PHILOLOGY

ACCOMMODATION IN DIALECT CONTACT: EVIDENCE FROM AN URBAN COMMUNITY IN VIETNAM

Trinh Cam Lan[1]

Abstract: Applying Giles' communication accommodation theory and Trudgill's accommodation model through quantitative analysis method, this paper presents the investigative findings of accommodation of the Northern dialect community in Ho Chi Minh City of Vietnam. Communication accommodation is demonstrated by selecting dialect variants of the community in the new settlement. Research shows that the communicative environment has created significant pressure that influences the level of accommodation. It also shows that the accommodation index is compatible with some of social variables such as prestige status of an immigrant dialect, duration of living in a new city, type of communication, and marriage models, in which, prestige status of an immigrant dialect and duration of living in a new city are the most important.

This article portrays a typical social linguistic phenomenon in modern-day Vietnam: accommodation in dialect contact in major cities. "Accommodation" here is understood as the adjustment or change in the way of using language in communication of people from dialect A region when moving to a dialect B region in a way for easier communication in the new dialect one. The research starts with the perception of Ho Chi Minh city (HCMC) and Hanoi [Trinh 2007][2] as typical urban communities and the two largest convergence centers in the country with influxes of immigrant population. Collaborators in this research were from the Northern dialect (ND) community, and their accommodation indexes in communication with the new community was measured by the ratio of usage of

[1] Trinh Cam Lan, Ph.D. (Philology), Assistant Professor, VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. Email: lantc@vnu.edu.vn; tclan.vnu@gmail.com

[2] Before HCMC, we did a survey on the language change of the Nghe Tinh community in Hanoi. The findings showed impressive changes in the community to adapt to a new dialect community [Trinh 2007].

Southern dialect (SD) variants in selected language variables. These are sentence-final modal particles because of the differences between their Northern and Southern variants.

In general, migrant communities often inevitably find a way to adapt their communication in the new environment. The problem they face is how to adapt their language usage so that it ensures its communicative effectiveness. While studying the Nghe Tinh community[3] in Hanoi a few years ago, we found that they had to adapt their language largely for accommodation. Previous studies have shown that this is a universal trend.

This paper will confirm the trend of accommodation in dialect contact in Vietnam through the evidence of the ND community in HCMC.

Theoretical foundation

Contact linguistics and dialect contact

'Contact' is a term used in sociolinguistics to refer to a situation of geographical continuity or close social proximity between languages or dialects. The impact of contact situations can be seen linguistically, in the growth of loan words, patterns of phonological and grammatical change, mixed forms of language (such as creoles and pidgins), and a general increase in bilingualism of various kinds (see bilingual). In a restricted sense, languages are said to be 'in contact' if they are used alternately by the same persons, i.e. bilinguals [Crystal 2008: 107–108]. Crystal gave the term *Contact Linguistics* and suggested that the contact occurs all languages and dialects. However, while linguists have invested heavily in the study of language contact, dialect contact has not received adequate attention [Meyerhoff 2018: 267]. Dialects in contact became a promising research direction only after Trudgill's earliest research [Trudgill 1986].

The contact between different groups of people is often said to be the ultimate consequence of social mobility among regions or social groups. Such contact can occur at the individual or community level as a result of migration [Milroy 2002]. Dialect contact within a country often takes place at the local level due to the frequent travel of individuals or communities between different areas. At the local level, mobility includes small scale movement of individuals between communities or localities, including frequent travel for seasonal businesses [Britain 2010: 208–229]. At the national level, it could be large scale migration from regions far away from each other, leading to contact situations between dialects containing many linguistic differences [Trudgill 2003].

Although there are differences, it is acknowledged that the two types of contacts (language and dialect) have similar linguistic effects. For example, codeswitching or codemixing forms are considered a result of both language and dialect contact. But, there are also forms that are the result of only one type of contact. For example, the mixed form (pidgin) is said to be the outcome of language contact, while the phenomenon of dialect leveling is the outcome of dialect contact.

Variationists have used accommodation models to investigate the linguistic outcome of contact between different dialects of the same language. Their research is focused on dialect mixing, dialect leveling, simplification and reallocation of dialect variants [Kerswill 2003; Kerswill & Trudgill 2005].

