workers, as social psychologists of language, have developed a theory known as accommodation theory.  This focusses on speech, and discusses and attempts to explain why speakers modify their language in the way and to the extent that they do.  It also examines the effects and costs of this type of modification.

Giles' initial paper (1973) looks mainly at convergence and divergence in terms of adjustments up and down the social dimension from high prestige to low prestige accents, but it is clear that accommodation also takes place in contacts between speakers with regionally differing accents.  In short-term contacts between speakers with socially different accents, the direction in which accommodation will take place is often problematical, and Giles and others have devoted considerable attention to exploring what factors are involved in determining who accommodates to who, why speakers do it, and to what extent they do it (see Giles et al, 1973).

In long-term contacts, on the other hand - and this is most clearly observable in contacts between speakers of different regional varieties - who accommodates to who is less problematical.  In most of the situations we are able to examine, the regionally or socially mobile minority accommodate to the non-mobile majority.  The problem is one of determining how they accommodate, the extent to which they accommodate, and

why some situations and some individuals produce more, or different types of, accommodation than others. Much of this paper is taken up with examining long-term modifications of this kind.

Work in accommodation theory has proved to be most insightful. Findings include the following:

(a) In some cultures, convergence in a socially downward direction can lead to a speaker being evaluated as kinder and more trustworthy (Giles & Smith, 1979).
(b) In some cultures, convergence in a socially upward direction can lead to a speaker being evaluated as more intelligent and educated (Bourhis et al, 1975).
(c) If a person anticipates meeting another socially significant person immediately, then the latter's speech is perceived by the former as being more like the former's own than would otherwise be the case (Larsen et al, 1977).
       - and so on.

A linguist, however, cannot help feeling that even more insights could be gained by more sophisticated linguistic analyses of accommodation than those employed by the social psychologists; and that, by these means, information of a linguistically, as well as psychologically interesting type could be obtained. This is particularly clear from the way in which, in the work of Giles, degree of linguistic accommodation is measured, in terms of accent "broadness", impressionistically. Typically, tape-recordings of speakers are played for assessment to groups of linguistically naive subjects.

It is one of the theses of this paper that the examination of linguistic accommodation in a linguistically analytical way would permit a number of advances not available with Giles' methodology. It would, for example, permit

(a) a study of the limits of accommodation - what are the linguistic (as opposed to social and psychological) constraints on accommodation, and is it possible to accommodate totally to a new variety?
(b) an exact, rather than impressionistic, quantification of degree of linguistic accommodation;
(c) an examination of which linguistic features are and are not changed during accommodation, and explanations for this;
(d) a study of whether accommodation is a uniform process, or whether linguistically different types of accommodation take place in the case of different speakers, different situations, or different relationships.

All this would be in addition to sociopsychological explanations of the roots of accommodation and studies of its consequences. I attempt, in this paper, to look at some of these

issues and concentrate mainly, though not entirely, on the
phonetics and phonology of English.

## The Limits of Accommodation

If we are interested in the limits to which long-term
accommodation can go, the obvious place to look is the ling-
uistic behaviour of children.  The conventional wisdom is that
young children, unlike adults, are capable of accommodating
totally to the speech of their peers.  It is well-known, and
has often been pointed out by Labov and others, that children
use the dialect and accent of their friends, and not those of
their parents or teachers.

There are, of course, qualifications that must be
placed upon this.  Many children become bi-dialectal, and
sound like their parents as well as like their peers.  Isolated
individuals - extreme "lames" (Labov, 1972) - such as Labov's
Nathan B. (Labov, 1966), may be relatively immune to peer-group
pressure: Newbrook (forthcoming) has one informant who has
lived all his life in the Merseyside area of England but speaks,
astonishingly enough, what is basically Scottish English (his
mother is Scots, and they belong to a rather bizarre, isolation-
ist religious group).

The general point, though, is clear.  In most western
cultures, children are known, in normal circumstances, to
accommodate totally to the speech of their peers.  However,
it now has to be acknowledged that this, while broadly speaking
true, is not absolutely correct, for we now have some studies
which show that there are linguistic limits on the degree of
accommodation even in the case of children.  A good example is
provided by the work of Arvilla Payne (1976; 1980).  She shows
that children from New York City families who have moved to
Philadelphia accommodate almost totally to the Philadelphia
sound system after residing there for a while.  Close analysis,
however, shows that there are some inadequacies.  The children
sound like Philadelphians, but have in fact failed to master
some fine phonological details.  When the modification to be
made is purely phonetic, there are no problems.  For example,
the distinctively Philadelphia phonetic realisations of the
vowels /ou/, /uː/, /au/, /ai/ and /ɔi/ are all readily acquired.
However, in some cases where the modifications required are
more complex phonologically, difficulties arise.  The New York
City children, for example, show no tendency to merge the vowels
of ferry and furry, as Philadelphia children do.  And the
raising of short /æ/ to [ɛə ~ eə] causes particular problems.
This raising of /æ/ is taking place in both cities, but the
phonological environments in which it is occurring differ in
a rather complex manner.  As a consequence, the New York City
children have close realisations of /æ/ before front nasals
and front voiceless fricatives, as in man, pass, laugh, and in
a few words before /d/, as in mad, bad, glad, as Philadelphians

would. But they also have close vowels in purely New York City environments. In New York City, raising may occur before all voiceless fricatives, and before voiced stops, and the New York City children therefore have a tendency to produce non-Philadelphian close vowels in smash, bag, dad etc.

