

## ACCOMMODATION STRATEGIES IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *A MAN OF THE PEOPLE*

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### **Abstract**

The paper examines accommodation strategies adopted by speakers in their interactions. In oral discourse, the speech of speakers is often similar to the speech pattern of their addressees or they differ from it. The process is referred to as speech accommodation. A speaker is said to converge to the speech of the addressee if the speech is similar or to diverge when it is away from it. Many factors motivate accommodation. A person can be induced or can induce another to judge him or her more favourably by reducing differences between the two done possibly to gain social approval. This is convergence behaviour. Conversely, if a person desired to be judged less favourably, the shift in behaviour will be away from the behaviour of the person or others. A desire to get on well with others and make them comfortable is another. Using Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, this study seeks to identify the accommodation strategies adopted by the characters and the motivations for the strategies. It also seeks to determine the impacts on the behaviour of the interlocutors. To achieve these objectives, eight sample excerpts purposively selected from the text were used as data. Findings revealed that convergent and divergent strategies identified were mainly motivated by topic under discussion, a desire to get on well with others and make them comfortable, the topic under discussion, the setting and a desire to be judged less favourably informed by social distance. In conclusion, convergence accommodation strategy adopted by the interlocutors strengthened their solidarity and cordial relationship while divergence strategy encouraged ill-feelings.

**Keywords:** accommodation, speech styles, speech style-shifts, power, convergence, divergence

### **Introduction**

In social interactions, the speech of the speakers oftentimes tends to be similar to the speech pattern of the persons they are addressing or away from it. This process has been referred to as speech accommodation (Holmes, 245). It usually takes place when the speakers are well disposed towards the people they are addressing or where they stand to gain through the interaction. A speaker is thus said to converge to the speech of the addressee when the speech is similar or a situation where an individual may be ready to sacrifice something in order to gain social approval of some kind, for instance, shift in behaviour in order to become more like the interlocutor. Convergence behaviour is said to be 'up' if the approval sought is of higher social status or 'down' if with someone of lower social status (Wardhaugh, 113). It is divergent when it is away from the speech pattern of the person he/she is talking to.

According to Holmes (245) people accommodate in different ways. When in a party a person responds to and develops a topic raised by an addressee, the person is converging in the content of the speech. When people make simple the vocabulary and grammar they use in talking to children or foreigners 'they are said to be converging to the lesser linguistic proficiency of their addressees'. When a complex technical message gets translated for someone who is not familiar with the jargon speech accommodation is taking place. In multilingual countries like Singapore, India or Democratic Republic of Congo-Zaire (Nigeria inclusive) with many varieties to choose from, speakers accommodate to others by selecting the code or varieties

they consider most comfortable to their addressees. In written prose like in ordinary face-to-face oral interactions, speech of people engaged in dialogue often is similar or they differ in pattern. When such accommodation processes are not observed as appropriate or if the purpose is misconstrued by the addressee, problems such as feelings of inferiority, rejection, contempt or avoidance may arise on the part of the interactant of lower social status while the one of higher status may display pride, arrogance, insult or prejudice. These may disrupt smooth social interactions and lead to breakdown in communication. In literary discourse which is the focus of this research, authors would always mirror these experiences in the characters, settings, plots and story lines since literature reflects real life. The major motivation for undertaking this study is that a number of studies exist on accommodation. An example is 'Syntax Accommodation in Social Interactions' (Rehaine Boghrati, Joe Hoover, Katie M. Johnson, Justin Garten and Mortena Deghani (2016). None however has been done on the adoption of accommodation strategies in social interactions. This study is therefore a contribution to the debate on why interlocutors employ different accommodation strategies and their influence on social interactions. This study examines accommodation strategies in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*. It aims at identifying the accommodation processes adopted by the characters and how they conform to the four social psychological theories that underlie accommodation, the motivation for the accommodation strategies and the impacts on the interlocutors.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Speech Styles**

Yule (257) describes speech style as a social feature of language use. Ezeifeke (136) asserts that they are linguistic options open to the speech community for particular events and activity types. She notes that they include: varieties (High/Low, Standard/non-standard, dialects, register choices, formal/informal/casual etc.) and speech events where they are appropriate-political, academic, folk literature, casual conversations; degrees of formality within one standard language. In language use, speakers usually adopt different styles of speaking. They can speak very formally or very informally depending on the circumstances. Wardhaugh (47) posits that ceremonial occasions usually require very formal speech; public lectures somewhat less formal, casual conversations between intimate persons on matters of little importance may be extremely informal and casual. According to him, the level of formality chosen may be related to a variety of factors such as the kind of occasion, the various social, age and other differences that exist between the interlocutors; the particular task that is involved such as writing or speaking, the emotional involvement of one or more of the participants. Holmes asserts that "language varies according to who is using it (239) She notes that the addressees and the context influence our choices of code or variety be it language, dialect or style. A change from one speech style to the other by an individual according to Yule (257) is referred to as style-shifting.

### **Motivation for Shifts in Speech Style**

Speech style-shifts motivate accommodation. Shifts in speech style are motivated by a number of factors. Some of them are addressee, age of addressee, social background of addressee, social distance (Holmes, 240-244), speaker (Wardhaugh, 47), the situation (Hudson, 199), and speech event (Ezeifeke, 136).

