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## Communication Accommodation Theory

### *A Look Back and a Look Ahead*

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Theories aim to capture the complexity of life in formalized conceptualizations. As time goes by, our understanding widens and at the same time becomes more precise. Theories undergo a continuous process of revising and refining; some disappear and are replaced by better-adapted ones. Theories are not only about life, they also have their own lives. For theories as for people, milestones like the turn of a century (or a millennium) or the completion of decades (see Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987) are occasions for a critical reappraisal of accomplishments and a look toward the future. As a theory that has investigated the links between language, context, and identity for three decades,

communication accommodation theory (CAT) is at a stage where it is timely for a look back at its history, which should help to set the agenda for its future development.

This chapter documents the trajectory of CAT, which has been particularly (but not solely) developed in the context of intercultural communication since its inception in the 1970s. Indeed, it has been reviewed in many intercultural communication texts and handbooks (e.g., Gallois & Callan, 1997; Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Gudykunst & Lee, 2002; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989; Martin & Nakayama, 2002) as well as in interpersonal communication and language texts (e.g., Bull, 2002; DeVito, 2004; Holtgraves, 2002;

Robinson, 2003) and in general communication theory texts more widely (e.g., Littlejohn, 2002; Miller, 2002). In addition, its cross-disciplinary impact has moved beyond social psychology and communication into handbooks and texts in sociolinguistics (e.g., Coupland, 1995; Giles, 2001; Giles & Powesland, 1997; see also Meyerhoff, 1998) as well as being adopted to provide explanatory weight to such linguistic phenomena as semicomcommunication (Braunmüller, 2002), code switching and mixing (e.g., Bissoonauth & Offord, 2001), language contact and dialect change (Trudgill, 1986), and hypercorrection (Giles & Williams, 1992).

In our view, CAT is a theory of both intergroup and interpersonal communication, invoking the dual importance of both factors in predicting and understanding intergroup interactions (see Gallois & Giles, 1998). As such, intercultural encounters provide perhaps the richest basis for understanding the theory, even though each intergroup context has its unique characteristics (e.g., Fox, Giles, Orbe, & Bourhis, 2000; Watson & Gallois, 2002; Williams, Giles, Coupland, Dalby, & Manasse, 1990). We examine CAT here on the basis of the different sets of propositions that have been formulated since the early 1970s (Ball, Giles, Byrne, & Berechree, 1984; Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Giles, & Coupland, 1988; Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile, & Ota, 1995; Giles et al., 1987; Street & Giles, 1982; Thakerar, Giles, & Cheshire, 1982). As we shall see, the evolution of CAT's propositions during these three decades raises a number of issues. The extensive amount of research and theory development around CAT has made parsimony a major concern, and, consequently, recent overviews of the theory have been more discursive and have not invoked propositional formats (see Gallois & Giles, 1998; Giles & Noels, 1997; Giles & Ogay, in press; Giles & Wadleigh, 1999; Shepard, Giles, & Le Poire, 2001). Indeed, working toward the reduced number of propositions in the final

section has been a major challenge. In order to conserve space and avoid redundancy with other reviews of communication accommodation, references to the many experimental results that support the theory are in general left out of this chapter. Interested readers should consult the above-mentioned sources, as well as Giles, Coupland, and Coupland (1991) and, for more recent reviews, Shepard and colleagues (2001), Giles and Ogay (in press), Sachdev and Giles (in press) and Williams, Gallois, and Pittam (1999).

### Background and Foundations

During the 1970s, social psychologists (Giles, 1973, 1977, 1979b; Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1972) laid the foundations of what was then named speech accommodation theory (SAT) out of a dissatisfaction with sociolinguistics and its descriptive (rather than explanatory) appraisal of linguistic variation in social contexts (see Beebe & Giles, 1984), as well as to provide the burgeoning study of language attitudes with more theoretical bite (Giles & Powesland, 1975). Street and Giles (1982) put SAT in propositional form for the first time, although precursors to this had already appeared in the parallel-evolving ethnolinguistic identity theory (ELIT; e.g., Giles, 1978, 1979a; Giles & Johnson, 1981). Thakerar and colleagues (1982) revised the propositions and restated them. Could these authors have imagined then the developments the theory would undergo? Probably not, if one considers the modest scope of the theory in the early papers that formulated propositions:

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. (Thakerar et al., 1982, p. 207)

SAT soon generated a plethora of research and related theories, resulting in an expansion of its scope:

SAT presents a broad and robust basis from which to examine mutual influences in communication, taking account of social and cognitive factors, and having the scope to cover the social consequences of speech shifts as well as their determinants and the motivations underlying them. Furthermore, it is applicable to a broad range of speech behaviors, and nonverbal analyses potentially, with the flexibility of relevance at both interpersonal and intergroup levels. (Giles et al., 1987, p. 34)

The latest presentation of the theory in propositional form indicates how much the scope of the theory widened in the ensuing years, exemplified by the change from “speech” to “communication accommodation theory” (CAT; Giles et al., 1987):

Overall, CAT is a multifunctional theory that conceptualizes communication in both subjective and objective terms. It focuses on both intergroup and interpersonal features and, as we shall see, can integrate dimensions of cultural variability. Moreover, in addition to individual factors of knowledge, motivation, and skill, CAT recognizes the importance of power and of macro contextual factors. Most important, perhaps, CAT is a theory of intercultural communication that actually attends to communication. (Gallois et al., 1995, p. 127)

SAT was first formulated in order to explore the sociopsychological parameters underlying the moves speakers make in their speech behaviors. Central to it is the idea that communication is not only a matter of exchanging referential information, but that interpersonal as well as intergroup relationships are managed by means of communication. What are the motives and intentions behind speakers’ conscious (or nonconscious)

linguistic choices? How do listeners perceive these choices and react to them?

Production and reception are thus the two basic facets of communication on which SAT first examined the original accommodative strategies of convergence and divergence/maintenance. *Convergence* is defined as a strategy through which individuals adapt their communicative behavior in such a way as to become more similar to their interlocutor’s behavior. Conversely, the strategy of *divergence* leads to an accentuation of differences between self and other. A strategy similar to divergence is *maintenance*, in which a person persists in his or her original style, regardless of the communication behavior of the interlocutor. Central to the theory is the idea that speakers adjust (or accommodate) their speech styles in order to create and maintain positive personal and social identities.

SAT was derived in part from similarity-attraction theory (Byrne, 1971), which posits that an increase in perceived interpersonal similarity results in an increase in interpersonal attraction. Thus, convergence is a strategy that allows one person to become more similar to another (or, more precisely, to one’s representation of the other) and therefore presumably more likeable to him or her. Giles (1978) also invoked Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) social identity theory of intergroup relations (SIT), and SAT thereafter has largely (but not solely) relied on the framework of SIT to explain the motives behind the strategies of divergence and maintenance. Why should one choose to appear *dissimilar* to another? Referring to similarity-attraction theory alone would mean that the motive driving divergence or maintenance behaviors would be to appear dislikable, or at least that the speaker’s need for social approval is low. Invoking the intergroup context, SIT explains the adoption of these strategies through the desire to signal a salient group distinctiveness so as to reinforce a social identity.

Another fundamental resource for SAT is attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley,

1973), which inspired the propositions on the reception side. How are accommodative strategies perceived and evaluated by interlocutors? Attribution theory suggests that we explain and appreciate people's behavior in terms of the motives and intentions that we think caused it: in other words, those to which we attribute the behavior. In general, we evaluate a person who performed a desired behavior more favorably when we attribute the behavior to an internal cause (e.g., intention to act in this way), rather than to an external one (e.g., situational pressure). Conversely, we evaluate a person who performed an undesirable behavior less negatively when we attribute the behavior to an external than to an internal cause (e.g., malevolent intention).

### Propositions of SAT and CAT in Historical Perspective

During its development, SAT/CAT has received broad empirical support. As Table 6.1 indicates, two phases can be distinguished in the articles where propositions have been formulated:

- a first phase (speech accommodation theory) of definition and refinement of the initial set of propositions, focused on the strategies of convergence and divergence of speech styles during social encounters;

- second phase (communication accommodation theory), characterized by a major extension of the focus from the two accommodation strategies of convergence and divergence to the whole process of communication in a number of intergroup contexts, along with the integration of satellite theories developed to account for communication between ethnic groups (Giles & Johnson, 1981), second-language acquisition (Beebe & Giles, 1984), and communication between generations (Coupland, Coupland, & Giles, 1991; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001).

