

SOCIAL ATTRIBUTE OF AGE IN “SPANGLISH” MOVIE: ACCOMMODATION THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini berkaitan dengan teori akomodasi yang dikemukakan oleh Giles dan Coupland (1991). Dalam hal ini, fonologi menjadi titik fokus penelitian yang membahas mengenai “bagaimana” dan “mengapa” imigran mengaplikasikan proses akomodasi. Sebuah modifikasi pada proses fonologis digunakan guna mengetahui berbagai macam sebab dan akibat yang dapat ditimbulkan dari pengaplikasian strategi akomodasi. Sebagai dampak dari sebuah adaptasi pada proses pembelajaran bahasa asing, berbagai macam strategi akomodasi yang berbeda akan tampak sejalan dengan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris yang dimiliki oleh masing-masing imigran. sebagai contohnya, setiap orang akan menggunakan proses fonologi yang bermacam-macam seperti penggantian, penyisipan serta penyederhanaan penumpukan konsonan. Pada akhirnya, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa usia yang berbeda mempengaruhi kemampuan seseorang dalam mempelajari sebuah bahasa karena pada usia tertentu otak manusia akan bekerja sesuai dengan kapasitas yang berbeda. Oleh sebab itu, terdapat periode usia tertentu dimana dalam jangka waktu tersebut seseorang berada dalam masa pertumbuhan kemampuan otak yang kritis. Sebagai hasilnya, seseorang dapat memahami arti pentingnya penggunaan dari bahasa asing. Untuk melakukan penelitian ini, data diperoleh dari dua karakter pada film “Spanglish,” dimana sebagai imigran mereka harus beradaptasi terhadap bahasa asing Amerika Inggris.

Kata Kunci: *speech accommodation theory, convergence and divergence strategies, language variation, phonological process, critical period.*

Abstract

The observation deals with accommodation theory revealed by Giles and Coupland (1991). This study focuses on “how and why” accommodative process applied by the immigrants in the phonological field. It involves a little modification of phonological processes in order to know the factors and impacts caused by accommodation strategies. The adaptation in the second language learning process shows the different accommodation strategies implementation as well as the different ability of English level they have. In line with variations of accommodation strategies, each participant also shows different phonological process like substitution, insertion and cluster simplification. Findings show these implementations are influenced by various factors like participants’ age. Finally, the result shows that the different ages cause the different level participants’ competence in acquiring second language. The participants’ ages lead their brain to work differently based on its capacity. There are particular ages that belong to the critical period – in which the second language learners can differentiate the use of language. In order to achieve the aim of this study, the data is gained from the two immigrants’ utterances in “Spanglish” movie that adjust American English as their L2.

Keywords: *speech accommodation theory, convergence and divergence strategies, language variation, phonological process, critical period.*

INTRODUCTION

Immigration seems to be more complex phenomenon in the daily-life. Gallois and Callan (1991) proposed that the immigrants should be taught to adjust the dominant norm in their new host community. This is due to the fact

that the immigrants will face a lot of cultural gaps compared with the host community. To bridge this problems, language is involved as well as its function of communication media. The reality is not as simple as it seemed. Language barrier becomes the next problem

then. That is why the scholars proposed the idea of learning the host community’s language.

In line with this idea, Accommodation theory revealed by Giles and Coupland (1991) explores the accommodative process. Some studies have been conducted by dealing with this process from the various perspectives. Then, this study focuses on “how and why” accommodative process applied by the immigrants in the phonological field.

Along with this research, the study involves participants whom have different English skill. As a result, each participant may appear various outcome that is shown through phonological processes like substitution, insertion and cluster simplification. Then, each phonological process belongs to the one of accommodation strategies, either in convergence strategy or divergence one. In this case, convergence means strategy that makes to reduce the differences between speaker and interlocutor’s speech style (Coupland and Giles, 2012 : 176). Meanwhile, divergence is described as the strategy which is used by speaker to raise the distinctive between he and his interlocutors for particular reasons (Coupland and Giles, 2012 : 177).

The application of accommodation strategies are influenced by various social variables. Then, age becomes one of the important variables in this case. As the result, people can acquire language effectively in the particular ages. In the study of Consideration of Age in L2 Attainment – Children, Adolescents and Adults, Zhao and Morgan (n.d.) argued that the ages before 15 years old can be said as critical period - in which children’s brain has a good ability in acquiring units of language productively. At his early age, the purpose of learning languages can relatively achieve high proficiency. In this case, the critical period does not exist in the adolescent and adult ages. Those ages will get the difficulties in acquiring second language because the brain loses plasticity (Lenneberg, 1967).