### **Accommodation**

Accommodation according to Giles and Coupland "at one level is to be seen as a multiply-organized and contextually complex set of alternatives, regularly available to communicators in face to face talk."(61) They note that "it can function to index and achieve solidarity with or

dissociation from a conversational partner reciprocally and dynamically.” At another level according to them, “accommodation strategies can characterize wholesale realignments of patterns of code or language selection, though again related to constellations of underlying beliefs, attitudes and socio-structural conditions.”(61) It has to do with the way individuals and groups relate with one another. Hudson (223) sees it as “the desire to reduce differences in behaviour in order to stress solidarity” He stresses that accommodation is only applicable when there are contrasting alternatives- i.e. in situations when people with high solidarity need to be contrasted with people with low solidarity.

Accommodation according to Wardhaugh (113) “is one way of explaining how individuals and groups may be seen to relate to each other. He observes that an individual can try to induce another to judge him or her more favourably by reducing the differences between the two. He asserts that speakers sometimes attempt to accommodate to the expectations that others have of them when they speak, noting that they do this consciously and deliberately or be unaware of what they are doing. Yule (258) defines speech accommodation as “our ability to modify our speech style towards or away from the perceived style of the person(s) we are talking to.” Holmes (245) observes that when people talk to each other, their speech often becomes similar. In other words, according to her, each person’s speech converges towards the speech of the person they are talking to. This process she refers to as speech accommodation. She notes that it usually happens where the speakers like one another or where one speaker has a vested interest in pleasing the other or putting them at ease. According to her, converging towards the speech of another is usually seen as a polite speech strategy which means that the addressee’s speech is acceptable and worth imitating. Using the same pronunciation and the same sort of vocabulary are instances she gave which signal that you are on the same wavelength.

The power variable according to Giles and Coupland (73) “is one that emerges often in accommodation literature and in ways that gives credence to the central predictions of the model.” He observes that Hamers adopting role-taking procedures in a bilingual industrial setting in Quebec has revealed convergence to the language of another who was an occupational superior than to one who was a subordinate; foremen converged more to managers than workers and that managers converged more to higher managers than to foremen. He notes also that Van den Berg studying code switching in commercial settings in Taiwan discovered that salespersons converged more to customers probably because the customers in those settings wield more economic powers.

Accommodation theory involves two main processes: convergence and divergence. Convergence has been defined as “a strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other’s communicative behaviours in terms of a wide range of linguistic/prosodic/non-vocal features including speech rate, pausal phenomena and utterance length, phonological variants, smiling, gaze and so on” (Giles and Coupland, 63). Yule avers that divergence is when a speech style is adopted to emphasize social distance between speakers. This he points out can be achieved by adopting forms that are distinctly different. Divergence according to Giles and Coupland (65) “was the term conceived to refer to the way in which speakers accentuate speech and non-verbal differences between themselves and others” They note that there is a hierarchy of divergent strategies available to speakers which ranges from indexical and symbolic dissociation (for example using in-group stereotyped pronunciation) through explicit propositional non-alignment (expressing disagreement or hostility) to physical distancing (ending or avoiding interaction)”(65) Like convergence, divergence according to LaFrance can be displayed in many forms, verbal and non- verbal. (qtd in Giles and Coupland,66)

### **Motivations for Accommodation**

Many factors give rise to accommodation. Wardhaugh (113) observes that a person can try to induce another to judge him or her more favourably by reducing differences between the two. He states that it could also be done to gain social approval of some kind. This is referred to as convergence behaviour. Alternatively, if one desires to be judged less favourably the shift in behaviour will be away from the behaviour of the person or others. This he referred to as divergence behaviour. He gave as an example one putting on airs and graces in order to deliberately disassociate oneself from peers. A desire to get on well with others and make them feel comfortable is another reason for accommodation offered by Holmes (244).

Bell (qtd in Wardhaugh, 113) notes that “one type of convergence behaviour is said to be motivated by how speakers often attempt to deal with listeners through audience design done by orienting their speech toward others through code choices.” He states that speakers associate classes of topics or settings with classes of persons and so they shift when talking on those topics or in those settings as if they are talking to addressees whom they associate with the topic or setting. Topics such as occupation or education, and settings such as office or school according to him cause shifts to a style suitable to address an employer or teacher. Intimate topics or a home setting he adds also elicits speech appropriate for intimate addressees – family or friends.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This work is based on Accommodation Theory; a Sociolinguistic theory developed by Howard Giles in 1983. Accommodation Theory evolved from the Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) which demonstrates the value of psychological concepts in understanding the dynamics of speech (Agbedo, 72). The theory posits that when people interact, they adjust their speech, their vocal patterns and their gestures to accommodate to others. It is a theory that seeks to explain shifts in the style of speaking people make such as when a person changes his /her way of speaking to make it sound more or less like the speech of the person they are talking to” (Richards and Schmidt, 5). It has to do with the way individuals and groups relate with one another. It explores the various reasons why individuals emphasize or minimize the social differences between themselves and their interlocutors through verbal and non-verbal communication. The theory is premised on the links that exist between language, context and identity. It x-rays both the inter group and the inter personal factors that lead to accommodation as well as the ways in which power, macro and micro context concerns affect communication behaviours in order to minimize the social differences.

