

CODE CHOICE IN INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATION: SPEECH ACCOMMODATION THEORY AND PRAGMATICS¹

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1. Introduction.

The purpose of this article is to re-examine the social evaluation of patterns of code choice in intercultural conversations. While certain strategies of code choice have been claimed in the Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) framework to have one predominant social meaning, in the pragmatic approach chosen here, these strategies of code choice are predicted to be sociopragmatically ambiguous. The range of listener responses to conversations in which speakers use these strategies supports the claim that these strategies are sociopragmatically ambiguous.

The paper will first summarize the claims about code choice strategies made in the framework of Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT). In contrast, the explicitly pragmatic approaches of Brown and Levinson (1987) and C.M. Scotton (1983 (see also Myers-Scotton 1993)), which predict a systematic sociopragmatic ambiguity for any act of code choice in an intercultural conversation, will be described next. The fourth section will describe the details of research designed to uncover this ambiguity in bilingual listeners' reactions to speakers who use different code choice strategies, and the fifth section will give results of that research.

2. Speech Accommodation Theory.

The claims of Speech Accommodation Theory (and indeed the names of various refinements of the theory) have evolved over the past 20 years, so I will attempt here to give only an overview of the claims of the basic framework (Giles and Coupland 1991 give an excellent summary of the work within this framework). The general thrust of SAT is that attempts to match linguistic features of an interlocutor (pronunciation features, pacing, and code choice), known as *convergence*, "may plausibly be considered

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a reflection of an individual's desire for social approval" (Giles and Coupland 1991: 72), and will win the speaker more social approval than other possible strategies. Thus, Genesee and Bourhis (1982) presented groups of listeners constructed conversations in which the speakers either converged to the code of the interlocutor, or failed to do so. Using the matched-guise technique (i.e., the same bilingual actors play both converging and non-converging roles), Genesee and Bourhis claimed that speakers tend to be more positively evaluated when they converge to the language or linguistic characteristics of the interlocutor. However, such approval will not necessarily be universal. In cases where there is social or political tension between the groups to which the speakers and listeners belong, members of an in-group may feel less solidarity with a speaker who converges to the out-group, even while they cede that speaker higher ratings on measures of status (Bourhis et al. 1975). Furthermore, too much convergence may be seen as threatening to listeners of the group to whose code the speaker converges (Giles and Coupland 1991: 79; Giles and Smith 1979). Rather, what wins approval for a speaker is the attempt: In their seminal paper, Giles, Taylor & Bourhis (1973) claimed that a single French Canadian speaker who made tape recordings in four linguistic guises (including one in fluent English) was rated most favorably by English Canadian listeners who heard his accented and less fluent English: That is, he was rated highest when he was perceived as trying hard to speak the language of his anglophone listeners; indeed Giles et al. showed that attempts at reciprocal accommodation (such as trying to speak French in a communication directed at the original speaker) occurred more often when the speaker used English. Although researchers are aware (as listener-judges probably are, too) that a variety of motivations may cause a speaker to converge to the language of the interlocutor (Simard et al. 1976), and that linguistic convergence may sometimes be accompanied by psychological divergence (Thakerar et al. 1982), in the SAT tradition, there is a tendency to evaluate convergence as a positive, friendly intergroup and interpersonal strategy (Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Giles & Coupland 1988: 178). This evaluation is quite intuitive, as anyone can attest who has made the effort to put her classroom knowledge of a foreign language to work in conversations with native speakers; one reason that people may try to learn and use foreign languages is to avoid appearing arrogant and non-accommodating in encounters with speakers of other languages.

2.1. Re-examination of Giles et al.

However, this intuition that speaking another's language is accommodating, and the theory which reflects this intuition tell only half the story, as is revealed by a closer look at the landmark paper by Giles et al. (1973). Giles et al. (1973) had a bilingual French Canadian (FC) record a text in four linguistic guises; it was found that, in accordance with two of the researchers' hypotheses, English Canadian (EC) listeners were most likely to try to speak French back to this person if they perceived the FC speaker to have made a great deal of effort in trying to speak English to them. However, contrary to what has been widely reported, when listeners were asked to rate the speaker on

various Likert scales, EC listeners did not rate the FC speaker higher on scales for considerateness or on attempting to bridge the cultural gap when he spoke English instead of French; indeed, the statistics, as published, reproduced below in table 1 (see particularly the second and third rows in the table), show a slightly higher rating on both these variables when the speaker speaks his own language, French. This study has been widely interpreted as showing that convergence - that is, the attempt to make one's own communication more like that of the interlocutor - is perceived as accommodating, but the statistics in the published version do not support this interpretation, although the behavior of the EC listeners can certainly be interpreted as doing so. This motivates re-opening the question whether hearers actually do perceive convergence to be as accommodating as it is thought to be in the SAT tradition.

TABLE I. *Mean ratings of Ss and their F values on four scales*

Rating scales ΣN=80	Stimulus conditions				F value (df=3,76)
	Nonfluent English (n=20)	Fluent English (n=20)	Mix- mix (n=20)	French (n=20)	
Ease in reproducing drawing	5.93	6.20	2.85	4.30	13.04**
Effort in bridging cultural gap made by FC speakers	1.30	1.70	2.15	3.65	9.71**
FC's considerate- ness	1.67	1.95	2.00	2.90	3.22*
EC's relaxation when giving des- cription to FC	2.16	3.65	1.80	3.65	4.23*

The higher the mean ratings the more ease, effort, considerateness and relaxation was felt by Ss.

**p<0.01 *p<0.05
(Giles et al. 1973: 184)

Giles et al. included open-ended questions in their survey instrument, in an attempt to find out the reasons behind subjects' ratings of the speaker in different linguistic guises. They report that these questions 'yielded very little valuable

information" (except for an explanation from listeners who heard the speaker in his fluent English guise, that they were responding in English, because the speaker's English was better than their own French) (Giles et al. 1973: 185-186). Another motivation for the current study, then, is to try again to see whether open-ended questions can be used fruitfully in the investigation of code choice. The issue in code choice studies is not only whether a particular code choice strategy garners positive or negative reactions from listeners, but also why it provokes the reactions it does. Quantitative approaches to code choice answer this second question by means of plausible inference: If a large number of listeners approve of a converging speaker, for example, it can be inferred that listeners like to have speakers make the effort to accommodate to them. But a qualitative approach, such as the use of open-ended questions, allows listeners to make direct statements about their reactions to a particular code choice strategy (although it does not necessarily guarantee that they will do so). A qualitative approach does not rule out the researchers' use of inference to explain results, but it does add a particularly valuable type of information, in allowing listeners to make their own explanations (although these explanations are subject to all the ills self-report is heir to: A listener may claim that she would speak German in a given situation, but might not actually do so in the heat of battle). For this reason, it seemed useful to attempt again to tap listener reactions by means of open-ended questions.