Furthermore, CAT, along with some of the satellite theories, was the foundation for independent models (themselves subject to their own later refinements and elaborations) in which accommodative processes and dilemmas were embedded within wider social forces. These models include the communicative predicament model of aging (e.g., Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986), the group vitality model (Harwood, Giles, & Bourhis, 1994), the intergenerational contact model (Fox & Giles, 1993), the model of multiculturalism (Sachdev & Bourhis, 2001), the workplace gender nonaccommodation cycle model (Boggs & Giles, 1999), and the communication management effects model of successful aging (Giles & Harwood, 1997).

**Table 6.1** Number of Propositions in Versions of SAT (Phase 1) and CAT (Phase 2)

<i>Authors and Date of Paper</i>	<i>Number of Propositions</i>
<i>Phase 1: SAT</i>	
Street and Giles (1982)	6
Thakerar et al. (1982)	6 (revision of Street & Giles)
Ball et al. (1984)	6
Giles et al. (1987)	6
<i>Phase 2: CAT</i>	
Gallois et al. (1988)	16 (revised, integrates satellite theories)
Gallois et al. (1995)	17

It is now time for a third phase, in which CAT is consolidated and revised in a clearer manner. Gallois and Giles (1998) noted that CAT's focus is most appropriately around the extent to which interlocutors apprehend the interaction in intergroup or interpersonal terms. Everything else, from motives to strategies to actual behavior to evaluations of behavior, flows from this. We adopt a similar approach in this reformulation.

### PHASE 1: SPEECH ACCOMMODATION THEORY

The first presentation of SAT's propositions per se was in Street and Giles (1982), and a revised set appeared in the same year in Thakerar et al. (1982). The early propositions follow a symmetrical structure for the strategies of convergence and divergence/maintenance, exploring motives for the strategies and magnitude on the production side, and evaluation of them on the reception side.

#### *Production*

- *Convergence*: People are more likely to converge toward the speech patterns of their recipients when they desire recipients' approval and when the perceived costs for doing so are proportionally lower than the anticipated rewards.
- *Divergence/Maintenance*: People are more likely to maintain their speech patterns or diverge them away from those of their interlocutors' either when they define the encounter in intergroup terms and desire a positive ingroup identity, or when they wish to dissociate personally from another in an interindividual encounter.

#### *Magnitude*

- *Convergence*: The magnitude of speech convergence is a function of the extent of speakers' repertoires and the factors (personality and environmental) increasing the need for approval.

- *Divergence/Maintenance*: The magnitude of speech divergence is a function of the extent of speakers' repertoires, as well as contextual factors increasing the salience of group identification and the desire for a positive ingroup identity, or undesirable characteristics of another in an interindividual encounter.

#### *Reception*

- *Convergence*: Speech convergence is positively evaluated by recipients when the resultant behavior is perceived to be at an optimal sociolinguistic distance from them and is attributed with positive intent.
- *Divergence/Maintenance*: Speech maintenance and divergence are unfavorably evaluated by recipients when they attribute them to negative intent, but favorably evaluated by observers of the encounter who define the interaction in intergroup terms and who share a common, positively valued group membership with the speaker.

### Functions of Accommodation

In its early days, SAT explained convergence in terms of the need for approval, and divergence in terms of the need for positive distinctiveness. Another function of convergence and divergence rapidly emerged, however. Thakerar et al. (1982) introduced into the propositions the idea that accommodation strategies have not only an affective function (i.e., of identity maintenance), but also a cognitive one involving speakers' organizing their output to take account of the requirements of listeners, and hence facilitating comprehension. Thakerar and colleagues mentioned the cognitive organization function only for convergence, however.

Street and Giles (1982) brought to the propositions the idea that divergence can also be enacted in order to facilitate comprehension, rather than being only an expression of the desire to show distinctiveness. For example, a bilingual may purposely exaggerate his or her accent or pretend to have

difficulty in finding words in order to remind his or her interlocutor that any breaking of norms (linguistic, but also interactional and social) should be attributed not to intention but to the speaker's foreignness. In other contexts, divergence can function as a strategic move to encourage interlocutors to change their speech patterns, for instance when therapists diverge in their quantity of talk to encourage their patients to talk more. Street and Giles introduced only this second function for divergence in their revised propositions, as did Giles et al. (1987); the self-handicapping tactic was incorporated without being theorized in the propositions (see Gallois & Giles, 1998).

Following Thakerar and colleagues (1982), subsequent presentations of SAT added the cognitive goal "attaining communicational efficiency" to the two original affective goals of accommodation: "evoking listeners' social approval" for convergence and "maintaining speakers' positive social identities" for divergence/maintenance. It was not clear, however, whether this new goal should be linked only to convergence or to both strategies. This ambiguity can be resolved, as we have done here, by situating more clearly the different goals on the two dimensions of functions of accommodation introduced by Giles, Scherer, and Taylor (1979)—the cognitive dimension of cognitive organization and the affective dimension of identity maintenance:

*Cognitive Function:*

*Cognitive Organization*

- *Convergence:* Speaker (S) converges to Recipient's (R) speech characteristics in order to facilitate comprehension.
- *Divergence/Maintenance:* S diverges from R's speech characteristics in order to remind R of their nonshared group memberships and hence prevent misattributions, or S diverges in order to encourage R to adopt a more situationally appropriate speech pattern.

*Affective Function:*

*Identity Maintenance*

- *Convergence:* S converges to R's speech characteristics in order to appear more similar and thus more likeable.
- *Divergence/Maintenance:* S diverges from R's speech characteristics in order to emphasize distinctiveness, and thus reinforce S's positive sense of identity.

Exploring the goals of accommodation leads us to the subjective dimension of communication, reflecting interactants' perceptions of their own and their counterparts' goals and behaviors in an interaction. Thakerar et al. (1982) investigated the incongruity between objective speech (i.e., speech as observed by an outsider such as the researcher) and its perception by interactants. They observed that, in dyads characterized by status inequality, high-status participants slowed their speech rates and made their accents less standard, while lower-status speakers increased rate and produced more standardized accents. On objective measures, the dyads were diverging, but they actually *thought* that they were converging. Lower-status speakers did not accommodate to the actual speech patterns of their partners, but to their stereotype of high-status speakers talking faster and having a more standard accent. Therefore Thakerar and colleagues brought an important modification to the original propositions, stating that one does not converge toward (or diverge from) the *actual* speech of the recipient, but toward (from) *one's stereotypes* about the recipient's speech.

### Types of Accommodation

Thakerar et al. (1982), thus, elaborated the distinction between linguistic accommodation (referring to actual speech behavior) and psychological accommodation (referring to speakers' motivations and intentions to converge or diverge). A further distinction was introduced

by dividing linguistic accommodation into an objective and a subjective dimension: While speakers' linguistic shifts can objectively be described as diverging (or converging), speakers may *believe* that they are converging (or diverging). Thus we can account for cases like the one above, where linguistic divergence is observed while interlocutors intend to converge and attain psychological integration. Such a mismatch between linguistic and psychological accommodation happens in many role-defined situations characterized by status discrepancy, like interactions between doctors and patients, professors and students, or men and women. In cooperative situations involving people of different status, interlocutors may contribute through different speech patterns to the attainment of a common goal. Social norms in these types of settings require "speech complementarity" (Giles, 1980) rather than convergence. Differences correspond to an optimal sociolinguistic distance and are psychologically acceptable to both participants.

Prior research had mostly assumed equivalence between speakers' intentions, what they actually do, and what they think they are doing. With these subtle (yet crucial) distinctions, SAT opened up the complexity of communication, underscoring the importance of elucidating both cognitive and affective processes underlying a wide range of verbal and nonverbal behaviors (Giles et al., 1991; Giles & Wadleigh, 1999). Perhaps most significant, SAT accorded central importance to the sociopsychological processes of communication, conceptualizing communication as a negotiation of personal and social identities. This affective function of accommodation represents the historical core of SAT. It allows predictions about speakers' accommodative moves as a function of the interpersonal or intergroup salience of the interaction for them—in other words, their perception of how much their personal and social identities are called into question by the interaction.