There are two main accommodation processes described in this theory: convergence and divergence. Convergence refers to the strategies through which individuals adapt to each other’s communicative behaviours, in order to reduce these social differences. Convergent behaviour could be upward if you seek the approval of someone of higher status, or downward if the approval sought is of someone of lower status. Divergence refers to a process in which a speaker linguistically moves in the opposite direction in order to make his or her speech sound more unlike that of the person(s) being addressed.

Underlying this theory according to Thanasoulas, an online source are four social psychological theories that actually constitute it and account for people’s tendency to converge towards or diverge away from the speech of others: similarity- attraction, social exchange, causal attribution and Tajfel’s theory of inter group distinctiveness. Similarity-attraction theory has it that the more similar our attitudes and beliefs are to certain others; the more likely it is we will be attracted to them. Social exchange theory suggests that speakers and listeners share a

common set of interpretative procedures which allow the speaker's intentions to be encoded by the speaker, and correctly interpreted by the listener. Causal attribution theory proposes that when we interact with others, we engage in an interpretative process, evaluating the individuals in terms of the possible motives that we attribute as the cause of their action.

The process of inter group distinctiveness, as theorized by Tajfel argues that when members of different groups are in contact, they compare themselves on dimensions which are important to them, such as personal attributes, abilities, material possessions. In this inter group social comparisons, individuals seek to find ways in which they can make themselves positively distinct from the out group in order to enhance their social groups, Divergence in speech style is often employed to maintain inter group distinctiveness and differentiate the out-group, especially when group membership is a salient issue or the individual's identity and group membership is being threatened. The accommodation theory is very relevant to this research because as posited by Giles (17), "language is not a homogenous, static system. It is multi-channelled, multi-faceted and capable of vast modifications from context to context by the speaker, slight differences of which are often deleted by listeners and afforded social significance."

### **Research Questions**

1. What accommodation strategies were adopted by the characters and how do they conform to the four social psychological theories that underlie accommodation?
2. What are the motivations for the accommodation strategies adopted by the characters?
3. What are the impacts on the behaviour of the interlocutors?

### **Methodology**

The accommodation strategies adopted by the characters and how they conform to the four social psychological theories that underlie accommodation are highlighted, the motivations for the accommodation strategies adopted by the characters as well as the impacts on the behaviour of the interlocutors are identified. Eight sample excerpts of the accommodation strategies are used as data

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

#### **Research Question 1**

What accommodation strategies were adopted by the characters in the text and how do they conform to the four social psychological theories that underlie accommodation?

In *A Man of the People*, there is a display of convergence as accommodation strategy. This is showcased in the following discussions among the Honourable Minister, Chief Nanga, Odili and others:

Later on in the Proprietor's lodge I said to the Minister:

"You must have spent a fortune today."

He smiled at the glass of cold beer in his hand and said: "You call this spend? You never



see something, my brother. I no de keep anini for myself, na so so troway. If some person come to you and say ‘I wan make you minister’ make you run like blazes comot. Na true word I tell you. To God who made me.” He showed the tip of his tongue to the sky to confirm the oath. “Minister de sweet for eye but too much katakata de for inside. Believe me yours sincerely.”

“Big man big palaver,” said the one-eyed man.

It was left to Josiah, owner of a nearby shop-and bar to sound discordant if jovial note.

“Me one,” he said , I no kuku mind the katakata wey de for inside. Make you put Minister money for my hand and all the wahala on top I no mind at all.”

Everyone laughed. Then Mrs. John said:

“No be so my fren’. When you done experience rich man’s trouble you no fit talk like that again. My people get one proverb: they say that when poor man done see with his own eye how to make big man e go beg make e carry him poverty de go je-je.” (14-15)

Here the Minister, Chief Nanga is converging in the content of the speech of Odili. It is worthy of note that pidgin is the lingua franca and a contact language in Nigeria. Its use therefore is not restricted to semi-literate characters. It cuts across the social classes, a feature which marks out Achebe’s philosophy of language and how language as a tool should be utilized. In his opinion, ‘a man who spoke Standard English would use pidgin for a certain purpose... (cited in Pweddton, 2004). Chief Nanga, one of the major characters employs pidgin in his interaction with Odili, the protagonist, both of them educated and belonging to the elite class. They are joined in the conversation by other people who also use pidgin. Here there is a display of both Similarity-attraction and Social Exchange theories. Under Similarity- attraction theory, the attitudes and beliefs of the interlocutors as showcased are similar hence the attraction to one another. On the side of the Social exchange theory, speakers and listeners share a common set of interpretative procedures which allow the speaker’s intentions to be encoded by each of the speakers and correctly interpreted by the listeners. This is evidenced in the free flow of the discussion. The convergent behaviour displayed here reduces the interpersonal differences that may have existed among the interactants thereby enhancing communication.

Another occasion where convergence accommodation strategy is displayed in the novel is in the interaction between Odili and the journalist who was part of Chief Nanga’s entourage to Anata as demonstrated in the following passage:

I edged quietly towards the journalist who seemed to know everyone in the party and whispered in his ears: “Who is the young lady?”

