



ELF realities: accommodative behavior and social preferences

-ELF accent accommodation in a Community of Practice

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25.5.2012

Accommodation

Giles et al. (1991): speakers looking to identify socially with partners typically converge to the communicative style of their interlocutor

- ▶ Communicative *behaviour* (not motivations as in CAT)
- ▶ Accommodation (speech convergence):
 - ▶ Regulation of communication in order to appear more like each other
- ▶ Counter-accommodation (divergence):
 - ▶ maximizing differences
- ▶ Non-accommodation (maintenance):
 - ▶ maintaining one's own behaviour and discourse

(cf. Gallois et al. 2005)

NS Context

- ▶ Trudgill, Gordon, Lewis 1998 (cf. Trudgill 1986):
 - ▶ In a dialect mixture situation the variants present in the mixture will be reduced as a result of accommodation in face-to-face interaction
 - ▶ On neutral land, in deciding who accommodates to whom, demographic factors are vital (linguistic ones also matter)
- ▶ Bloomfield's principle of density in Labov (2001):
 - ▶ the more often people talk to each other, the more similar their speech will be.

ELF / International Contact Context

- ▶ Meierkord 2012: A speaker's choice to either adopt or not to adopt any salient feature available in their context may be influenced by power relations, overt and covert prestige of the varieties the feature is associated with, the forces of the linguistic market, and issues of identity construction.
- ▶ Previous studies on ELF accent accommodation
 - ▶ Shaw et al. 2009; Kalocsai 2009
- ▶ *Both* maintenance of accent and LI identity *and* signaling ELF group membership – situational preferences
- ▶ Little tendency for shared norms for pronunciation
 - ▶ receptive accommodation?

Research Setting: Community of Practice

- ▶ Longitudinal ethnographic study of ELF speakers in continuous interaction with set group
- Case:
 - ca. 20 people from around the world studying in an English medium degree program in nursing (Helsinki metropolitan area)
 - representing 10 nationalities, 5 continents, 10 L1s
- ▶ Accommodative behavior in the group
 - ▶ Immediate speaker-sensitive accommodation, and shift towards group preferences by individual speakers
 - ▶ Acceptability of variation in language form: maintenance of idiolectal preferences
 - ▶ Flexible use of wide repertoire of segmental features, acquisition of new ones

“So here’s an example of...”

- Isolated instances of accommodative behavior are interesting but lack framework enabling fuller understanding

→ Social preferences of speakers as analytic tool

Emergence of subgroups

- ▶ Interview data:
 - ▶ S2: there are a few people that i kinda spend my days with that i sit with in class [...] we eat lunch together most of the time and the rest of the people, they eat lunch somewhere else.
 - ▶ S3: it's natural that these smaller subgroups are gonna form. in our class we have the, i haven't thought of any names but the ladies from africa sort of have their own group and then S19, S5 and S18 are really close.
- ▶ Observation data / field notes:
 - ▶ S5, S18, S19 frequently sit together in class and over lunch (often separate from the rest)
- ▶ Sociometric survey:
 - ▶ S5, S18, S19 all report positive attitudes toward each others