A similar example is provided by Chambers (forthcoming). In this paper, Chambers examines changes that are taking place in Toronto English in the nature of "Canadian Raising" – the phenomenon whereby the diphthongs /ai/ and /au/ have close central first elements before voiceless consonants, as in house [hɜʉs], and open first elements elsewhere, as in loud [laʉd]. (Chambers shows that among Toronto adolescents there is now also considerable fronting of the first element of /au/, while adults still for the most part retain the original pattern.) Chambers studies this phenomenon by developing a raising index as follows:

$$\overline{/\!\!\!\rule[-1mm]{8mm}{0.3pt}\; \text{[- voice]}} \qquad\qquad \text{elsewhere}$$

(ɑu)-0 = [ʌu ~ ɐu] ("raising")       [ɑu ~ ɑu]
(ɑu)-1 = [ɑu ~ ɑu] (no raising)       [ʌu ~ ɐu]

The index is computed in such a way that a speaker adhering strictly to the phonological rule of Canadian raising would score 0, while a speaker getting this rule consistently wrong (open vowels before voiceless consonants, close vowels elsewhere) would score 100. Fig. 1 shows the scores obtained in three styles, in a tape-recorded interview session, by 6 Toronto adults. Our interest is in Mr. J., who does indeed seem to be getting things rather wrong. Mr. J., it emerges, was born in New York, and only moved to Toronto when he was 11. Since then he has accommodated to Canadian English, except in this one respect. When it comes to phonological conditioning, he, like the children in Philadelphia, has not quite succeeded in accommodating totally.

Now, it could be argued that 11 is simply too old to learn such a rule and that younger children could have done a better job. Certainly Payne's data shows that there is a close correlation between how old her informants were when they moved to Philadelphia and the degree to which they accommodated successfully.

We have, however, some further evidence that certain types of complex phonological differentiation may never be accommodated to successfully, however young a speaker is. In the English city of Norwich (see Trudgill, 1974) the originally distinct Middle English vowels o and ou have been preserved as distinct, as they have also in other geographically peripheral areas in Britain. The distinction in Norwich is as follows:
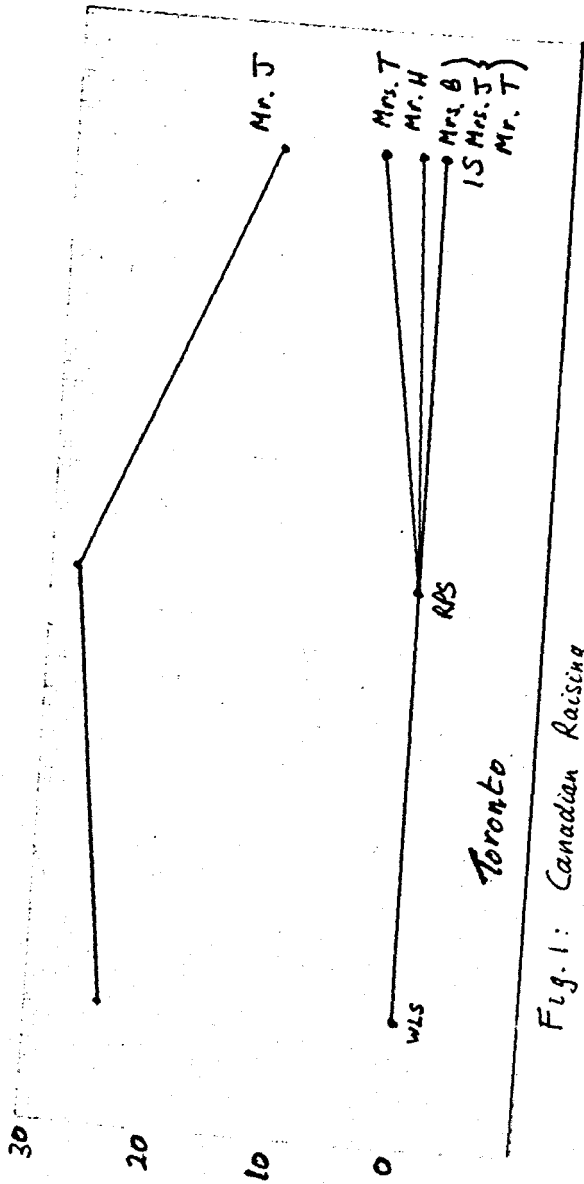
Fig. 1: Canadian Raising
WLS = Word List Style; RPS = Reading Passage Style; IS = Interview Style.

| /uː/ | /ʌu/ | |
|------|------|------|
| moan | mown | |
| nose | knows | |
| rose | rows | |
| sole | soul | etc. |

