

Speaker-Addressee Interactions in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*: An Accommodation Theory Approach

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Abstract

The paper examines accommodation strategies adopted by speakers in their interactions. Accommodation strategies in oral discourse are convergence and divergence. Speakers are said to be in convergence when they adapt to the speech patterns of their interlocutors and to be in divergence when the verbal differences are emphasized. Using Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, 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 of the strategies on the behaviour of the interlocutors. To achieve these objectives; six sample excerpts purposively selected from the text are used as data. Findings show that convergent and divergent strategies identified are mainly motivated by the addressee, social distance, the situation and power structure. Convergence strategy adopted by the interlocutors strengthened the cordial relationship and feelings of solidarity while divergence strategy stirred hostility and indicated dissociation from the negative behaviour of the interlocutors concerned. In conclusion, convergence accommodation strategy promotes cordiality and enhances social interactions while divergence strategy encourages hostility and ill-feelings.

Key words: accommodation, speech styles, speech style-shifts, convergence, divergence, power

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 is a reflection of real life. The major motivation for undertaking this research stems from the fact that quite a number of studies exist on accommodation. An example is 'Syntax Accommodation in Social Conversations' (Rehaine Boghrati, Joe Hoover, Katie M. Johnson, Justin Garten and Morteza Deghani (2016). This study therefore is a contribution to the debate on why interlocutors employ different

accommodation strategies and their influence on social interactions. This present study seeks to examine accommodation strategies in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*. It seeks to identify the accommodation strategies 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 impact of the strategies on the behaviour of 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 Copeland (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 greater 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.

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 study 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 strategies advanced in this theory: convergence and divergence. Convergence is "the 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) 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 “the way in which speakers accentuate speech and non-verbal differences between themselves and others.” (Giles and Coupland, 65) It is 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-channeled, 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.”

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 impact(s) of the strategies on the behaviour of the interlocutors. Six sample excerpts of the accommodation strategies are used as data

Data Presentation and Analysis

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?

One of the accommodation strategies in *Arrow of God* is convergence. This is showcased in the interaction between Captain Winterbottom and his servant John (between a European and a native) when the first rain fell and the native children were running around naked and singing in the rain thus:

“What are they saying?” he asked John, who was now carrying in the deck-chairs.

“Dem talk say make rain come quick quick.”

Four other children ran in from the direction of the Boys’ quarters to join the rest on Winterbottom’s lawn which was the only space big enough for their play.

‘Are all these your pickin, John?’ there was something like envy in his voice.

‘No sir,’said John, putting down the chair and pointing. ‘My pickin na dat two wey de run yonder and dat yellow gal. Di oder two na Cook im pickin. Di oder one yonder na Gardener him brodder pickin.’(30-31)

Here, John because he belongs to a different social class, is converging upwards to the speech of his European master in an effort to translate for him. The convergent behaviour of the servant is a polite speech strategy and is one that fosters the relationship between him and his master and also enhances their communication. There is also downward convergence in the interaction. Captain Winterbottom converges downward to the speech of his servant which he finds acceptable and worth imitating – a variety that is most comfortable for the addressee in order for them to interact. This passage 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. John is attracted to the language of Captain Winterbottom who happened to be his European master hence he attempts to speak his language.

Another accommodation strategy adopted in the text is divergence. This is showcased in the interaction between Moses Unachukwu, the carpenter (an African missionary), who is familiar with the white man's language, and who was acting as an interpreter between the Otakagu age grade who were providing the labour for the white man's new road and Mr. Wright, the European road contractor thus:

'Shut up black monkeys and get down to work!'

Mr. Wright had a grating voice but one that carried far. Truce was immediately established. He turned to Unachukwu and said:

'Tell them I shall not tolerate any more slackness.'

Unachukwu translated.

'Tell them this bloody work must be finished by June.'

'The white man says that unless you finish this work in time you will know the kind of man he is.'

'No more lateness.'

'Pardin?'

'Pardin what? Can't you understand plain, simple English? I said there will be no more late-coming.'