“Ah,” he said, leaving his mouth wide open for a while as a danger signal. “Make you no go near am-o. My hand no de for inside.” I told him I wasn’t going near am-o, I merely asked who she was. The Minister no de introduce-am to anybody. So I think say na im girl-friend, or im cousin.” Then he confided: “I done look am, look am, look am sotay I tire. I no go tell you lie girls fot this una part sabi fine-o. God Almighty!” (15-16)

Here again, Odili and the journalist who are both educated people adopt pidgin as a medium of interaction possibly because it is a lingua franca in Nigeria which cuts across the social classes. The informality of the context is another possible explanation. The passage also illustrates Similarity-attraction theory which has it that the more similar our attitudes and beliefs are to certain others; the more likely it is we will be attracted to them. Odili fancies the journalist. This explains his attraction to him (the journalist) among the Minister’s entourage to make enquiries in the first place. The act of whispering and the fact that he confided in Odili suggests semblance of attitude. There is also a conspiratorial tone to their discussion to further buttress their attraction to each other.

Again, in an interaction among Chief Nanga, Odili, Mrs. John and the journalist, convergence accommodation strategy is also showcased thus:

[Chief Nanga to Odili] “If you come as soon as you close,” he said, you can stay in my guest room with everything complete – bedroom, parlour, bathroom, latrine, everything – self-contained. You can live by yourself and do everything you like there, it’s all yours.” Make you no min’ am, sha-a” said Mrs. John to me. I kin see say you na good boy. Make you no gree am spoil you. Me I no de for this bed-room and bath-room business-o. As you see dis man so, na wicked soul. If he tell you stand make you run.” Everybody laughed. Eleanor, why you wan disgrace me and spoil my name so for public for nothing sake. Wetin I do you? Everybody here sabi say me na good Christian. No be so, James?” “Ah, na so, sir” replied the journalist happily. (18)

In the interaction above, all the interactants readily adopt pidgin which is seemingly acceptable to all. There is also a display of Similarity-attraction, Social exchange and Causal attribution theories. All the interactants have similar attitudes and beliefs which explains their attraction to one another. Social exchange theory also showcased here, explains their ability to share a common set of interpretative procedures that allows each of the speaker’s intention to be encoded by the speaker and correctly interpreted by the listeners. Causal attribution theory accounts for the interpretation that Mrs. John gave to Chief Nanga’s proposal to Odili which informed her remarks.

Again, there is convergence accommodation strategy in the interaction that took place between Chief Nanga, Odili and others when the Minister was informing them of the honorary doctorate degree that was to be awarded him thus:

‘They are going to give me doctorate degree, he announced proudly.  
“Doctor of Laws, LL.D.  
“That’s great,” I said. “Congratulations.”

“Thank you, my brother.”

“So the Minister will become ‘Chief the Honourable Doctor M.A. Nanga,’” intoned the journalist, a whole second ahead of my own thoughts on the matter. We all cheered the impressive address and its future owner.

“You no see say the title fit my name pem,” said the Minister with boyish excitement, and we all said yes it suited him perfectly.

“But the man wey I like him name pass na ‘Chief the Honourable Alhaji Doctor Mongo Sega, M.P.’,” said the Minister somewhat wistfully.

“Him own good too,” admitted the incomparable journalist, “but e no pass your own, sir: ‘Chief the Honourable Dr M.A. Nanga, M.P., LL.D.’ Na waa! Nothing fit passam.”

“What about ‘Chief Dr Mrs?’” I threw in mischievously.

“That one no sweet for mouth,; said the Minister. “E no catch.”

“Wetin wrong with am?” asked Mrs John.

Because na woman get am e no go sweet for mouth. I done talk say na only for election time women dey get equality for dis our country.”

“No be so, madam,” said the journalist. “You no see how the title rough like sand-paper for mouth: ‘Chief Dr Mrs’. E no catch at all.” (19)

There is a display of convergence in the above passage. The Minister converges to them in Pidgin which is readily taken up by the rest of the interactants. Divergence is also reflected in the speech of Mrs. John, who though she still speaks in pidgin, diverged in the content which signals her displeasure when the minister noted that ‘Chief Dr. Mrs.’ was not sweet in the mouth. The social exchange theory is showcased here. The interlocutors here share a common set of interpretative procedure which allows each speaker’s intentions to be encoded by the speaker and correctly interpreted by others. Each of the interlocutors is conscious of the mad cravings of the society’s elite for honorary titles. Also, the theory of inter group distinctiveness is reflected in the passage. The theory has it that when members of different groups are in contact, they compare themselves on dimensions which are important to them such as personal attributes, abilities, and material possessions. In this inter group social comparisons; individuals seek to find ways in which they can make themselves positively distinct from the out-group in order to enhance their social identity. Here, Mrs. John’s divergent behaviour at the dismissal of the prospects of a ‘Dr. Chief Mrs.’ title is typical of some Nigerian females’ reaction in repulsion at the chauvinistic tendencies suspected of their male counterparts. Credence is lent to the male chauvinistic tendency when the journalist sarcastically said: “You no see how the title rough like sand-paper for mouth: ‘Chief Dr. Mrs.’ E no catch at all.”

The use of convergence accommodation strategy is also evident in the interaction between Chief Nanga and the taxi driver that brought Odili to his house in Bori thus:

“Come right inside,” said the Minister. We have been waiting for you all morning.

The house is yours.” I hung back to pay the taxi-driver.

“No, no, no!” cried my host. Go right inside. I will settle the driver. He na my very good friend, no be so, driver?”