A third question also motivated the current study: How valid is the SAT-predicted preference for convergence in encounters between bilinguals from monolingual language communities who have voluntarily chosen to learn a particular second language, in other words, for advanced language learners? Much of SAT research has been in communities where language is tied up with interethnic relations that are problematic. Giles et al (1991: 35) report anecdotal evidence of negative reactions on the part of French Canadians to attempts at accommodation by English Canadians, and Woolard (1989: 69) has reported similar reactions by Catalan speakers to the attempts of Castilian speakers to converge, but both of these are areas where language has been a focal point for ethnic tension. Heller (1982) gives further ethnographic evidence that code choice can be problematic and ambiguous in its social effect, in Montreal. But SAT research has not addressed the question of accommodation between language communities where interethnic relations are relatively harmonious. In such a case, if a person is motivated to speak her second language because she is eager to improve her knowledge of it, or because she wants to put her voluntarily acquired knowledge to work, will she welcome convergence to her native language by an interlocutor, as SAT would predict? Or might she instead find an interlocutor's attempt to converge to her language sociopragmatically problematic? In other words, is code choice inherently ambiguous, regardless of relations between the relevant ethnic groups? This question is closely related to the pragmatic considerations to be discussed next.

3. Pragmatic approaches to code choice.

In addition to the questions above about the claim that convergence is accommodating, theoretical developments in pragmatics raise further questions about this interpretation of the convergence strategy. These developments are (1) the Politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), and (2) the theory of identity negotiation of Scotton (1983), more recently presented as the Markedness Model of codeswitching (Myers-Scotton 1993). This section will show that both these models predict that a convergence strategy can be interpreted as sociopragmatically ambiguous.

Basic to Politeness theory is the notion of face. Brown and Levinson (1987) propose two types of face; both types have the crucial characteristic that only actions and utterances by other people can satisfy the individual's need for that kind of face. Negative face, or deference, is the individual's need to be uninhibited in actions or utterances. Positive face, on the other hand, is the need to have one's actions meet with approval from others. Much of politeness behavior is thought to be an attempt to balance the face needs of interacting individuals.

In an initial meeting between two speakers, each a learner of the other's native language, each speaker can be assumed to have a negative face want to speak her own language, because to do so is less inhibiting to self-expression; however each can also be assumed to have a positive face want to speak her second language and to gain the approval of a native speaker (acceptance of a non-native speaker as a conversational partner constitutes in itself a certain amount of approval of the non-native speaker's language learning efforts). However, for any given individual learner, it is not obvious which face want will be stronger at the time. Furthermore, an action which satisfies the negative face want - speaking the person's native language - is a possible affront to her possible positive face want; conversely, to speak an interlocutor's second language only, out of regard for her positive face, runs the risk of ignoring her possible wish to be paid deference by being spoken to in her native language. Each possible code choice - to speak the other's native language, or to speak the other's second language - is potentially sociopragmatically ambiguous, as shown in (1):

(1)	<u>code choice</u>	<u>positive politeness</u>	<u>deference</u>
	interlocutor's NL	-	+
	interlocutor's SL	+	-

How, exactly, a given listener will interpret an act of code choice on the part of any speaker is not necessarily straightforward (indeed, Giles has pointed out (personal communication) that if a speaker intends to diverge psychologically and this is conveyed through non-verbal signals, any otherwise accommodating move will not be perceived as such). In addition to the pragmatic considerations here, the individual listener's background and the immediate conversational context will play a role in which interpretation the listener will favor (Bourhis 1985 examines the sequence of code choices, among other factors, in an intercultural situation: he found that attempting to speak the language of the interlocutor early in the conversation may mitigate possible negative effects of returning later to one's own language; but again, his study did not consider that speakers might in some cases prefer to speak their second language).

Scotton's model similarly predicts sociopragmatic ambiguity for any act of code

choice. In Scotton's model, codes are symbolic for sets of rights and obligations (RO sets) between speakers. By changing the code, a speaker may convey a wish to change the operative RO set for the interaction. Using an explicitly Gricean framework, Scotton proposes maxims for the interpretation of code choice, of which the two most important, for our purposes, are given in (2):

- (2) The Deference Maxim: Show deference in your code choice to those from whom you desire something (Scotton 1983: 123).

The Virtuosity Maxim: Make an otherwise marked choice whenever the linguistic ability of either S(peaker) or A(ddressee) makes the unmarked choice for the unmarked RO set in a conventionalized exchange infelicitous. (Scotton 1983: 125).

Hearers may use these maxims to derive inferences about the speaker's intent. For example, if a speaker chooses her interlocutor's native language, the interlocutor may infer that the speaker is showing deference (by the deference maxim), or, on the other hand, that the interlocutor's abilities in the speaker's native language are deemed inadequate (by the virtuosity maxim). Saville-Troike (1989: 194) gives evidence of Dutch, Turkish and Chinese speakers expressing negative reactions to the attempts of English-speaking foreigners to use those languages, perhaps because they felt that those attempts conveyed that their English was not good enough. For a speaker to take the other possible tack, however, is equally risky. If an English speaker, for example, chooses her own native language, she may convey that the interlocutor's English is good, but she may also convey a lack of deference.

Speakers in the situation where each is a second language learner of the other's native language are in a sociopragmatic double-bind, in that either choice of code allows both positive and negative interpretations. Given the sociopragmatic ambiguity of each of the two choices open to a speaker, speakers may decide to divide their eggs between two baskets, and to switch codes - at least until they find a code or norm that both speakers will be happy with.

Codeswitching, however, comes in a variety of patterns. A speaker may try out the language of the interlocutor, and then switch back to her own language -for a number of reasons. A less confident speaker may hesitate to try her second language, and then, encouraged by her interlocutor, eventually do so. Another may decide that the chance to speak her second language is one not to be missed, and so charge ahead with an "L2-only" strategy.

