Speech-accommodation theories: a discussion in terms of second-language acquisition

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The study of linguistic variation in social contexts has captured the imaginations of scholars in various social and language-related sciences. The desire to understand the relationship between linguistic and social variables gave rise to the multidisciplinary field of sociolinguistics, which, according to Hymes (1972), has at its heart the study of speech diversity in different social settings. While acknowledging the fact that sociolinguistics has in the last decade made great strides forward by informing us how, when, and where we modulate our speech, some social psychologists of language have nevertheless voiced dissatisfactions with the current state of the art. Reservations expressed by social psychologists have been primarily on theoretical grounds. First, they claim, traditional sociolinguistics has been more descriptive than explanatory, thus lacking power of prediction. Second, sociolinguistics has mainly highlighted correlations between linguistic and large-scale, objectively defined social variables (e.g. SES, age, and sex groupings), thereby downgrading empirically the idea that speakers' own subjective attitudes, perceptions of situations, cognitive and affective dispositions, and the like may interact to determine their speech outputs. Third, social psychologists of language assert that sociolinguistics, in line with its tendency to exclude language from definitions of social and structural variables, cannot entertain fully the idea that language can often assume the role of an independent variable by creating, defining, and negotiating social settings. Exceptions are acknowledged, e.g. Labov (1970), Sankoff (1971) and Scotton (1980). These sociolinguists have attempted to address some of the issues by employing social psychological phenomena such as attitudes, intentions, and motivations as determinants of verbal behavior and by considering some of the creative and negative functions of speech.

Some sociolinguists, for their part, acknowledge the contributions that social psychologists of language have made toward (1) predicting and explaining linguistic variation in social contexts, and (2) integrating speakers' feelings, values, attitudes, and perceptions into their research design. Most sociolinguists, however, have not incorporated the findings of the social psychologists.
into their research. This might be due to a lack of familiarity with the social psychological research. Or, there might be some reservations on their part about the orientation taken by social psychological researchers. For one thing, the social psychologist of language, being first a psychologist rather than a linguist, rarely provides a detailed linguistic analysis of the speech used by the interlocutors. Second, the speech variables which are studied are often phenomena such as utterance length, speech rate, pauses, and interruptions – variables which nonlinguists might study, as opposed to the fine phonetic differentiations, grammatical categories, semantic shifts, and discourse structure usually preferred by sociolinguists. Additionally, the social psychologist carefully designs experimental controls but often does not acknowledge generalization problems arising from the fact that the data obtained are not samples of unselfconscious language in spontaneous interactional contexts. The sociolinguist might argue that social psychologists overspecialize in nonlinguistic reactions to (e.g. written numerical ratings of) hypothetical, role-played speech samples in simulated experimental settings (see Coupland, this issue). Sociolinguists, as well as social psychologists, have pointed out that these data are a complement to, not a substitute for, the analysis of linguistic phenomena (see Beebe and Zuengler 1981; Giles et al. 1980). Sociolinguists have repeatedly demonstrated that linguistic variables as well as social variables determine linguistic outcomes (e.g. Marshall 1979; Ferguson 1975; Long 1981; Scarcella 1981; Beebe 1974, 1980; Trudgill 1974). Sociolinguists are, therefore, surprised at the suggestion that they do not fully acknowledge language as a potential independent variable as well as a dependent variable. In actual fact, both sociolinguists and social psychologists study language as an independent variable, but their interpretations of what this means differ greatly. Although both groups may be aware of the two different interpretations of ‘language as an independent variable’, social psychologists use the term to refer to an interpersonal phenomenon (see Smith et al. 1980). They refer to the way in which the language chosen (e.g. French versus English) or the style of language used by one interlocutor affects the language decoding or encoding of the other interlocutor. In other words, theirs is in essence an interactional perspective. To the sociolinguists, on the other hand, ‘language as an independent variable’ is primarily understood as an intrapersonal phenomenon. That is, for a given individual it indicates the way in which the linguistic environment (e.g. the phonetic context of a word or sound) affects the form of the language which that person encodes. Linguistic environment is seen as an adjunct to the social independent variables.

This last point reflects the difference in orientation between sociolinguistics and the social psychology of language – a difference which in itself is not a problem. However, there is a problem beyond the expected difficulty of communicating across disciplines. Except for a small number of issues (e.g.
language attitudes), the two fields are not being sufficiently cross-referenced nor sufficiently integrated. Moreover, it does appear that the research in one field is not that well known to the other. The present Special Issue, while addressing itself in this instance to a particular set of language behaviors (i.e. speech accommodation) is a modest attempt to rectify this state of affairs and widen the potential for more substantive multi- if not interdisciplinary research on these as well as other linguistic phenomena.

In this paper, we shall attempt to achieve two goals. First, we shall overview speech-accommodation theory (SAT) in its most recent propositional format. This will be followed by a brief introduction to the contributions, sociolinguistic and social psychological, to this volume, which will be discussed in the light of the aforementioned theoretical framework. Second, we shall move on to overview two interrelated theories which were formulated directly from some of the fundamental social psychological notions inherent in SAT. These two perspectives have particular relevance to understanding the process of second-language acquisition (SLA) but are limited to the extent that they have not as yet taken into account adequately enough linguistic factors. We then discuss briefly SLA research by sociolinguists and other applied linguists with a view to providing a more comprehensive, multi-disciplinary perspective on second-language acquisition.

**Speech-accommodation theory**

Social psychologists have established arguably a new paradigm in sociolinguistics and, as we shall see ultimately, second-language acquisition. This has focused essentially upon the cognitive process mediating between individuals' social perceptions of the environment and their communicative behaviors (see, for example, Giles and Smith 1979; Giles, Robinson and Smith 1979). In order to elucidate the nature of cognitive organization, researchers have relied upon a number of social psychological processes underlying both the encoding and the decoding of language behaviors. This interest in exploring the mediating cognitive processes has been the central concern of SAT and its satellites, to be introduced in a later section.