Yes, sir, master, said the driver who hitherto seemed a most unfriendly man to me. Now he broke into a broad smile showing smoke-and kola-stained teeth. (32)



There is a display of downward convergence in the above interaction. The Minister in this instance adopts pidgin in order to communicate with the taxi-driver who is of a lower social status and possibly also to exhibit his joviality. The Social exchange theory is brought to bear on this interaction. Both speakers and listeners share a common set of interpretative procedures which allows the speaker's intentions to be encoded by the speaker and correctly interpreted by the listener.

Again, in an interaction that involved Chief Nanga, Odili and a man who came to offer his services as a cook to Chief Nanga, convergence (downward) is showcased as an accommodation strategy thus:

“Wetin you fit cook?” asked Chief Nanga as he perused the young man's sheaf of testimonials probably not one of them genuine.  
“I fit cook every European chop like steak and kidney pie, chicken puri, misk grill, cake omelette...”  
“You no sabi cook African chop?”  
“Ahh! That one I no sabi am-o,” he admitted. I no go tell Master lie.”  
“Wetin you de chop for your own house?” I asked, being irritated by the idiot.  
“Wetin I de chop for my house?” he repeated after me. “Na we country chop I de chop.”  
“You country chop no be African chop?” asked Chief Nanga.  
“Na him,” admitted the Cook. “But no be me de cook am. I get wife for house.”  
My irritation vanished at once and I joined Chief Nanga's laughter. Greatly encouraged, the cook added: How man wey get family go begin enter kitchen for make bitter leaf and egusi unless if the man no get shame.” (46)

Downward convergence is showcased in the above interaction. Chief Nanga and Odili adopt pidgin in conducting an interview with the prospective cook, a code he can easily understand. Social exchange theory is displayed in the interaction because it suggests that speakers and listeners share a common set of interpretative procedures which allow the speaker's intentions to be encoded by the speaker, and correctly interpreted by the listener.

There is a display of divergence accommodation strategy in the interaction between Odili and the gateman when the former wanted to drive into Anata Mission Hospital in search of Edna, the young lady betrothed to Chief Nanga but was stopped and addressed by the gateman thus:

“Abi you no fit read notice?”  
“Don't be silly!” I said “and don't shout at me!”  
“Be silly!” he shouted. “Idiot like you. Look him motor self. When they call those wey get motor you go follow them comot? Foolish idiot.”  
I parked my car outside the gate and went in, deciding to ignore the man who had not ceased shouting.  
“Na him make accident de kill them for road every day. Nonsense!” (105)

Here is a display of divergence on the part of Odili. Apparently enraged by the rudeness of the gateman, he makes a deliberate shift from his speech pattern. He speaks Standard English to him in an attempt to dissociate himself. The theory of Inter group distinctiveness is showcased here. The theory argues that when members of different groups are in contact, they compare themselves on dimensions which are important to them, such as personal attributes, abilities, material possessions. Individuals here seek to find ways in which they can make themselves positively distinct from the out-group in order to enhance their social groups. The gateman

evidently is biased against the likes of Odili that own cars. He makes no effort to hide his resentment of the people in that group.

Another occasion where there is a display of both divergence and convergence accommodation strategies is in the interaction that Odili had with the political touts he had engaged to counter Chief Nanga's more vicious opposition group. This was when Boniface and one of the other stalwarts woke him and demanded twenty five pounds. Odili needed to satisfy his conscience that he was exercising adequate control thus:

(Odili) "I gave you ten pounds only yesterday," I said and was about to add that unlike our opponents we had very limited funds –a point which I had already made many times. But Boniface interrupted me.

"Are you there?" he said. "If na play we de play make you tell us because me I no wan waste my time for nothing sake. Or you think say na so so talk you go take win Chief Nanga. If Government no give you plenty money for election make you go tell them no be sand sand we de take do am..."

"Man no fit fight tiger with empty hand," added his companion before I could put in a word to correct Boniface's fantastic misconception.

"No be Government de give us money," I said. We na small party, C.P.C. we wan help poor people like you. How Government go give us money...?"

"But na who de give the er weting call... P.C.P money?" asked Boniface puzzled.

"Some friends abroad," I said with a knowing air to cover my own ignorance which I had forgotten to worry about in the heat of activity.

"You no fit send your friends telegram?" asked Boniface's companion.

Let's not go into that now, I said. What do you need twenty five pounds for? And what have you done with the ten pounds." I felt I had to sound firm. It worked. "We give three pound ten to that policeman so that he go spoil the paper for our case. Then we give one-ten to Court Clerk because they say as the matter don reach him eye the policeman no kuku spoil am just like dat. Then we give give another two-pound ..."

"Alright," I said. What do you want the twenty-five pounds for?"

They no tell you say Chief Nanga don return back from Bori yesterday?"

"So you wan give am money too?" I asked.

"This no be matter for joke; we wan the money to pay certain porsons wey go go him house for night and burn him car."

"What! No, we don't need to do that." There was a minute's silence.