Burt (1990), in an analysis of conversations recorded between pairs of bilingual learners, German learners of English, and American learners of German, showed that code-switching decisions in bilingual conversations were based on a variety of motivations, ranging from the inability to find the right word in the language of the moment to an altruistic desire to give the interlocutor a chance to practice her second language. Each of the resulting choices, however, has the possibility of multiple social interpretations of the intentions behind it, because, as shown above, each individual act of code choice is potentially pragmatically ambiguous. Thus, in a conversation between two speakers, each a second language learner of the other's first language, we could predict that while the L2-only strategy (or convergence) might be construed

as showing deference by some listeners, others might interpret it as conveying lack of approval of the interlocutor's abilities in her L2. Conversely, some might find that for a speaker to use her native language with a non-native speaker whose native language she knows shows a lack of deference, while others might approve this generous gesture of allowing the interlocutor to use her L2. In other words, rather than finding universal approval for one strategy and disapproval for another, we can expect to find mixed judgments for any act of code choice.

Burt (1992), using the same recorded data, found it necessary to distinguish between convergence to the interlocutor's native language, and *compliance*, choosing the language that the interlocutor is speaking at the moment. Given this distinction, it was found that speakers in conversations where each had complied with the other's code choice, i.e., had chosen the same language the interlocutor chose, were more likely to have congruent predictions about code choice in future conversations than speakers who had mutually converged, that is, had each chosen her interlocutor's native language, regardless of the interlocutor's immediate language choice. The complying pairs were more likely to develop shared norms for code choice than the mutually converging pairs. This suggested that convergence, that is, speaking the interlocutor's native language, was not always perceived as entirely accommodating, whereas compliance, speaking what the interlocutor seems to want to speak at the moment, is. Based on that suggestion, and the pragmatic considerations given above, the following hypotheses were generated:

- 1) Listener reactions to a conversation in which speakers converge to each other's language would be mixed, some positive, some negative, rather than wholly positive.
- 2) Listeners to a conversation characterized by compliance in code choice would approve of the speakers more highly than listeners to a conversation in which speakers mutually converge.

Thus, the current study was designed to follow up on the claim that convergence was sociopragmatically ambiguous by collecting reactions from other bilinguals.

4. Method.

4.1. Data elicitation

In order to explore the notion that listener reactions would reflect the inherent pragmatic ambiguity of code choices in intercultural conversations, two matched guise conversations were devised as prompts for bilingual listeners who then answered open-ended questions on an accompanying questionnaire. A single short conversation between two students, one American and one German, was scripted, and then arranged so that each of two versions had a different pattern of code choice. In one

version, each of the two speakers switched codes twice, once to her native language and once to her second language. In this script, each speaker also complied with both switches of code initiated by her interlocutor; that is, when the interlocutor switched codes, the speaker used the code the interlocutor switched to. This pattern of compliance has been claimed (Burt 1992) to be more accommodating than convergence alone. This script (the compliance conversation or conversation A) is given below (Maria is the German student, and Kay is the American):

- (3) Maria: Und wo kommst du her?
Kay: Aus Urbana. Urbana.
Maria: Die Stadt kenne ich nicht.
Kay: Urbana liegt südlich von Chicago. Right in the middle of the cornfields.
Maria: Is it in Illinois or another state?
Kay: In Illinois. In the middle of Illinois. Und du? Wo kommst du her?
Maria: Aus Lübeck. Ich weiss nicht, ob du die Stadt kennst.
Kay: Liegt Lübeck nördlich von Hamburg?
Maria: Ja, genau! How good that you've heard of it!
Kay: Well, I was in Bremen for a year as an exchange student. And that isn't very far from Lübeck.
Maria: No, it isn't. Und die zwei Städte sind auch relativ ähnlich, weil sie beide alte Hansestädte sind. Hat Bremen dir gefallen?
Kay: Ja, Bremen hat mir gut gefallen.

While it may seem that this conversation contains a high frequency of switches, this actually mirrors the high frequency of switches found in the beginnings of conversations described in Burt (1992: 181). Notice that each speaker initiates two switches of code: Kay switches first from German to English, and Maria complies. Kay switches in her next turn from English to German, and Maria again complies. Later, Maria switches from German to English in one turn, and from English to German in another turn. In both cases, Kay complies.²

The second conversation was identical in content, but the pattern of code choice was different in that each speaker persisted in speaking her second language, that is, she consistently converged to the interlocutor's first language, and did not comply with her interlocutor's immediate code choice, regardless of the fact that the interlocutor was also speaking *her* second language. This conversation (the convergence conversation or conversation B) is given below in (4) (Gisela is the German student, and Lisa is the American):

- (4) Gisela: Where are you from? What city in the states?
Lisa: Aus Urbana. Urbana.
Gisela: Oh dear! I've never heard of it! Where is it?
Lisa: Urbana liegt südlich von Chicago. Rund herum sind lauter Maisfelder.
Gisela: Is it in Illinois or in another state?

² While it is conceivable that the order of switch-initiation plays a role in listener reactions, the small number of available listeners rendering testing this possibility impossible. It will, quite frankly, have to left to future research to investigate this (but see Bourhis 1985).

Lisa: In Illinois. Genau in der Mitte. Und du? Wo kommst du her?

Gisela: From Lübeck. I don't know if you've heard of it.

Lisa: Liegt Lübeck nördlich von Hamburg?

Gisela: Yes, exactly! How good that you've heard of it!

Lisa: Ja, ich war ein Jahr Austauschschülerin in Bremen. Und Bremen ist nicht weit von Lübeck.

Gisela: No, it isn't. And the two cities are relatively similar, because they're both old Hanseatic cities. Did you like Bremen?

Lisa: Ja, Bremen hat mir gut gefallen.

Both conversations were then recorded by the same two bilingual speakers, both of whom were excellent speakers of their second languages.³ The resulting recordings are controlled for both content and speaker effects, and only the patterns of code choice are different. Listeners were asked to listen to and react to one of the conversations, and were assigned to alternate conversations so that an equal number of listeners heard each conversation.⁴

It was initially hypothesized, in line with Burt (1992), that listeners would evaluate the two conversations differently, and show not only (1) mixed reactions to conversation B, the one with mutual convergence, but also (2) higher evaluations for conversation A, where each speaker complies with the other's switches. As will be seen below, while there is some evidence for a preference for compliance on the part of a few listeners, there is not enough evidence to support a claim that compliance is the preferred strategy for all. Instead, we will see that both codeswitching patterns elicited mixed reactions from listeners.

