

Speech convergence miscarried: an investigation into inappropriate accommodation strategies¹

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Introduction

Earlier investigations into speech accommodation have often focused on the reasons for or the results of accommodation in certain interactions between individuals or between social or ethnic groups (e.g. Giles 1973; Giles and Powesland 1975; Giles et al. 1973; Giles and Smith 1979). These investigations have usually been based on the assumption that appropriate convergence (or divergence) attempts have been made by the speaker. This paper will deal with situations in which the speakers clearly wish to converge but where the accommodation strategies used by them are inappropriate. The effects on the listener of these miscarried attempts may vary from zero to negative.

In the investigation of unsuccessful speech accommodation it must be shown

- (a) that the speaker did in fact want to accommodate to the other interlocutor(s);
- (b) why he or she wanted to accommodate; and
- (c) that the accommodation was not successful in that the speaker's aim, as in (b), had not been achieved or was only partly achieved.

In a recent revised model of accommodation theory, Thakerar et al. (1982) make the useful distinction between the subjective and objective dimensions of accommodation, where the subjective dimension concerns the speakers' beliefs as to whether or not their speech patterns are moving toward or away from others and the objective dimension concerns the actual independently measured shift in the speakers' speech. The subjective dimension has relevance to our point (a) above in that a desire to converge is invariably connected with some concept of what it is one is trying to move toward.

A fact that must be considered here is that the concept erroneously aimed for may not be on any linear axis in the direction of the true speech pattern of the other interlocutor, in which case any interpretation of the speaker's intent is made even harder for the listener. On the other hand, part of a

listener's speech pattern may be perceived correctly and converged toward by the speaker, but this is not in fact the part that is relevant for a particular situation. That part which is required as a goal for accommodation in a particular situation is not perceived by the speaker.

Investigations into speech accommodation often make use of simulated or 'staged' speech or speech events which are then submitted to 'naive' listeners for evaluation and reactions (e.g. Bourhis and Giles 1977; Bourhis and Genesee 1980; Thakerar et al. 1982). Although these often highly sophisticated investigations of simulated speech events have the advantage of tighter control over some variables, they at times lack the complexities that accompany the whole process of accommodation in real-life situations (see Coupland, this issue). Investigating inappropriate strategies in real-life situations presents, of course, a multitude of problems. The main methods that can be used are structured observations, the use of self-reports as well as what we shall call for the moment 'group tendencies with or without directive'.

In situations where inappropriate strategies are used, the investigator notices

- (1) that X deviates from his or her usual speech patterns when communicating with Y; and
- (2) that Y's reactions are not favorable or at least are not those which X had apparently expected.

It needs to be established, of course, whether X really intended convergence toward Y or, for instance, merely wanted to mock Y by using Y's speech patterns, and whether Y's negative reaction was the reaction expected by X.

Some type of self-report is needed to elicit from X that

- (1) he or she wanted to converge, and
- (2) if possible, the reasons for his or her attempt.

This needs to be followed up by a self-report from Y as to why he or she did not react as expected by X.

Self-reports are notoriously suspect for more than one reason (see Bourhis, this issue), but we nevertheless feel that they supply some, if not all, of the information required. Self-reports could be linked to a particular real-life situation, with the observer asking those who have participated in the act of communication and referring to the particular instance or instances where he or she felt that convergence had been attempted (see Putnam and Street, this issue). On the other hand, self-reports could be of a more general type, referring to a particular accommodation strategy which had been observed by the investigator, without specific reference to any particular situation. That answers given by the same interviewee in these two types of self-report are not always identical will be shown later on.

By 'group tendency to accommodate' we mean a regular behavioral

pattern which is used by a particular group of people in particular situations to achieve particular effects. This tendency is naturally more easily defined if it is stated explicitly in directives to a group of people. We are thinking here of 'instructions to sales personnel', 'advice to administrative personnel at banks', and advice on 'how to lower that barrier between you and your patient' given to some trainee doctors and dentists. Some of these directives are part of a wider set of communicative strategies and not directly concerned with accommodation. Others, however, can be seen as deliberately stipulated accommodation strategies.