SAT was devised to explain some of the motivations underlying certain shifts in people's speech styles during social encounters and some of the social consequences arising from them. More specifically, it originated in order to elucidate the cognitive and affective processes underlying speech convergence and divergence (for a discussion of arguably less theoretically powerful explanations of these phenomena, see Street and Giles 1982). Convergence has been defined as a linguistic strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other's speech by means of a wide range of linguistic features including
speech rates, pause and utterance lengths, pronunciations, etc. (for a review, see Giles and Powesland 1975), whereas divergence refers to the manner by which speakers accentuate vocal differences between themselves and others (see Giles 1979). Central to this framework is the notion that during social interaction, participants are motivated to adjust (or accommodate) their speech styles as a means of gaining one or more of the following goals: evoking listeners' social approval, attaining communicational efficiency between interactants, and maintaining positive social identities. The theory has been elaborated by recourse to a number of social psychological principles (Giles 1980), but in the present context, we shall summarize it in terms of its basic and most recently reformulated propositions (Street and Giles 1982; see also Thakerar et al. 1982 for further details and other linguistic strategies involved in SAT):

1. People will attempt to converge linguistically toward the speech patterns believed to be characteristic of their recipients when they (a) desire their social approval and the perceived costs of so acting are proportionally lower than the rewards anticipated; and/or (b) desire a high level of communicational efficiency, and (c) social norms are not perceived to dictate alternative speech strategies (Giles 1973; Giles et al. 1973; Beebe 1981; Katz 1981; Thakerar et al. 1982; Beebe and Zuengler i.p.).

2. The magnitude of such linguistic convergence will be a function of (a) the extent of the speakers’ repertoires, and (b) factors (individual difference and environmental) that may increase the need for social approval and/or high communicational efficiency (Welkowitz and Feldstein 1969; Natalé 1975).

3. Speech convergence will be positively evaluated by recipients when the resultant behavior is (a) perceived as such psychologically (i.e. as integrative); (b) perceived to be at an optimal sociolinguistic distance from them; and (c) attributed with positive intent (Simard et al. 1976; Giles and Smith 1979; Street 1982).

4. People will attempt to maintain their speech patterns or even diverge linguistically away from those believed characteristic of their recipients when they (a) define the encounter in intergroup terms and desire a positive ingroup identity, or (b) wish to dissociate personally from another in an interindividual encounter, or (c) wish to bring another's speech behaviors to a personally acceptable level (Bourhis and Giles 1977; Taylor and Royer 1980; Cappella 1981).

5. The magnitude of such divergence will be a function of (a) the extent of speakers' repertoires, and (b) individual differences and contextual factors increasing the salience of the cognitive or affective functions in (4) (Bourhis et al. 1979; Taylor and Royer 1980).

6. Speech maintenance and divergence will be negatively evaluated by
recipients when the acts are perceived as psychologically diverging (i.e. dissociative), but favorably reacted to by observers of the encounter who define the interaction in intergroup terms and who share a common, positively valued group membership with the speaker (Bourhis et al. 1975; Doise et al. 1976; Street 1982).

The papers in this issue underline the viability of SAT in general and a number of the propositions in particular. They do so importantly within the context of a rich variety of background disciplines involved, methodologies adopted, social settings studied, cultural and social groups sampled, and linguistic features measured. Such diversity marks the real potential for SAT breaking away from its essentially social psychological mold and emerging more centrally and, in line with our opening discussion, into the interdisciplinary arena (see also Trudgill 1981). On the production side of SAT, we see that proposition 1 receives significant support. For instance, we see in a number of papers that people, even those of a very young age (Purcell; see also Garvey and BenDebbas 1974; Welkowitz et al. 1976) and when legislative policies demand the opposite (Bourhis), will modify their speech toward that of their partners in the short term or the host community in general in the long term (Shockey) when they seek the social approval of, and/or intend to make their messages communicatively more effective for others. This convergence is illustrated by Montrealers’ bilingual code switches when asked for directions in the street in either French or English (Bourhis), by Hawaiian children’s code shifts in prosodic and lexicogrammatical features when talking together in small groups (see also Ros and Giles 1979) constituting various degrees of decentering speakers (Purcell), by a travel agent’s phonological variation in /h/, /ng/, /c cluster/ and /intervocal t/ when conferring in her office with clients varying in levels of socioeconomic status and education (Coupland), by individuals’ shifts in speech rate and duration when intending to sound likeable to an interviewer (Putnam and Street), and by Americans’ use of the flapping rule for /t/ and /d/ during the course of their residence in England (Shockey). Moreover, and again for positively valued affective and/or cognitive reasons, people will converge to where they believe their partners to be linguistically. Unlike the previous examples, intending convergers can for a number of specifiable reasons be inaccurate in their linguistic mapping or membership of their interlocutors. This is illustrated by some Singaporeans’ and Australian immigrants’ ‘miscarried’ attempts lexically, grammatically, and prosodically to match ‘upwardly’ the speech of native English speakers (Platt and Weber). Now while there is evidence in line with proposition 2 that individuals who possess languages (Bourhis) and dialects (Purcell) associated with social prestige and control are more likely to maintain their linguistic habits and be converged toward more than those who have relatively less sociolinguistic status, there are of course many occasions when the former might
require the latter's approval as implied in proposition 1. In this sense, we can observe occasions when native English speakers mismanage their downward convergent attempts toward what they believe Singaporeans and Aborigines sound like (Platt and Weber). Regarding proposition 4, interviewees who role-play sounding dislikeable are found predictably to diverge in noncontent speech features from their interviewers (Putman and Street).