Previous research on code choice (Bourhis 1985; Giles et al. 1973) has relied on Likert scale evaluations of speakers. Here, a questionnaire with open-ended questions was used instead, since the main interest was to find reasons behind listener evaluations of speakers, as mentioned above. Listeners were asked to write out their evaluations of each speaker on the tape they heard, first on status characteristics, such as intelligence, education level, skill at the second language, and confidence, and then on solidarity characteristics such as friendliness, likeability, considerateness, and eagerness

³ The reader for the roles of Kay and Lisa was the American wife of a professor of German, who had lived in Germany with her husband, and who speaks without a noticeable American accent. The reader who played Maria and Gisela was the native German wife of another American professor, who has lived in central Illinois for at least five years, and who speaks English so well that her linguistic origins are not immediately obvious. The author thanks them both.

⁴ Two types of matched guise recordings are used for different types of research: Research on the relative evaluations of codes or of their features uses a within-subjects design, in which all subjects hear both (or all) versions of the test (Giles and Smith 1979; Lambert 1967; Woolard 1989). On the other hand, researchers investigating code choice seem to prefer an across-subjects design, in which subjects are split between two or more groups, with each group hearing only one version of the test (Bourhis 1984, 1985; Bourhis, Giles and Lambert 1975; Genesee and Bourhis 1982 and 1988; Giles et al. 1973). This preference may be due to the low intra-subject reliability of the test, cited by Lambert (1967: 94). Since the aim of the current study did not include the type of group statistical analysis for which a within-subjects design is appropriate, the across-subjects design was chosen instead.

to learn about other people and other countries. In addition, they were asked whether they would like to meet each of the two speakers. There were also questions asking subjects to evaluate the conversation as a whole (the entire questionnaire is given in the appendix). Open-ended questions were chosen as more likely than a quantitative measure to reveal not only the listeners' reasons for their reactions, but also, the predicted pragmatic ambiguity.⁵

Although we are particularly interested in the reasons behind listeners' evaluations of speakers who use different code choice strategies, no questions were included that asked directly for evaluations of those strategies. Although listeners were asked to evaluate speakers' confidence and skill in the second language, comments on code choice that did appear should be regarded as significant, because subjects volunteered them; they were not directly solicited.

Listeners were questioned individually. Each listener was given a copy of the questionnaire booklet, and after it was ascertained that the listener understood the questions, the listener was given a cassette tape of one of the two conversations. Listeners were invited to play and replay the cassette as many times as needed to answer the questions. Listeners were left alone in an office while they completed the questionnaire, which took between forty minutes and an hour, in most cases.

4.2. Subjects

As mentioned above, the focus in this study was on bilingual subjects whose bilingualism resulted from voluntary language learning. Consequently, native speakers of German were recruited from a small group of exchange students visiting Illinois State University from their home university in Paderborn, Germany. Native speakers of English who knew German were recruited from among local university faculty, graduate students, and advanced undergraduates; also, two American women who had majored in German, including one who had taught it, were recruited through a notice in the local newspaper. In addition, four of the subjects, acquaintances of a graduate student who had spent a year in Germany, were tested in Paderborn, Germany, by Pamela Boltz. All the others were tested in Normal, Illinois, by the author. The setting of the individual test did not seem to play a role in subject responses: No particular profile of responses could be identified by setting.

In all, 25 subjects were questioned, 12 with the compliance tape, and 13 with the convergence tape, between May 1992 and April 1993. Eleven of the subjects were American native speakers of English, and 14 were either German or Austrian native speakers of German. Thirteen were female and 12 were male. While subjects ranged in age from 18 to 52, most were in their twenties; indeed, the average age was 28.9 (actually, one subject declined to reveal his age, so his age was estimated). One of the American subjects did not seem to understand the instructions (he created fictional

⁵ A qualitative study was also chosen for a ore practical reason, in that the population of available bilinguals was known to be small enough that a quantitative analysis would not have been valid.

biographies for the speakers he heard, rather than just giving his reactions), so his responses were not used. Thus, the responses of 24 listeners were included in the analysis.

In terms of background in the second language, listeners from both sides of the Atlantic varied. The Americans ranged from a low of two years of formal instruction in German (offset, however, by visits in Germany that were numerous, long, or both) to completion of the Ph.D. in German. All American subjects had visited Germany or Austria at least once, and most, more than once. The German-speaking subjects had had between 7 and 12.5 years of formal instruction in English, and all had visited an English-speaking country at least once; most were on their second or third visit to an English-speaking country when they came to Illinois.

Subjects will be designated by nationality, sex, the tape they heard, and age. Thus, a listener coded AFA 36 is an American female who heard conversation A (compliance), who is 36 years old. GMB 22 is a German male of 22 who heard conversation B (convergence) (apologies to the Austrian subject, who will be classified as German, on the basis of native language).

5. Results.

If we classify reactions to speakers as positive, negative or neutral, we can see the variety of evaluations that speakers elicited. Tables 2 and 3 show the numbers of overall positive, neutral, and negative responses that each speaker received on status and solidarity considerations.⁶

⁶ Coding was done by a coder naive to the aims of the investigation. The author thanks Claire C. Lamonica for doing this.

TABLE 2. *Evaluations of speakers in the compliance conversation (A) by 5 American listeners and 7 German listeners*

		positive	neutral	negative
By Americans of Kay	status	2	2	1
	solidarity	2	0	3
of Maria	status	2	1	2
	solidarity	3	0	2
by Germans of Kay	status	4	3	0
	solidarity	5	0	2
of Maria	status	2	3	2
	solidarity	2	1	4

TABLE 3. *Evaluations of speakers in the convergence conversation (B) by 5 American listeners and 7 German listeners*

		positive	neutral	negative
by Americans of Lisa	status	4	1	0
	solidarity	5	0	0
of Gisela	status	3	2	0
	solidarity	4	1	0
by Germans of Lisa	status	3	1	3
	solidarity	4	1	2
of Gisela	status	5	0	2
	solidarity	5	0	2

At first glance, these results would seem to give some support to SAT, in that more Americans who heard the convergence tape (B) rate the speakers positively than do Americans who heard the compliance tape (A). The comparison between the responses of German listeners to A and those who heard B, however, shows no obviously similar pattern. This patternlessness, in fact, is more likely to indicate a mixed collection of reactions towards the speakers, which is what we can expect if acts of code choice play a role in the evaluation of speakers (an assumption this study shares with SAT studies of code choice), and if acts of code choice are sociopragmatically ambiguous. But more information can be gleaned if we look at the actual content of the listeners' evaluations.