### Interpersonal and Intergroup Accommodation

Even though convergence leads to an increase in similarity, and divergence to an increase in distinctiveness, it should not be concluded that convergence is linked *only* to the interpersonal dimension of communication or that divergence is linked *only* to the intergroup dimension. This would allow for only interpersonal convergence and intergroup divergence. It is true that most SAT research on divergence is about intergroup contexts, as this strategy is a powerful means for interactants to differentiate from relevant outgroup members and to reinforce their social identities. Yet both strategies can in principle be either person-based or group-based, depending on the salience of the interpersonal or intergroup dimensions for the interactants, as well as their motivation (see Gallois & Giles, 1998, for a discussion of this and related issues). Gallois et al. (1988) noted, however, that interpersonal and intergroup accommodation are likely to involve different behaviors (i.e., personal and group markers, respectively).<sup>1</sup> Hornsey and Gallois (1998) followed this issue up empirically in the context of intercultural communication by examining evaluations of cultural ingroup (Australian) and outgroup (Chinese) speakers who converged to an Australian speaker's personal style, converged to typical Australian speech markers, or who diverged from interpersonal or intergroup markers. They found a tendency for some evaluators to be more responsive to interpersonal and others to intergroup convergence and divergence.

It is also likely that convergence has often been considered as interpersonal and divergence/maintenance as intergroup because these concepts were originally explained by reference to different theoretical frameworks: convergence to similarity-attraction and divergence to social identity theory. It is important to explain these two concepts using the

same theory, because they are theorized as psychologically opposing strategies. SIT, and the concepts of social and personal identity in particular, allows for this possibility, but similarity-attraction theory probably does not; thus, CAT can be theorized more completely through social identity processes.

### Reception of Accommodation

On the reception side, early SAT research (e.g., Giles, 1973) found that convergence generally evokes positive reactions in its recipients and divergence evokes negative reactions. According to Street and Giles (1982), "that convergence functions to establish optimal speech patterns represents a basic tenet of SAT" (p. 211). Converging speakers have been found to be perceived as more competent, attractive, warm, and cooperative; convergence is also appreciated by recipients because it means a reduction of the cognitive effort they have to provide in the interaction.

Other research has specified the antecedent conditions for these evaluations, demonstrating that convergence is not positively evaluated in all situations, and that divergence is not always negatively evaluated. For example, Simard, Taylor, and Giles (1976) investigated attribution processes in the evaluation of accommodation strategies. They found that listeners perceived convergence favorably when they attributed it to speakers' intent to break down cultural barriers (internal attribution of positive intent), but when speakers attributed the act to situational pressure (external attribution), their reaction was not positive. Conversely, when divergence was attributed to situational pressures, the response to it was less negative than when divergence was internally attributed, for example to a lack of effort on the part of the speaker. In the same vein, Ball et al. (1984) investigated the influence of situational constraints on the evaluation of divergence and convergence. Their

results showed that, in a context where strong social norms operate (such as a job interview), adherence to sociolinguistic norms determines the positive or negative evaluation of the speaker, not the display of convergence or divergence itself (see Gallois & Callan, 1997, and Giles & Johnson, 1987, for extended discussions of the role of norms).

The propositions in these papers, thus, state that convergence is positively evaluated when it is attributed positive intent, and that divergence is negatively evaluated when it is attributed negative intent. These propositions do not indicate how convergence is evaluated when perceived intent is negative, or how divergence is evaluated when perceived intent is positive. Even so, Street and Giles (1982) argued that we should not conclude that "the relationship between degree of convergence and positive evaluation is necessarily linear" (p. 212). They named attribution processes as well as "listeners' tolerance or preference levels for various magnitudes and rates of speech discrepancies and adjustments" as moderating variables of the evaluation of convergence and divergence. Furthermore, Ball and colleagues (1984) stated that convergence is negatively evaluated when "prevailing situational norms define the convergent act as a violation of them" (p. 126). These papers open up the potential for the same strategy to be evaluated differently in different circumstances, which became a key part of CAT.

The next revision of SAT (Giles et al., 1987) went back to the original structure, stating that convergence is positively evaluated when perceived as adhering to a valued norm, and that divergence is negatively evaluated when perceived as departing from a valued norm. They noted in the text that "in some cases this sort of divergence that adheres to a valued norm would be expected to produce positive evaluations in fact. Similarly, convergence that departs from a valued norm should produce attenuated positive or even negative evaluations" (p. 39). Overall, the thrust has

**Table 6.2** Attributions and Evaluations of Convergence and Divergence/Maintenance

	<i>Internal Attribution by Recipient R of Speaker S</i>		<i>External Attribution by R</i>
<b>Convergence</b>	Benevolent Intent by S e.g., R thinks that S is converging because S wants them to become friends.	Malevolent Intent by S e.g., R thinks that S is converging because S is making fun of R's accent.	R Situational Constraints e.g., R thinks that S is converging because of social role and is forced to do so.
<b>Divergence/ maintenance</b>	Positive evaluation e.g., R thinks that S is diverging/maintaining because S wants to remind R that this is not S's mother tongue (perceived self-handicapping strategy by S).  Positive evaluation	Negative evaluation e.g., R thinks that S is diverging/maintaining because S wants to show disdain or disinterest in the interaction  Negative evaluation	Less positive/negative evaluation e.g., R thinks that S is diverging/maintaining because S has not had an occasion to learn how to behave appropriately in another culture.  Less negative evaluation

been that *both* convergence and divergence/maintenance can involve affective as well as cognitive functions, and that *both* can be attributed internally (to a positive or a negative intent) or externally, so that *both* can lead to positive or negative evaluations—perceptions and attributions are privileged over actual behavior. Nevertheless, statements of the propositions have maintained the original form. In this chapter, we address this issue by first stating the general tendency to evaluate convergence positively and divergence negatively, and then specifying the moderating variables (or “conflicting variables”; Giles et al., 1987, p. 39) that may change the valence of these evaluations.

Furthermore, the propositions in SAT mention only internal attributions (to a positive or negative intent) and not external attributions (to situational pressures), as investigated by Simard et al. (1976; see also Ball et al., 1984; Gallois & Callan, 1991). SAT and CAT have theorized the role of norms as constraints to accommodative processes, but social and

situational norms and pressures have not yet received the attention they deserve. Table 6.2 illustrates the diversity of possible attributions (and, therefore, evaluations) for convergence and divergence/maintenance.

Other research has also investigated the errors in attribution processes. This research shows that we do not attribute meaning objectively to the behaviors we evaluate, but that attributions are biased. The “fundamental attribution error” describes our tendency to overestimate the influence of internal factors (personality, effort, intent) over external ones. The “ultimate attribution error” (Hewstone, 1990) adds intergroup processes to the attributional biases. If we are interacting with ingroup members, we tend to attribute their desirable behaviors to internal factors and their undesirable behaviors to external ones (situational constraints). Conversely, when we interact with outgroup members, we tend to attribute their desirable behaviors to external factors, and their undesirable behaviors to internal ones. The assumption of SAT is

that convergence in general reflects desirable behavior and divergence/maintenance undesirable behavior, so that the integration of the ultimate attribution error leads to the following attributions: convergence by ingroup members attributed internally to benevolent intent; convergence by outgroup members attributed externally to situational constraints (and thus as less desirable); divergence by outgroup members attributed internally to malevolent intent; divergence by ingroup members attributed externally (and thus as less undesirable).

### From SAT to CAT

In their 1987 paper, Giles et al. assessed the first decade of SAT and presented a reformulation of its propositions in light of recent research, renaming the theory communication accommodation theory (CAT). As can be seen from Table 6.3, the propositions still followed the original structure, with the exception of the order of presentation.

These revised propositions introduce the processes of self-presentation and impression management (see Baumeister, 1982, 1993; Giles & Street, 1994) as another theoretical resource. Indeed, the production and reception of language behaviors can be understood in terms of the image that individuals want to convey to others. According to self-presentation theory, communication is a process by which individuals manage the impressions they make on others, attempting in particular to create a positive impression on socially influential others (e.g., by adopting speech features, like deep pitch, fast speech rate, standard accent, that social knowledge associates with competence). This positive impression is crucial for the acquisition and maintenance of social power and influence, and hence for positive self- and group-esteem (see Ng & Bradac, 1993).

A comparison of these revised propositions to the first set shows how much subtler, and at the same time broader, the theory had become. Speech and linguistic features are no longer the

only focus of the theory, which progressively has grown into a theory of communication. A significant number of new theoretical concepts have been inserted into the six original propositions. Furthermore, proposals for further research and refinements abound in the papers reviewed so far, which would lead to even more complex propositions. As Giles et al. stated, the challenge for SAT in 1987 was

whether or not SAT can be expanded comfortably to accommodate more and more complexity in its propositional format. At the same time, another challenge that will have to be met involves *explaining* this increased propositional complexity in terms of a parsimonious and unique set of integrative principles. (p. 41)

In the next section, we consider how the newly named CAT managed these challenges.