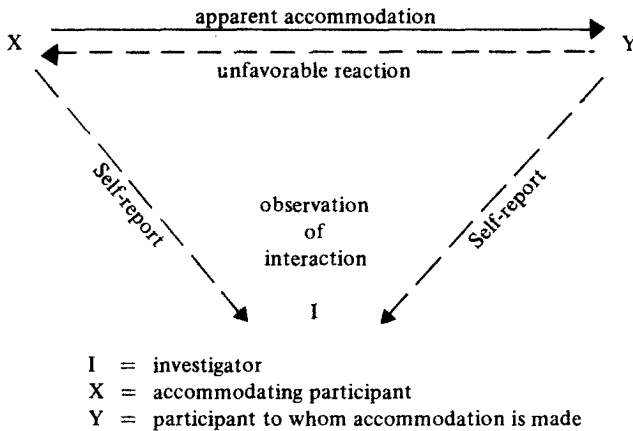


Figure 1. *Investigation of inappropriate accommodation*

Some of the main areas of verbal interaction where inappropriate accommodation strategies can be observed are

- (1) interaction between speakers of native and nativized varieties of a language;
- (2) interaction between native speakers of a language and immigrants acquiring that language;
- (3) interaction between speakers of different social classes or age groups within a native variety of a language.

The investigation

(1) A country where there is constant interaction between speakers of a local nativized variety of English and speakers of American, Canadian, British, Australian, and New Zealand English is the Republic of Singapore. The local variety, Singapore English, has developed through this century and is spoken

by English-medium educated Singaporeans of Chinese, Indian, and Malay ethnic backgrounds as well as those non-English-medium educated who have been in contact with English in the work domain, at tertiary colleges, etc. As a major commercial and financial center in Southeast Asia, Singapore has attracted nationals from various countries to work there, the so-called 'expatriates', and many firms have expatriates in some of their managerial or higher technical positions.

The writers, who have been involved in investigations into language use and the characteristics of Singapore English in the area since 1974 (Platt 1975, 1977a, 1977b, 1979, 1980a, 1980b; Platt and Weber 1980), have had many opportunities to observe communicative breakdowns and inappropriate strategies of accommodation.

As is typical with many speakers of nativized varieties (Angogo and Hancock 1980; Kandiah 1981), many speakers of Singapore English have two basic attitudes to language and language use:

(a) they suffer from an insecurity concerning their own variety; and

(b) they not only have a vague notion about the official standard, in this case British English, but are often also inclined to consider the official standard as a monolithic and invariant system. What such speakers lack, in particular, is a knowledge of and feeling for the stylistic variations that are available to a speaker of Standard British English.

Language and 'correct' language use are important issues in the Republic. It is the implied official policy that Singaporeans should display their very best English to outsiders. This is reinforced in the schools by some of the teachers, as can be seen from statements which the writers obtained in interviews with Singaporeans about their language use, e.g.

S: Our teacher told us we must use *educated* words when we speak to you [meaning English-speaking non-Singaporeans].

I: Oh, why is that?

S: Ah [laughs], to show we are *educated*.

To the Singaporean, 'educated' and 'educated in English' are often identical. It implies belonging to that group which went to English-medium schools and not to Chinese or other non-English-medium schools. These and similar statements can be seen as evidence of deliberate attempts by members of the elite group to associate themselves with members of an outside group whom they regard as in some ways more elite.

Another statement is typical of many which stress the concept of *formality* in speech with outsiders.

A: Our teacher told us we must use *formal* English when we converse with people from England – not Singapore English.

I: Why is that?

A: I think they understand us. Think we are educated, you know. If you want job with English firm you must converse in *good* English.

Unfortunately, because of misconceptions by many Singaporeans as to what is 'formal' or 'good' English, inappropriate strategies are often used when wanting to make a good impression on a speaker of a native variety of English. In situations, for instance, where colloquial style would have been appropriate, Singaporeans used utterances such as these:

'Will you furnish me with your telephone number, please.'

'You arrived by plane, I presume.'

'I like to converse with you.'

'Oh, I did not encounter that word previously.'

Contractions, such as *I'm, I'd, he's, they've* are rarely used.