5.1. Differential attention to code choice patterns

It was originally thought that the actual pattern of codeswitching throughout a conversation might have social meaning for listeners, that listeners would perceive whether speakers converged or complied, and then evaluate them according to their own valuations of that particular pattern. In fact, 17 of the 24 listeners wrote some kind of comment about code choice, either about the taped speakers, or about what they themselves would do in a similar situation. But in spite of the opportunity to listen to the tapes as many times as they wanted, listeners varied in how completely and accurately they perceived the different patterns of code choice. For example, in the compliance conversation (A), Kay switches from German to English in turn 4, and switches back to German in turn 6. Other switches in the conversation are initiated by her interlocutor. Yet, perhaps because her first switch is in the direction of her native language, Kay is widely perceived by listeners as preferring to speak English, a preference for which she receives less than positive evaluations:

- (5) "she doesn't continue speaking German . . . maybe that's because she hasn't enough self-confidence." (GFA27)
"although she had the chance to talk in German to Maria, Kay always got back to English and it looked like she wouldn't feel very comfortable with her German . . ." (GMA23)
"Her German is good, even though she switches from German to English." (GFA25b)
"She can converse in German sufficiently on a more simple level, but she reverted to English quickly after she started speaking, without attempting to describe Urbana's location to Maria in German. Kay's confidence in German is average - the fact that she is speaking with Maria at all in German attests to this, but she (Kay) seemed unwilling to even try saying something (Urbana's location) that she hadn't said or practiced before." (AMA27)
"Kay obviously can speak German, but she seems uncomfortable doing so. . . . she should have been able to express everything said in this conversation in German." (AFA36)
"She is not very confident using the German language. This is evident when she fails to continue the conversation in German, speaks in English, . . ." (AFA52)

Not all listeners perceived Kay in this way, however. One listener focused on the fact that Kay used German, and seemed almost to ignore her use of English:

- (6) "Her German (to the extent one can judge) is sound, that is correctly pronounced and error free. Above all, she uses it with confidence. . . Her use of German is an attempt to meet Maria on the latter's own terms." (AMA46)

This same listener also missed or discounted the fact that Maria switched codes as well; he focused on her speaking English, which he disapproved of:

- (7) "I have the feeling that she adopts English in order to try to assert her superiority. . ." (AMA46)

In other words, this listener seems to have perceived the compliance conversation (A) as a mutual convergence conversation, like conversation B, in which each speaker speaks only her second language, although in fact, each speaker in the compliance conversation spoke both languages.

Other listeners to the compliance conversation are somewhat more accurate in their perception of the pattern, but they vary in how they evaluate that pattern:

- (8) "Maria follows Kay's lead in choosing languages. As soon as Kay goes to English, Maria follows suit." (AFA36)
 "The two languages are intermingled, each person is afraid to speak in the foreign [one] entirely." (AFA52)
 "[Maria's] English seemed to be good as well, so that she was able to understand Kay and even switch from English to German and vice versa." (GMA23)

Listener AFA36 perceives that Maria complies with Kay's switches (though not, apparently, that Kay complies with Maria's); listener AFA52 perceives that switching occurs, and attributes it to lack of confidence, while GMA23 seems to perceive the switching that occurs in A as evidence of a certain amount of skill on Maria's part.

When we turn to the convergence conversation (B), we find that one listener perceived the pattern of code choice, but did not know how to interpret it:

- (9) "I must wonder why Gisela is initiating conversation in English, while Lisa speaks German. Maybe this is unimportant." (AFB31)

As can be seen from these examples, listeners varied both in their perception of overall codeswitching patterns within conversations, and in their evaluations of them. Rather than picking up on whole patterns of convergence or compliance, most listeners seem instead to perceive individual speakers as adopting specific code choice strategies, which the listeners then evaluate.

5.2. Evaluations of codeswitching: Attitudes towards compliance

As can be seen from the above section, many listeners did not seem to perceive the patterns of compliance and convergence that distinguish the conversations in the mind of the researcher. The negative attitude towards Kay, for example, is based on the

perception that Kay "reverts" to her native language, rather than trying to speak her second language, even though Kay might also be seen as choosing to speak her native language, in at least one instance, because her interlocutor prefers it. It would seem, then, that to the extent that complying with an interlocutor's code choice forces a speaker not to converge, compliance will be negatively evaluated (see the reactions in (5), above).

However, the failure to comply can also elicit unfavorable reactions and the specific recommendation that a speaker attempt a compliance strategy, as shown by some reactions to the convergence conversation. Some listeners to conversation B seem not to approve of the codeswitching that results when each speaker converges to the other's native language. They are quite clear in their recommendations:

- (10) "Probably the conversation would be easier for both of them if Lisa switched to English." (GFB21)
- "If Gisela initiated the conversation in English, I would continue in English. If she spoke German, I would speak German." (AFB31)

In other words, whatever the motivations may be for a speaker's choosing her second language, listeners GFB21 and AFB31 recommend instead a compliance strategy, in which a speaker matches her code choice to the code choice her interlocutor seems to prefer. Implicit in this recommendation is a preference for compliance, or at least for the consistency in code choice that can result when a speaker complies.

But a compliance strategy can please only some of the people some of the time. If we turn to listener comments about conversation A, in which speakers use the compliance strategy that the listeners in (11) recommend, we find one listener who dislikes this code choice strategy:

- (11) "Her habit of switching to English from German (and then back to German) is very irritating to me. Choose one or the other!" (AFA36)

For this listener, consistency in code choice on the part of the individual speaker is desirable in itself, although she also recommends elsewhere in her responses that each speaker use her second language. Her comment here may reflect the attitude that it is good for a speaker to be consistent in her attempt to speak her second language; given that AFA36 is a university teacher of German, she may well feel this way.

