

COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION IN CONTEXT: AN ANALYSIS OF
CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE IN ACTION

A Paper
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
North Dakota State University
of Agriculture and Applied Science

By

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In Partial Fulfillment
for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major Department:
Communication

April 2012

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University
Graduate School

Title

Communication Accommodation in Context: An Analysis of Convergence and Divergence in
Action

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MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

This collection of essays examines nature and relationship of discourse and social distance by focusing largely on the concepts of divergence and convergence throughout the communication process. The first essay examines the risk communication strategies used by officials to effectively and accommodatively confront and manage the outdoor New York City smoking ban. The second essay performs a rhetorical criticism of former-President Bush's September 11th Speech, outlining specific instances in discourse that both decrease and increase social distance with the audience. And the third essay steps into the ESL classroom to propose ways in which we can better recognize and understand the effectiveness of different communication accommodative teaching styles from ESL instructors. Overall, the collection discusses how a better, more comprehensive understanding of convergence and divergence may provide more efficient and powerful discourse throughout various everyday communicative scenarios in the world.

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

Social distance plays a large role in our communicative lives and can be understood through two key concepts: *convergence* and *divergence*. The term, convergence, refers to ways in which we can use communication to overcome forms of social distance. Depending on the specific communicative context, convergence can come in a number of ways, including: identifiable metaphors, narratives, and anecdotes, or even nonverbal forms of communication, such as body position or hand gestures. Mazer & Hunt (2008) further note convergence as the way by which “individuals adapt to each other’s speech by means of a wide range of linguistic features, including speech rates, pauses and utterance length, pronunciations, and so on” (p. 21). In the end, convergence takes place when all of these pre-mentioned forms and aspects of communication come together, bridging a bond between speakers to establish and secure a common meaning.

While convergence brings meaning together, the term divergence oppositely means that communication might be (in)directly used to establish and maintain social distance in different situations. Divergent communication, in one or more ways, is discourse that keeps information and understanding separated and unlinked. Or, as noted by Dougherty et al. (2008), “[d]ivergence...is a strategy used to differentiate one’s self from others in the communication acts” (p. 3) to maintain distance. Sticking with the bridge metaphor, we might assume that divergence—whether used intentionally or not—is weak and unreliable communication that isn’t strong or stable enough to carry a message from one side to the other.

These concepts of convergence and divergence examine the polar complexities of communication accommodation (meaning-created vs. meaning-averted) to illustrate how and why communicators might at times construct strong, accommodative bridges of meaning with audiences, while at other moments either burn the same bridge or simply fail to cross that large divide. The purpose of this essay compilation is to examine the elements of convergence and

divergence at play in three different contexts to understand how and why both elements contribute to the communication accommodation process.

The first essay, written in Dr. Vivea's COMM 786 – Risk Communication, uses the case study approach to confront and address whether or not instances of risk are met with appropriate strategies of communication. The essay critically assesses the communicative strategies of New York City officials in addressing risk in a recent city-wide, outdoor smoking ban to examine how and why communication accommodation could have been improved. The essay includes an array of in-depth data from Internet and print media sources, political interviews, as well as public forums on the Internet. The study finds that although there was much dissent and distaste over the smoking ban from the public *and* some city officials, there was little to no opportunity or common place for an argument or message interaction; and therefore, very little communication convergence. Without this convergence of communication, stake-holders had no real voice in the policy-making process, which ultimately created more problems for the city after the law was passed. In this context of risk communication, social distance was not overcome between public officials and the public due to the lack of converging dialogue and ideas. The results show us that dialogues, in fact, diverged, allowed public officials to maintain a one-way, un-accommodative voice over all at stake.