In all these instances, the speakers admitted afterward that it had been their intention to make a good impression on the addressee and that they genuinely felt that words such as *furnish, presume, encounter* would be used by the addressees in this type of situation. Some of the reasons given for the use of these expressions were the teachers' instructions quoted above. In such cases of overformality, typical reactions of addressees not familiar with Singapore English usage are irritation and sometimes confusion about the speaker's attitude to the addressee. Genuine attempts at convergence are at times mistaken for coolness or standoffishness.

More explicit directives to accommodate were the instructions given by a Singapore hotel to their employees during a courtesy campaign. English phrases used in personnel training overseas were taught to employees of the hotel, particularly to those involved in dealing directly with the hotel guests, e.g. receptionists, porters, waitresses. No consideration was given to the fact that basic communicative strategies as practiced within the various ethnic groups in Singapore often differ markedly from those used by people of a European cultural background. Singapore Chinese, for instance, usually have shorter greeting and farewell rituals and a more direct approach to many business transactions, often dispensing with the courtesy formulae required by some speakers of native varieties of English. In addition to this, Singapore English intonation patterns may sound abrupt to a Western ear, vowels are shortened and consonant clusters reduced, producing a 'clipped' speech pattern. A typical verbal exchange at the hotel between one of the specially trained Chinese receptionists and a tourist was as follows:

R: Wha(t) can I do for YOU? [heavy stress on *you*].

T: May I have the key for 104 please?

R: (hands the key over silently)

T: Oh, where can I change a traveler's check?

R: Over there [pause] MADAM [heavy stress on both syllables of *madam*].

[Then, according to instructions to make friendly conversation with the guest:]

You stay here long time?

T: Yes, we'll be staying here another week.

R: [Learned phrase uttered without a smile in an even speech rhythm:] I hope you will have a pleasan(t) stay a(t) our HOTEL [heavy stress on *hotel*].

Guest's 'thank you' received as a reply a 'you're welcome' in an intonation pattern that would signal to speakers of a native English anything but a welcome. The four receptionists who were on duty claimed, when questioned, that they tried their hardest to converge by using a type of courteous English that they believed their guests were accustomed to.

The reactions of a group of Australian tourists who were questioned about these exchanges ranged from neutral to extremely negative, e.g.

'I must say, they're rather a rude lot'

'I can't say they're trying very hard with that so-called courtesy. . .'

'Well, if that's courtesy. . .'

But expatriates who wish to converge by switching into colloquial Singapore English when talking to Singaporeans make a similar mistake. Singapore English is a continuum from a basilect spoken by those with lower levels of English-medium education to an acrolect spoken in more formal situations by those with high levels of English-medium education and higher socioeconomic status. Like many developmental varieties, Singapore English has not yet fully developed stylistic ranges within each sociolect range (Platt and Weber 1979, 1980). Therefore, educated Singaporeans would use the lower end of the continuum, the basilect, as their colloquial style, but only in certain situations and with certain people, e.g. with close friends and fellow workers and within the family. They certainly do not use this basilectal sub-variety, at times referred to as 'colloquial Singapore English', to outsiders, e.g. expatriates, and generally consider it inappropriate if expatriates try to use it to them. In addition, the colloquial Singapore English attempted by expatriates lacks many of the features of the true colloquial Singapore English, e.g. vowel quality, final consonant deletion, aspectual system, and the use of *one* as a relativizer, but concentrates on some syntactic structures and a few lexical items.

Thirteen expatriate businessmen who were observed by the writers using a type of colloquial Singapore English to their Singaporean employees were questioned as to why they did so. One claimed that he was not aware of

having used it, two appeared to use it to 'show that they knew it', and one admitted that he was 'making fun of the way they spoke'. The other nine claimed to use it to converge or in their words 'to get a better rapport', 'to break down social barriers', 'to bridge the social gap'. Some also felt that it would 'break down cultural barriers'. All nine agreed that they wanted to make themselves more acceptable to their employees, but all of them were aware that they had a higher-status position and felt that by using Singapore English they did not in any way, even temporarily, relinquish this status position. Whereas the previously mentioned attempts at convergence made by the staff of a Singapore hotel could be considered as attempts at 'upward' convergence, we are concerned here with typical cases of attempted 'downward' convergence (see Ball et al., this issue). This is not only because of the higher-status positions held by the accommodators in relation to the accommodatees but also because of the general attitude of expatriates that colloquial Singapore English is a type of English inferior to their own native variety.