Less attention is focused in this Special Issue implicitly on the reception side of the SAT propositions; nonetheless we do also have support for them as well. Regarding proposition 3, interviewees who converge toward their interviewers in terms of speech rate and response latency (and also complement in utterance duration, see Giles 1980) are reacted to favorably by the latter in terms of perceived social attractiveness (Putman and Street) but derogated as amusing or even annoying when their speech convergence is attributed negatively as being incomplete or inappropriate (Platt and Weber). Observers of encounter also align themselves with notions inherent in proposition 6 to the extent that job applicants perceived as diverging downwardly from their prospective employers are negatively assessed as flippant, uneager, and disfluent (Ball et al.).

While there is indeed empirical confirmation in the papers for SAT propositions (and number 1 in particular), as well as a welcome increase in attention to the linguistic mechanisms involved and the sociostructural conditions in which they occur (Bourhis; see also St. Clair 1982), the contributions leave no doubt as to the embryonic status of SAT. Indeed, empirical consideration of the role of implicit social norms operating as situational constraints on accommodative processes, led Ball et al. in their paper to revise propositions 3 and 6 as introduced earlier in important ways. At the same time, a number of papers have raised problems based on their innovative fine-grained analyses of linguistic data during the course of social interaction (Coupland; Purcell) which cannot yet be resolved in terms of yielding more sophisticated, revised SAT propositions at the present time without recourse to further and extensive empirical inquiry. We shall highlight four of these somewhat interrelated issues here.

First, we need in future empirical research to investigate multiple linguistic levels of analysis (Putman and Street) during the duration of a conversation (Coupland; Purcell) so that we can ascertain which features are accommodated, when, and how, and which are not accommodated at all (see Trudgill 1981). The use of the concepts 'converge' and 'diverge' in SAT propositions 1/2 and 4/5 respectively is of course far too imprecise linguistically. Second, we need to specify which social dimensions are involved in the evaluative consequences of accommodative acts. The use of the concept 'social approval' in propositions 1 and 2 and of 'positive' and 'negative' reactions in propositions 3 and 6 is similarly too all-pervasive. The fact that convergence appears to be
evaluatively linked to perceived social attractiveness and not to perceived competence in some situations bears this out (Putman and Street). Third, we see that not all shifts which can be labeled 'convergence' and 'divergence' fall fruitfully under the SAT rubric (Platt 1977). For instance, some shifts which can be measured objectively as interpersonal convergence can in different instances be better conceptualized as due to one or more of the following influences: situational norms (Ball et al.); sociolinguistic demands of various genres (Purcell); and positive (competent) self-presentation (Coupland; Putman and Street). Ultimately, we need of course to move toward a broader theoretical base which will allow us an 'interpretive' framework (Coupland) for understanding the complex interweaving of different communication strategies for normative, self-presentation, negotiative, and accommodative (among other) purposes. Finally, we need to determine more fully the role of awareness in SAT as it tends to shy away from considering this notion within the confines of the propositional format (see Street and Giles 1982; Berger 1980).

Indeed, we see that people's attitudes and intentions to accommodate (bilingually), as well as their anticipated reactions to attempts at it from others, do not always coincide with what they actually do and feel in specific communication settings (Bourhis; Platt and Weber; Ajzen and Fishbein 1980). Nevertheless, we see that sometimes quite explicit directives 'from above' induce consciously conceived lexicogrammatical accommodations (Platt and Weber), and also observers of social encounters can, apart from certain perceptual biases, label in retrospect certain accent shifts they have heard (Ball et al.). Yet people are often quite unaware of their own and others' accommodative shifts at particular noncontent speech levels (Putman and Street).

Despite the inevitable and stimulating need for further developments in SAT, it can still be considered theoretically robust, and the social psychological principles underlying it perhaps universal enough to have some explanatory potential for increasing our understanding of other, and in some regards more macro-, linguistic phenomena. To this end, ethnomlinguistic theory (ELIT) was conceived and the intergroup theory of second-language acquisition subsequently born out of that too. As these two satellite theories are afforded little attention elsewhere in this issue, the remainder of the present paper is devoted to overviewing them and extending the latter, as we are attempting to achieve with regard to SAT in a more multidisciplinary direction based on current sociolinguistic and applied linguistic research into second-language acquisition.
Ethnolinguistic-identity theory (ELIT)

ELIT developed not only out of a desire to further refine SAT’s propositions 4 and 5 in an interethnic context (i.e. specify more precisely the conditions necessary for ethnic speech divergence) but also out of an attempt to provide a social psychological theory for the area of language and ethnicity. Giles and Johnson (1981) have classified, although not in any mutually exclusive fashion, existing approaches to language and ethnicity multidisciplinarily as ‘socio-linguistic’, ‘sociological’, and ‘communication breakdown’ perspectives. The first provides a linguistic taxonomy of ethnic markers in the speech of groups with the same language and focuses on the variety of ways in which individuals can manifest their ethnic membership through speech (see Trudgill 1974; Giles 1979). The second approach – the ‘sociological’ – concentrates on examining why some ethnic-minority languages survive and others do not, with the phenomenon of ‘language erosion’ being related to such sociostructural factors as radical economic changes and demographic fluctuations (see Lewis 1979; Anderson 1979). The third approach focuses upon reasons for the breakdown of interethnic communication, with an emphasis on such factors as differential sociocultural norms and motivational aspirations (see Taylor and Simard 1975; Clyne 1979). While these approaches have provided extremely fruitful avenues of empirical inquiry, cumulative problems in the area, such as vast differences in interethnic situations, language strategies, and attitudes to an ingroup’s language, have made generalized theoretical predictions from one ethnic context to another impossible. ELIT is an attempt to clarify the empirical and theoretical confusion by identifying common processes underlying diverse speech strategies and language attitudes as well as by taking into account sociostructural influences on the groups as perceived by their members. Arguably this perspective, although complementary to the aforementioned three traditions, is the best equipped currently to explore the important question of who uses which language strategy, when, and for what purpose.