'Oho. He says everybody must work hard and stop all this shit-eating.' (82-83)

In the above interactions there is first of all a show of prejudice attitude showcased in the address form used by Mr. Wright on the natives which is divergent in nature and also upward convergence in the speech of Moses Unachukwu as he was interpreting for Mr. Wright. In this case he is translating from English to the vernacular. There is also divergence behaviour reflected in the speech of Mr. Wright to Moses Unachukwu and to the local workforce themselves. Mr. Wright diverges by accentuating verbal differences in order to distinguish himself from Moses Unachukwu. This he does by speaking the Standard English to him. In the above interaction also, there is a display of three, out of the four social psychological theories that constitute and account for people's tendency to converge or diverge from the speech of others. The first one is the social exchange theory. It suggests that speakers and listeners share a common set of interpretative procedures that allow the speaker's intentions to be encoded by the speaker and correctly interpreted by the listener. This is showcased on the one hand in Mr. Wright's ability to encode his intentions and be correctly interpreted by Unachukwu because they share a common set of interpretative procedures. On the other hand, it explains Unachukwu's ability to encode the intentions of Mr. Wright even though he fails to render accurate interpretations to his fellow natives, the listeners in this instance because of his literacy level. Causal attribution theory which 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, accounts for Mr. Wright's divergent speech style in a show of annoyance when Moses Unachukwu says 'Pardin?', which he attributes to his inability to understand and interpret what he said. The process of inter group distinctiveness 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, 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 group. This very theory is showcased in the divergent speech of Mr. Wright, the European road contractor, who disdainfully addresses the native workforce as black 'monkeys'. It readily showcases his superior attitude and disposition to the natives who he does not want to identify with hence his divergent speech style both to Unachukwu, the interpreter and his fellow blacks. It should be pointed out that the divergent attitude of Mr. Wright towards the native workforce and Unachukwu, a display of arrogance and prejudice may have engendered feelings of inferiority and possibly rejection on the addressees. Such attitude does not foster cordial relationship.

There is another display of divergent accommodation strategy in the interaction between the court messenger and Ezeulu when he came to summon Ezeulu to Captain Winterbottom thus:

... I know that Wintabota will not send a mission of death to Ezeulu.

We are good friends. What I said was that a stranger could not come to Umuaro unless a son of the land showed him the way.' ...

Shut your mouth! roared Ezeulu. This man has come all the way from my mother's land to my house and I forbid anyone to abuse him...

'You asked me a question, continued Ezeulu turning again to the messenger.

I shall now answer you. I am that Ezeulu you spoke of. Are you satisfied?' ...

'I have not come all the way from Okperi to stretch my legs.

Your kinsman here has told you how Kaputin Winta-bor-tom has put me in charge of many of his affairs.'

'He is the chief of all the white men in these parts.

I have known him for more than ten years and I have yet to see another white man who does not tremble before him.

When he sent me he did not tell me he had a friend in Umuaro.'

He smiled in derision.

'But if what you say is true we shall know tomorrow when I take you to see him.'

'What are you talking about?' asked Akuebue in alarm.

The Court Messenger continued to smile menacingly.

'Yes,' he said. Your friend 'Wintabota' (he mouthed the name in the ignorant fashion of his hearers) 'has ordered you to appear before him tomorrow morning.'(137-138)

Here, the Chief Messenger who wants to display his distinctive social status does not wish to accommodate to Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu. He makes mockery of the way Ezeulu and others pronounce the white man's name. He aspires to a higher social status and so diverges away from the speech of a fellow native. The point of the divergent pronunciation is to signal the speaker's wish to distinguish himself from his addressees thus exhibiting pride and arrogance. Causal attribution theory is reflected in the interaction. Ezeulu's reference to Captain Winterbottom as his friend does not go down well with the court messenger who sees his own acquaintance with the white man as an exclusive privilege over other natives. The process of inter group distinctiveness is also showcased in the superior attitude of the court messenger who belongs to the semi-literate Africans that look down on the illiterate group into which Ezeulu happens to fall. Such attitude widens the social distance between groups and is counterproductive to inter personal relationships.

Divergent accommodation strategy was adopted by the characters in the text as is evident in the interaction between Corporal Matthew Nweke and the man carrying a pot of palm wine in Umuaro when the policeman went to arrest Ezeulu for his refusal to appear before the White man at Okperi:

'Where is Ezeulu's house?' asked Corporal Matthew Nweke. The man looked suspiciously at the uniformed strangers.

'Ezeulu,' he said after a long time in which he seemed to search his memory. 'Which Ezeulu?'

'How many Ezeulus do you know?' asked the corporal irritably.

'How many Ezeulus do I know?' repeated the man after him. 'I don't know any Ezeulus.'

'Why did you ask me which Ezeulu if you don't know any?'

'Why did I ask you-'

Shut up! Bloody fool!! Shouted the policeman in English.