The self-reports of 21 employees who had been addressed by these nine expatriates were interesting. A general self-report in response to the question, 'How do you feel if an expatriate in a higher position in the firm addresses you in colloquial Singapore English?' produced mainly negative responses, ranging from amusement to annoyance. It was considered as inappropriate, as an intrusion by outsiders, or as exhibiting a paternalistic attitude. Of the 21 interviewees, none had a positive reaction; only two stated that they did not mind; six claimed to be amused, seven slightly irritated and six annoyed. We count amusement here as a somewhat negative reaction as it shows that the addressee is distancing himself from the situation and making judgements on it and on the behavior of the speaker.

Interviewees were, understandably, much more cautious when they were asked about their reactions to a particular situation, which the interviewer had observed and in which the interviewee had been the accommodatee. There was a remarkable shift to milder reactions. Of the 21 interviewees only one claimed to like it but thirteen claimed that they did not mind. Only seven of the 21 admitted to negative reactions: four to amusement, two to slight irritation, and one to annoyance. Several who had stated in the more general self-report that they were annoyed now claimed to feel amusement. After filling in the questionnaire, the employees were encouraged to make more specific comments. Two typical responses are given below:

A Chinese secretary about her American employer:

'You know, he sounds so funny. He uses *la*² a lot. I want to say – stop, stop. Don't use our slang – is all wrong.'

A Chinese accountant about his Australian manager:

'Is wrong, you know. I am English educated. If I speak like that to my brother, is O.K. but I speak good English to my boss and he speaks Singapore English. What Singapore English, I ask you.'

A particular type of situation in which accommodation attempts occur is that where a minority group speaks a pidgin, creole, or nativized variety of the language of the numerically and economically dominant group. Such a situation occurs in parts of northern Australia, where many Aborigines speak an English-based pidgin, a creole (e.g. Kriol in the Northern Territory, Cape York Creole in Northern Queensland), or, especially in the case of those who have had some formal school education, a nativized English.

Attempts at convergence by non-Aborigines sometimes involve the use of what the speaker obviously feels to be a simplified register comprehensible to the Aboriginal addressee, including an exaggeratedly slow rate of speech. Such attempts do not take into account that Aboriginal pidgins and creoles and nativized Aboriginal English are language systems with their own rules and structures which must be understood if attempts at convergence are to be successful. An example of a miscarried attempt at convergence was a tape-recorded message sent by a state government minister to a group of Aborigines in northern Australia (Ian Malcolm, personal communication), in which he wished to explain some aspects of government policy concerning mining explorations in their area. His address in a simplified register at a uniformly slow speech rate was meant to be conciliatory, but caused angry reactions.

(2) The famous 'likee-soup' joke in which a British diplomat wanted to accommodate to a British-university educated Chinese is well known, and yet native speakers make similar mistakes all over the world. Even if the addressee's competence in a particular language is relatively low, attempts at convergence by partially adopting the other's speech patterns is a dangerous game as it may easily be mistaken for patronizing or ridiculing.

Various kinds of foreigner talk (FT) are used by native speakers of a language to foreigners (Clyne 1968, 1976; Ferguson 1971, 1981). Usually they involve radical simplification of syntactic structures and a limited basic lexicon. At times they incorporate sound features, including intonation patterns, from the foreign language which may also be found in the foreigners' own attempts at speaking the language in question (Clyne 1981). Failed attempts at convergence through the use of FT can often be explained as being due to some type of faulty membership. Snow et al. (1981) point out that usually less FT is used to addressees believed to be of a higher social status than to those of a lower status. When insufficient status markers are available, the speaker may wrongly membership the addressee and use an excessive amount of FT features. The same would be the case in wrongly

membership the addressee as being a less-fluent speaker of the language in question than he really is. Usually more FT is used when the addressee's language ability is poor, but a speaker often does not take into account that the addressee may have a receptive competence far beyond that of his productive competence.