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[3] Nghe Tinh is a province in Central Vietnam, belongs to the Central dialect. Nghe Tinh community is one of the largest immigrant communities in Hanoi.

Accommodation in dialect contact

Many linguistic processes taking place in dialect contact situations leading to a change in usage from one dialect variants to another [Trudgill 1986]. The changes in usage are influenced by many factors, but individual and community psychological mechanisms play an important role. In this way, according to Trudgill, Giles's accommodation theory is an important basis for understanding the way of linguistic accommodation of people who speak different dialects when interacting with each other in a certain communicative situation. Indeed, the studies mentioned above have found in Gill's accommodation theory persuasive explanatory mechanisms.

The first form of this theory knowing as the Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) was presented in Street and Giles [1982]. 5 years later, 1987, Gill developed and expanded its scope of application and appropriately labelled it the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) [Giles, Gallois & Ogay 2006: 121–148]. In this theory, Giles introduced the model of accent mobility to discover *'accent convergence'* among individuals and mentioned that in communication, the different accent of individuals (due to dialect differences) can be adjusted to reduce the differences through accommodation. The reverse process is called *'accent divergence'* by Giles. That is a situation in which communicators have no goodwill to come together by maintaining, even emphasizing local features in their voices [Ibid: 121–148].

Applying Giles' Accommodation Theory flexibly to explain the phenomena of dialect contact, Trudgill expanded this theory and made it capable of covering all phenomena of dialect contact and formation of new dialects through dialect contact. In Trudgill's model, dialect contact and accommodation are closely related. According to him, accommodation in dialect contact can be short-term or long-term. Short-term accommodation is often the result of temporary contact when communicators interact with each other in a specific communication context. This is said to not cause long-term effects on a speaker's language competence [Trudgill 1986]. It means that when the temporary contact ends, the behaviors that are considered to be provisional accommodation will end and probably leave no imprint if they are not repeated. However, if the short-term accommodation occurs regularly for a long period of time, the change and adjustment of the voice can become permanent, which is a long-term accommodation [Ibid.]. Like Trudgill, Kerswill also argued that long-term accommodation can often be because of numerous short-term accommodation behaviors in specific interactions [Kerswill 2003)].

In terms of accommodation type, Trudgill has focused on long-term accommodation for its effectiveness in explaining situations of dialect contact and interpreting the internal mechanisms of language change that are caused by contact [Kherbache 2017]. In terms of methods, Trudgill in particular, sociolinguists in general determined the ratio of mixing variants of both dialects in the context of communication through quantitative analysis to quantify the accommodation indexes. In this way, researchers all have a common denominator that contact with people outside the community can motivate migrants to adapt new regional features that they are not familiar with [Trudgill 1986, Kerswill 2003; 669-702, Kerswill & Trudgill 2005].

In this study, we will examine the accommodation in the contact between the Northern and Southern dialects in the communication language of the ND community in HCMC. The research data is the performative variant of some sentence-final modal particles collected from 63 participants in this community. Accommodation indicators will be determined through the ratio of usage of the Southern dialect variants of these particles in speech community from the ND.

Materials and methods

The sentence-final modal particles is one of the most important modal means in Vietnamese. Among the kinds of lexical means of expressing modalities such as modal verbs, performative verbs, adverbs, modal adverbs, modal collocations... the sentence-final modal particles is considered to have a special role, although they are not in large numbers.

In this study, there are 6 selected sentence-final modal particles, including: ***à, chứ, hả, này, nhé, nhỉ*** .

This selection is based on the difference between the ND and SD variants. It could be the difference in form, expressed on the phonetic aspect (***nhé***, ***nhá*** and ***nha***, or ***này*** and ***nè***), it could be the difference of some semantic features or a certain illocutionary force among variants.

The one-to-one correspondence, that is, the ND particle corresponding to a single variant in the SD in all the used illocutionary forces is found only in the two particles ***à*** and ***này***. The remaining particles *(hả, chứ, nhé, nhỉ)* do not correspond one to one. It means that a variant in the ND can correspond to more than one variant in the SD, typically the particle ***nhé*** in all illocutionary forces. The complexity is also revealed in the phenomenon of overlap between variants. A certain variant in the SD, ***ha*** for example, can be both a variant of ***à***, of ***hả*** and of ***nhỉ***… in the ND.