'I say I don't know any Ezeulu. I am a stranger here.'(151)

In the above interaction there is divergent speech behaviour which is due to the social distance. The Corporal evidently irritated at evasive behaviour displayed by the man, switches over to English in a show of indignation and arrogance. Both men do not wish to accommodate to each other's speech. The gross speech divergent behaviour exhibited by the addressee is influenced by contextual cultural factors. The man is suspicious of the uniformed strangers hence the divergent strategy. It is against the norm in the Igbo society to divulge information on a fellow native to strangers and so in this case divergence is

expected. The little boy who unwittingly eventually led the policemen to Ezeulu's house received a beating from the mother when the act was reported to her by an old woman who observed them. Divulging such information would be considered as a token of dissociation from group's values and norms and would serve as a signal of unwarranted friendliness and allegiance to the opposing group. This also highlights the process of inter group distinctiveness which has it that when members of different groups come in contact they compare themselves on dimensions which are important to them. The man employs divergent speech style because he perceives that their group membership and interest is being threatened.

Convergence accommodation strategy is again adopted by the characters in the text as reflected in the interaction among Captain Winterbottom's servants and Clarke's steward on the Whiteman's ignorance of African science (juju). Ezeulu's arrest was misconstrued as the reason behind Winterbottom's sudden illness on the day he sent policemen to go and arrest the chief priest of Umuaro thus:

(John Nwodika) 'Did I not say so?' he asked the other servants after their master had been removed to the hospital. 'Was it for nothing I refused to follow the policemen? I told them that the chief priest of Umuaro is not a soup you can lick in a hurry.' His voice carried a note of pride.

'Our master thinks that because he is a white man our medicine cannot touch him.' He switched over to English for the benefit of Clarke's steward who came in just then and who did not speak Ibo.

'I use to tellam say black man juju no be something wey man fit take play. But when I tellam na so so laugh im de laugh. When he finish laugh he call me John and I say Massa. He say you too talk bush talk. I tellam say O-o, one day go be one day. You no see now?' (155)

Here, there is convergence strategy. John Nwodika accommodates to Clarke's steward and converges upward to him by code-switching to pidgin, a linguistic code he can understand. This speech style shift showcases similarity-attraction theory. John Nwodika has attraction for pidgin which is the code that Clarke's steward understands and so he speaks it in order to include him in the discussion. Code switching by way of accommodation enhances communication while fostering social relationships.

Another instance of the divergent accommodation strategy in the text is evident in the conversation between Clarke and the court messenger when the former and Wade, another European drove back from the hospital where they went to see Captain Winterbottom thus:

'Deven Sah', said the man.

'Good evening,' replied Clarke.

'De witch-doctor from Umuaro don come.'

There was fear in his voice as though he was reporting the arrival of smallpox in the village.

'I beg your pardon.'

The man gave more details and it was only then that Clarke understood he was talking about Ezeulu.

'Lock him up in the guardroom till morning,' Clarke made to enter the bungalow.

'Massa say make I putam for gaddaloom?'

'That's what I said,' shouted Clarke. 'Are you deaf?'

'No be say I deaf sah but...'

'Get out.'(156)

In this instance, there is divergent speech behaviour. Mr. Clarke clearly shows no interest in accommodating to the speech of the court messenger and so dismisses him unceremoniously. The divergent behaviour is also influenced by the context of the speech situation. Clarke is infuriated by the chief priest's stubborn attitude and also anxious about the deteriorating health of Captain Winterbottom. In line with Similarity attraction theory, the court messenger's convergent speech behaviour obviously is to increase his master's attraction to him and to obtain social approval (reward) from the white man. However, on this occasion it also brings forth costs – an increased effort to converge. The divergent

behaviour of Clarke may have resulted in feelings of rejection on the Court Messenger, an act which does not foster interpersonal relationships.

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

Excerpt 1

‘What are they saying?’ he asked John. . . (30-31)

The motivation for the accommodation strategy adopted in the above interaction between Captain Winterbottom and his servant John, a native was the addressee. Captain Winterbottom is a European and so John in adopting pidgin in speaking to him is accommodating (upward convergence) to his speech in the only code available for him to interact with his European master. Achebe in his accommodative stance causes John to use pidgin to interact with his European master because it the only code available for them to interact with. Here also the captain is accommodating (downward convergence) to the linguistic code (pidgin) of his servant which he fancies. The servant also converges upwards to the speech of his master in response. The writer employed pidgin to serve as lingua franca between the interlocutors.