A common mistake is faulty membership on the basis of the perceived mental capacity of the addressee. Freed (1981:20) when differentiating between baby talk (BT) and foreigner talk (FT), states that young children 'in addition to being linguistically insufficient are socially immature and cognitively limited as well', whereas the cognitive capacity of foreign adults 'is presumably equal to that of the native adult speaker'. We have, however, observed cases where, due to the native speaker's stereotyped image of foreigners as basically lacking his or her cognitive capacity, something approaching baby talk was employed. If the foreign addressee's cognitive capacity was equal or superior to that of the speaker, there often appeared to be a negative response to the convergence attempt.

It would be of interest to look at the whole phenomenon of FT in terms of accommodation theory, investigating to what extent the attempted convergence succeeds or fails, what the reasons for the failure are, and what type of FT would bring about the most favorable reaction from the addressee.

That communicative strategies can vary between the so-called 'native speakers' in a country and different immigrant groups has been pointed out by Clyne (1979) in a comparative study between the communicative competences of monolingual Anglo-Australians and Italian, German, and Greek immigrants. Accommodation strategies based on group tendencies with directives can fail if they are designed for use with native speakers but are applied to immigrants. Although the main immigrant groups in Australia (Greeks, Italians, Lebanese, Serbo-Croatians, and Turks) each have their own cultural behavior patterns, the writers have found that in none of the groups is it commonly accepted that an unknown male addresses a married female by her given name only or introduces himself by his given name only. Male insurance salesmen and encyclopedia salesmen who have been instructed to use a given-name approach to make themselves more acceptable have had hostile responses from immigrant women of various age groups.

First-generation immigrants who have acquired a fair to very good command of English frequently err in their convergence attempts because of an incomplete knowledge of the stylistic subvarieties of English and conditions for their appropriate use. Immigrant workers in Australian factories sometimes laboriously learn and reproduce Australian colloquialisms such as *bonzer*, *sheila*, *grouse* as in 'a real grouse sort' and use them in order to be accepted by their Australian fellow workers without realizing that these expressions are no longer in use in urban colloquial Australian English. The

reaction of their fellow workers is often ridicule or at least amusement. A similar reaction would be achieved by the use of current colloquial expressions fitted into a style which is too formal and still has strong traces of foreignness about it, e.g. 'My *mate* is feeling somevot indispost today'. This would be a type of variation on the breaking of cooccurrence rules mentioned by Ervin-Tripp (1969).

(3) Accommodation failures because of inappropriate strategies also occur within the same native speech variety between speakers of different social status, age groups, professional groups, etc. Thakerar et al. (1982), for instance, discuss the discrepancies between the subjective and objective dimensions of accommodation of native speakers due to the speakers' misconception of the other interlocutors' speech patterns. In Australia, it is now a common practice to introduce oneself in most situations with one's given name and surname, e.g. William Roberts or Bill Roberts, Elizabeth Brown or Liz Brown, depending on the situation or the interlocutors. A group tendency with directive is the use of the Christian or given name only when meeting someone for the first time in order to break down social distance, to make the addressee feel more at ease, or to make the speaker appear a pleasant person. The directive is at times made explicit in the instructions to certain types of salesmen dealing with products or services which involve a high financial commitment, e.g. cars, real estate, insurance, encyclopedias (in the case of door-to-door salesmen), kitchen and bathroom renovation services (where a consultant visits the client's home). It also appears in some university course material dealing with doctor-patient relationships.

This strategy, mentioned earlier in the discussion about immigrant women, may be considered as a mere communicative strategy not necessarily related specifically to accommodation, but we feel that it is often a subtle form of accommodation in that it assumes that the addressees would use or accept Christian or given names within a much wider circle than is actually the case. That this strategy is not always successful is shown by a pilot study of aspects of communicative strategies which involved a questionnaire administered to 40 Australian housewives. The interviewees were divided into four groups of ten according to age and social class:

1. upper middle class (UMC) over 40 years;
2. lower middle class (LMC) over 40 years;
3. upper middle class (UMC) 20-40 years;
4. lower middle class (LMC) 20-40 years.

The questions put to the interviewees were

1. How would you feel if a car salesman or an encyclopedia salesman whom you have never met before introduced himself by his Christian or given name only?

2. How would you feel if a doctor whom you visited for the first time addressed you immediately by your Christian or given name? (Incidentally, all the interviewees assumed tacitly that the question referred to a *male* doctor).