"Look my frien I done tell you say if you no wan serious for this business make you go rest for house. I don see say you want play too much gentleman for this matter...? Dem tell you say na gentlemany de give other people minister...? Anyway wetin be my concern there? Na you sabi." (114-115)

In the interactions above, the two accommodation strategies – convergence (upward and downward) and divergent speech behaviour are displayed. Odili diverges away from the speech of Boniface and his companion by speaking Standard English. This was probably necessitated by their incessant demand for money and so he puts up a tough disposition to disarm them. Boniface on responding converges upward to the speech of Odili, probably to impress him in the hope of influencing him to release money to them. Odili converges downwards to the speech of Boniface when he informs them that Government does not sponsor them (C.P.C.). The sudden switch to Pidgin is probably in the hope of appealing to their emotion. Social

exchange theory and Causal attribution theories are showcased here. Basically as a result of social exchange theory, the speakers and hearers in the above interaction share a common set of interpretative procedures which allows the speaker's intentions to be encoded by the speaker and correctly interpreted by others. Causal attribution theory accounts for the fact that the interactants engage in an interpretative process, evaluating the individuals in terms of the possible motive that is attributed as the cause of their action.

## Research Question 2

What are the motivations for the accommodation strategies adopted by the characters?

### Excerpt 1

(Odili) "You must have spent a fortune today."  
He smiled at the glass of cold beer in his hand and said:  
"You call this spend? You never see something, my brother.  
I no de keep anini for myself, na so so troway... (14-15)

The motivation for the accommodation strategy in the above excerpt was influenced by the (linguistic) situation which is against the backdrop that pidgin serves as lingua franca in various parts of multilingual Nigeria and so it serves as a common language of most people. It cuts across the social classes, a feature which marks out Achebe's philosophy of language and how language as a tool should be utilized. In his opinion, a man who spoke Standard English would use pidgin for a particular purpose... (qtd in Pwedom 45). Chief Nanga in the above excerpt as such employs pidgin in his interaction with Odili, the protagonist, both of them educated and belonging to the elite class.

### Excerpt 2

(Odili) "Who is this young lady?"  
"Ah!" he said, leaving his mouth wide open for a while as danger signal.  
Make you no near am-o. My hand no de for inside,"... (15- 16)

The motivation for the accommodation strategy in the interaction above is the situation for the fact that pidgin is a common language in big cities irrespective of social classes. It is used to foster friendship and to socialize.

### Excerpt 3

[Chief Nanga to Odili] "If you come as soon as you close," he said, you can  
Stay in the guest room with everything complete –bedroom, parlour, bathroom, latrine,  
everything self-contained..."  
"Make you no min' am sha, said Mrs. John to me. I kin see say you na good boy.  
Make you no gree am spoil you. Me I no de for dis bedroom and bathroom business-  
o... (18)

The motivation for the accommodation strategy in the interaction above is again the situation (linguistic). The description given about Mrs. Eleanor John suggests that she belongs to a different social group from the Minister. This perhaps explains her ready use of pidgin in her

interactions. Mowarin (cited in Aboh 2016: 93) observes, especially of Nigerian pidgin, that “Nigerian novelists’ continuous use of NP in their creative ambience is not unconnected to its ‘ethnically neutral’ nature and because it has affinity to Nigerian languages” Mafeni (cited in Elugbe and Omamor 1991: 15) gives credence to this view when he asserts that:

The rapidly growing towns of Nigeria has increasingly become the melting pots of the many tribes and races which constitute Nigeria and pidgin seems to be today a very widely spoken lingua franca, many towns and city dwellers being at least bilingual in pidgin and an indigenous language.

The use of pidgin here helps to place the characters in relaxed moods and also showcases a sense of humour.

#### Excerpt 4

They are going to give me doctorate degree; he announced proudly. “Doctor of Laws, LL.D.”  
“That’s great, I said. Congratulations.”  
So the minister will become ‘Chief the Honorable Doctor M.A-Nanga,” intoned the journalist . . .  
You no see say the title fit my name pem, “said the Minister with boyish excitement . . . (19)

The motivation for the accommodation strategy showcased in the above excerpt was also influenced by the situation. Apart from the fact that pidgin serves as a common means of interaction among the interlocutors who may have different linguistic identities in multilingual Nigeria, Chief Nanga and others here apparently employs it to foster a sense of humour and to socialize.

#### Excerpt 5

“Come right inside,” said the Minister. We have been waiting for you all morning.  
“The house is yours.”  
I hung back to pay the taxi driver.  
“No, no, no! cried my host. Go right inside. I will settle the driver. He na my very good friend, no be so driver...(32)

The motivation for the accommodation strategy in the above excerpt was also influenced by the situation. Apart from the fact that pidgin serves as a common means of interaction among the interlocutors who may have different linguistic identities in multilingual Nigeria, Chief Nanga and others here apparently employs it to foster a sense of humour and to socialize.

#### Excerpt 6

“Wetin you fit cook?” asked Chief Nanga as he perused the young man’s sheaf of testimonials . . .  
“I fit cook any European chop like steak and kidney pie” . . . (46)

In the interaction above, the accommodation strategy as in the earlier one was motivated by the situation for the fact that in big cities in Nigeria, pidgin is a common linguistic code that

traverses social status and level of education. This is why Chief Nanga uses it in interviewing the man that applied for the post of a cook in Bori, a city where he lived.

Excerpt 7

“Abi you no fit read notice?”

“Don’t be silly!” I said, “And don’t shout at me!” . . . (105)

The motivation for the accommodation strategy was influenced by the situation, social distance and power structure. Odili is put off by the rudeness of the gateman and so he diverges to Standard English in a deliberate effort to heighten the social distance that exists between them.