We are left, then, with no overwhelming impression either of positive or of negative evaluations of the compliance pattern: Both favorable and unfavorable reactions crop up in response to this code choice strategy, a result that casts doubt on hypothesis (2) above. The compliance pattern, rather than winning overwhelmingly positive evaluation, may be better characterized as sociopragmatically ambiguous.

5.3. Positive attitudes towards convergence

There are a number of responses that indicate a positive reaction towards

convergence. While most listeners seem to focus on the code choice strategies of individuals, rather than on code choice patterns of entire conversations, there are nonetheless some comments on the codeswitching patterns that result from the interaction of speakers' code choice strategies. Two listeners who heard conversation B, the convergence tape, commented positively on the pattern of mutual convergence, and on the code choice strategies that give rise to that pattern:

- (12) "the fact that they were both speaking in their respective target languages made it clear to me that they were both eager to experiment and let the other person practice." (AFB24)
- "The way they answer respectively ask each other shows, that both want to speak a foreign language exactly and that they consider the other one as a person who is learning." (GMB26)

These two listeners seem to approve of the convergence pattern, not necessarily because it results from a friendly interpersonal strategy adopted by the speakers, but rather because it results from each speaker allowing and perhaps approving the other's attempt to speak in her second language. In terms of Politeness theory, the listeners here seem to attribute to both speakers an understanding of the interlocutor's positive face want to speak her second language, and to receive the approval for doing so that a continued conversation with a native speaker represents.

Other listeners wrote responses that reflected a positive attitude towards convergence; these comments were of three main types: a) comments showing that the listener would converge if placed in a similar situation to that of the speaker on the tape, b) comments disapproving of a taped speaker's lack of convergence, and c) comments approving of a taped speaker's convergence. For example, two American listeners to conversation B wrote that they would like to meet Gisela if that would give them an opportunity to speak German:

- (13) "For some reason, I would prefer to meet Gisela over Lisa, perhaps because Lisa is from Urbana, and Gisela is from Lübeck! There seems to be something more relaxed in her voice (Gisela's), where Lisa's voice is a bit more high-pitched and (I hate to say it) "American"-sounding. Otherwise both girls seem to have similar personalities (friendliness, intelligence levels, interest levels)." (AFB31)

While a number of observations influence AFB31's reactions, eagerness to meet a German person is one of them. AFB24 responds along the same lines:

- (14) "I probably would want to join in just for the experience of meeting new people & using my German." (AFB24)

Similarly, some American listeners to the compliance conversation (A), even if they were rather lukewarm about Maria's personality, wanted to meet her if such a meeting would give them a chance to speak German:

- (15) "Yes [I would want to meet Maria] Mainly because she's German - and would provide me w/ the opportunity to practice speaking German." (AFA36)

- (16) "I suppose I would like to [meet] Maria - primarily because she is German & I would enjoy feeling as if some of my "Fernweh" for Germany would be a little lessened. If Maria studies literature, liked to drink lots of beer & travel, I would love to make friends w/ her. . . . I guess I would, if given the opportunity, like to ask Maria about where she studies, how she likes America, etc. I would also like to ask Kay about her experiences in Bremen, if she traveled, what she liked best about Germany, etc. (I would like to ask these questions in German)." (AFA24)
- (17) "I would also be interested in meeting her to practice my German & perhaps learn more about the culture. My family's history is German & so is my wife, & I feel a great desire/interest in knowing more of the language and culture." (AMA27)

The responses of one German listener to the compliance conversation (A) reflects a similar attitude, an interest, not only in meeting native speakers of his second language, but also in avoiding his compatriots, so as to maximize his chances to speak English. While he would like to meet Kay because she seemed friendly and interesting, he wrote that he would prefer not to meet Maria, at least not during his stay in the United States:

- (18) "In the states: No, because I came here to study English and not to speak German. From my experience I know that if you hang out with Germans, you consequently talk in German. That's why I try to avoid meet[ing] German people in general." (GMA23)

But this listener would be willing to meet Maria if the meeting were in Germany, and to join conversation A, as its current configuration includes Kay, and would therefore afford an opportunity to speak English:

- (19) "I would want to join the conversation because I like both girls and there could be an opportunity to make new friends. In addition it gave [i.e., would give] me another chance to speak English." (GMA23)

In terms of their own wants, then, some listeners, both Americans and Germans, give responses that indicate an eagerness for opportunities to speak their second language. Convergence to the second language is the strategy they would choose for themselves, and in this sense, they approve of it; note, however, that they do not necessarily consider whether or not their putative interlocutor would welcome it, or whether they would welcome symmetric convergence on the part of the interlocutor.

In terms of judgments about the speakers in the taped conversations, there are both German and American listeners who react negatively to a speaker who does not converge. One German listener, for example, mitigates his otherwise favorable impression of Maria because of her use of German:

- (20) "friendly, but in my opinion she speaks too fast in German. seems to be not very eager [to learn about other countries], because she uses her native tongue too much." (GMA28)

Similarly, one American, among those who perceive Kay as speaking mostly English, is harsh in his criticism of her:

- (21) "I felt that she was a bit rude because she didn't ask if Maria could speak English before she (Kay) started describing Urbana's location. . . . Her reverting to English very early on in the conversation makes me feel that she wasn't trying very hard (& her majoring in German makes this more inexcusable)." (AMA27)

This same listener, while perhaps predisposed to like Germans ("Germans are also more low key & genuine than americans and I feel a certain honesty from them."), reacts very positively to Maria's use of English, i.e., he approves of her converging:

- (22) "I liked Maria, she seemed accommodating to Kay - in so far that she spoke some English to equalize the exchange. . . . She seemed friendly and willing to accommodate Kay by using some English. . . . Maria used some English to make Kay feel better." (AMA27)

He is not alone in his positive evaluation of a speaker who uses her second language. One German listener to conversation B evaluates Lisa favorably, in part because of her use of German:

- (23) "Because of her nice voice and her way of speaking I think she is a very sympathetic person. My impression is that she is a very open-minded person who likes to meet new people and to learn things about other countries. She seems to be very eager to learn the language because she took the chance to speak German in the conversation with a German girl." (GFB33)

All of these listeners, then, either in examining their own wants, or in reacting to the code choice strategies of the taped speakers, express the attitude that convergence is an appropriate strategy in intercultural conversations.