Degree programme
subgroup with
S5, S18, S19

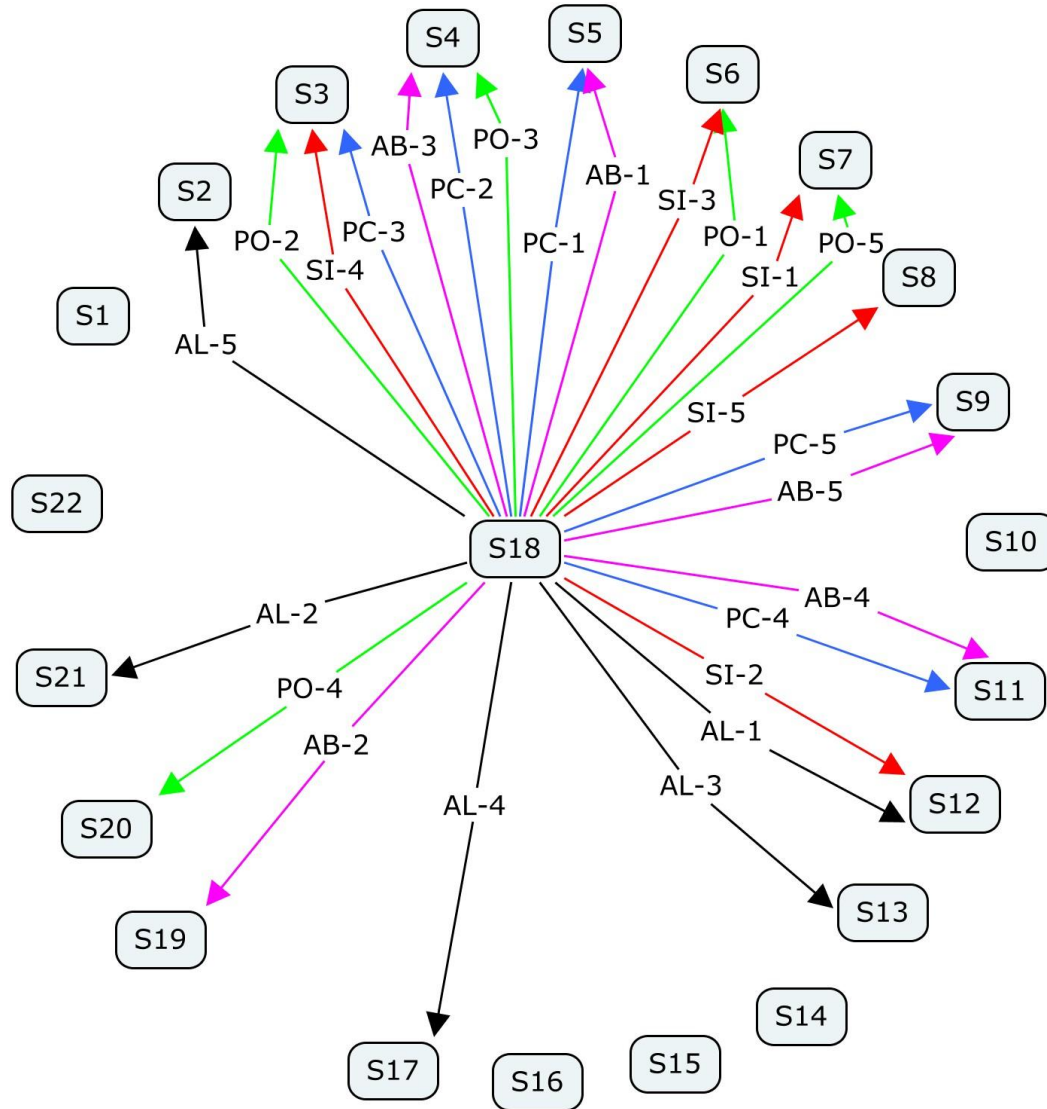
Ingroup=S5, S18, S19

Outgroup=everybody
else in the 20-person
degree programme

- S5: F, 23. From Calcutta, India. L1 Bengali.
- S18: F, 29. From Austria. L1 German.
- S19: F, 22. From CA, USA. L1 English (GA/AAE).

S18 views

Social
Influence
Preferred
coworkers
Popularity
Personal
preference,
positive
Personal
preference,
negative



Gradual increase in accommodation

S5 / *the*

Key: d ð

Usage during one conversation (excerpts)

1/3 the the

2/3 the the the

3/3 the the the the the the

- Gargesh 2004: interdental fricatives nonexistent in IndE
- Interlocutors: Ingroup members and two neutral speakers

Changes in the realization of 'the'

Interlocutors	Outgroup only (two positives, one neutral)	Ingroup and outgroup (two neutrals)	Ingroup and outgroup (two neutrals, two negatives)	Ingroup only (positive)
S5 (IndE)	the the the the	the the the the the the the the the the the	the the the the the the the the the the the	the the the the the the the the the the

Social proximity or preference seems to reduce accommodation, while indifferent/negative attitude seems to increase accommodation within CoP.

Accommodation, or the end of it?

S5 / trilled r



<S5> alright [so that goes] <S4> [okay] </S4> under special then it's temporal
</S5>

<S4> temporal </S4>

[...]

<S4> mhm-hm yes then we have [rhythmic] </S4>

<S5> [uh and] do you understand **more** about **temporal** , or just only these two
</S5>

<S4> we have on temporal you have **three** branches </S4>

→ Gargesh 2004: liquid /r/ generally trilled in IndE 

→ Interlocutors: outgroup speakers; two positive, one neutral

Expression of Ingroup membership

S5, S18, S19 / *i think*

Outgroup form: θɪŋk / tɪŋk  

Ingroup form: θɪŋ / tɪŋ   

→ Fixed Ingroup realization (-ɪŋ)

→ feature only applies with the specific sequence marker (*i think*), not across the board

Interim Conclusions on ELF Segmental Accommodation

- ▶ Lack of local or dominant English variety in ELF contexts seems to produce accommodative behavior different from stable NS contexts
 - ▶ Speaker-sensitive accommodation through wide repertoire of realizations; highly situational, variants not reduced
 - ▶ Demographic factors (Trudgill) replaced by social factors
 - ▶ Principle of Density (Bloomfield/Labov) does not seem to be valid here; frequency of communication does not always lead to increased accommodation, the opposite may be true

Interim Conclusions on ELF Segmental Accommodation

- ▶ Degree of intimacy (number of interlocutors and the speaker's social proximity to them) seems to be defining variable
 - ▶ Within CoP, active accommodation applied variously by speakers
 - ▶ In socially more intimate circumstances the need to be genuine may apply to linguistic self as well
 - Ingroup non-accommodation
 - ▶ Emblematic items (e.g. *i think*) may take on role of accommodation in signaling group membership
- ▶ Receptive accommodation paramount

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