The picture is further complicated by interaction with other vowels, especially /uː/ and /ʊ/, and other lexical sets. By way of illustration:

| /juː/ ~ /uː/ | tune, music, few |
|--------------|------------------|
| /uː/ | do, who, lose |
| /uː/ ~ /uː/ | boot, fool, moon |
| /uː/ | school, moan, nose |
| /uː/ ~ /ʊ/ | road, stone, home |
| /ʊ/ | put, pull, took |
| /ʌu/ | own, old, mown |

Research that I have recently carried out into Norwich English indicates that even people who were born and brought up in Norwich and who otherwise have perfect local accents do not correctly master the distinction between <u>moan</u> and <u>mown</u> etc. <u>if their parents come from somewhere else</u> i.e. if their parents do not have a Norwich accent. In some cases, it seems to be necessary for simply the mother to have had a non-Norwich accent for this distinction not to be mastered. (In another case, the distinction had not been mastered by a speaker both of whose parents had a Norwich accent but who himself had lived away from Norwich until the age of 8.)

In investigating this phenomenon informants in their 30s were employed, since it is possible that younger people are now losing this distinction as a result of influence from the London area. And although the research was prompted initially by observations of the informants' natural speech, the main evidence came from tests where informants were required to repeat a sentence in a "proper Norwich accent". This was necessary because the prestige R.P. accent has no phonological distinction at this point, and correction towards the R.P. noun is often indulged in by Norwich speakers – absence of the distinction from their speech does not therefore necessarily mean that they have not mastered it correctly.

Test sentences were of the form: <u>Norwich City scored an own goal</u>. When asked to repeat this in a "proper Norwich accent", speakers focussed their attention on producing <u>City</u> as [srʔi] and, sometimes, on producing <u>Norwich</u> as [náɹɪ̯j] rather than [noːɹj̊]. The point of interest, however, was in the pronunciation of <u>own goal</u>. Of the ten informants with Norwich parents, 6 produced the correct Norwich pronunciation <u>own goal</u> /ʌun guːl/. Of the ten with non-Norwich parents, none produced the correct response. In every other respect their phonetics was perfect, but they all produced /ʌun gʌul/, with the exception

of one informant who seemed to have some awareness of the issue
and reported that he was not sure whether goal should be /guːl/
or /gʌul/ but he was pretty certain it was /gʌul/. It seems
possible, therefore, that, perhaps because of the complexity
of the Norwich phonological system at this point, speakers are
not capable of acquiring the correct underlying phonological
distinction unless they are exposed to it ab initio. Exposure
to it in the speech of one's peers from the age of 4 or 5 seems
not to be enough.

## Quantification of Accommodation

If there are constraints on the degree of possible
accommodation in the speech of children, we must assume that
these constraints will be even more severe in the case of
adults. We will turn to an examination of these constraints
shortly. Let us first, however, observe that these constraints,
in the work of Payne and Chambers, were revealed by quantific-
ation. And quantification, we have argued, is one area where
a sociolinguist can provide an analysis of accommodation
superior to that of the social psychologist. Chambers' and
Payne's quantifications were of long-term accommodation. Short-
term accommodation, in which Giles is especially interested, can
also be quantified. This can be illustrated in the following
way, as can some of the benefits of quantification.

Giles (1973) suggests, in a comment on Labov's New
York City work, that linguistic accommodation can lead to
circularity in sociolinguistic work. When interviewing,
linguists expect the pronunciation of their informants to
correlate with, say, social class and therefore themselves
speak with a "broader" accent when interviewing lower class
informants. The lower class informants then accommodate to the
interviewer, thus fulfilling the prophecy.

To investigate the extent to which accommodation
does take place in the interview situation, I have analysed my
own speech as an interviewer in the tape-recordings I made as
part of my survey of the English spoken in Norwich (Trudgill,
1974). My feeling had always been, in fact, that, as a native
of the city, I had indeed accommodated linguistically to my
informants, rather than, it should be stressed, they to me. It
also seemed to me that I had done this in a relatively automatic
and subconscious way, and that the effect of this convergence
was to put my informants at their ease, which is, of course,
what one wants. But I had no evidence to prove this.

Analysis revealed the following. Fig. 2 shows scores
for the variable (t) obtained by 10 of the Norwich informants,
selected from the total sample of 60 to give (t) scores across
the whole range, and scores obtained by myself in interviews
with each of them. The variable (t) refers to intervocalic
and word-final /t/ as in better and bet and has three variants:

Fig. 2: (t)