However, in this study, we undertake not to analyze the difference in semantics and pragmatics between the variants. For the purpose of finding out the accommodation evidence in multi-dialect communication, we only investigate the appearance of ND variants of this particles in the speech of the ND community as an expression of the language change in multi-dialect communication. Therefore, the semantic and pragmatic differences between the variants in the two dialects, if any, are left to discuss in another study.

As such, this research was conducted based on two main sources of materials:

a. Data from questionnaires of 63 participants of the ND community in HCMC. Besides linguistic behavioral information, the questionnaires includes information about personal traits that the researcher, based on a few indicators, thinks may have a certain influence on the accommodation indexes such as gender, age when moving to HCMC, duration of stay in HCMC, type of communication[4], marriage models, etc. This information can help find the correlation between accommodation and the social characteristics of the speakers (Table 1).

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[4] With this type of communication, we want to talk about the communication range of the Northern people in HCMC. Accordingly, those who tend to only communicate or mainly communicate with compatriots, those in their own community are called *intra-group communication*. In contrast, those who tend to communicate a lot with people outside of their Northern community (ie with a lot of communication with the Southerners), we call it *intergroup communication*.

Table 1. **Social characteristics of the speakers**

Characteristics		Frequency	Ratio, %
Gender			
	Male	28	44.4
	Female	35	55.6
	Total	63	100.0
Age on coming to HCMC			
	Under 18	22	35.6
	Over 18	41	64.4
	Total	63	100.0
Duration of residence in HCMC			
	1–9 years	15	23.8
	Over 10 years	48	76.2
	Total	63	100.0
Type of communication			
	Intra-group communication	13	20.6
	Intergroup communication	50	29.4
	Total	63	100.0
Marriage models			
	Not married yet	13	20.6
	To the Northern people	38	60.4
	To the Southern people	12	19.0
	Total	63	100.0

b. Data from natural language: 28 natural conversations (with the participation of researchers) in different communicative situations, including 4 conversations in taxis, 9 conversations in restaurants or cafes, 6 conversations on the streets and in the markets, 2 in a hair salon, 4 in a family context, 2 in an office setting, and 2 phone conversations. In addition to the above 28 contacts, there were also some conversations between the researcher and the ND participants before answering the structure questionnaire. The total amount of natural conversation is estimated to be over 5 hours. There were 39 speakers of the ND participating in the conversations who produced 57 sentence-final modal particles.

The basic research methodology that we applied is the linguistic fieldwork method. The survey data was processed by quantitative analysis method on SPSS statistical software which checked the statistical significance.

Results and discussion

Accommodation through the selection of language variants

Table 2. **The data from questionnaires**

Variable	Var	Frequency	Ratio, %	Total	Variable	Var	Frequency	Ratio, %	Total
à	ND	52	82,5	63/	**này**	ND	47	74.6	63/
	SD	11	17,5	100,0		SD	16	25.4	100,0
chứ	ND	50	79,4	63/	**nhé**	ND	35	55.5	63/
	SD	13	20,6	100,0		SD	28	44.5	100,0
hả	ND	56	88,9	63/	**nhỉ**	ND	42	66.6	63/
	SD	7	11,1	100,0		SD	21	33.4	100,0

On average, the number of uses of variant 0 (ND) is 47/63 times, accounting for 74.6%; and the number of uses of variant 1 (SD) is 16/63 times, accounting for 25.4% (Table 2).

Table 3. **The data from natural language**

Variable	Variants	Show	Frequency
à	ND	à	10
	SD	ha	2
chứ	ND	chứ	6
	SD	co/hé	2
hả	ND	hả	3
	SD	hả/ha	4
này	ND	này	2
	SD	né	1
nhé	ND	nhé	10
	SD	nghe/nha	7
nhỉ	ND	nhi	4
	SD	hà/ha	7
Total			**57**

Thus, variant 0 appears 34/57 times, accounting for 59.65%; variant 1 appears 23/57 times, accounting for 40.35% (Table 3).

Although the usage rate of the ND variant is quite high (74.6% on data by questionnaire and 59.65% on natural speech data) as compared to the presence of the SD variants (25.4% on data by questionnaires and 40.35% on natural speech data), the ratio of mixing SD codes is not small. This is evidence of accommodation of the ND community in HCMC, even though it is not as impressive as seen in some other communities.