Excerpt 8

“I gave you ten pounds only yesterday,” I said and was about to add that unlike our opponents we had very little funds...But Boniface interrupted me.

“Are you there?” he said. “If na play we de play make you tell me bscience I no wan waste my time for nothing sake...” (114-115)

The motivation for the accommodation strategy on the part of Odili in the excerpt above was influenced first of all by the social distance. Odili and the touts do not belong to the same social class and so he diverged by speaking to them in Standard English. He converges to them in Pidgin to appeal to their emotions and possibly secure their goodwill.

### Research Question 3

What are the impacts on the behaviour of the interlocutors?

Excerpt 1

(Odili) “You must have spent a fortune today.”

He smiled at the glass of cold beer in his hand and said:

“You call this spend? ... (14-15)

The convergence accommodation strategy adopted by Chief Nanga creates an atmosphere of Odili cordiality between him and Odili.

Excerpt 2

(Odili) “Who is this young lady?”

“Ah!” he said, leaving his mouth wide open for a while as danger signal.

Make you no near am-o. My hand no de for inside...” (15- 16)

The convergence accommodation strategy adopted by the journalist created a fellow’s feeling and solidarity in Odili.

Excerpt 3

[Chief Nanga to Odili] “If you come as soon as you close,” he said, you can stay in the guest room with everything complete –bedroom, parlour, bathroom, latrine,



everything self-contained...” (18)

The convergence accommodation strategy adopted by Chief Nanga created a jovial and relaxed atmosphere on the interlocutors.

Excerpt 4

They are going to give me doctorate degree; he announced proudly. “Doctor of Laws, LL.D.”

“That’s great, I said. Congratulations.”

... (19)

The convergence accommodation strategy adopted by Chief Nanga and others served to create a a jovial and relaxed atmosphere while the divergence accommodation strategy employed by Mrs. John was used to signal her displeasure at the chauvinistic tendencies displayed by the male interactants.

Excerpt 5

“Come right inside,” said the Minister. We have been waiting for you all morning.

“The house is yours.”... (32)

The convergence accommodation strategy adopted by Chief Nanga and the taxi driver created a feeling of rapport and friendship.

Excerpt 6

“Wetin you fit cook?” asked Chief Nanga as he perused the young man’s sheaf of testimonials . . .

“I fit cook any European chop like steak and kidney pie” . . . (46)

The convergence accommodation strategy adopted Chief Nanga serves to increase the confidence of the applicant.

Excerpt 7

“Abi you no fit read notice?”

“Don’t be silly!” I said, “And don’t shout at me!” . . . (105)

The divergence accommodation strategy adopted by Odili angers the gateman and creates a feeling of animosity in him which made rain abuses on him.

Excerpt 8

“I gave you ten pounds only yesterday,” I said and was about to add that unlike our opponents we had very little funds...But Boniface interrupted me.

“Are you there?” he said. “If na play we de play make you tell me because I no wan waste my time for nothing sake...” (114-115)

The divergence accommodation strategy initially adopted by Odili made Boniface , the leader of the touts to offer explanations to justify their demand for more money while the convergence accommodation strategy he adopted later helped to calm them down.

## Discussion

In the 1<sup>st</sup> excerpt from Research Question 1, the accommodation strategy displayed by the interlocutors is convergence. There, Chief Nanga converges in the content of the speech of Odili. There is a display of both Similarity-attraction and Social Exchange theories. The motivation for the accommodation strategy was influenced by the situation as pidgin serves as lingua franca in Nigeria and so it cuts across the social classes. The convergence accommodation strategy adopted by Chief Nanga created an atmosphere of cordiality between him and Odili.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> excerpt, the accommodation strategy displayed is still convergence. Odili and the journalist who are both educated people adopt pidgin as a medium of interaction because it is a lingua franca in Nigeria. Another possible reason for its use here is the informality of the context. Similarity-attraction theory is applicable here. The interlocutors are attracted to each other. The motivation for the accommodation strategy is the situation. Pidgin is a common language in some big cities. The convergence accommodation strategy adopted by the journalist created a fellows feeling in Odili.

In the third excerpt, the accommodation strategy deployed is convergence. Pidgin is readily adopted by the interlocutors which is a sign that it is acceptable to all. Similarity-attraction, Social Exchange and Causal-attribution theories are displayed in the interactions. All the interactants appear to have similar attitudes and beliefs which inform their attraction to one another. The motivation for the convergence accommodation strategy in the interaction is the situation (linguistic). Mrs Eleanor John appears to belong to a different social group based on the description given about her. This probably explains her ready use of Pidgin. The convergence accommodation strategy adopted by Chief Nanga created a jovial and relaxed atmosphere among them.

In the fourth excerpt, the accommodation strategies adopted by the interlocutors are both convergence and divergence. There the Minister converges to them in Pidgin which is readily taken up by the interlocutors. Divergence is showcased in the speech of Mrs. John who though she adopts Pidgin, diverged in the content which signals her displeasure at the remarks of the Minister that the title “Chief Dr.Mrs.” was not sweet in the mouth. The Social Exchange theory and the theory of Inter group distinctiveness are reflected in the interactions. Mrs. John’s divergence accommodation strategy occasioned by Chief Nanga’s dismissal of the prospect of a “Chief Dr. Mrs.” Is characteristic of some Nigerian females’ negative reaction to the chauvinistic tendencies suspected in their male counterparts. Credence is lent to that tendency when the journalist sarcastically affirms that the title “no catch at all” The motivation for the accommodation strategies showcased here is the situation. Chief Nanga and others apparently employ Pidgin to foster a sense of humour and to socialize apart from it being a lingua franca. The convergence accommodation strategy adopted by the interlocutors served to create a jovial and relaxed atmosphere while the divergence accommodation strategy employed by Mrs. John was used to signal her displeasure at the negative remarks of Chief Nanga and the journalist.