$$(t)-1 = [t]$$
$$(t)-2 = [t?]$$
$$(t)-3 = [?]$$
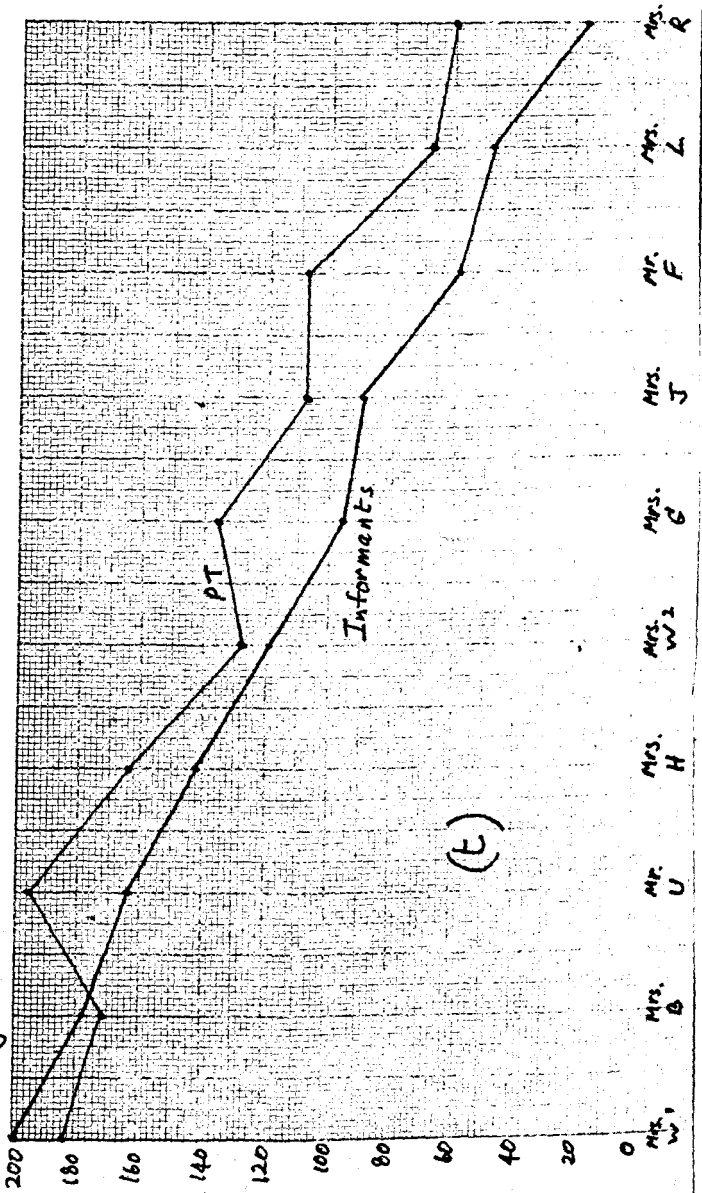
Index scores range from 0, indicating consistent use of the prestige pronunciation [t], to 200, indicating consistent use of the glottal stop.

Fig. 2 paints a rather dramatic picture. Clearly, extensive accommodation has taken place, and Giles, I suppose, might want to argue that my informants have accommodated to me. I think, however, that it is clear that the reverse is the case, as I had always suspected. For two of the informants, Mrs. W. and Mrs. B., my scores are lower i.e. I did not use so many glottal stops as they did. These were the two of the informants who were also lowest on the social class scale. For all the other informants I have used more glottal stop realisations of /t/ than they have, including, crucially, the two informants with the highest social class indices and lowest (t) indices, Mrs. L. and Mrs. R. If I had been modifying my speech in order to influence my informants to fit in with my hypotheses, the pattern would have been reversed: I would have had higher scores than the lower class informants, and lower scores than the higher class informants.

Fig. 3 is also interesting, and reveals what could never have been revealed by impressionistic measures of degree of accommodation. Fig. 3 relates to the variable $(a:)$, which deals with the degree of fronting or backing of the vowel of the lexical set of part, path, half, banana etc., high indices indicating a low-prestige front vowel [a:] and low indices a high-prestige back vowel [ɑ:]. The figure suggests that while I accommodated to my informants on my pronunciation of (t), I did not accommodate at all in my pronunciation of $(a:)$ - a finding again not possible without detailed linguistic analysis. The question thus arises: why is there this difference in the behaviour of these two variables?

Explanations for Modification of Linguistic Features

It seems certain that the difference between my treatment of (t) and $(a:)$ has something to do with the fact that (t) is subject, in Norwich, to both social class and stylistic variation, while $(a:)$ is subject merely to class differentiation (cf. Labov's discussion, 1972, of indicators and markers). I have hypothesised that this difference between (t) and $(a:)$ is due to different levels of awareness of these variables, which are in turn due to the fact that (t) is undergoing linguistic change while $(a:)$ is not (Trudgill, 1974).

This suggests that, during linguistic accommodation generally, it is linguistic features which are relatively high in the speaker's consciousness - markers and stereotypes in Labov's terms - which are subject to modification. Whether