The second essay, written in Dr. Majdik's COMM 767 – Rhetorical Criticism, examines a rhetorical artifact under a theoretical lens to expose and understand speaker motives and discourse strategies. Specifically, this essay explores the 9/11 speech of former-President Bush to isolate and understand how rhetorical devices in language can create both convergence and divergence during times of war. Through a rhetorical criticism using Kenneth Burke's Dramatistic Approach, the essay specially examines the ways by which Bush frames his "audiences" and his "content" to create a strong dichotomy and divide. In this context, social distance is determined and controlled through the use of Patriotic themes, metaphors, and narratives, as Bush directly attempts to establish convergent meaning with his audience, or "his

side.” Yet, at the same time, Bush openly distances himself and “his audience” from the enemy, “terrorist audience” through the use of enemy metaphors and religious appeals to fear. While at once drawing in a specific audience through communication convergence, Bush also, cleverly and rhetorically, pushes others away through divergent tactics.

Lastly, the third essay, written in Dr. Platt’s COMM 700 – Research Methods in Communication, is a highly-detailed research proposal which critically and thoroughly—through research description, design, and organization—addresses a specific area of research interest in the field of communication. This essay steps into the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom to offer insights into the ways in which language instructors can effectively reach convergent meaning with non-native English speaking students through communication accommodation teaching strategies. Using the concepts of convergence and divergence defined by Giles to examine how four common teacher communication styles—*Non-Accommodation*, *Under-Accommodation*, *Over-Accommodation*, and *Accommodation*—are perceived by the students within the walls of an ESL classroom in Bangkok, Thailand. Using surveys and checklists, the proposal essay seeks information from the student participants in determining how well instructors can effectively manage social distance through particular accommodative teaching styles.

Each of these three essays aims to better acknowledge and understand the role of overcoming (or creating) social distance throughout communication. Further knowledge of this process is our key for understanding how discourse can both bring people together, acting as a bridge for meaning; or, alternatively, push people and meaning apart—breaking that bond. By examining these various contexts under the concepts of convergence and divergence, we may better recognize and understand the relationship between accommodation and communication within real-life situations.

SECTION 2. THE NEW YORK CITY OUTDOOR SMOKING BAN: A RISK COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT

On May 23, 2011, New York City passed an ordinance to ban smoking outdoors in public places. The outdoor smoking ban came nine years after New York's initial ban which prohibited smoking inside restaurants and public facilities. This put New York City in the lead for the "largest metropolitan area to attempt to cut down on the amount of second-hand smoke by enacting smoke-free laws for open areas" (Kloeffler, 2011). Following Mayor Michael Bloomberg's efforts to promote a healthier city, the ordinance was passed, largely supported by city officials and members of the public. However, the ordinance also brought its fair share of dissent. Anti-ordinance groups staged rallies, while individuals voiced unhappy concerns over the ban. Using a case study approach, this essay examines the ways in which New York City Officials failed to provide an opportunity for communication convergence while managing risk through the implementation of public policy.

Conceptual Framework

To confront and understand risk communication, Sellnow (2009) recommends that researchers stick to the case study approach, which serves as a "fitting method for identifying the interaction between individuals, messages, and context" (ch.4). Under this approach, this study aims to comprehend where and how risk communication may or may not have been effectively managed during the proposed New York City smoking ban.

There is always much to consider in regards to a specific and properly handled case of risk communication. Effective factors, of course, are dependent on specific contexts or "cases;" therefore, risk communicators need to read the situation to adjust their style and communication modes before addressing the risk. Situations of risk are dynamic so the communication involved must be as well. Communication styles must be open and flexible to encourage discourse and understanding between the various individuals involved in each situation. This will ensure

communication convergence, making certain that the risk is addressed from many different angles to reassure ideas from all stakeholders and promote effective and valid communication.

To effectively address and manage the risk of situations at hand, successful communicators must first gather an appropriate reading of the specific scenario before tailoring messages and strategies for solving the problem. Sellnow (2009) notes that the correct combination of communication can effectively solve the risk problem, while an incorrect combination can only make the problem worse; hence, speakers must be sure to achieve the right levels of convergence, while maintaining minimal communicative divergence.