Then, this study is conducted to explore more about the accommodation theory used by the immigrants. Along with the immigration and language barrier, this study focuses on how the participants adapt the host community’s language within its evidence in the phonological processes. Also, it analyzes the social attribute of age that may influence the implementation of accommodation strategies.

To achieve the aim of this study, Spanglish movie is chosen as the source of the data taken. The case in this movie is valued to be relevant with problems of the study. Telling about the immigrants who have to adjust themselves with their new environment, they bring up L2 varieties applied in their utterances. As the representation of real-life, this movie shows the phenomenon of the immigrants and their language

barrier. Then, it becomes a proper source to complete this experiment.

METHOD

This study belongs to the qualitative approach because it deals with exploring how people experience something, or what their views are, exploring the particular area which has not gotten the issues yet, and looking at real-life context. Moreover, it takes conversation analysis. By doing observation method, the data was taken from Spanglish movie which is valued to be relevant with the study issue. Two Spanish immigrants in the movie are chosen to be the participants. They are mother (Flor) and her daughter (Christina) who immigrate from Mexico to the Los Angeles because of economy factor. In this case, the immigrants share different levels of language skill. Flor cannot speak in English while Christina can do it fluently. From this issue, the study pointed out the immigrants’ utterances when they speak with the natives, especially in the way of pronouncing English based on the General American standard phonetics.

In conducting this research, there are some steps to collect the data. First, the observer watched the movie and focused on the listening to the participants’ speech. The way of listening to the particular words are based on the researcher’s knowledge about the American English pronunciation features. Then, the observer tried to find out the particular words that are not pronounced based on the natives-like. It belongs to take a note of both different pronunciations features. Afterwards, the observer classified them based on the research questions. To answer the research questions, the findings are analyzed with related theories and previous studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis, it can be seen that this study has found accommodation strategies used by the participants in “Spanglish” movie. The result shows that the younger participant involves some phonological processes like consonant and vowel substitutions in accommodative process. These processes take replacement way of particular element (consonant / vowel) in a segment. The study found that the participant is frequently adjust /ð, θ, r/ consonants to be more similar to Angelonous’ pronunciation. The summary of phonological processes in the table below are as the effort of applying convergence strategy:

Table 1. The convergence strategy used by Christina

N o.	Word	Phonetics Transcription	Christina’s Pronunciation
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		S.E	G.A.E	
1.	Them	/d/	/ð/	/ðəm/
2.	Those	/d/	/ð/	/ðoʊz/
3.	Things	/t/	/θ/	/θɪŋs/
4.	Thrilled	/t/	/θ/	/θrɪld/
5.	Fair	/r/	/r/	/fer/
6.	Right	/r/	/r/	/raɪt/

The findings show that the younger participant apply convergence strategy constantly. Along the research was conducted, the researcher did not find divergence strategy in her speech. In this case, the young participant has ability to adjust the way of pronouncing each word based on her interlocutors. When she is talking to another immigrant, she uses her L1 features. In contrast, when she has conversation with American, she produces every single word as well as the American's norms and standards had.

This kind of implementation is strongly affected by “Critical period”. The theory of critical period is applied as well as Christina's age in which she is 12 years old when acquiring English as her L2. It such the golden age when her brain can acquire General American phonetics standard successfully. In her age, children tend to imitate her interlocutors' act as their development process. In this case, Christina's utterances are imitated by the interlocutors' speech. As the result, she can communicate in English based on natives-like.

Hence, convergence strategy can be functioned as the representation of speaker's desire for social approval because children will have no particular intentions to do this act. They just want to be a part of their interlocutor's group. Then, imitation becomes the way. In their thought, they will be accepted if they imitate their interlocutor's behavior. As Christina has been done, she uses General American standard phonetics constantly when she is speaking with Claskys'.