Fig. 3: (a:)
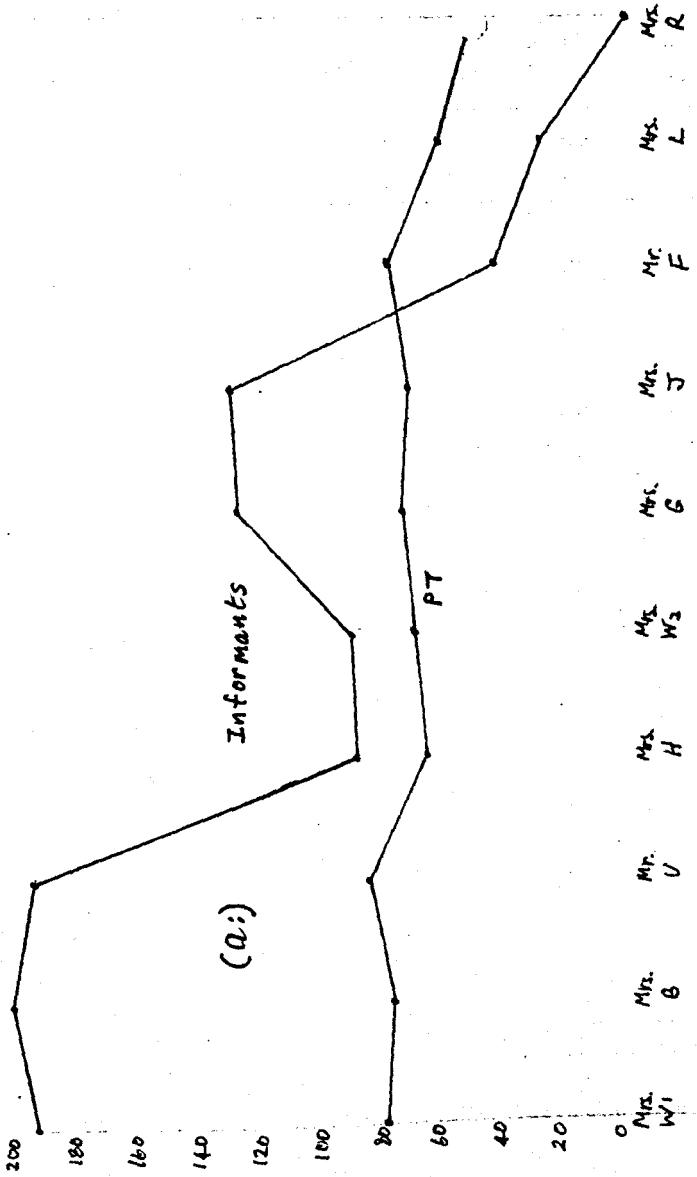
this is so or not we can check by examining what happens in long-term accommodation by speakers of English English to American English.

It is relatively simple in this case to establish what are the features of American English that are most prominent in the consciousness of speakers of English English, since it is those features which, because they are stereotypical and therefore salient, are reproduced during imitation. An obvious site for the study of the imitation of American English by English English speakers is the pronunciation of pop and rock songs. In Trudgill (1980) I have outlined five main respects in which British singers modify their pronunciation, when singing, in imitation of an American model:

| 1) | /ai/ : | [aɪ] | > | [a·] | high, I |
|----|--------|------|---|------|---------|
| 2) | | ∅ | > | /r / | car, part |
| 3) | /ɒ/ : | [ɒ] | > | [a] | top, hot |
| 4) | | /aː/ | > | /æ/ | dance, last |
| 5) | /t/ : | [t] | > | [d̪] | better, city |

Now, if it is the case that accommodation involves modification of features of which speakers are most conscious, we would expect accommodation to American English by English English speakers in the U.S.A. to follow closely the sort of imitation indulged in by British pop singers. Is this the case? The data I have on this is based on observations on what happened to my own speech while I was in the United States during the academic year 1979-80, as well as on unsystematic observations of other English people who are, or have been, resident in America. I will examine the five features above in turn.

1) /ai/ : [aɪ] > [a·]. It is obvious that this feature of British, and indeed American, pop song singing style, is in imitation, not of Americans as a whole, but of Southerners and/or Blacks. It is therefore no surprise that I, during my sojourn in the Midwest, did not acquire this feature.

2) ∅ > /r/ / ____ (#C. During my stay in the U.S.A. there were no signs whatsoever of the acquisition of non-prevocalic /r/, and indeed it seems that it is a very rare r-less English person who becomes r-ful even after many years in America. Why should this be? We can hypothesise that phonotactic constraints of this type - /r/ can occur only before a vowel and not before a consonant or a pause - are very strong. (Foreign language learning also seems to bear this out.) Certainly, if I want to pronounce part as /part/ I find it very hard to do so.

3) /ɒ/: [ɒ] > [a]. Again there was no trace of any tendency in my speech to modify the pronunciation of hot, top etc. from [hɒt] to [hat]. This is more difficult to

explain, since the change would have been a purely phonetic
one involving no phonotactic constraints and no phonological
constraints. It is probable, however, that the answer to
the question of why this modification was not made lies
in homonymic clash. English English already has a vowel of
the /a/ type, and when I say [hɑt] I mean _heart_, not _hot_.
The wholesale adoption of the American vowel would thus
have led to the loss of contrast between pairs such as

| hot | - | heart |
|-----|---|-------|
| lost | - | last |
| pot | - | part |

unless change 2) above and change 4) below were also
adopted.

4) /ɑ:/ > /æ/ in _dance, last_. Once again there was hardly
any trace of this change in my speech, although there was
some (see below), and it is a change that some English
English speakers do seem to make.

This feature would seem to be a very obvious
candidate for change during accommodation, since it involves
a very simple modification. I already have the vowel /æ/
in my speech, and it would therefore be a simple matter to
substitute this for /ɑ:/ and say /dæns/ rather than /dɑ:ns/.
I do, after all, already say _romance_ /roumæns/, so why not
/dæns/? I say _ant_ /ænt/, so why not _plant_ /plænt/ rather
than /plɑ:nt/? Introspection suggests a sociopsychological
explanation: /dæns/ sounds, and feels, too American. The
stereotype, in other words, is too strong. Why this is it
is hard to say, but it does seem to be an explanation.