### PHASE 2: COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION THEORY

Since 1987, CAT has been expanded into an interdisciplinary model of relational and identity processes in interaction (Coupland & Jaworski, 1997, pp. 241-242). It has been applied to communication between different social groups (cultures, generations, genders, abilities) and within and between organizations, in face-to-face interactions, as well as through different media (radio, telephone, e-mail, etc.), in different countries, and by researchers of diverse cultural and language backgrounds (for a review of this variety, see Giles & Ogay, in press). In particular, communication between generations (Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988; Fox & Giles, 1993), along with communication between cultures and linguistic groups (Gallois et al., 1988; Gallois et al., 1995), has been significantly considered in the theoretical development of CAT (in the further area of intergender communication, see Abrams, Hajek, & Murachver, in press, for a review).

**Table 6.3** SAT/CAT's Revised Propositions (after Giles et al., 1987)

	<i>Convergence</i>	<i>Divergence / Maintenance</i>
<b>Production</b>	<p>1. Speakers attempt to converge toward the speech AND NONVERBAL PATTERNS <i>believed to be characteristic</i> of their message recipients, BE THE LATTER DEFINED IN INDIVIDUAL, RELATIONAL, OR GROUP TERMS, when speakers: (a) desire recipients' social approval (and the perceived costs of acting in an approval-seeking manner are proportionally lower than the perceived rewards); (b) <i>desire a high level of communicational efficiency</i>; (C) DESIRE A SELF-, COUPLE-, OR GROUP PRESENTATION SHARED BY RECIPIENTS; (D) DESIRE APPROPRIATE SITUATIONAL OR IDENTITY DEFINITIONS; WHEN THE RECIPIENTS' (E) ACTUAL SPEECH IN THE SITUATION MATCHES THE BELIEF THAT THE SPEAKERS HAVE ABOUT RECIPIENTS' SPEECH STYLE; (F) SPEECH IS POSITIVELY VALUED, THAT IS, NONSTIGMATIZED; (G) SPEECH STYLE IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE SPEAKERS AS WELL AS FOR RECIPIENTS.</p> <p>2. The magnitude of such convergence is a function of: (a) the extent of speakers' repertoires, and (b) individual, RELATIONAL, SOCIAL, and contextual factors that may increase the needs for social comparison, social approval, <i>and/or high communicational efficiency</i>.</p>	<p>3. Speakers attempt to maintain their communication patterns, or even diverge away from their message recipients' SPEECH AND NONVERBAL BEHAVIORS when they (A) DESIRE TO COMMUNICATE A CONTRASTIVE SELF-IMAGE; (b) desire to dissociate personally from the recipients or the recipients' definition of the situation; (c) define the encounter in intergroup or relational terms WITH COMMUNICATION STYLE BEING A VALUED DIMENSION OF THEIR SITUATIONALLY SALIENT IN-GROUP OR RELATIONAL IDENTITIES; (d) <u>desire to change recipients' speech behavior, for example, moving it to a more acceptable level</u>; WHEN RECIPIENTS (E) EXHIBIT A STIGMATIZED FORM, THAT IS, A STYLE THAT DEVIATES FROM A VALUED NORM, WHICH IS (F) CONSISTENT WITH SPEAKERS' EXPECTATIONS REGARDING RECIPIENT PERFORMANCE.</p> <p>4. The magnitude of such divergence is a function of (a) the extent of the speakers' repertoires, and (b) individual, RELATIONAL, SOCIAL, and contextual factors increasing the salience of the cognitive and affective functions in (3) above.</p>
<b>Reception</b>	<p>5. Convergence is positively evaluated by message recipients, THAT IS, WILL LEAD TO HIGH RATINGS FOR FRIENDLINESS, ATTRACTIVENESS, AND SOLIDARITY when recipients PERCEIVE (A) A MATCH TO THEIR OWN COMMUNICATIONAL STYLE; (B) A MATCH TO A LINGUISTIC STEREOTYPE FOR A GROUP IN WHICH THEY HAVE MEMBERSHIP; (c) the speaker's convergence to be optimally distant sociolinguistically, AND TO BE PRODUCED AT AN OPTIMAL RATE, LEVEL OF FLUENCY, AND LEVEL OF ACCURACY; (d) <b>the speaker's style to adhere to a valued norm</b>; ESPECIALLY WHEN (E) PERCEIVED SPEAKER EFFORT IS HIGH; (F) PERCEIVED SPEAKER CHOICE IS HIGH; (g) perceived intent is altruistic or benevolent.</p>	<p>6. Divergence is negatively rated by recipients when they perceive (A) A MISMATCH TO THEIR OWN COMMUNICATIONAL STYLE; (B) A MISMATCH TO A LINGUISTIC STEREOTYPE FOR A GROUP IN WHICH THEY HAVE MEMBERSHIP; (C) THE SPEAKER'S DIVERGENCE TO BE EXCESSIVELY DISTANT, FREQUENT, FLUENT, AND ACCURATE; (d) <b>the speaker's style to depart from a valued norm</b>; especially when (E) PERCEIVED SPEAKER EFFORT IS HIGH; (F) PERCEIVED SPEAKER CHOICE IS HIGH; (g) perceived intent is selfish or malevolent.</p>

NOTE: The additions by Thakerar et al. (1982) are italicized; those by Street and Giles (1982) are underlined; the additions inspired by Ball et al. (1984) are in **bold font**; and those by Giles et al. (1987) are in SMALL CAPS.

McLaughlin, M., *Communication Yearbook 10*, pp. 13-48, ©1987 by Sage Publications, Inc. Reprinted by Permission of Sage Publications, Inc.

Working in the intergenerational context, Coupland and colleagues (1988) replaced the original structure of SAT's propositions with a model of the communication process as a path, starting with the psychological orientations of speakers; going through their goals and sociolinguistic strategies; and ending with evaluations of the interaction, which are dynamically related to orientations in subsequent encounters. This model was taken up again by Gallois et al. (1988), who developed CAT for the context of intercultural communication, and also incorporated propositions from ELIT (Giles & Johnson, 1981, 1987). In 1995, a second elaboration of CAT was presented (Gallois et al., 1995).

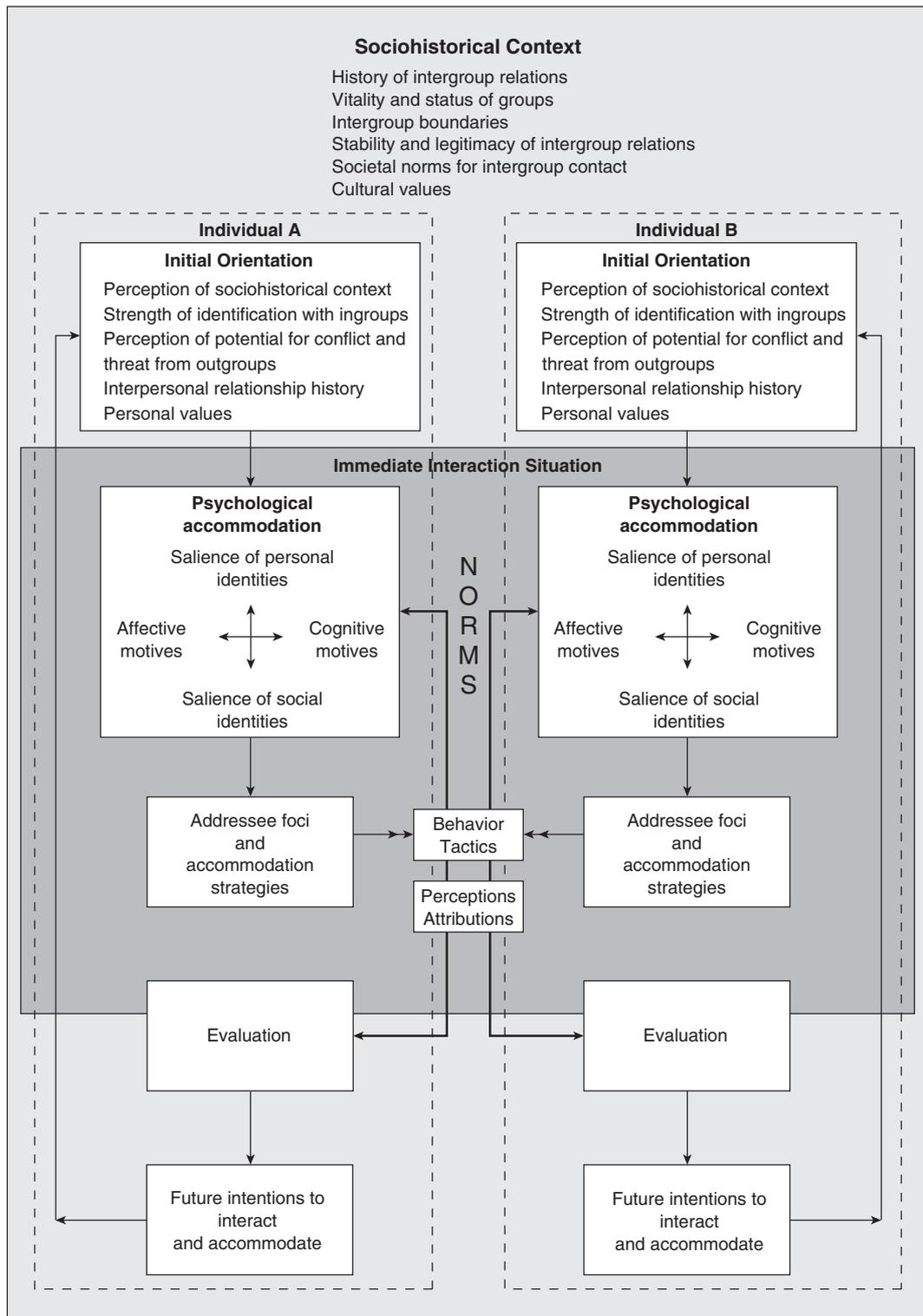
In the vast literature produced within CAT's framework, the two papers by Gallois and colleagues in 1988 and 1995 are the only publications to continue the task of developing CAT's propositions, although a number of other papers present formal models of the accommodation process, particularly in the contexts of health, emotions, and intergenerational communication (e.g., Williams et al., 1990). By problematizing issues of miscommunication and sociopsychological processes in communication, CAT is especially relevant to the study of intercultural communication and represents an alternative to the approach of communication effectiveness (see Gallois & Giles, 1998). Moreover, cultural groups (or groups with different linguistic codes or accents) were the most frequent ones studied in the early days of the theory; from the start, this gave SAT and CAT an intercultural flavor.

