

Accommodation theory and (socio)linguistics

Miriam Meyerhoff, All Souls College, University of Oxford

Communication accommodation theory has shown remarkable staying power, but largely in fields outside of linguistics. To what can we attribute this? I suggest the enduring appeal of accommodation is because: (i) accommodation has been long recognised by researchers and skilled practitioners of language; (ii) accommodation theory is well-suited to experimental methods. But 'cultural' factors also play a role in its trajectory in different fields. I argue that accommodation researchers in social psychology have adopted a syncretic approach to changes in the theory's focus and methods, building on and not rejecting previous stages of CAT; this differs from theoretical developments in sociolinguistics. I also suggest that the different goals associated with research in the social psychology of language and sociolinguistics may account for why CAT has had more lasting impact in fields other than sociolinguistics, despite the paradox of accommodation remaining fundamental to accounts of language variation and change.