ELIT includes aspects of social-identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), the concepts of perceived ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles et al. 1977; Bourhis et al. 1981), perceived group boundaries (cf. Weber 1964), and multiple group memberships (cf. Coser 1956). Social-identity theory is the framework to which all the other concepts relate and provides an analysis of strategies for so-called positive distinctiveness which are related to linguistic differentiations as well as some hypotheses about when they will be adopted. The other concepts are then introduced and discussed as they specify more precisely some of the personal and situational factors enhancing the salience of ethnic identification for individuals and hence allow for more concrete predictions concerning the attenuation and accentuation of ethnolinguistic behaviors. ELIT
will be summarized by recourse to its most recent propositional development (Ball et al. i.p.; see Giles and Johnson 1981 for further details).

Individuals are more likely to define themselves in ethnic terms and adopt strategies for positive linguistic differentiation (e.g. divergence and linguistic creativity) to the extent that they (1) identify strongly with their ethnic group, which considers language an important dimension of its identity; (2) regard their group's relative status as changeable and illegitimate; (3) perceive their ingroup to have high ethnolinguistic vitality; (4) perceive their ingroup boundaries to be hard and closed; (5) identify strongly with few other social categories, each of which provides them with inadequate group identities and low intragroup statuses.

While these propositions may not cover all possible conditions contributing toward positive linguistic differentiations, such as the accentuation of existing, and the creation of new, ethnic speech markers for use in interethnic contexts, they do nevertheless encapsulate some of the most important factors and make sense of an otherwise unstructured understanding of language and ethnic relations. The converse of these propositions (e.g. weak ethnic ingroup identification, low perceived vitality) are likely to locate the conditions deemed necessary for the attenuation of ethnic speech markers and linguistic assimilation within the ethnic (often dominant) outgroup.

**Intergroup theory (IT) of second-language acquisition**

ELIT is believed by us to have profound pragmatic implications for bilingual education as well. Recent social psychological models of SLA (Gardner and Lambert 1972; Gardner 1982; Clément 1980) have brought attention to the theoretical status of the social milieu in determining second-language proficiency. These formulations are important in that they move us in a more process-oriented direction toward understanding the conflicts under which SLA is facilitated and point out conflicting tendencies within certain individuals given the perceived instrumentality of learning a second language (L2) on the one hand and the desire to retain a valued mother tongue (L1) on the other. Significant as such developments are, these models have not taken into account explicitly concepts and processes highlighted in ELIT which are deemed crucial for understanding the factors likely to promote or impede nativelike proficiency in an outgroup's language. In an attempt to rectify such omissions while at the same time integrating constructs from the previous models, Giles and Byrne (1982) presented the core framework of what can be termed the 'integroup theory' of SLA based on ethnolinguistic-identity principles.

Let us recall the six propositions which concluded the previous section and
call members of an ingroup for which these statements apply ‘subgroup A’ and those for which they do not ‘subgroup B’ (see Figure 1). Subgroup A is proposed to be likely not to achieve nativelike proficiency in L2. L2 learning for them would be ‘subtractive’ to their ethnic identities even if economically and politically it was deemed profitable; its motivational tendency, in Clément’s terms, would be ‘fear of assimilation’. ‘A’ individuals would not seek informal acquisition contexts and (à la Gardner 1979) would be likely to attain L2 proficiency only in classroom aspects of vocabulary and grammar which would reflect individual differences in learners’ intelligence and aptitude more than anxiety about speaking situations.

Subgroup B, however, would be more likely to approach nativelike L2 proficiency. For ‘B’ members, L2 learning would be ‘additive’ (Lambert 1974) and their motivational tendency ‘integrative’. They would take advantage of available informal acquisition contexts to further their L2 skills and would, besides formal knowledge, gain high oral competence, sociolinguistic mastery, and accommodative flexibility in L2 as well as favorable nonlinguistic outcomes in the form of positive attitudes toward the outgroup and cultural enrichment. Anxiety levels experienced in situations of L2 usage would for subgroup B correlate more strongly than intelligence or modern-language aptitudes (Carroll and Sapon 1959) with L2 proficiency.

What would be the collective consequences of the contrasting outcomes of individuals from subgroups A and B? This would depend partly upon the proportionate division of the L1 ingroup into its A and B subgroups, but both subgroups, if detectably large, would provide feedback to themselves, each other, and the (let us presume, dominant) outgroup (see Figure 1) which could be evaluated by recipients and possibly acted upon. The nonacquisition of L2 proposed for individuals ‘A’ would probably be interpreted by its members as successful retention of ethnolinguistic distinctiveness in the face of cultural threat, but ‘B’ members would be more likely to see it as their ‘failure’ due to perhaps remedial socioeconomic or educational inadequacies, while the dominant group, if it thought the ‘A’ outcome predominated, would see their prejudices confirmed and no reason to change the status quo. Subgroup B’s mastery of L2 would fortify its members’ integrational motivational tendencies, but ‘A’ members would regard it as ethnic betrayal and become yet more fearful of assimilation and still less motivated to acquire L2 themselves. The outgroup might feel its distinctiveness threatened and respond by ‘upward’ divergence to create new linguistic group markers; a process we feel may contribute to the phenomena of linguistic change and evolution. (For a detailed discussion of the way in which the intergroup theory of SLA can, by means of mathematical catastrophe theory, take into account those learners who define themselves and the interethnic situation in terms ‘intermediate’ to the [polarized] members of subgroups A and B, see Ball et al. i.p.)
Figure 1. The intergroup theory of SLA (italicized phrases are the amendments to Ball and Giles's [1982] schematic representation)
Considerations when extending SAT to the SLA context

The range of factors affecting SLA

As seen in a previous section, speech-accommodation theory has recently been refined. In addition, ethnolinguistic-identity theory and the intergroup theory of SLA have been developed to specify conditions for speech accommodation (especially divergence) in an interethnic context. The development of ethnolinguistic-identity theory, in particular, has enabled accommodation research to extend to the SLA context.