Excerpt 2

‘Shut up you black monkeys and get down to work’ ... (82-83)

The motivation for the accommodation strategies in the above passage was social distance. First of all Mr. Wright, a European heightens the racial difference between him and his addressees and is divergent in his accommodative stance. He employs derogatory address form on the natives. Secondly, Moses Unachukwu, the carpenter (an African missionary) who is familiar with the white man’s language is acting as an interpreter between the Otakagu age grade who were providing the labour for the white man’s new road and Mr. Wright. Unachukwu converges to the natives by translating from English to the vernacular. The shift in speech style of Mr. Wright to Unachukwu was occasioned by the latter’s inability to fully grasp and possibly interpret accurately what he had just said. The researcher is of the view that Mr. Wright’s divergent behaviour may have caused a feeling of inferiority in Unachukwu and eroded his translation efforts.

Excerpt 3

“ ... I know that Wintabottom will not send a mission of death to Ezeulu ...” (137-138)

The motivation for the accommodation strategy in the interaction above was social distance. Social distance as earlier noted is “the perceived or desired degree of remoteness between a member of one social group and the members of another as evidenced in the level of intimacy tolerated between them.” The policeman is assertive of his superior social status by pronouncing Captain Winterbottom’s name in the ignorant fashion of his hearers. This divergent behaviour, in the view of the researcher, may widen the social distance between the groups and thus hinder communication.

Excerpt 4

‘Where is Ezeulu’s house?’ asked Corporal Matthew Nweke... (151)

The motivation for the accommodation strategy in the interaction in the excerpt above was social distance. The policeman, though an African belongs to a different social class. The notion of social distance includes differences such as social class, race/ethnicity, gender or sexuality and also the fact that different groups mix less than the members of the same group. The evasive behaviour displayed by the old man is irritating to him. He therefore switches to English in a show of indignation and superiority.

Excerpt 5

(John Nwodika) ‘Did I not say so? He asked the other servants ... (155)

The motivation for the style-shift in the excerpt above was influenced by the situation. John Nwodika who is second steward to Captain Winterbottom accommodated to Clarke’s steward (a non-Ibo) and converged upwards by code switching to pidgin, a code the steward can understand.

Excerpt 6

‘Deven sah,’ said the man... (156)

The motivation for the accommodation strategy exhibited by Mr. Clarke in the above interaction was the situation which in turn is influenced by power structure. He is infuriated by the chief priest's stubborn attitude in refusing to be made a warrant chief. He is also anxious about the deteriorating health of Captain Winterbottom whom they had just visited at the hospital. He therefore diverges in his speech behaviour. The researcher is of the view that a more polite reaction would better enhance a cordial interpersonal relationship.

What are the impacts of the strategies on the behaviour of the interlocutor?

Excerpt1

'What are they saying?' he asked John. . . (30-31)

The convergence attitude adopted by Captain Winterbottom sets his native servant, John at ease and fosters cordial relationship between them.

Excerpt 2

'Shut up you black monkeys and get down to work'... (82-83)

The divergence strategy employed by Mr. Wright wrought fear among the native labour force and even Unachukwu who was translating for him and sets them on edge. In all it brought about a breakdown in communication.

Excerpt3

"... I know that Wintabottom will not send a mission of death to Ezeulu... (137-138)

The divergence strategy adopted by the court messenger towards Ezeulu and his friend Akuebue instilled fear and intimidation in them and brought about a breakdown in communication.

Excerpt 4

'Where is Ezeulu's house?' asked Corporal Matthew Nweke... (151)

The divergence strategy employed by Corporal Matthew Nweke towards the man carrying a pot of wine in Umuaro brought about a breakdown in communication as he declined from going further in the interaction.

Excerpt 5

(John Nwodika) 'Did I not say so? ... (155)

The convergence strategy adopted by John Nweke towards Clarke's steward gave him a sense of belonging and made for solidarity among them.

Excerpt 6

The divergence strategy adopted by Clark towards the court messenger froze the atmosphere and brought about a breakdown in communication between them.