In the fifth excerpt, the accommodation strategy displayed is convergence. All the interlocutors readily adopt Pidgin probably because the novel is mostly set in the city. The theories of Similarity-attraction, Social Exchange and Causal attribution are displayed in the interactions. All the interlocutors have similar attitudes and beliefs which explain their attraction to one another. Social exchange theory explains their ability to share a common set of interpretative procedures that allows each of the speaker’s intentions to be encoded by the speaker and

correctly interpreted by the listeners. Causal attribution theory accounts for the interpretation that Mrs. John gave to Chief Nanga's proposal to Odili which informed her remarks. The motivation for the accommodation strategy was influenced by the situation. Pidgin serves as a common means of interaction in some big cities and is also used to foster a sense of humour and to socialize. The convergence accommodation strategy adopted by Chief Nanga and the taxi driver fostered a feeling of rapport and friendship.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> excerpt, the accommodation strategy displayed is convergence (downward).

Chief Nanga and Odili adopt pidgin in conducting an interview with the prospective cook, a code he can easily understand. Social exchange theory is displayed in the interaction because it suggests that speakers and listeners share a common set of interpretative procedures which allow the speaker's intentions to be encoded by the speaker, and correctly interpreted by the listener.

In the interaction the accommodation strategy as in the earlier one was motivated by the situation for the fact that in big cities in Nigeria, pidgin is a common linguistic code that traverses social status and level of education. This is why Chief Nanga uses it in interviewing the man that applied for the post of a cook in Bori, a city where he lived. The convergence accommodation strategy adopted Chief Nanga serves to increase the confidence of the applicant.

In the seventh excerpt there is a display of divergence accommodation strategy in the interaction between Odili and the gateman when the former wanted to drive into Anata Mission Hospital in search of Edna, the young lady betrothed to Chief Nanga but was stopped and addressed by the gateman. Apparently enraged by the rudeness of the gateman, Odili makes a deliberate shift from his speech pattern. He speaks Standard English to him in an attempt to dissociate himself. The theory of Inter group distinctiveness is showcased here. The theory argues that when members of different groups are in contact, they compare themselves on dimensions which are important to them, such as personal attributes, abilities, material possessions. Individuals here seek to find ways in which they can make themselves positively distinct from the out-group in order to enhance their social groups. The gateman evidently is biased against the likes of Odili that own cars. He makes no effort to hide his resentment of the people in that group. The motivation for the accommodation strategy was influenced by the situation, social distance and power structure. Odili is put off by the rudeness of the gateman and so he diverges to Standard English in a deliberate effort to heighten the social distance that exists between them.

The divergence accommodation strategy adopted by Odili enrages the gateman and creates a feeling of animosity in him which made rain abuses on him.

In the eighth excerpt, there is a display of both divergence and convergence accommodation strategies in the interaction that Odili had with the political touts he had engaged to counter Chief Nanga's more vicious opposition group. This was when Boniface and one of the other stalwarts woke him and demanded twenty five pounds. Odili needed to satisfy his conscience that he was exercising adequate control. The two accommodation strategies – convergence (upward and downward) and divergent speech behaviour are displayed. Odili diverges away from the speech of Boniface and his companion by speaking Standard English. This was probably necessitated by their incessant demand for money and so he puts up a tough disposition to disarm them. Boniface on responding converges upward to the speech of Odili, probably to impress him in the hope of influencing him to release money to them. Odili

converges downwards to the speech of Boniface when he informs them that Government does not sponsor them (C.P.C.). The sudden switch to Pidgin is probably in the hope of appealing to their emotion. Social exchange theory and Causal attribution theories are showcased here. Basically as a result of social exchange theory, the speakers and hearers in the above interaction share a common set of interpretative procedures which allows the speaker's intentions to be encoded by the speaker and correctly interpreted by others. Causal attribution theory accounts for the fact that the interactants engage in an interpretative process, evaluating the individuals in terms of the possible motive that is attributed as the cause of their action. The motivation for the accommodation strategy on the part of Odili was influenced first of all by the social distance. Odili and the touts do not belong to the same social class and so he diverged by speaking to them in Standard English. He converges to them in Pidgin to appeal to their emotions and possibly secure their goodwill. The divergence accommodation strategy initially adopted by Odili made Boniface, the leader of the touts to offer explanations to justify their demand for more money while the convergence accommodation strategy he adopted later helped to secure their goal.

In conclusion, the accommodation strategies displayed by the characters are convergence and divergence. The theories of similarity attraction, social exchange, causal attribution, intergroup distinctiveness are all reflected in the excerpts. The motivations for the accommodation strategies include the topic under discussion, the setting, a desire to get on well with others and to make them feel comfortable and a desire to be judged less favourably as a result of social distance. Convergence accommodation strategy enhances social interactions while divergence accommodation strategy creates hostility.

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