Looking for the reason for this, we thought of the status of the dialects, and accordingly their reputation in the communities. Vietnamese language in Hanoi is a prestigious dialect, or at least it is recognized as the dialect of the capital, a kind of the standard variant of Vietnamese. Vietnamese language in Nghe Tinh does not have this status. That will be an important factor affecting the accommodation of the Nghe Tinh speakers in Hanoi. And it will explain why the people who speak Hanoi dialect in particular, the ND in general, when moving to other dialectal region, will be less likely to change strongly to adapt to the new dialect. The same goes for the ND residents in HCMC.

Since they already own a reputable dialect, even if the assimilation of the new dialect is strong, the change, inevitably, will not reach the same level as the changing both to adapt to a new communication environment, and towards a stronger dialect.

Regarding the type of accommodation, according to Trudgill's model, after considering factors such as residence space, regular contact environment, duration of residence, etc., it can be seen that the accommodation in these two communities is largely long-term accommodation. In the Nghe Tinh community, besides some old men (about 60 years old) and young men who have recently arrived in Hanoi, the community does not show a clear accommodation tendency, since the remaining individuals have shown conscious adjustment behaviors to adapt in communication with the indigenous community.

Looking at the phenomenon in a holistic way, it can be seen that behind the adjusted behavior for the accommodation is the tendency of both communities to use Vietnamese universally. In the HCMC environment, the SD variants are considered to be of universal use. However, the ND community in HCMC tends to preserve its original variants and shows weak accommodation to immigrant dialect variants. While the Nghe Tinh community, in accommodation to the Hanoi environment, has adjusted its usage from the Nghe Tinh variants to the Hanoi variants.

These findings support Giles and Trudgill's theoretical model but not too strongly. The tendency of accommodation is absolutely strong in environments where its native dialect is judged to be prestigious and immigrants come from less prestigious dialects, and vice versa, in environments where people comes from dialects that are considered prestigious, the tendency of accommodation will still exist but are much weaker. The gravitational pull of a dialect of the place of origin but stronger always resists the process of accommodation to a dialect of immigration but weaker. However, HCMC Vietnamese is still something of a prestige dialect in the region, and so there would still be some reason for some Northern speakers to accommodate.

From a linguistic perspective, having to answer closed questions in structured questionnaires with a certain degree of attention can put participants in the study fall in the situation of being directed to answer. The choice of the answer, therefore, is more or less subjective, governed by linguistic loyalty attitudes towards the original dialect variants which are considered highly prestigious. This may be one of the factors leading to low accommodation indexes. In other words, when attentions to speech and linguistic loyal attitudes are no longer dominant, the accommodation indexes can reach the "natural" level as the actual communication (40.35%). This is a true indicator of the accommodation trend of this community in the new communicative situation. This adaptation is completely natural, objective and without the involvement of consciousness. However, it is also influenced by the atmosphere and communication environment. Linguistic loyalty attitudes and the self-respect of the original prestigious dialect are blurred and almost ineffective, leaving only the subject of communication being governed almost entirely by rules of accommodation.

The difference seems to be a paradox between the subjective data in Table 2 (through questionnaires) and the objective data in Table 3 (through natural speech). This data shows that the sense of linguistic loyalty and the habit of using the mother's dialect seems to be deeply entrenched in one's speech but]in direct contact situations, under the influence of context, they can completely change towards a strong adaptation to the new dialect. In these cases, the communicative environment and the need to come together in specific communicative situations become important. This is demonstrated by short-term accommodation in specific communicative situations and the potential to become long-term accommodation when more and more temporary contact situations occur over

time. In any case, with the index of 40.35%, the accommodation of the ND community in HCMC may not be as impressive as the Nghe Tinh community in Hanoi (over 70%) but this is in accordance with the rule.

Accommodation in relation to social variables

Among the 5 social variables selected through indicators of their influence on the accommodation indexes, there is only one variable with a difference between non-significant groups: 'age on coming to HCMC' with p = 0.529. Although there is a disparity in the level of accommodation among migrant groups before and after the age of 18, the difference is not clear. This result shows that the age of arrival in HCMC is not a social variable that plays a dominant role in accommodation. The remaining four variables are gender, duration of stay in HCMC, type of communication and marriage model, which all represent significant statistical differences. In particular, the type of communication and the marriage model are two variables that are highly sensitive to accommodation expressed at high disparities between groups. The more communicative the group is, the more accommodative they are. The group of immigrant dialect speakers that married SD speakers is more accommodative than the other two groups. This is also the group with the strongest accommodation level in all groups by social dimension (55.94%) (Table 4). This shows that the communication environment is an extremely important factor in the accommodation level. For instance, besides social communication, for immigrants, the environment is basically similar between groups. The support of a family communication environment with a marriage to a spouse from the receiving community leads to a remarkable accommodation result.