Other similar phenomena can be observed. In England,
Northerners are stereotyped by Southerners as saying _butter_
/bʊtə/ rather than /bʌtə/, and as saying _dance_ /dæns/
rather than /dɑ:ns/. Southerners, on the other hand, are
stereotyped by Northerners as saying /dɑ:ns/ rather than
/dæns/ - while the pronunciation of _butter_ etc. seems to
be of no significance. Again, I have no explanation for
this. But given that this _is_ the situation, it is signifi-
cant that Northerners moving to the South, and accommodating
to Southern speech, usually modify _butter_ /bʊtə/ to /bʌtə/
or at least to [bətə], but hardly ever modify /dæns/ to
/dɑ:ns/. Many Northerners, indeed, would rather die, it
seems, than say /dɑ:ns/. Again, the stereotype seems to be
too strong.

5) /t/ : [t] > [ɖ] _better_. Now we come to a modification
which did take place in my speech, not consistently by any
means, but to a considerable extent. This can probably
be relatively easily explained. First, it is a purely
phonetic change involving no phonological complications.
Intervocalic /t/ is simply realised as [ɖ]. Secondly, no
homonymic clash is involved. Whatever the situation in real

American accents, for me latter and ladder were still
distinct a, [læd ə] and [1æd ə]. Thirdly, the pronunciation
of intervocalic /t/ is problematical in many Southern
English accents, including my own, in that there are two
main variants, as we have seen, [t] and [ʔ], both of which
are socially marked. The voiced flap [d] is a convenient
way out of the problem of having to use a pronunciation
which is socially marked in one direction or another.
Fourthly, the flap [d] is actually already available in my
native Norwich accent. In Norwich English there is a
phonotactic constraint such that a glottal stop may not
occur both before and after an unstressed /ɪ/ or /ə/. That
is, one can say get him [gɛʔɪm], but not get it*[gɛʔɪʔ].
In cases such as these one has to say either [gɛtɪʔ] or
[gɛdɪʔ]. The fact that the phone actually exists in my
accent, and indeed occurs more widely in other English
English accents, presumably means that it is not too strongly
stereotypical of American usage.

Thus there may be a basic drive to linguistic accommo-
dation when one is surrounded by people speaking an alien
variety, and it does indeed seem to be salient features which
are acquired, or at least acquired first. At the level of
phonetics and phonology, however, there appear to be a number
of factors, including the difficulty of acquiring the correct
phonological constraints, the presence of phonotactic con-
straints, the possibility of homonymic clash, and the strength
of stereotyping, which may combine to prevent the modification
of certain features, at least in the early stages of long-term
accommodation.

A further factor which appears to play some role
emerges from data on accommodation in the reverse direction.
Linda Shockey, an American linguist at the University of Essex
in England, has written a paper on "Eastern Trans-Atlantic
English" (Shockey, ms.), which examines long-term accommodation
by Americans to English English. She observes three main
characteristics of their English:

1) The pronunciation of /ou/, as in boat, as [əu]. This is in
imitation of R.P., and represents a purely phonetic change.
2) The pronunciation of hot, top etc. with [ʊ] rather than [ɑ] .
Unlike the potential change in the opposite direction, this
produces no homonymic clash.
3) Intervocalic [d] has been changed to [t] and [d] in latter
and ladder, etc. respectively.

Her four informants were speakers of Midwest or
California varieties, and had lived in England for between 8
and 27 years. Shockey shows that the reduction of flaps in
their speech, as revealed in analysis of tape-recorded inter-
views, affects /t/ and /d/ differently:

| % Flaps | /t/ | /d/ |
|---|---|---|
| Stanwood | 17 | 61 |
| Bunnin | 37 | 58 |
| Morton | 41 | 67 |
| Davidoff | 39 | 68 |

Why is there this difference in the treatment of these two consonants?

Shockey makes the important point that, in addition to sociopsychological factors which lie at the root of accommodation theory such as <u>the desire to not be different</u>, there is one obvious explanation for linguistic accommodation which social psychologists often overlook, namely <u>the desire to be intelligible.</u> American and British English are, of course, mutually intelligible, but difficulties do arise. Shockey points out that comprehension of T.V. programmes from across the Atlantic often relies on context. (And certainly a year's residence in the United States taught me that there were a number of things in American films and shows I had not understood before, without realising it. Many of these were cultural, but some were linguistic.) Out of context, moreover, problems are more severe. Shockey has received <u>cherries</u> in England when she asked for <u>carrots,</u> as a result of vowel differences, but she reports that it is the flapping of /t/s which causes the greatest difficulties. Flapping of /d/s is much less of a problem, because of the phonetic similarity - hence the differential modification to the British norm for /t/ and /d/. I can certainly attest that one factor that precipitated the introduction of flaps into my speech in America was the number of people who thought, if only for a second, that my name was not <u>Peter</u> but <u>pizza.</u> And, while I did not generally change /aː/ to /æ/ in <u>dance</u> etc., I certainly did end up saying <u>half</u> as /hæf/ in stores and restaurants, in order to avoid exchanges of the type:

> Waiter: Would you like another bottle of wine?
> PT: A half, please.
> Waiter: Coffee?