Figure 6.1 presents the full CAT model, incorporating concepts and variables from all its variants. As can be seen, intergroup encounters are theorized as occurring in a sociohistorical context, which is a key influence on the initial orientation of speakers to treat each other in intergroup terms, interpersonal terms, or both. This part of the model shows the influence of SIT and ELIT. In the immediate interaction situation, which is governed by norms that may enhance or

inhibit accommodative moves, speakers take a psychological accommodative stance, depending upon the salience of affective or cognitive motives and social or personal identities. As the interaction proceeds, their addressee foci, strategies, behavior, and tactics change as a function of changing identity salience and the behavior of the other speaker, as well as of their perceptions and attributions about the other's behavior. Finally, speakers take their evaluations of the other person and the interaction away with them, leading to future intentions about interactions with the other or members of his or her ingroup.

It is worth asking whether this model should really be constrained to intercultural contexts alone. Indeed, the "interculturalness" of the model is limited to the dimension of individualism-collectivism, all other variables being applicable in other intergroup contexts. Individualism-collectivism describes the relative importance attached by a cultural group to the individual versus the group (e.g., Triandis, 1995). According to Gallois and colleagues (1995), individualism-collectivism helps to characterize the strength and exclusiveness of identification with ingroups. Collectivists belong to few ingroups and share strong beliefs about ingroup identification and loyalty, whereas individualists belong to many ingroups and have weaker beliefs about identification and loyalty. Collectivists emphasize group identity and thus tend to make sharper distinctions between ingroup and outgroup. In contrast, individualists value group identities less and personal identity more. They have multiple and changing group identifications, and make more interpersonal than intergroup comparisons.

These characterizations of individualists and collectivists have implications for the study of communication accommodation processes. For example, individualists may react to convergence from outgroup interlocutors in a relatively positive manner, and converge toward outgroup speakers reciprocally as well. With softer intergroup boundaries,



**Figure 6.1** Full Model of Communication Accommodation Theory, Containing All Variables From Previous Versions of the Model

their thresholds for allowing linguistic penetration by outgroup members may be lower. Conversely, people from collectivistic cultures, who perceive harder intergroup boundaries, may react to attempts at communicative convergence from outgroup members more negatively, and diverge from them more if they perceive the convergence as overstepping a valued cultural or national boundary. In general, speakers from collectivistic cultures are likely to diverge more from outgroup interlocutors, both psychologically and linguistically, than their individualistic counterparts (Gallois et al., 1995; see Giles, 1979a, for the introduction of the ethnic boundary model).

The dimension of individualism-collectivism is centrally interesting and important to intercultural communication. Nevertheless, other concepts in the theory can probably do the same work as this variable, in a more generic way. For example, to characterize how individuals relate to their ingroups, both the 1988 and 1995 versions of CAT refer to dependence on the ingroup (available alternatives for ingroup identification; cf. Giles & Johnson, 1981) and solidarity with it (strength of identification to the ingroup and satisfaction with it). More generally, the concepts of social categorization and comparison processes, personal and social identity, and permeability and softness of group boundaries have already been integrated in CAT and can probably incorporate individualism and collectivism. This would be compatible with Gallois and Giles's (1998) presentation of CAT as "a systematic attempt to take account of intergroup *and* interpersonal variables, at macro and micro levels, in accounting for behavior in intergroup interactions" (pp. 157-158).<sup>2</sup> This is not to deny how central intercultural communication is to CAT, however, both as a key context of intergroup encounters and as the most fully developed context of the theory.

According to Shepard et al. (2001), while researchers first tended to apply CAT to a wide range of contexts, they are now formulating "specific context-driven theories using

basic CAT propositions" (p. 41). Gallois and Giles (1998) noted that

CAT has become very complex, so that the theory as a whole probably cannot be tested at one time. This means that researchers using CAT must develop mini-theories to suit the contexts in which they work, while at the same time keeping the whole of the theory in mind. (p. 158)

Given the complexities of CAT's history, it is not crystal clear what "basic CAT propositions" (Shepard et al., 2001) or the "whole of the theory" (Gallois & Giles, 1998) refer to. For example, Gallois et al. (1988; Gallois et al., 1995) adopted the hierarchical conceptual structure proposed by Coupland et al. (1988). Accommodation is the big picture; when people want to accommodate, they use "attuning strategies." There are four strategies: interpretability, discourse management, interpersonal control, and approximation; Giles et al. (1991) suggested two more—emotional expression or relationship-maintenance strategies and face-related strategies—that have recently begun to be studied. Under the approximation strategy, we find the original convergence, divergence, maintenance, and speech complementarity. This structure and the underlying terminology are not always represented consistently in texts and propositions, however. We attempt in this chapter to make the language of CAT more consistent and clear.

Overall, it seems timely to consider the achievements made so far in order to produce a revised set of propositions that can be considered as the general theory, and to which specific context-driven subtheories can be related. A general cross-contextual theory is even more important because theories focused on specific contexts entail the risk of considering one group membership (culture, generation, gender) on its own, thereby overlooking the multiplicity of identities that are negotiated through communication (Gallois & Giles, 1998; Gallois & Pittam, 1996).