In the past, accommodation research focused largely on (1) speakers of the same first language (L1) (e.g. Bourhis and Giles 1977; Thakerar et al. 1982) who modified their L1 in subtle ways or (2) fully established bilinguals who code-switched from one language to another (e.g. Bourhis and Genesee 1980; Bourhis et al. 1979), arguably a less subtle form of accommodation. With recent extensions, accommodation researchers have created a theory with greater explanatory power than any theory developed to date in the area of SLA. In particular, they have gathered more empirical data than the SLA researchers to support the theory of speech accommodation. For example, Schumann's social distance hypothesis (1976) and acculturation model (1978) are products of only a few case studies.

Thus, with the extension of the original accommodation work to the SLA context, a promising area of research has emerged. But, social psychologists involved in this field are now obligated to explore a whole new body of data — namely SLA research. As social psychologists of language investigating second-language acquisition contexts, their work has a distinctly different perspective than that of most SLA researchers. For one thing, social psychologists are first and foremost psychologists, whereas the SLA researchers are usually, though not invariably, applied linguists. The SLA researchers are cohesive as a group because they share a linguist's interest in a particular linguistic context — second-language development. They do not necessarily have a common interest in any one set of independent variables which are seen as influencing second-language development. Their interests and concerns run the whole gamut of possible factors: biological, social psychological, cognitive, pedagogical, and linguistic. The accommodation theorists, on the other hand, do indeed have an interest in one particular set of factors — namely, the social psychological ones. This constitutes a second difference between the two groups. A third difference between social psychologists and SLA researchers is that the former seem to have concentrated more on the 'why' of SLA, while SLA researchers tend to concentrate on the 'what'. Accommodation theorists, in particular, focus extensively on a specific group of determining
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factors and emphasize theory building, but they tend to spend little time describing linguistic outcomes. SLA researchers, on the other hand, examine, perhaps more superficially, a wide range of determining factors, but describe linguistic outcomes in detail. In turn, they neglect theory building. Neither field can succeed in explaining second-language data without the other.

Limited analyses emerge as a result of this narrowness. The failure to draw on each other’s work makes for a serious research straitjacket on both groups. Interdisciplinary research, merging the interests and findings of the two approaches, will enable us to inspect data from a broader, more balanced perspective.

With the formulation of IT, accommodation researchers have begun to theorize about an individual’s language development over time (i.e. proficiency attained; see also Shockey, this issue) as well as language use at any single moment. There are two consequences of extending accommodation research to the development of language over time. Researchers must attend to (1) the competence–performance relationship, and (2) the distinction between adding to versus using one’s linguistic repertoire. We shall discuss each of these consequences, since they represent important considerations for future research.

First of all, by extending their research interest to cover proficiency attained in SLA, accommodation researchers will not be able to avoid getting involved in the competence–performance controversy. Previously, they escaped this problem by concerning themselves only with actual performance. They are still using performance measures, but they are actually examining competence, since proficiency is merely a performance measure of competence. It is impossible to study language competence directly; we can ask for people’s intuitions about language, or we can infer competence from language performance. But competence is only accessible via performance measures. The result of turning their attention to expected proficiency (the eventual product of development over time) is, in effect, a shift in focus toward the competence that underlies performance, rather than the performance itself.

Another problem concerns the case of second-language (L2) learners in particular. Competence in the L2 may be in a constant state of change. Therefore, learners’ statements about what they know in their L2 (i.e. their competence or ‘level of acquisition’) are probably less reliable than those of L1 speakers. In the absence of specific empirical evidence, we can only guess that, relative to an L1 speaker’s performance, an L2 speaker’s performance will have (a) a more limited repertoire in terms of sociolinguistically appropriate registers in the target language; (b) a higher variability not due to sociolinguistic style shifting; (c) a higher rate of performance errors (slips); (d) a less easily discernible pattern of systematicity; (e) a more complex network of factors affecting performance.
The number of factors is claimed to be greater since, in addition to the social psychological factors that affect all language performance, L2 speech performance is always subject to L1 interference. And, in most cases, there are pedagogical variables from formal learning settings that have intervened as well. Consequently, it will be more difficult to assess L2 competence (i.e. level of acquisition) than to assess L1 competence.

The second consequence of studying both use and development of language concerns the importance of distinguishing between adding to and using one’s linguistic repertoire. Adding to one’s repertoire in an L2 is a process which is affected by such things as speech input as well as biological, pedagogical, cognitive, and other variables. These factors are considerations in the study of language use, but they seem even more important to the study of language development. When using an L2 repertoire learners can choose to imitate or ignore a model in the input they receive. They are linguistically independent to some extent. When adding to a repertoire, L1 and L2 learners are dependent on speech input as a source of data. As an extreme example, Chinese babies have no choice but to acquire the Chinese that they receive as input. As adult bilinguals in New York, they may choose to use Chinese or English, no matter what language is spoken around them. This is an example on the most obvious level. Although it is usually more subtle within the L2 context, the distinction between using and adding repertoire is still necessary to maintain. The distinction is important to SAT because the relative importance of social psychological factors may be different in the two processes.

*Language as an independent variable complementing social psychological factors*

The different directions that SLA and social psychological researchers have taken enable us now to combine two types of research in an effort to determine how linguistic factors interact with social psychological factors in influencing SLA. Some of the linguistic factors which we would like to claim can be independent variables affecting linguistic performance can be categorized as follows: (1) linguistic environment; (2) linguistic input; (3) linguistic repertoire; and (4) linguistic background.