The interviewees were given three choices:

I'd like it;

I wouldn't like it;

I wouldn't mind.

The reactions of the subjects are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. *Reactions of 40 Australian housewives to salesmen introducing themselves by Christian or given name only*

	Like	Neutral	Don't like
UMC 40 +	—	—	10
LMC 40 +	—	3	7
UMC 20 — 40	—	5	5
LMC 20 — 40	8	2	—

Table 2. *Reactions of 40 Australian housewives to salesmen and doctors addressing them by their Christian or given names only*

	Salesmen			Doctors		
	like	neutral	don't like	like	neutral	don't like
UMC 40 +	—	—	10	—	—	10
LMC 40 +	—	2	8	—	3	7
UMC 20 — 40	—	2	8	7	2	1
LMC 20 — 40	6	4	—	8	2	—

Questions concerning the same strategies if practiced by female sales personnel or doctors elicited nearly identical responses to those shown in Tables 1 and 2.

On an age basis, it is obvious that the younger groups were more ready to like these strategies than the older groups, but on a class division it was noticeable that, although younger upper-middle-class women did not totally reject them as did their older counterparts, some of them did not like them, particularly when the strategies were used by salesmen. This is not surprising. Although most Australians consider themselves members of a very egalitarian society, it is obvious that medical practitioners enjoy a very high social status.

Attitudes to car and encyclopedia salesmen and women are typically less favorable.

Although these accommodation strategies are commonly used to women of all age groups and backgrounds, it appears that they are unsuccessful if the speaker does not correctly membership his addressee, e.g. it does not generally appear to work with older women of upper-middle-class background.

A type of convergence attempt which usually fails is that made by some parents who deliberately use the 'in' language used by their teenage children, in particular the current teenage vocabulary, in order to make themselves more acceptable to their children and/or their children's friends. Most teenagers who were questioned about these convergence attempts had negative reactions. Some said they were amused, many said that they were irritated, particularly if it was done in the presence of members of their peer group. Apart from the obvious attitude that parents were outsiders and that it was a 'mean way to gate-crash', the other main reason for rejection was that the attempts were obviously 'phony', i.e. that the parents has been using words which were already outdated, that they had combined some which should not cooccur or used a word in the wrong context, or simply that parents used these words in a self-conscious way.

Conclusions

There are obviously many attempts at convergence in many areas of verbal exchange which clearly 'misfire'. They are due to a number of reasons. We feel that some of the main ones are

1. Interference from the background languages and from cultural strategies appropriate in ethnic intragroup communication.

This may be seen in the Singapore examples mentioned earlier. It would also be a common reason for accommodation failures in verbal exchanges between immigrants and native speakers of English. Some of the main interferences are due to different intonation patterns and to general strategies used in background languages and cultures, e.g. greeting exchanges, leave-takings (disengaging formulae), which may be considerably shorter or longer and more or less involved in different cultures.

2. The speaker not having sufficient knowledge of the communicative strategies and/or stylistic variations within the other speech variety.

This is the case in Singapore in the employment domain when educated expatriates in a higher role relationship attempt to speak colloquial basilectal Singapore English which is reserved by the educated Singaporeans for informal situations or for use with basilectal speakers. The same reason underlies the type of miscarried convergence attempts exemplified when Singaporeans use

formal, literary, or archaic English to tourists or expatriates in colloquial conversation and the use by immigrant workers of archaic Australian colloquialisms to their Australian fellow workers. It is also the reason for miscarried attempts within a native variety when speakers try to converge toward speakers of another sociolect or ingroup of whose language patterns they have an insufficient knowledge (e.g. parents to teenage children).

3. Incorrect or insufficient membership of the addressee.

Here, either the speaker judges the addressee to belong to a younger or older age group or to a different social or ethnic group than the one he or she really does belong to, or the speaker fails to make adequately fine distinctions – that is, he applies his accommodation strategies indiscriminately to all age groups, social classes, or ethnic groups, as in the Australian case of Christian or given name use to customers, clients, or patients.

The above categorization should, of course, not be taken as an absolute division. We do not suggest that failures are necessarily always due to only one of the reasons at any one time. Sometimes two or even all of the factors may be involved in the 'miscarriage' of a genuine attempt at convergence.