But this attitude is not universal, as the next section will show.

5.4. Negative reactions to convergence

Thus far, we have seen that a number of listeners may favor a convergence strategy in intercultural conversations, either for themselves (see comments (15) through (19)), or for others (see comments (22) and (23), although we have also seen that some listeners may prefer a compliance strategy (see comments in (10)). However, there are a few listeners who, far from welcoming a convergence strategy, react very negatively to it. One such listener was very harsh in her evaluation of Lisa, the American speaker in tape B who speaks exclusively German:

- (24) "She sounds boring to me. She expects that everyone knows where Chicago is. Seems to have little knowledge about her own cultural limitations. I'd feel she'd just talk to me to practice her German. She would probably only go for small talk . . ." (GFB26)

In other words, if an American speaker converges to German mainly because of her own desire to further her second language facility, this German listener has little patience with her. If both speakers converge, as they do in conversation B, this same listener evaluates the result quite negatively:

- (25) "There is clearly a conflict about presentation of knowledge. Each is trying to impress the other with geographic & cultural knowledge. They seem to be the slightest bit hostile. Gisela has already checked Lisa out: "type dumb American" - didn't expect she'd been an exchange student. But whatever Lisa knows about Lübeck, Gisela has that urge to demonstrate that she knows more! I wouldn't join the "exercise" because of its hostile atmosphere. If it were a classroom practice, all would be fine - adequate. But as a "real" conversation I'd be too bored about the content. It's just a ritual exchange, bearing no consequences. I doubt the two people involved would ever speak to each other again. There was no spark of liking, really." (GFB26)

While this listener does not mention language directly in this excerpt, it is plausible to think that the "conflict of knowledge" she finds in the conversation includes a conflict as to language choice. If this listener perceives Lisa's and Gisela's code choice strategies as stemming from an intuition like that expressed by Scotton's Virtuosity maxim, she may interpret each speaker as intending to convey that the other's second language facility is not as good as her own. If this interpretation is accurate, mutual convergence, as in conversation B, might instead be described as complementary schismogenesis (Bateson 1957: 176), a pattern of behavior in which each participant models, in vain, the kind of behavior she wants her interlocutor to adopt, to their mutual annoyance and misunderstanding. Needless to say, this is not accommodating.

Interestingly, the compliance conversation (A) provokes a similar (though somewhat milder) reaction, significantly, from the listener who seems to perceive conversation A as a mutual convergence conversation. This speaker approved of Kay's use of German (excerpt (6) is repeated here for convenience):

- (6) "Her German (to the extent one can judge) is sound, that is correctly pronounced and error free. Above all, she uses it with confidence. . . . Her use of German is an attempt to meet Maria on the latter's own terms." (AMA46)

But AMA46 reacts rather negatively to Maria, who, ironically, uses exactly the same code choice strategy as Kay:

- (26) "After listening to her several times, I conclude that Maria is just a bit pedantic, a bit of a German know-it-all. Her English is good, but *for a German* not *that* good. Maria is not inconsiderate or unfriendly, but there is just a hint in her tone that what she hasn't heard of isn't important. Therefore she is somewhat less genuinely interested in other people. For the above reasons, I would not walk across campus just to meet Maria. I have the feeling that she adopts English in order to try to assert her superiority, while Kay (who seems much younger) displays unspoiled curiosity about people and places." (AMA46) [emphasis in the original]

Again, if it is code choice that provokes these reactions (and the impression that Kay is more curious than Maria is puzzling, given that Maria asks one more question than Kay does), the reaction of AMA46 seems rather unfair: Kay is praised for converging, while Maria is evaluated negatively for adopting the same strategy. However, Scotton's model can explain this asymmetry, if we invoke her notion of RO set, the set of rights and obligations that is associated with a code. If German is chosen as the conversational code, American speakers, like Kay, assume the role of non-native speaker, with the right to expect patience and help from native speakers, and the obligation to pay attention to any instruction that might be forthcoming. These roles are reversed, of course, if English is chosen as code for any given conversational episode. Listener AMA46, an American professor of German, may well approve of an American student who takes on the role of non-native speaker (or who is perceived as doing so), since taking on that role is widely believed to lead to improved mastery of the second language. In other words, it is good for a non-native speaker of German to speak German, because she will learn best by doing so, but it is bad for a native speaker of German to speak English, because she should instead foster that non-native speaker's learning of German by speaking German herself. We can predict that a conversation between bilinguals GFB26 and AMA46 might well evidence conflict of its own, as AMA46 would seem to prefer German speakers who speak German, and GFB26 seems to dislike Americans who have such a preference.

But GFB26 and AMA46, the most highly critical of the entire set of listeners, have much in common; and these common characteristics may explain why both react so critically. AMA46 has a Ph.D. in German, and GFB26 is a doctoral student in American literature at an American university; in other words, both aspire to or have already achieved status as scholars of their second languages. For such individuals, it may be that even the possibility of interpreting a speaker's code choice of their native language as arising from Scotton's virtuosity maxim is an affront. Hence, AMA46 reacts negatively to a German's choice of English, and GFB26 reacts negatively to Americans who try to speak German with her (indeed, in my nodding acquaintance with GFB26, I don't feel I can dare to use German). With their high achievements and aspirations in their second languages, these two are plausibly the most committed learners of their second languages of the entire group of listeners, and consequently, the most sensitive to possible unspoken aspersions on their abilities.

Listeners GFB26 and AMA46 may represent, then, a group of individuals for whom the predictions of SAT do not work, committed and advanced second language learners. For these bilinguals, convergence by another speaker to their native language allows the negative interpretation that Scotton's virtuosity maxim provides - the interpretation that their abilities in their second language are inadequate, an interpretation that these bilinguals would find face-threatening indeed. The sensitivity that these bilinguals have to the possible negative inferences allowed by certain code choices seems to render overall patterns of codeswitching almost irrelevant (recall that one of these listeners heard conversation A and the other heard B); rather, what matters is the specific configuration of native speaker, non-native speaker, and the

specific act of code choice. In the presence of native speakers, these bilinguals simply prefer to speak their chosen second language, and have it spoken to them.