The different result is shown by the adult participant that applies both of two strategies. She does not use it constantly as well as the younger done. It shows that she tends to use divergence strategy than convergence one. The accommodation strategies can be seen from the use of phonological processes like consonant substitution, vowel substitution, consonant insertion, vowel insertion and cluster simplification. Here are the examples;

Table 2. Divergence strategy used by Flor

N o.	Word	Phonetics Transcription		Flor's Pronunciation
		S.E	G.A.E	
1.	The	/d/	/ð/	/dæ/
2.	Tell	/t/	/t/	/dæl/
3.	Your	/dʒ/	/j/	/dʒɔr/

Table 3. Convergence strategy used by Flor

N o.	Word	Phonetics Transcription		Flor's Pronunciation
		S.E	G.A.E	
1.	Thank	/t/	/θ/	/θæŋk/
2.	Wonder-ful	/r/	-	/ˈwʌn.də.fəl/
3.	About	/e/	/ə/	/əˈbaʊt/

From the tables above, the adult participant cannot adjust General American phonetics standard maximally. It is due to the fact that she has just learnt English. In this case, she could not speak English before. Because of the job demanding, she has to be able to communicate in the dominant language, English with her interlocutors. In acquiring English as her foreign language, she gets natural error in pronouncing the words (Krashen, 1982: 10). The error is marked by L1 phonetic features that are transferred into L2 outcome as has been explained in the table (2 & 3).

Therefore, some phonological processes tend to be used as the divergence strategy of L2 interactional variation. The L1 phonetics background seems to have a big role in the L2 outcome. The ability in acquiring L2 does not exist because Flor had passed her critical period. It is well-known by lateralization in which the two sides of the brain develop specialized functions. Due to this process, it can cause the brain loses its plasticity. As the impact, it leads the adult participant cannot achieve General American accent easily. The language cannot be acquired maximally because it is too complex to adjust the units of language.

However, it is not impossible that the older learner can achieve high proficiency in acquiring L2 as well as the younger done. It takes more efforts and time. Also, the learner should be taught consciously because a foreign accent cannot be easily overcome.

CONCLUSION

In this study, two participants, Flor and Christina have different levels of communicating in English language. The case emerges when Flor could not speak in English at all and was forced by the environment to be able to communicate in English. In contrast, Christina can speak English fluently. Thus different ability of communicating English has become the main topic of this study in which two immigrants have different implementations in producing English as their L2. As has been analyzed in the chapter 4, the application is illustrated into phonological processes such as substitution, insertion and cluster simplification. These processes have answered the first problem of this study.

Continuously, those processes belong to the one of accommodation strategies that becomes the answer of second question. When the participants adjust their pronouncing way to be more similar to the natives’ phonetics (in this case English), the implementation belongs to the convergence strategy. Meanwhile, the phonological processes can be classified into divergence strategy if the participants emerge L2 variations. On the other words, they speak in English differently from the General American standard and show their L1 phonetic features.

Behind the implementation of phonological processes under accommodation strategies, the participants are forced by some critical factors either external factor or internal one. Each factor can be listed based on the expression and situation in the movie. For convergence strategy which tends to be implemented by Christina, there are two factors. She has been communicated in English since in her critical period. In contrast, external factor is represented to gain social approval. On the other hand, divergence strategy that was shown by Flor is also affected by age factor. Being adult L2 learner, she has the difficulties to assimilate her mother tongue phonetics. It is as impact of her brain that does not work maximally in her age. This is natural deviation because people’s brain loses its plasticity as well as age development. For this reason, Flor applies L2 variations in her speech.

Later, as the adaptation in the new community, both of two participants get some impacts. Christina tends to have positive impacts in which she can build an effective communication with the interlocutors. a good impression as a gorgeous Hispanic also becomes a positive impact of accommodation implementation in short-period. Unfortunately, Flor may give negative impact in native language (English). There may be degradation of the English standard language due to her L2 variation. This can occur in long-period. If it is continuously applied by her and her next generation, there will be more much L2 variations. Finally, the impacts that may appear are limited to be explored because of the condition in the movie. The movie only focuses on the interaction between the immigrants and Claskys’.

SUGGESTION

Along the phenomenon that has been illustrated in the movie, the researcher expects that the problems of this study can give knowledge for the readers, especially for those who want to be an immigrant and even second language learner. The immigrants will face a lot of problems in the new environments, extremely in language barrier. By knowing the common factors and its impacts of each accommodation implementation, the immigrants will be more aware about their attitude taken

in the next. Then, it is hoped that the next immigrants will have a better competence to live in their new community.

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