TOWARD PHASE 3

This final section moves from the issues discussed above into a revised formulation of CAT. The challenge is to formulate propositions that respect the principle of parsimony as much as possible, while making allowance for the richness of research findings. The revised model is presented in Figure 6.2. Like previous models, it situates intergroup encounters in a sociohistorical context. This version highlights intergroup and interpersonal history, along with norms and values. The model features an interaction between two individuals, including what they bring into the interaction (their

initial orientation) and what they take out of it (their evaluations and future intentions for the partner and his or her social group). Within the norm-constrained immediate interaction situation, speakers derive a psychological accommodative stance, including the aspects of the interlocutor they are attending to (previously called addressee focus), which influences the accommodative and nonaccommodative strategies they adopt. We posit that behavior and tactics happen in a dynamic environment, influenced by the other's behavior as well as changing motives and identities. In addition, behavior leads to perceptions of the interlocutor and attributions about his or her motives,

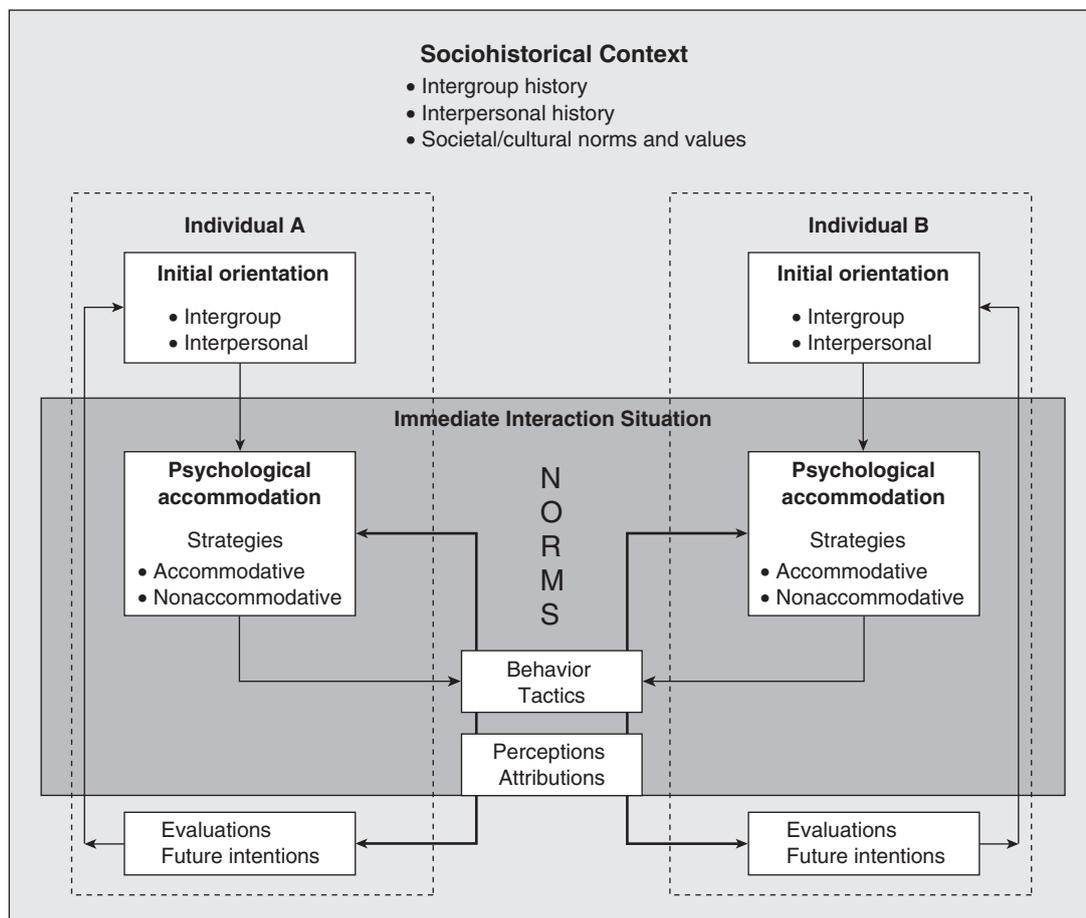


Figure 6.2 Revised Model of Communication Accommodation Theory as a General Theory of Intergroup Communication

which in turn influence evaluations and future intentions. In our view, this revised model foregrounds the key variables in CAT, leaving other variables for more specific contexts.

The present version of CAT is formulated as a general framework for intergroup communication. Specific contexts generate sub-theories within CAT, for example for intergenerational (Coupland et al., 1988; Giles, Coupland, Coupland, & Williams, 1992) or organizational (Gardner, Paulsen, Gallois, Callan, & Monaghan, 2001) communication. As such, CAT highlights the fact that intergroup encounters are never exclusively or permanently intercultural, intergenerational, or other per se, but that *different* group memberships may become salient during the same encounter and may affect the communication process.

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) remains the major theoretical reference for CAT, along with attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Hewstone, 1990; Kelley, 1973). Reference to the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971), which inspired earlier formulations, has been left out, as the perception of intergroup and interpersonal similarity and distinctiveness has since developed into an important topic within social identity theory (e.g., Brewer, 1991; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1999). In addition, we have omitted references to anxiety/uncertainty management theory (e.g., Gudykunst, 1995), which also influenced earlier versions of CAT.

### Assumptions

CAT is based on three general assumptions (A):

*A.1: Communicative interactions are embedded in a sociohistorical context.*

As stressed by sociolinguists (e.g., Gumperz, 1992), communication never occurs in a vacuum, but within a sociohistorical context. The influence of context on communication

operates at two levels: a direct influence through the opportunities for intergroup contact that are provided, and, more important for CAT, an indirect influence by means of interactants' perceptions of the context. A range of macro-level factors delineates the intergroup power configuration reflected in the interaction:

- History of relations between the groups with which interactants identify;
- Vitality of these groups (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977). A group's vitality is influenced by three structural factors: status (in terms of economic and sociocultural prestige), demography, and the institutional support enjoyed by the group. Giles et al. call vitality "that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations" (p. 308).
- Permeability (or impermeability) of intergroup boundaries (see Giles, 1979a); and
- Stability and legitimacy of intergroup relations (see Giles, 1978).

Along with the value priorities of the culture (for a review of cross-cultural research on values, see Smith & Schwartz, 1997), these factors contribute to the establishment of societal norms for intergroup contact that specifies with whom, when, and how it is appropriate to interact. In particular, societies where two or more ethnolinguistic groups of unequal vitality are in contact tend to establish norms regarding bilingualism, diglossia, and code-switching.

*A.2: Communication is about both exchanges of referential meaning and negotiation of personal and social identities.*

This assumption refers directly to the origin of CAT (Giles, 1973). Giles pointed to the affective as well as cognitive functions of communicative behavior. Personal and social identities are negotiated throughout the communication process, whereby interactants

regulate the social distance between themselves. As formulated in social psychology by Brewer (1991; Brewer & Roccas, 2001) and in intercultural communication by Ting-Toomey (1993), interactants strive for a compromise between two antagonistic identity needs: the need for assimilation (or, in Ting-Toomey's terms, desire to belong) and the need for differentiation (desire for uniqueness).

*A.3: Interactants achieve the informational and relational functions of communication by accommodating their communicative behavior, through linguistic, paralinguistic, discursive, and nonlinguistic moves, to their interlocutor's perceived individual and group characteristics*

Accommodation is the process through which interactants regulate their communication (adopting a particular linguistic code or accent, increasing or decreasing their speech rate, avoiding or increasing eye contact, etc.) in order to appear more like (accommodation) or distinct from each other (nonaccommodation, including counter-accommodation through divergent or hostile moves, underaccommodation through maintenance and unempathetic moves, and over-accommodation through oftentimes patronizing or ingratiating moves). These processes occur at the level of communicative behavior per se (termed "linguistic accommodation" by Thakerar et al., 1982), as well as at the psychological level (speakers' motivations and perceptions). The two levels may not coincide, for example, in situations characterized by status discrepancy requiring complementarity (cf. Giles, 1980). In addition, objective linguistic accommodation does not always equate to subjective linguistic accommodation (as perceived by interactants; Giles et al., 1991). This distinction highlights the importance of interactants' perceptions, which are privileged in CAT. Interactants have expectations regarding optimal levels of accommodation, based on stereotypes about

outgroup members as well as prevailing social and situational norms.

### Scope of CAT

These assumptions help to describe the scope of the theory: what CAT does, and what supplementary theory CAT relies on. First, CAT theorizes communication (and thence accommodation) as motivated. The motivation in a specific communicative encounter may be intergroup, interpersonal, both (see Giles & Hewstone, 1982), or neither (although the latter two are not included in the propositions below), and is influenced by the socio-historical context and more directly by the initial orientations of participants.

Second, CAT theorizes accommodative strategies, motivated by initial orientation and the salience of particular features of the interaction like the desire to appear similar or identify, to be clearly understood and to understand, to maintain face, to maintain the relationship, to direct the flow of discourse, and to maintain interpersonal control. Like initial orientation, accommodation is in part a function of the context, salient societal and situational norms, and salient behaviors. Overall, motivation and perceptions are privileged over behavior as measured by outside observers. Even so, behavior is important because it is a major influence on the perceptions of recipients, which lead to attributions for behavior, evaluations of the other person and the encounter, and future intentions toward the other person and his or her group (see Figures 6.1, 6.2).