The negative reactions of GFB26 and AMA46 could have been expressed only roughly on a Likert scale. In particular, if the negative reaction of AMA46 to Maria had been averaged with the very positive reaction to Maria shown by AMA27 in excerpt (22), valuable information about both speakers' reactions and the reasons for them would have been lost. The range of reactions that have been shown here demonstrate that the potential for sociopragmatic ambiguity of acts of code choice is realized in listener reactions; this range of reactions, and more important, differing reasons behind those reactions are not phenomena that an averaging statistic can be sensitive to, but they can be discovered if qualitative methods are used.

There are questions which this study raises, but does not tackle. Given the evidence that very advanced second language learners are sensitive to possible aspersions to their abilities if an interlocutor speaks their native language, we can ask when in a language learning career this sensitivity is developed. What are the conditions that give rise to this increased sociopragmatic sensitivity? It may be a challenge to find a research method that can answer this question.

Second, because of limitations on available subjects, we were not able to test the variety of sequencing possibilities in code choice, as Bourhis (1985) does (both test conversations begin with a German speaker choosing the code), and the possible effect on listener reactions. Given Bourhis's research into the sequencing of code choice, testing this possibility (with a larger subject pool) is one direction for future research.

6. Conclusions

While it is intuitive to interpret convergence to the interlocutor's language as accommodating in an intercultural conversation, consideration of the pragmatic notions of politeness, and of the explicit maxims of Scotton's pragmatic theory of identity negotiation should cause us to predict instead that a convergence strategy will be sociopragmatically ambiguous, even with speakers from ethnic groups that enjoy relatively harmonious intergroup relations. Listener evaluations of matched guise conversations support this prediction; listeners who heard a conversation in which both speakers converged varied widely in their evaluation of those speakers. Many approved of the strategy, and their reactions lend real support to the prediction of SAT that convergence is a successfully accommodating strategy. But some listeners did not approve, instead reacting in a vehemently negative fashion to the converging speakers. Indeed, there is evidence that advanced learners of a second language find an interlocutor's converging to their native language a face-threatening act in itself.

Similarly, listeners who heard a conversation in which both speakers switched codes to comply with interlocutor code choice also varied in their evaluations. The initial hypothesis (2) was not confirmed here; speakers in the compliance

conversation did not garner more favorable reactions than those in the convergence conversation. Rather, the mixed nature of the reactions to both conversations leads to the conclusion that in intercultural conversations, acts of code choice cannot be assigned any single social interpretation because they are inherently sociopragmatically ambiguous, as both pragmatic frameworks (Brown and Levinson 1987; Scotton 1983; Myers-Scotton 1993) predict.

Reactions to a given code choice strategy are not wholly unpredictable, however. We have seen that committed second language learners are likely to look for opportunities to use their second language; in terms of Scotton's notion of RO set, committed learners are likely to seek opportunities to take on the role of non-native learner, with a native speaker in the role of teacher. Consequently, they will attempt to converge, in conversations with native speakers of their second language, and they will approve of compatriot learners who do the same. However, they will not approve of convergence in the direction of their own native language, perhaps because such a move casts doubt on their second language abilities, perhaps because it deprives them of the opportunity to take on the RO set of their choice. Learners who are not quite so intent on using their second language may be more tolerant in their evaluation of code choice strategies, approving of non-native speakers who are able to converge to their native language (as AMA 27 is in selection (22)), approving of speakers who mutually converge in the interests of mutual learning (as in (12)), and even admiring the ability to switch back and forth between languages (as in the third selection in (8)). The degree of commitment to using the second language affects the speaker's intentions and wants for the conversation; intention, of course, is a pragmatic factor *par excellence*.

Speech Accommodation theorists have not been insensitive to pragmatic considerations, such as those discussed here, but have not explored sociopragmatic ambiguity outside of areas of interethnic tension. Furthermore, reliance on quantitative approaches may fail to uncover the complexities of subjects' motivations and reasoning, exactly the phenomena which are pragmatically interesting. If these motivations and reasons have intercultural and pedagogic significance, like the reality of the sociopragmatic ambiguity of code choice, this may have untoward consequences on both practice and theory.

An open-ended, qualitative method can find evidence for the reactions and inferences which a pragmatic approach predicts. Thus, research in code choice needs to re-examine adding qualitative methods to supplement the quantitative methods now in use, and social psychological approaches to intercultural communication need to find ways to increase or maintain their sensitivity to pragmatic considerations.

Speech Accommodation Theory has its roots in similarity-attraction theory - the basic idea that we will like people who are similar to us or who try to become so. This notion leads to the prediction that interlocutors will appreciate speakers who converge. The pragmatic model preferred here, with its focus on people's intentions and motivations, shows that speakers may be motivated by wishes other than that expressed by similarity-attraction, wishes to use a second-language skill painstakingly acquired, for example. Thus, we must temper the obvious truth of similarity attraction

with another obvious truth - the idea that we also will like people who do what we want them to.

APPENDIX: Questionnaire A

(Note: Questionnaire B was identical, except that Lisa should be substituted for Kay, and Gisela for Maria)

Introduction

You will hear a short conversation between two university students. Kay is an American student majoring in German, while Maria is a German student learning English. The passage you will hear is from their first conversation, when they are just getting to know each other.

1. Please give your initial opinion about Kay, the American student in this conversation. Specifically, you might want to evaluate her in terms of intelligence, her level of education, her skill at German, and her confidence in speaking it.
2. Now evaluate Kay on other measures. Specifically, what is your impression of her in terms of friendliness, likeability, considerateness, and eagerness to learn about other people and other countries?
3. Would you like to meet Kay? Why or why not?
4. Please give your initial opinion about Maria, the German student. Try to include in your evaluation impressions of her intelligence, level of education, skill at English, and confidence in speaking it.
5. Now evaluate Maria in terms of friendliness, likeability, considerateness, and eagerness to learn about other people and other countries.
6. Would you like to meet Maria? Why or why not?
7. Now please consider the conversation as a whole. Does it strike you as friendly or conflictual? If you had the opportunity to join in this conversation, would you want to? Why or why not?
8. Imagine that the conversation took place at Illinois State University. Would that change any of your answers to question 7, above? How?
9. Imagine that the conversation were taking place in Germany. Would that change your answers to the questions in 7? How?

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