The implications of the above findings for second-language learning are the need for making learners aware that native speakers of a target language, e.g. Standard British English, are by no means monostylistic, that there exists a whole continuum of stylistic varieties within a language, with each one being appropriate for a different set of situations, and that successful attempts at convergence need to include a knowledge of all the features of such a subvariety *and* its appropriate use.

The concepts of completeness and appropriateness are, we feel, of significance in the way that miscarried convergence attempts fit into an accommodation model. So far, we have accepted the general concept of convergence and divergence as being adaptations of speech patterns toward or away from the addressee respectively. However, in many of the examples quoted the attempt failed not because there was *no* convergence but because there was *incomplete* convergence. This means there was not the total configuration of all the features necessary for the convergence process. Instead of achieving a uniform approximation of the addressee's speech patterns, the speaker may have achieved a high degree of approximation in some features, a lower degree in others, and zero approximation in another set of features, presenting to the addressee a rather odd or skewed speech pattern. Taking the Thakerar et al. (1982) division into subjective and objective convergence and referring to our Figure 1, we could say that apparent subjective convergence (verified by speaker's self-report) is coupled with an objectively or 'semiobjectively' established incomplete convergence attempt (based on evidence of recorded material and/or observation). In addition there are, however, other attempts which cannot even be classed as *incomplete* but rather as altogether *inappro-*

priate, e.g. choice of the wrong code or subcode because of wrongly membership the addressee or misjudging the situation of one's own status vis-à-vis the other participants. Although a change in speech pattern can be observed, it does not usually occur on a linear axis toward or away from the addressee.

We have in our discussions deliberately focused on the speaker and the speaker's attempts at convergence. In conclusion, a brief look at the addressee's reactions to these attempts will help to demonstrate the scope of the two types of miscarried convergence attempts discussed above. Using the concept of attribution, i.e. the perceived causes of other persons' behaviors (Kelley and Michela 1980), in particular the internal/external dimensions and their effect on listener responses (Giles and Powesland 1975; Simard et al. 1976), we can see that both types of attempt follow an essentially similar pattern; namely, that where internal attribution is concerned, particularly if the miscarried attempt is perceived by the addressee as due to lack of effort, the reaction is more unfavorable than where the speaker's attempt is perceived as being due to external pressure (see Figure 2), e.g. enforcement by management of certain convergence strategies. Some inappropriate strategies may, however, result in 'zero' perception, i.e. when the addressee is unable to attribute any cause whatsoever to the speaker's verbal behavior.

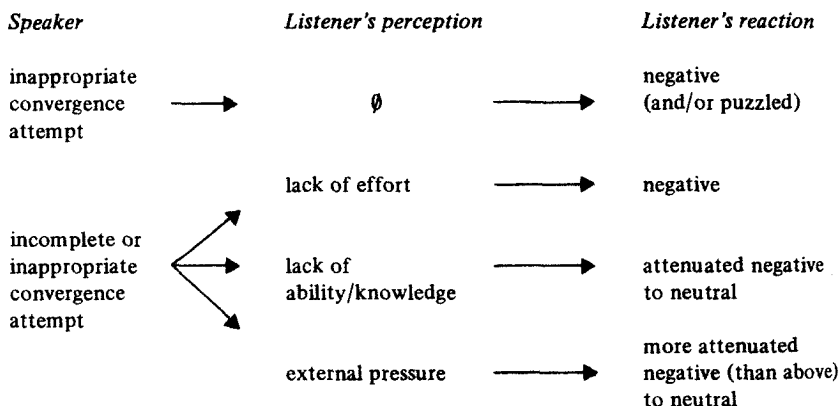


Figure 2. *An extended version of the attribution model of accommodation (after Simard et al. 1976)*

When comparing the patterns of listener reaction shown in Figure 2 with the revised version of the accommodation/nonaccommodation model in Giles and Powesland (1975:164), we can see that although convergence was attempted and in some sense has 'subjectively' taken place, these 'objectively' miscarried attempts at convergence vary in a similar manner with regard to

internal/external dimensions of attribution as does actual divergence and non-convergence.

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Notes

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2. An emphatic particle used sometimes in Singapore English as an ingroup marker.

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