It is important to remember that risk communication is a process and cannot usually be solved instantly in an isolated manner. Rather, to manage any and all risk, we must treat it as a complex, dynamic process, made up of many levels of varying components, such as individuals, messages, and contexts. By breaking down these situations using the case study approach, we can better understand the complex systems of meaning which continue to interact throughout this process. This understanding allows us to critically examine effective (and not-so-effective) communicative elements resulting from the processes at work in the case of the New York City outdoor smoking ban.

Method

This study examines coverage of New York City's outdoor smoking ban with a majority of data collected from all major U.S. newspapers and online media outlets. The dataset consists of 44 articles, each sharing a common theme focusing on either the city's or the public's communication over the smoking ordinance. To gain and offer perspective on both sides of the issue, this study critically examines discourse in support of the ordinance, as well as discourse in opposition of the ordinance under the lens Sellnow's (2009) concept of the communication convergence. Doing so, questions arise as to whether or not NYC and city officials used effective practices in risk communication to accommodate the concerns of stakeholders, while also managing itself as a power in which it operates.

Results

To begin, this essay provides a chronological overview of the events leading up to and following the smoking ban. Second, the case will be analyzed using best practices in risk communication. And third, the practical implications for effective risk communication will be identified in this case.

The Smoking Ban Cometh

1994 brought the year in which California became the first state to issue a statewide smoking ban, the first step for creating potential for expanding anti-smoking legislation (Kloeffler, 2011). Shortly thereafter, many states and/or cities in the USA and the world followed suit, passing legislation in support of anti-smoking laws.

It was in 2002 when NYC first passed an ordinance to ban smoking in indoor facilities. Unsurprisingly, initial reactions from the public towards the ban came from both ends. A mixture of voices rained down; some supported the issue; while some stood strong in opposition. Yet, the acceptance of similar, prior smoking bans (like California's) in the US and international cities, in ways, set precedence over NYC, allowing city officials to sway opinion and gain enough support in the end to easily pass the ban. Prohibiting smoking indoors, had, in a way, become the accepted norm in society, a law set in place to protect the health of both non-smokers and smokers.

The 2002 ordinance banned smoking in restaurants, bars and other indoor places (Kloeffler, 2011) to curb health risks. Shortly after, this move was followed by an increase in taxes on cigarettes, making the average price for a pack around \$12 (Kiebus, 2011). According to a WebMD article, it was those two steps that "cut New York City's adult smoking rate for the first time in a decade...from 21.% to 18.4%" (Hitti, 2007). From this statistical decline in smoking, New York City officials concluded that the ban promoted positive and successful outcomes. The indoor smoking ban ensured cleaner air to breathe, resulting in a healthier,

longer-living society. The city now positively assumed that tighter restrictions on cigarettes and smoking saved lives and set a good example.

And, because of this, just a few years later a second, more-tightly controlled outdoor smoking ban was proposed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and city officials. The ban would further restrict the act of smoking to ensure public safety. Mayor Bloomberg's reputation for cleanliness and health began to grow in the public spotlight as he "pushed through the ban with a zeal that angered smokers and even some nonsmokers" (AP, 2009). He, city officials, and members of the public held strong with discourse supporting the second ban; however, this supportive discourse was challenged with much oppositional, anti-ordinance language from other stakeholders.

Ordinance Discourse

To fully understand the outdoor smoking ban case of NYC, it's important to consider all of the perspectives at play. Sellnow (2009) notes that in risk communication two sides "take conflicting stands and offer justification for their position" (ch. 1). Covello (2001), as well, explains that the interactive process of risk communication is made up of "non-experts" as well as "experts and risk management authorities" (p. 5), which we will soon see in this case, are Mayor Bloomberg and city officials, as well as members of the public. These two parties often have various views and ideas on the risk in question; and, sometimes oppose one another.