Discussion

In the 1st excerpt from the first research question, the accommodation strategy displayed is convergence. Here, John, native servant to Captain Winterbottom, a European converges upward to the speech of his master in an effort to translate for him. The convergent behaviour of the servant is seen as a polite speech strategy and one that fosters cordial relationship between him and his master. Downward convergence is also reflected in the interaction. Captain Winterbottom converges downwards to the speech of his servant which he finds acceptable and worth imitating especially as it enhances their interaction. It also depicts "a desire to get on well with others and make them feel comfortable," another reason for accommodation offered by Holmes (244) The theory of similarity-attraction is showcased here 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. John attempts to speak the language of his European master, Captain Winterbottom because he is attracted to it. The motivation for the accommodation strategies adopted was the addressee. Captain Winterbottom is a European and so John in adopting pidgin in speaking to him is accommodating (upward convergence) to his speech. Achebe in his accommodative stance causes John to use pidgin to interact with his European master because it is the only code available for them to interact. He employed pidgin to serve as lingua franca between the interlocutors. Giles and Coupland (1991) observe that increased intelligibility is a byproduct of convergence. The convergence

attitude adopted by Captain Winterbottom sets his native servant, John at ease and fosters a cordial relationship between them.

In the 2nd excerpt, the accommodation strategy displayed is divergence. Unachukwu, the carpenter (an African missionary) who is familiar with the white man's language acts as an interpreter between the Otakagu age grade and Mr. Wright. There is a show of prejudice attitude as evident in the address form used by Mr. Wright on the natives which is divergent in nature. Convergence (upward) accommodation strategy is showcased as Unachukwu was interpreting for Mr. Wright from English to vernacular. There is also divergence behaviour reflected in the speech of Mr. Wright both to Unachukwu and the local workforce. Mr. Wright diverges by accentuating verbal differences in order to distinguish himself from Moses Unachukwu. He does this by speaking Standard English to him. In the above interaction also, there is a display of three, out of the four social psychological theories that constitute and account for people's tendency to converge or diverge from the speech of others. The first one is the social exchange theory. It suggests that speakers and listeners share a common set of interpretative procedures that allow the speaker's intentions to be encoded by the speaker and correctly interpreted by the listener. This is showcased on the one hand in Mr. Wright's ability to encode his intentions and be correctly interpreted by Unachukwu because they share a common set of interpretative procedures. On the other hand, it explains Unachukwu's ability to encode the intentions of Mr. Wright even though he fails to render accurate interpretations to his fellow natives, the listeners in this instance because of his literacy level. Causal attribution theory which 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, accounts for Mr. Wright's divergent speech style in a show of annoyance when Moses Unachukwu says 'Pardin?', which he attributes to his inability to understand and interpret what he said. The process of inter group distinctiveness 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, 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 group. This very theory is showcased in the divergent speech of Mr. Wright, the European road contractor, who disdainfully addresses the native workforce as black 'monkeys'. It readily showcases his superior attitude and disposition to the natives who he does not want to identify with hence his divergent speech style both to Unachukwu, the interpreter and his fellow blacks. It should be pointed out that the divergent attitude of Mr. Wright towards the native workforce and Unachukwu, a display of arrogance and prejudice may have engendered feelings of inferiority and possibly rejection on the,,,,,, addressees. Such attitude does not foster cordial relationship. The motivation for the accommodation strategies in the above passage was social distance. Mr. Wright, a European heightens the racial difference between him and his addressees and is divergent in his accommodative stance. Unachukwu converges to the natives by translating from English to the vernacular. The shift in speech style of Mr. Wright to Unachukwu was occasioned by the latter's inability to fully grasp and possibly interpret accurately what he had just said. The researcher is of the view that Mr. Wright's divergent behaviour may have caused a feeling of inferiority in Unachukwu and thus eroded his translation efforts. The divergence strategy employed by Mr. Wright wrought fear among the local labour force including Unachukwu who was translating for him and sets them on edge.

In the 3rd excerpt, the accommodation strategy deployed is convergence. Here, the Chief Messenger who wants to display his distinctive social status does not wish to accommodate to Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu. He makes mockery of the way Ezeulu and others pronounce the white man's name. He aspires to a higher social status and so diverges away from the speech of a fellow native. The point of the divergent pronunciation is to signal the speaker's wish to distinguish himself from his addressees thus exhibiting pride and arrogance. This highlights Holme's (2013) observation the point of divergent pronunciation may signal the speakers' wish to distinguish themselves from their addressees. Causal attribution theory is reflected in the interaction. Ezeulu's reference to Captain Winterbottom as his friend does not go down well with the court messenger who sees his own acquaintance with the white man as an exclusive privilege over other natives. The process of inter group distinctiveness is also showcased in the superior attitude of the court messenger who belongs to the semi-literate Africans that

look down on the illiterate group into which Ezeulu happens to fall. Such attitude widens the social distance between groups and is counterproductive to inter personal relationships. The motivation for the accommodation strategy in the interaction was social distance. Social distance as earlier noted is “the perceived or desired degree of remoteness between a member of one social group and the members of another as evidenced in the level of intimacy tolerated between them.” The policeman is assertive of his superior social status by pronouncing Captain Winterbottom’s name in the ignorant fashion of his hearers. This divergent behaviour, in the view of the researcher, may widen the social distance between the groups and thus hinder communication.