Table 4. **Accomodation in relation to social variables**

Features		Type of variant,%		Total
		Soutern	Northern	
Gender	Male	3.6	96.4	100% (28)
	Female	17.1	82.9	100% (35)
p = 0.049				
Age on coming to HCMC	Under 18	31.8	68.2	100.0 (22)
	Over 18	25.36	74.64	100.0(41)
p = 0,529				
Duration of residence in HCMC	1–9 years	42.68	57.32	100.0(15)
	Over 10 years	30.84	69,16	100.0 (48)
p = 0,042				
Type of communication	Intra-group communication	10,.78	89.22	100.0(13)
	Intergroup communication	31.2	68.8	100.0 (50)
p = 0,026				
Marriage models	Not married yet	23.1	76.9	100.0(13)
	To the Northern people	29.31	70.69	100.0 (38)
	To the Southern people	55.94	44.06	100.0(12)
p = 0,034				

On deeper analysis particularly from the lens of gender, findings are similar to previous studies in Vietnam and other parts of the world with women having a stronger accommodation capacity but being less adaptable to prestigious variants [Trudgill 1974; Fasold 1991; Trinh 2007; Kherbache 2017; etc.]. Although women's accommodation of the ND community in HCMC is not in line with the prestigious standard of Vietnamese variant, it is adapted more to the common variants. In this environment, however, it can be said that the prestigious variant is also the more popular and preferred variant.

The findings are also surprising when the length of settlement in the new community is inversely proportional to the accommodation indexes. This fact is in contrast to our original visualization and also contrasts with the accommodation of other migrant communities. This suggests a common psychological tendency for people who change dialects. When migrants come to a new environment, they often tend to adapt quickly, and therefore need to make many conscious adjustments. But when they have had enough time to integrate, the need to adapt urgently is weakened and the efforts to integrate themselves also gradually decreases.

The type of communication also strongly affects the degree of accommodation. Intra-group communication can make migrants without subjective motivation or objective external influences adapt to a new environment. Conversely, intergroup communication with many different people will put pressure on migrants to adapt. The accommodation shows the ability to regulate appropriate behaviors in specific communication situations but also may be the result of pressure that communicators will find hard to ignore.

Finally, the marriage model is a social factor that has a decisive influence on the accommodation degree of the North dialect community in HCMC. This also supports the results obtained from the Nghe Tinh community in Hanoi. If the social communication environment (workplace, place of education, venues for social engagements, etc.) is an important factor, both for motivation and pressure that can lead to adjustments for accommodation. Then the home environment can contribute to strongly boosting or inhibiting that accommodation.

Conclusion

Applying the basic points from Giles' communication accommodation theory and the adaptive model that Trudgill developed, through a quantitative analysis method, this article shows that the tendency of accommodation of the ND community in HCMC, although not as strong as adaptation of the Nghe Tinh community in Hanoi, is quite obvious with an average utilization rate of over 35% of PNN variants of modal particles in communication. The tendency of accommodation goes beyond both the confidence in the reputation of the ND variants and the dominance of these variants. The accommodation indexes found in the data of natural language also indirectly supports this community's psychological tendencies of linguistic loyalty when answering a structural questionnaire. Research findings have shown that the communication environment has created significant pressure to influence the degree of accommodation. In addition, the results also show that the accommodation indexes are compatible with a number of social variables that are sensitive to a community's changing dialect, such as duration of stay in a new environment, type of communication, and marriage models.

Although our analysis of each social variable is fundamentally carried out separately, it is necessary to understand the speech habits of the ND community in HCMC (as well as the Nghe Tinh community in Hanoi). This is the result of the combined influence of all their linguistic, social, psychological, and cultural factors. All of these factors depend on each other, influence each other, and together create accommodative trends in the language behavior of a community's changing dialect.

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