We shall discuss each of the above subsequently in separate sections. It might first be useful, however, to explain the relationship among the various factors. ‘Linguistic environment’ refers to intrapersonal linguistic context, whereas input refers to interpersonal linguistic context. That is, if the actual linguistic form of one’s speech affects another part of one’s own speech, we call it ‘environmental’. If the form of our interlocutor’s speech affects what
we say, we call it 'input'. Related to 'input' is linguistic status which refers to automatic status accorded an interlocutor with higher proficiency. The higher proficiency (greater nativeness, fluency, and control) that a native speaker (NS) has over a non-native (NNS) interlocutor, or an advanced NNS over a beginning NNS, leads to a built-in status differential. This factor emphasizes the social value attached to native linguistic proficiency. 'Linguistic repertoire', on the other hand, focuses on the linguistic forms themselves and is thus a matter of the speaker's competence in the language. It refers to the presence or absence of linguistic knowledge under a speaker's command. Finally, 'linguistic background' refers to all previous formal language learning and natural language acquisition that will have bearing on future language development. Native-language interference is an example of this.

The importance accorded to each of the four subcategories of independent linguistic variables in SLA research is not equivalent. For example, linguistic environment (i.e. phonological, grammatical, and discourse constraints determined by the linguistic context of the utterance) is the traditional domain of general linguistics — descriptive and theoretical. SLA researchers have therefore tended to assume its importance, concentrating instead on linguistic input (language the speaker is exposed to), background (primarily native language), and limitations in repertoire. The interlocutor's linguistic proficiency (i.e. the nature of his/her language) has been recognized as important. It is primarily accommodation researchers, however, who have emphasized it as a factor in creating, defining, and negotiating social settings and thus determining another speaker's linguistic behavior.

Linguistic environment. As previously mentioned, linguistic environment from a linguist's perspective is an intrapersonal phenomenon. It consists of the phonological, syntactic, and discourse constraints of one's own utterance on linguistic form and semantic content of that same utterance (see Coupland; Purcell; Platt and Weber; and Shockey, this issue). This area of research is universally recognized, but not singled out, as a separate line of inquiry by SLA researchers. We shall therefore discuss it somewhat briefly here after trying to explain this bias. As previously stated, the subject is the traditional domain of general linguistics. Second, SLA researchers are aware that the conditioning factors in the linguistic environment are frequently the same for L1 and L2 speakers. They are not, then, the specific domain of SLA research, but rather a property of the target language itself, and possibly, in some cases, universals. In many cases, however, a given linguistic environment affects L2 speakers differently or they render the environment in various non-native ways. In this situation, linguistic environment is specifically the domain of SLA research. Most often, however, under these circumstances, the variation is at least in part a function of linguistic background. Thus, there
is a vast literature on language transfer which includes extensive references to linguistic environment, but there is very little SLA literature devoted entirely to linguistic environment per se. Nevertheless, it may be of value here to cite a few examples of SLA research where reference is made to linguistic environment: phonological context (Dickerson 1974; Dickerson and Dickerson 1977; Gatbonton 1974); syllable shape (Tarone i.p.); syntactic context (Ravem 1974); discourse context (Vander Brook et al. 1980; Celce-Murcia 1980). A brief description of some of these studies might help to illustrate the nature of the findings. In a study of French Canadians learning English, Gatbonton (1975) concluded that some environments favor the articulation of phonetically correct target-language variants. For example, a postvocalic environment leads to higher accuracy on /h/ and /ʔ/ than a postconsonantal environment. Dickerson (1975) found that Japanese learners of English maintained higher accuracy on /z/ in a prevocalic environment than in a preconsonantal environment. She also observed devoicing (realization as [s]) before silence. Tarone (i.p.) claims that second-language learners tend to break down complex target-language syllables into simpler structures with a CV (consonant–vowel) pattern. Vander Brook et al. (1980) contend that L2 learners’ presuppositions about answers to questions determine whether they will invert the yes–no questions they ask. It is evident from these examples that L1 and L2 speakers are constrained in highly similar ways by linguistic environment.

Linguistic input. SLA researchers interested in input as an independent variable have concentrated on three simplified codes that are addressed to non-native speakers: foreigner talk (Ferguson 1975; Freed 1980; Clyne 1981; Gaskill et al. 1977; Arthur et al. 1980; Meisel 1977; Platt and Weber, this issue), teacher talk (Chaudron 1978, 1979; Gaies 1977; Henzl 1973, 1979), and interlanguage talk (Krashen 1980).

These are seen as comparable in some ways to the caretaker speech or ‘motherese’ that children acquiring L1 are exposed to (for a discussion, see Freed 1980). Researchers have examined them for two reasons beyond their purely linguistic interest in describing distinctive dialects. They have asked, does simplified input facilitate communication during a given interaction: and does it affect acquisition over the long term? At this point, there seems to be a general consensus that the answer to both questions is ‘yes’. From a study of taped telephone calls of NS and NNS customers talking to fluent, usually native, English-speaking airline ticket agents, Arthur et al. (1980) concluded that simplified input does indeed facilitate communication. The study indicates that agents respond to NNS callers with shorter utterances, lower grammatical complexity, smaller vocabularies, and greater redundancy than to NS callers. The researchers assumed that such responses were easier to understand than longer and more complex ones and claimed, realizing that
their evidence was indirect, that this facilitated communication (see Shockey, this issue).

Krashen (1978) has claimed that simplified input (i.e. comprehensible input or 'intake') facilitates acquisition as well. Hatch (1979) and Larsen-Freeman (1979) make the same claim. Long (1981) contends that SLA researchers widely assume the modifications found in speech to NNSs are responsible for making the input comprehensible.

There are several additional modifications, not previously discussed, found in foreigner talk which are believed to create simplified input. Long (1981) summarizes some of these, including NSs using alternative questions (choices with or) to help NNSs maintain control over what is discussed (Hatch 1978); NSs treating accidental topic switches due to misunderstanding by NNSs as intentional topic initiations (Long i.p. a); NSs repeating, recoding, or abandoning messages (e.g. Chaudron 1978; Hatch 1978; Long i.p. b).