In the 4th excerpt, the accommodation strategy displayed is divergence which is due to social distance. The Corporal evidently irritated at evasive behaviour displayed by the man, switches over to English in a show of indignation and arrogance. Both men do not wish to accommodate to each other’s speech. The gross speech divergent behaviour exhibited by the addressee is influenced by contextual cultural factors. The man is suspicious of the uniformed strangers hence the divergent strategy. It is against the norm in the Igbo society to divulge information on a fellow native to strangers and so in this case divergence is expected. The little boy who unwittingly eventually led the policemen to Ezeulu’s house received a beating from the mother when the act was reported to her by an old woman who observed them. Wardhaugh (2010) avers that “divergence is behind exaggerating differences...” Divulging such information would be considered as a token of dissociation from group’s values and norms and would serve as a signal of unwarranted friendliness and allegiance to the opposing group. This also highlights the process of inter group distinctiveness which has it that when members of different groups come in contact they compare themselves on dimensions which are important to them. The man employs divergent speech style because he perceives that their group membership and interest is being threatened. The motivation for the accommodation strategy in the interaction was social distance. The policeman, though an African belongs to a different social class. The notion of social distance as earlier noted includes differences such as social class, race/ethnicity, gender or sexuality and also the fact that different groups mix less than the members of the same group. The evasive behaviour displayed by the old man is irritating to him. He therefore switches to English in a show of indignation and superiority. The divergence strategy adopted by Corporal Matthew Nweke towards the man carrying a pot of wine in Umuaro brought about a breakdown in communication as he declined from further interaction with him.

In the 5th excerpt, the accommodation strategy displayed is convergence. John Nwodika accommodates to Clarke’s steward and converges upward to him by code-switching to pidgin, a linguistic code he can understand. This speech style shift showcases similarity-attraction theory. John Nwodika has attraction for pidgin which is the code that Clarke’s steward understands and so he speaks it in order to include him in the discussion. Wardhaugh (2010) notes that “code switching allows a speaker to meet someone else half-way, establish common ground, and show flexibility and openness.” Code switching by way of accommodation enhances communication while fostering social relationships. The motivation for the style-shift in the excerpt above was influenced by the situation. John Nwodika who is second steward to Captain Winterbottom accommodated to Clarke’s steward (a non-Ibo) and converged upwards by code switching to pidgin, a code the steward can understand. The convergence strategy employed by John Nwodika towards Clarke’s steward gave him a sense of belonging and strengthened their relationship.

In the 6th excerpt, the accommodation strategy displayed is divergence. Mr. Clarke clearly shows no interest in accommodating to the speech of the court messenger and so dismisses him unceremoniously. The divergent behaviour is also influenced by the context of the speech situation. Clarke is infuriated by the chief priest’s stubborn attitude and also anxious about the deteriorating health of Captain Winterbottom. In line with Similarity attraction theory, the court messenger’s upward convergent speech behaviour obviously is to increase his master’s attraction to him and to obtain social approval (reward) from him. However, on this occasion it also brings forth costs – an increased effort to converge. The divergent behaviour of Clarke may have resulted in feelings of rejection on the Court Messenger, an act which

does not foster interpersonal relationships. The motivation for the accommodation strategy exhibited by Mr. Clarke in the above interaction was the situation and power structure. He is infuriated by the chief priest's stubborn attitude in refusing to be made a warrant chief. He is also anxious about the deteriorating health of Captain Winterbottom whom they had just visited at the hospital. He therefore diverges in his speech behaviour. The researcher is of the view that a more polite reaction would better enhance a cordial interpersonal relationship. The divergence strategy adopted by Clarke towards the court messenger froze the atmosphere and brought about a breakdown in communication.

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. Motivations for the accommodation strategies include addressee, social distance, the situation and power structure. The convergence strategies adopted by the speakers set the interlocutors at ease fostered a cordial relationship among them while the divergence strategy marred the relationship and led to a breakdown in communication.

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