CAT allows for the role of conversational tactics—the ongoing behavioral moves that are driven by norms, the behavior of others, and so forth. This means that there is no one-to-one correspondence between strategy and behavior, or between behavior and evaluation (Gallois et al., 1995; Jones, Gallois, Callan, & Barker, 1999). In addition, motivation and accommodative strategies can change throughout the course of an interaction

as a consequence of behavior or tactics (Gallois & Giles, 1998, give examples of such changes in terms of accommodative dilemmas). Overall, there is a cycle beginning with initial orientation and progressing through an interaction to future intentions, which influence initial orientation in the next iteration.

This scope is large, but many processes are inevitably left out and must be described by other theories. First, it is important to have a well-developed theory of social norms or rules. CAT theorizes norms as part of the societal and situational context, taking them as read but emphasizing that intergroup and interpersonal histories and initial orientation influence tolerance about their application. Norm theories should themselves deal with social rules as a function of the group memberships of interactants. Second, CAT relies on a thorough taxonomy of verbal and nonverbal behavior, in terms of both function and meaning. CAT assumes the existence of intergroup and interpersonal communicative markers, which have different impacts, but the task of describing these is left to other theory and research. Finally, CAT relies crucially on attribution theory. CAT deals with attributions as moderators (e.g., evaluation of behavior is exaggerated when attributions are internal; behavior is attributed more favorably when the other is an ingroup member).

### Propositions

The propositions (P) below account for the process of communication accommodation in an intergroup encounter. They are written with reference to Speaker A and Partner B; of course, from B's perspective, A is the partner. Encounters take place in a context that includes a salient intergroup history involving good or bad relations, social equality or inequality, and so forth. The context may be one of permeable or less permeable boundaries, and an intergroup status that is perceived to be more or less stable and legitimate. The context also includes salient cultural values. Further, there is an interpersonal history

involving anything from no previous interaction to a long-term relationship of intimacy or enmity, and including salient personal values and identities. Thus, in the encounter, individuals are predisposed to a more intergroup or more interpersonal orientation to each other.

*Initial Orientation.* This part of the model concerns the extent to which A is predisposed to have an intergroup or interpersonal orientation toward B, and thus with A's motivation to accommodate or not to perceptions of B's personal and group characteristics.

*P.1: A speaker A is predisposed to have an intergroup orientation toward interacting with a partner B, and be motivated toward nonaccommodation with B's perceived group characteristics when:*

- There is a salient negative intergroup history between A's and B's ingroups AND
- A identifies strongly with one or few ingroups and perceives this ingroup's vitality to be low or makes insecure social comparisons with B's group OR
- A has had an earlier negative interaction with another member of B's group whom A perceived as typical of B's group.

However,

*A is predisposed to have an intergroup orientation but be motivated to accommodate to B's perceived group characteristics when:*

- A is a member of a subordinate group with which A identifies weakly, perceives the group's vitality to be low and intergroup boundaries to be soft, and perceives intergroup relations to be legitimate and stable OR
- A is a member of a dominant ingroup with high subjective vitality and perceives intergroup relations as legitimate and stable OR
- A has had an earlier positive interaction with a member of B's group whom A perceived as typical of B's group.

*P.2: A speaker A is predisposed to have an interpersonal orientation toward interacting with a partner B and be motivated to accommodate to B's perceived personal characteristics when:*

- A and B share a positive interpersonal history AND
- A identifies weakly with salient ingroups or there are no salient ingroups.

However,

*A is predisposed to have an interpersonal orientation but be motivated toward nonaccommodation with B's perceived personal characteristics when:*

- A and B share a negative interpersonal relationship history.

*Psychological Accommodation.* Here, we enter the interaction itself. Speaker A's initial orientation is transformed into A's immediate and ongoing intention to accommodate or not to B, through A's experience of the interaction. A's psychological accommodation is shaped by A's perception of the salience of personal and social identities in the interaction and by A's conversational motives. Perceived situational norms for contact and accommodation, as well as norms for other salient roles or group memberships, place constraints on the forms accommodation can take (Ball et al., 1984; Gallois & Callan, 1991).

Both the cognitive motive of facilitating comprehension and the affective motive of identity maintenance or development correspond to a dialectic about the amount of distance (or difference) to be expressed through communication. On the cognitive side, comprehension may be facilitated by either increasing similarity (e.g., adopting the same language), or in other situations by increasing dissimilarity (e.g., exaggerating one's foreign accent). On the affective side, identity maintenance or development can be attained either by trying to assimilate to the other (and thus be recognized as an intimate or ingroup member), or by trying to differentiate

from the other (and thus gain a positive sense of identity based upon comparisons with B or B's groups). The relative importance of cognitive and affective motives in determining psychological accommodation is especially significant when they do not coincide; for example, when the aim of facilitating comprehension requires emphasizing similarity but the aim of identity maintenance requires differentiation.

*P.3: When A perceives that personal identities are salient in the interaction, A's psychological accommodation is directed at the perceived personal characteristics of B;*

Whereas,

*When A perceives that social identities are salient in the interaction, A's psychological accommodation is directed at the perceived group characteristics of B.*

*P.4: When A has an intergroup orientation, A is likely to perceive narrower, more constraining norms for the behavior of outgroup members and wider, more tolerant norms for ingroup behavior;*

Whereas,

*When A has an interpersonal orientation, A is likely to perceive similar norms for ingroup and outgroup members.*

*P.5: When affective motives predominate for A in the interaction, and A feels a need for assimilation, A is likely to accommodate psychologically even at the cost of facilitating comprehension;*

However,

*When affective motives predominate for A but A feels a need for differentiation, A is likely to nonaccommodate psychologically, even at the cost of facilitating comprehension.*

*P.6: When cognitive motives predominate for A in the interaction, and A feels that comprehension would be facilitated through increasing similarity with B, A is likely to accommodate psychologically, even at the cost of identity maintenance or development;*

However,

*When cognitive motives predominate for A and A feels that comprehension would be facilitated through differentiating from B, A is likely to nonaccommodate psychologically, even at the cost of identity maintenance or development.*

*P.7: In a status-stressing situation, A is likely to accommodate psychologically to the sociolinguistic markers and behavior of the dominant group.*

#### *Focus, Accommodative Strategies, and Behavior.*

The motivational force of psychological accommodation leads to the adoption of communicative strategies through A's focus on the needs or behaviors of B (earlier referred to as addressee focus). These strategies were called "attuning strategies" in earlier formulations of CAT, following Coupland et al. (1988); we have instead used the term *accommodative strategies* to be more consistent with the whole course of SAT and CAT. Strategies may change across the course of an interaction as a function of tactics and behavior. Indeed, as represented in Abrams, O'Connor, and Giles's (2002) transactional model of the relationship between communication (accommodation) and identity, the very perception of accommodative behaviors can trigger a social or personal identity. Furthermore, foci and strategies may be mixed in a single interaction (not to mention across time).

Several main foci have been proposed, including productive behavior, conversational competence, conversational needs, role and power relations (Coupland et al., 1988),

emotional and relational needs, and face maintenance (Giles et al., 1991; Williams et al., 1990). When the focus is on B's productive language and communication, A may employ approximation strategies of convergence, divergence, or maintenance, which involve mutual perceived behavioral influence. The other foci may involve nonapproximation strategies (Coupland et al., 1988). The first of these is interpretability, resulting from a focus on B's interpretive (mainly decoding) competence or stereotypes about it, leading among other things to slower or simpler speech, more use of questions to check understanding, and the choice of familiar topics.

The second nonapproximation strategy, discourse management, results from a focus on B's conversational needs, and leads among other things to sharing of topic choice and development, as well as shared conversational register. Interpersonal control results from a focus on role relations, and leads to use of interruptions, honorifics, and the like, to keep the other person in role or to allow freedom to change roles. Emotional expression, resulting from a focus on B's emotional or relational needs, includes expressions of reassurance, care, warmth, and so forth (e.g., Watson & Gallois, 2002). Finally, face strategies, resulting from a focus on face maintenance, include positive and negative face threats and face maintenance moves (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987).

These strategies, alone or in combination, are used to manage the psychological and sociolinguistic distance between interactants, making them more equal or emphasizing intergroup or interpersonal differences. While there is some association between strategies and behavior, there is no necessary connection between them. For example, discourse management is often reflected in topic development and turn-taking behaviors, but may be reflected in other behaviors, while topic development and turn taking can also reflect interpersonal control or interpretability strategies (Jones et al., 1999). Thus the model describes

strategies and behaviors separately: Strategies remain covert; only behaviors are apparent in the situation. Behavior is the focal point through which the dynamic of the communicative process develops.