Shockey also provides some interesting data based on recordings of her own speech:

| % flaps | /t/ | /d/ |
|---|---|---|
| Shockey (6 months residence) | 100 | 100 |
| Shockey (3 years residence) | 66 | 77 |

Shockey is much slower in losing flaps than I was in acquiring them, which may well have implications for the relative naturalness of different types of phonological change. Shockey herself points out that, even after three years, her scores are higher than those of her informants, and suggests that phonological

Table 1: Norwegian and Swedish Pronouns

| | jeg(N)/jag(S) "I" | de(N)/dom(S) "they" | ham(N)/honom(S) "him" | dere(N)/ni(S) "you pl" |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fanny | N | N | N | N |
| Jenny | N | N | N | N |
| Katarina | N | N | N | N |
| Bodil | N | N | N | S |
| Eva | N | N | N | S |
| Blenda | N | N | S | N |
| Charlotte | N | N | S | N̄ |
| Henny | N | N | S | S |
| Carin | N | S | N | S |
| Stina | N | S | N̄ | S |
| Barbro | N | S | S̄ | S |
| Lisbeth | N | S | S | S |
| Alma | N | S | S | S |
| Nancy | N | S | S | S |
| Erna | S | S | S | S |
| Ellen | S | S | S | S |
| Inez | S | S | S | S |
| Helen | S | S | S | S |
| Mona | S | S | S | S |
| Nina | S | S | S | S |
| Linda | S | S | S | S |
| Lena | S | S | S | S |

Table 2: Norwegian and Swedish Adjectival Agreement

| | Adverb ending -ig(N)/-igt(S) | Neuter adjective -ig(N)/-igt(S) | Predicate adjective ending ∅(N)/-e(S) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fanny | N | N | S |
| Jenny | N | N | N |
| Katarina | S | N | N |
| Bodil | N | N | N |
| Eva | N | S | N |
| Blenda | N | N | N |
| Charlotte | N | N | N |
| Henny | S | N | S |
| Carin | N | S | N |
| Stina | N | N | N |
| Barbro | N | S | N |
| Lisbeth | N | N | N |
| Alma | N | S | N |
| Nancy | S | S | N |
| Erna | N | N | S |
| Ellen | N | S | S |
| Inez | S | S | S |
| Helen | N | N | S |
| Mona | N | N | S |
| Nina | S | S | N |
| Linda | N | N | S |
| Lena | S | S | S |

accommodation is a slow, ongoing process which is not
completed for a number of years.

## The Accommodation Process

Given that there are certain linguistic constraints
on accommodation, and given that groups of informants in the
same situation (e.g. Payne's informants, Shockey's informants)
appear to behave in similar ways, the possibility suggests
itself that generalisations can be made about the routes
followed by speakers who are in the process of accommodating.
It may well be, for example, that all or most English people in
the U.S. first flap /t/s, then change /aː/ to /æ/, then modify
[ɒ] to [a], and so on. We might, that is, be able to establish
implicational scales.

We have some evidence to suggest that this might be
the case from the work of Kerstin Nordenstam (1979), a Swedish
linguist, who has examined long-term linguistic accommodation
by Swedes living in Bergen, Norway, to Norwegian. (Swedes, of
course, do not, for the most part, need to modify their speech,
since the two languages are probably almost as mutually intell-
igible as British and American English. Nevertheless, the
complete autonomy of the two languages does seem to produce
a rather different situation from that concerning the two
Englishes. Some of the Swedes, for example, were careful to
keep the two varieties entirely separate.)

Nordenstam's study is mainly lexical and morphological,
and she finds that lexical accommodation begins first. Accommo-
dation then spreads to the morphological level, and at some
points something like implicational scaling does seem to occur.
Table 1, for instance, shows aspects of the acquisition of
Norwegian pronominal forms by the Swedes, and reveals a very
consistent pattern. Table 2, on the other hand, is much less
encouraging, both in its relative lack of implicational scaling
and in its failure to relate in an implicational way to Table 1.
In fact, much of Nordenstam's data suggests quite strongly that,
while, as we have seen in our phonological data, there are
constraints and regularities in linguistic accommodation, there
is also, as in child language acquisition and in second language
learning, plenty of room for individual strategies.