In addition to questions about whether simplified input facilitates communication and/or acquisition, there is a third central question in the SLA literature about input in general. Researchers have asked whether the frequency of particular linguistic structures in NS input affects order of acquisition, i.e. the order of appearance of correct forms in obligatory contexts in NNS output. Larsen-Freeman (1976) found a significant correlation between morpheme acquisition order and frequency of occurrence in adult NS speech. She tentatively concluded that input frequency was the principal determinant of acquisition order. There are reasons to reserve judgement, however. In particular, very little is known about the acquisition order of L2 structures other than that of a few sounds and morphemes.

Unfortunately, although all three of the above-mentioned questions are empirical in nature, most of the SLA research on input so far has been descriptive, or has not been directly addressed to the questions. There has been no attempt to analyze the rich body of data using the social psychological framework of accommodation theory. And, presumably, there is more going on in the use of simplified codes than the desire to communicate referential meaning. SAT can provide a meaningful theory for interpreting the data (see Platt and Weber, this issue).

In native speaker-non-native speaker interactions, the status of the native-speaking interlocutor is a variable affecting second-language performance; the nativeness of the language used provides linguistic status. While closely related to linguistic input, it is not exactly the same. Linguistic input refers to the form of the input itself and linguistic status refers to the status of the input due to relative nativeness. Linguistic status is just one of many kinds of status. The other forms of status have received more attention, however. For example, IT is founded on comparisons of a subordinate and a dominant group. The social psychological status of ethnolinguistic groups has traditionally
been a major concern of accommodation researchers (Giles 1979; Bourhis 1979; Taylor and Giles 1979). Status in terms of other parameters, for example, sex (Kramarae 1981; Jenkins 1980), topic expertise (Leet-Pellegrini 1980), and task expertise (Thakerar et al. 1982; Zuengler 1981), has been given increasing attention in recent years. Language status (in the sense of the relative status of the language of the L1 and L2 groups) has been claimed to be a major factor in SLA as well (e.g. Giles and Byrne 1982; Schumann 1978; Gardner and Lambert 1972). Linguistic status (as opposed to language status) has been relatively neglected and deserves more attention in future research. It refers to nativeness in a language – native linguistic ability, i.e. complete facility and expertise in using that language. While all adult native speakers have it, adult L2 speakers virtually never acquire it. Consequently, there is a built-in status differential inherent to all native speaker-non-native speaker interactions, which gives an automatic edge of control to the native speaker. Scarcella (1981) suggests in her study of NS-NNS interaction that NSs tend to control the conversation. Long (1981) showed that there was a higher proportion of questions as topic-initiating moves in NS-NNS interactions than in NS-NS interactions. It seems that NSs tend to ask more questions of NNS interlocutors than of NS interlocutors, and when they pose these questions, they often change topic. Although there is very little research on the effect of linguistic status in NS-NNS interactions, it would seem the NSs tend to exert control. Topic initiations in general reflect control, and so do questions. Because they ‘compel’ answers (Goody 1978), questions are ‘a powerful tool for ensuring the NNS’s participation’ despite his limited linguistic ability (Long 1981: 149). It is important for future research to consider the effect of this type of status differential on NS-NNS interactions.

Linguistic repertoire. All speakers have, to some extent, a limited linguistic repertoire, both in their native language and in any second languages they might speak. Native speakers are not proficient in all the forms of other dialects of their own language. The Californian does not command the phonetic repertoire of the Texan or the Brooklynnite, let alone the particular vocabulary and syntactic patterns characteristic of dialects in England, Scotland, or Australia. Second-language learners have much more obvious limitations in proficiency, as they may not know even the basic structures or the everyday vocabulary of the target language they are attempting to learn.

Limitations in repertoire are central to research within SLA, whereas they are peripheral in studies of native speakers. As reasons for the limitations in repertoire, we could point to biological, physiological, or social psychological factors, as well as to insufficient linguistic input. That is, having passed the ‘critical period’ for learning language, adults may be biologically incapable of learning the accent of a foreign language (see Tahta et al. 1981). Or, they may
be physiologically incapable of pronouncing foreign words, not having developed sufficient motor control. It may also be that they are unwilling to adopt a correct foreign accent, wishing to retain their mother-tongue accent as an expression of solidarity with their own ethnic group. Finally, they may have a limited repertoire due to an inadequate amount or type of linguistic input. There are many possible explanations for an adult having a limited repertoire in a second language or dialect. Schumann (1978) claimed that social psychological factors form the causal variable in successful or unsuccessful second-language acquisition. While many researchers are willing to ascribe first place to these factors, they are not willing to dismiss the other factors entirely, and there is no research documenting the relative importance of the various types of factors.

The L2 speaker’s limited repertoire may act as an independent variable affecting the form of his or her L2 performance. Tarone (1977) identifies five communication strategies which L2 speakers use to make up for limitations in repertoire: (1) avoidance (including topic avoidance and message abandonment); (2) paraphrase (approximation of the correct target-language structure, new word coinage, and circumlocution); (3) conscious transfer (literal translation from and language switch to native language); (4) appeal for assistance (e.g. ‘What you call this?’); (5) mime (gestures). Schachter (1974) has shown that avoidance may be manifested as a below-normal frequency of a structure such as the relative clause. L2 speakers may simply avoid using a structure that is difficult for them.

It is important, when extending social psychological theories to SLA data, that limitations in repertoire be considered. For it is the tension between limitations in ability to converge toward a native-speaking interlocutor and motivation to converge that makes second-language data unique (cf. Simard et al. 1976). It is this duality of variables that distinguishes SLA data not only from native-speaker performance data but also from data of fully fluent bilinguals code-switching with each other. With native speakers and fluent bilinguals, we assume that the ability to converge is there. With second-language learners, the capability may not be there.