In CAT, there is one main path to accommodation: treating the other person more as an individual or ingroup member, and less as a function of the other's outgroup membership. Accommodation may involve any (or all) of the foci and strategies, but the underlying process is the same. On the other hand, non-accommodation can take a number of forms. The first is counter-accommodation (an elaboration of the original divergence). When speakers counter-accommodate, they utilize the strategies to maximize the difference between themselves and the interlocutors as individuals and, when intergroup relations are salient, as group members. This often involves negative and even hostile behavior.

In many interactions, however, nonaccommodation takes a less obvious but also powerful form. One way this can happen involves under-accommodation (an elaboration of the original maintenance), in which speakers simply maintain their own behavior and discourse without moving at all toward the behavior or conversational needs of interlocutors. Coupland et al. (1988) described this process for intergenerational communication (see also Williams & Giles, 1996). In the intercultural context, it can involve in extreme cases the maintenance of a speaker's language even when the speaker is aware that the other person cannot speak the language and the speaker is competent in the other's language.

Finally, nonaccommodation can take the form of over-accommodation (an elaboration of negatively perceived convergence). In this case, speakers accommodate to their stereotypes about interlocutors' groups. Once again, over-accommodation has been articulated particularly for intergenerational communication, mainly as patronizing talk or secondary baby talk (e.g., Hummert & Ryan, 2001). In

intercultural contexts, a striking example involves foreigner talk, in which speakers "help" foreigners to understand by using a simplified—and unknown (often incomprehensible)—version of their language, frequently accompanied by exaggerated intonation and loud volume. Over-accommodative behavior is paradoxical in that the speaker may have good intentions (or appear to), but behave in an inappropriate way. Similarly, the receiver may interpret the behavior interpersonally and thus evaluate it positively as accommodation. This interpretation frequently occurs when intergroup relations are not salient and the interpersonal history is positive. When intergroup relations are salient and when speakers' behavior is perceived as not accommodating to the receiver's own behavior or needs, it is likely to be interpreted as nonaccommodative, whatever the speaker's intention. An important task for research is to specify and predict the conditions in which each form of nonaccommodation—counter, under, or over—is most likely to occur or be perceived to occur.

*Attributions, Evaluations, and Future Intentions.* The final part of the model concerns reception, although we again highlight the *transactive* nature of accommodative processes (Abrams et al., 2002). Essentially, CAT proposes that, all things being equal, accommodative behavior is attributed internally, evaluated positively, and results in positive future intentions toward interactions with the other person. In addition, when the other person is considered to be a typical member of his or her ingroup, these positive intentions are generalized to the whole group (cf. Hewstone, 1990). Likewise, nonaccommodation is attributed internally, evaluated negatively, and results in negative future intentions toward interactions with the other person (and the other person's group if it is an outgroup).

Of course, most of the time all things are *not* equal. As we noted above, social norms may dictate how behavior is initially perceived. For

example, convergence that violates social norms is not labeled as accommodative (and may be perceived as over-accommodative; cf. Ball et al., 1984). In the same way, norm-following behavior is likely to be attributed more externally, and evaluated less extremely, than behavior that does not seem to be dictated by the situation. Third, all behavior by ingroup members tends to be evaluated more positively than the same behavior by outgroup members, at least when intergroup relations are salient. Finally, future intentions toward an outgroup generalize to interpersonal intentions toward the interlocutor only when the interlocutor is perceived as a typical member of his or her group.

These caveats lead to a plethora of propositional permutations on the path from behavior to future intentions. Gallois and colleagues (1988; Gallois et al., 1995) derived a large number of propositions in an attempt to capture this complexity. Looking back, this may be why it has been difficult to develop hypotheses that test the propositions (see Gallois & Giles, 1998). In this presentation, we have tried to cut through the complexity by relying on attribution theory. We believe the propositions below capture the essential characteristics but leave the nuances to context-specific models and empirical research.

*P.8: When a speaker B accommodates to a receiver A, A is likely to interpret the behavior and evaluate B positively, especially when:*

- A attributes B's behavior internally to benevolent intent OR
- B is a member of A's ingroup.

*P.9: When a speaker B nonaccommodates to a receiver A, A is likely to interpret the behavior and evaluate B negatively, especially when*

- A attributes B's behavior internally to malevolent intent OR
- B is a member of a salient outgroup for A.

*P.10: When A evaluates B positively in an interaction, A is likely to have positive intentions toward*

- Interpersonal interactions with B as an individual or as an ingroup member;
- Interactions with other members of B's group when A considers B to be a typical member of this group;

However,

*When A evaluates B's behavior positively, A is likely to maintain A's original intentions toward B's group when A considers B to be an atypical group member.*

*P.11: When A evaluates B negatively in an interaction, A is likely to have negative intentions toward*

- Interpersonal interactions with B as an individual;
- Interactions with other members of B's group, especially when A considers B to be a typical member of this group;

However,

*When A evaluates B's behavior negatively, A is likely to maintain A's original intentions toward B's group when A considers B to be an atypical group member.*

These 11 propositions together delimit the CAT model, with one caveat. The process of accommodation, like the process of communication (cf. Harwood & Giles, in press), is dynamic. Thus, something may happen in an interaction—sudden awareness (or change) of the situation or relevant norms, unexpected behavior (positive or negative) by the other person, a change to a more intergroup or interpersonal frame of reference, and so forth—that shifts a speaker from an interpersonal to an intergroup orientation (or vice versa) or from an accommodative to a nonaccommodative

stance (or vice versa). The accommodative dilemmas in Gallois and Giles (1998) go some way toward describing this phenomenon. This means that the path from initial orientation to future intentions has many twists and turns, and predicting it will never be a simple task.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

So where are we now, after three decades with communication accommodation theory, and where do we go from here? It is fair to say that CAT has stood the test of time in that it is still generating research up to the present day. It has also spun off a number of more specific theories, of which communication predicament of aging theory (Ryan et al., 1986) is perhaps the most fully developed and productive example; in the health arena, Street's (2001) linguistic model of patient participation in care is also gaining momentum. It has provided the impetus for research in intercultural communication, as well as intergenerational, intergender, interability, and organizational communication. In all these contexts, CAT highlights the intergroup aspects of communication, something that many theories of interpersonal communication neglect.

In the case of intercultural communication, the intergroup aspects of interactions are always there. Intercultural encounters take place in the context of an intergroup as well as an interpersonal history, and in the context of different (and sometimes contradictory) social norms. Effective or good communication depends crucially on these factors. For this reason, the communication skills models that have been so prevalent in intercultural communication training are frequently likely to fail (cf. Cargile & Giles, 1996; Gallois, 2003; Gallois & Giles, 1998; Hajek & Giles, 2003). It is essential both for theory development and for effective applications that researchers take full account of the intergroup aspect of intercultural, and indeed all, communication.

CAT provides a comprehensive way to do this without neglecting the interpersonal and idiosyncratic aspects of conversation.

We have attempted in this chapter to clarify the propositions of CAT to at least some extent. We have reduced their number from 17 in 1995 to 11 here. In doing this, we have acknowledged the scope of CAT, invoked supporting theories explicitly, and tried to make the use of terms consistent. Our aim is to make CAT more accessible and easier for researchers to use to derive testable hypotheses. In addition, we have tried to make CAT more generic, so that researchers can develop more specific models for particular contexts. These models may invoke extra variables like values and personality, and situational characteristics such as formality, task orientation, and uncertainty management.

A great deal of work is still to be done before we understand the process of accommodation fully and in detail. There is a need to explore the strategies beyond approximation, especially the more recently theorized strategies of emotional expression and face maintenance. It will also be important to elaborate the impact of social norms as against intergroup relations. The role of multiple identities is a key factor that has hardly been explored using CAT, but that CAT can handle (see Jones et al., 1999). Finally, there are many important intergroup contexts where CAT has not been developed at all, involving interactions in institutionally driven contexts and elsewhere. Our hope is that CAT will be useful in all this research, and that in 30 years we (or others) will be able to take stock of it again.

## NOTES

1. Sometimes "accommodation," which at the inception of SAT included both convergent and divergent moves, became rather loosely associated with convergence. "Nonaccommodative" moves included everything else: maintenance/divergence, and later under- and over-accommodation. See Giles, McCann, Ota, and Noels (2002) for the

invocation of this distinction (following Williams & Giles, 1996) in the sphere of cross-cultural inter-generational communication.

2. Gallois and Giles (1998) do not present propositions, but four "cases" showing how the elements of the model interplay.

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