This is borne out by some further data on linguistic
accommodation by children which shows very clearly the extent
to which individual routes can be followed. This evidence
is all the more striking because it comes from the linguistic
behaviour of twins, albeit not identical twins. Debbie and
Richard were born and grew up in Britain. Their mother is
Scottish, their father Australian, and they live in Reading,
England. At the age of 7 they went to Australia for a year,
where recordings were made of their speech at monthly intervals
for 6 months. This permits us to make a longitudinal study of

their accommodation, from their original Reading accent, to Australian pronunciation. The features that were investigated (from recordings made by Inge Rogers) were the following:

| | | | English (Reading) | Australian |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) | -/t/- | better | [t] | [d̪] |
| (b) | /ai/ | high | [ɑɪ] | [ɑ·ɪ] |
| (c) | /ou/ | low | [ɔu] | [æ·ᵘ] |
| (d) | /ei/ | face | [ɛɪ] | [æ·ɪ] |
| (e) | /iː/ | see | [ɪɨ] | [əi] |
| (f) | /ʌ/ | but | [ə] | [ǟ] |
| (g) | /ɑː/ | part | [ɑː] | [aː] |
| (h) | /uː/ | boot | [uɪ] | [ʉː] |
| (i) | /ɛ/ | bed | [ɛ] | [e] |
| (j) | /au/ | how | [æu] | [ɛ·ᵚ] |
| (k) | -/t/ | get | [ʔ] | [t] |
| (l) | /æ/ | bat | [æ] | [ɛ] |
| (m) | /ɛə/ | there | [ɛ̇] | [eː] |
| (n) | /ɪ/ | David | /ɪ/ | /ə/ |
| (o) | /ɪ/ | hit | [ɪ] | [i] |

Table 3 shows Richard's development over the 6-month period. Note the very regular pattern, and the almost entirely perfect implicational scaling. Table 4 shows the long-term accommodation by Richard's twin-sister Debbie. Note that Debbie is much less regular than Richard, and that in many respects the routes they have followed to acquiring an Australian accent are very different. Indeed, Debbie has acquired Australian features that Richard has not, even though she gets off to a slower start. The extent of the difference is illustrated in Table 5, which shows the first month of acquisition of each feature.

**Table 3: Richard**

| Month | -/t/- | /ai/ | /ou/ | /ei/ | /iː/ | /ʌ/ | /aː/ | /uː/ | /ɛ/ | /au/ | -/t/ | /æ/ | /ɛə/ | /ɪ̈/ | /ɪ/ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | A | AB | AB | | | | AB | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | A | AB | AB | AB | | | AB | AB | AB | | | | | | |
| 3 | A | A | AB | AB | | | AB | AB | AB | AB | | | | | |
| 4 | A | A | A | A | A | A | AB | AB | AB | AB | A | A | A | A | B |
| 5 | A | A | A | A | A | A | AB | A | AB | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 6 | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A | A |

**Table 4: Debbie**

| Month | -/t/- | /ai/ | /ou/ | /ei/ | /iː/ | /ʌ/ | /aː/ | /uː/ | /ɛ/ | /au/ | -/t/ | /æ/ | /ɛə/ | /ɪ̈/ | /ɪ/ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | B | B(A) | B | B | B(A) | B | B(A) | A | A | B | B | A(B) | B | B | B |
| 2 | B(A) | B | B | B | B | B | B(A) | B | A | AB | B(A) | A(B) | B | B | B |
| 3 | B | B | A | B | B | B | AB | B | B | A | B | B | B | B | B |
| 4 | B | B | A | B | B | B | AB | B | B | A | B(A) | B | B | B | B |
| 5 | B | AB | A | A | A | AB | A | A | A | A | B | B | B | A(B) | B |
| 6 | B(A) | A | A | A | A | A | A(B̲) | A | A | A(B̲) | A(B) | AB | A | AB | AB |

A = Australian
B = British
AB = Both forms
A(B) = One instance of British form

Table 5: Month of Acquisition

|        | Debbie | Richard |
|--------|--------|---------|
| -/t/-  | 3 —    | 1       |
| /ou/   | 3      | 1       |
| /au/   | 3      | 4       |
| /ai/   | 4      | 1       |
| /ɑː/   | 3      | 2       |
| /ɛ/    | 4      | 3       |
| /ei/   | 5      | 2       |
| /ɛə/   | 5      | -       |
| /ɪ/    | 5      | -       |
| /iː/   | 6      | 2       |
| /ʌ/    | 6      | 2       |
| /uː/   | 6      | 3       |
| /æ/    | 6      | 5       |
| /ɪ/    | 6      | -       |
| -/t/   | -      | 5       |

Conclusion

Some of the evidence used in this paper is purely anecdotal. Much of it is based on data from individuals or small groups of speakers. Many of the explanations advanced, too, are essentially speculative. It is, however, possible to make some suggestions about the nature of accommodation. We can conclude that accommodation may take place both for socio-psychological reasons, and because of a desire to be understood. When it does take place, lexical accommodation probably precedes grammatical and phonological accommodation. Phonological accommodation appears to be inhibited by difficulties in re-structuring underlying forms and detailed phonological constraints; by phonotactic constraints; by the need to avoid losses of contrast; and by a desire to avoid very strongly stereotyped features. These constraints may well lead to the possibility that there are generalisations and predictions that can be made about the routes followed by speakers during accommodation. In addition to this, however, there is evidence that indicates that, at both the phonological and grammatical levels, different speakers are very likely to follow different routes and adopt different strategies of accommodation.

Many questions, of course, remain unanswered, but it is probable that explanations for why speakers behave as they do during linguistic accommodation are more likely to emerge from quantitative analyses than from impressionistic evaluations. It is also probable that linguistic analysis, as well as helping to achieve a better understanding of the linguistic processes involved in accommodation, will also prove to be of assistance to social psychologists themselves.

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