What this means for future research is that we must consider the interaction between linguistic and psychological convergence and divergence when analyzing L2 data (see Beebe 1981 and Thakerar et al. 1982 for the distinction between ‘psychological’ and ‘linguistic’ accommodation). As descriptive linguistic labels, ‘convergence’ and ‘divergence’ imply an availability in the speaker’s repertoire. But when viewed as psychological phenomena, ‘convergence’ and ‘divergence’ reflect the speaker’s motivation to accommodate, rather than an ability to do so. As we have indicated, the interaction between ability and motivation is at the heart of SLA research on both use and development. Consequently, we should not restrict our analyses of L2 data to
accommodation in its linguistic sense only, or to accommodation in its psychological sense only. Instead, we must look at the interaction of the two.

**Linguistic background.** Linguistic background as an independent variable affecting second-language performance generally refers to the native or first language of a non-native speaker. It can, however, refer to any previous language experience. Some 'second'-language learners are actually acquiring a third or fourth language. All previous linguistic experience can have a bearing on subsequent language learning (Chamot 1978); however, SLA researchers have concentrated on the role of the first language in this respect.

L1 is related to L2 use and development via language transfer:

1. Positive transfer: the less the structural and pragmatic difference between two languages, the more potential there is for 'positive transfer', i.e. using implicit knowledge of L1 for accurate performance in L2 and ultimately successful acquisition.

2. Negative transfer: the greater the structural and pragmatic difference between two languages, the more potential there is for 'negative transfer', i.e. interference from implicit knowledge of L1, which leads to inaccurate performance in L2.

These propositions have frequently been used (not without controversy) as the basis for predicting or accounting for acquisition/nonacquisition on a competence level and for correct/incorrect use on a performance level. The first proposition suggests, for example, that an L1 speaker of French should find it easier to acquire Spanish than to acquire Chinese. This macrolevel notion of distance between language is similar to that of hard and soft linguistic boundaries which Giles (1979) sets forth and relates to nonlinguistic factors. Clearly, language distance functions along with social psychological, cognitive, and pedagogical variables, as well as other linguistic factors. For example, it is possible for a native speaker of French to resist learning Spanish and successfully acquire Chinese due to differences in motivation, attitudes, amount of exposure, etc. Similarly, in the second proposition, interference operates along with social psychological factors. Schmidt (1977) and Beebe (1980) have demonstrated 'sociolinguistic transfer' where socially marked phonological rules of the native language are transferred inappropriately in formal contexts to the target language, which has no such sociolinguistic rules. (For discussion of whether a non-native speaker adopts the native language or the target language as norm in speech shifts, see Tarone 1979 and Beebe 1980). The data suggest that when accommodation researchers extend their theoretical framework to the SLA context, they will have to discuss convergence and divergence in relation to native-language, interlanguage, and target-language superordinate norms, as well as to the actual variants that occur in the speech of the interlocutor.
The intergroup theory of SLA: an elaboration in terms of some linguistic factors

Let us return to our brief outline of IT and extend it modestly in terms of the four linguistic factors just introduced. It will be recalled (see also Figure 1) that subgroup A individuals were proposed to be unlikely to achieve nativelike proficiency in L2. They would not seek informal acquisition contexts and, on the basis of the foregoing, would also be unlikely to seek out NS individuals who might provide them with facilitative, simplified L2 input. Moreover, even when encountering potentially accommodative NS (or even NNS) people, learners would be unlikely to furnish interpersonal cues of such a nature as to engender facilitative L2 input from them and, in addition, would be unlikely to adopt communicative strategies in order to compensate for their limited L2 repertoires. Therefore, it was proposed that ‘A’ members would become proficient only in classroom aspects of L2 (e.g. vocabulary, grammar) with individual differences in intelligence and language aptitude determining the level of proficiency in these outcomes. However, we would now wish to propose (see Figure 1 and indicated amendments to IT) with regard to subgroup A members that oral proficiencies would be enhanced somewhat (a) when L2s were (perceived to be) highly similar in linguistic structures to learners’ L1s and (b) especially in those (as yet, largely unspecified) linguistic environments favoring the articulation of nativelike sounds. Furthermore, we would also propose that linguistic performance would be enhanced among those individuals who had been submitted to very frequent facilitative, simplified L2 inputs.

Subgroup B, it will be recalled, was proposed to be more likely to approach nativelike L2 proficiency. They would take advantage of available informal acquisition contexts, promote the use of simplified L2 inputs from NS and NNS others, and also attempt to adopt communicative strategies to compensate for their limited linguistic repertoires. As a result, they would, besides formal knowledge, gain a high oral competence and sociolinguistic mastery of L2 with individual differences in terms of anxiety levels experienced in situations of L2 use determining the levels of proficiency involved. However, and in accord with the theoretical line taken with regard to subgroup A above, we would now wish to propose that oral proficiency among subgroup B members would be limited somewhat (a) when L2s were (perceived to be) highly dissimilar in linguistic structures from learners’ L1s, and (b) especially in those linguistic environments unfavorable to the articulation of nativelike sounds. Finally, we would also propose that linguistic performance would be diminished among those learners who had not been in frequent contact with facilitative, simplified L2 inputs.
Summary

We have in this paper introduced SAT and indicated by recourse to the papers appearing in this issue avenues for further elaboration and interdisciplinary collaboration. We have also shown how further developments from SAT in terms of ELIT and IT may enhance our understanding of language-ethnicity relationships and SLA respectively. Once again, with regard to the intergroup theory of SLA, we have not been blind to many of its limitations but rather have attempted to extend it in order to take account of four important linguistic considerations. Obviously, much needs to be done in all these areas empirically, methodologically, and theoretically, but we hope that research of the type advocated herein will lead us closer to a coherent interdisciplinary theory not only of speech-accommodation-related issues but of other crucial sociolinguistic problems too.

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Notes

1. The authors gratefully acknowledge valuable substantive comments from Jane Zuengler on the earlier version of this paper.
2. This, of course, assumes an L2 speaker who is neither a complete beginner (and therefore has not yet had the chance to build up a repertoire of target-language variants and approximations) nor a fluent bilingual (who has surpassed the stage of variability due to native-language interference and unsuccessful trial at target-language approximation).

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