Sellnow (2009) notes that "[a]s the arguments interact, the strength and weakness of the claims are assessed by those offering formal arguments and by those who engage in discourse about the issue" (ch. 1). Therefore, as we compare different perspectives from various individuals and/or organizations involved in the NYC case, assessing all arguments taking part in the discourse, we are then able to more critically examine the claims and ideas operating throughout this interactive process.

What follows is a critical sampling of the two most conflicted perspectives on the issue. First, we examine discourse that stands in favor, supporting the outdoor smoking ban.

Perspectives, here, are from Mayor Bloomberg, city officials, as well as members of the public who share support for the ordinance. Secondly, we will look at discourse on the opposite end, opposing the proposed smoking ordinance. These perspectives are largely made up of voices of the public, as well as some city officials and organizations.

As we move forward, it is important to formulate questions over the interacting discourse, such as: How do both of these sides "offer justification for their position" and in what ways do the arguments interact through discourse?

Pro-Ordinance Discourse

Support from the public was found from many individuals from higher, political offices, like Scott Santarella, who runs the American Lung Association in New York, said "no compromise [was] necessary" (McCarthy, 2010) in passing the smoking ban. Other members of the public expressed agreement and compliance through newspaper editorials and Internet forums. Two themes were prevalent in support of the ban: New York City would a) be a less polluted, cleaner city, and b) have safer, less dangerous air to breathe.

According an article in All Headline News, "Cigarette-related litter accounts for 75 percent of trash on beaches and a third of all litter in parks" (Alingod, 2011). With the ban in place and people unable to smoke in these locations, there's no doubt that the amount of garbage and pollution would decline. This perspective on less garbage only strengthens the idea that the ordinance would ensure a cleaner, greener environment. No only will the ground be less polluted, but Mayor Bloomberg major intention with the ban aimed to provide New Yorkers with "even cleaner air," (Khan, 2011) by eliminating all risk to promote public safety.

Health Commissioner, Thomas Farley, said "the law is meant to prevent exposure to second-hand smoke and set a good example for children" (Khan, 2011). This prevention of second-hand smoke, then, would eliminate many of the health risks often linked to and associated with cigarette and smoking. These risks of smoking (first or second-hand) can include asthma attacks and blood clots, while the litter can have negative consequences for pets

(Alingod, 2011). The view that the ordinance would eliminate the health risks associated with smoking, as well as eliminate garbage and littering in the parks does offer solid support for a plan that aims to set positive examples for children.

Additionally, supportive discourse was plastered all over forum walls on internet media sites, as well as op ed articles for printed media. On an NPR Forum, a woman named Sarah Arch, stated that “This is a HUGE win for public health, and the public in general” (Memcott, 2011), while a user named zengirlnyc exclaimed on a Huffington Post forum that “I think this is GREAT and it should also be extended to include shared roof deck spaces” (Colvin, 2011). On a WNCY web posting, a number of users made pro-support comments like, “Mayor Bloomberg shows a lot of courage to stand up against the smoking lobby,” and “smoking is dangerous to everyone” (McCarthy, 2010). Many forums; however, served as a means for public discourse on both side, usually creating heated debates. What follows is a look at the discourse opposing the ordinance.

Anti-Ordinance Discourse

Support for the NYC ordinance was confronted with a backlash of oppositional discourse from other members of the public, like Councilman Robert Jackson of Manhattan, a marathon runner and nonsmoker, who noted that “We’re moving towards a totalitarian society if in fact we’re going to have those kinds of restrictions on New Yorkers,” (AP, 2009).

Others, too, voiced concerns over the government’s control and their own person rights, calling NYC city officials “[f]ascist” (Kraft, 2011) by attempting to “revoke civil liberties over half-truths” (Khan, 2011). Some people were afraid the ban would de-face the New York image, noting that “[s]moking...is part of the city's in-your-face, adrenaline-fueled culture" (AP, 2009). Others flooded the Internet and newspapers, challenging the health risks of smoking, like Michael Siegel (2009), Joe Jackson (JoeJackson.com) and James Colgrove, a Columbia University public health professor and author, who noted that while outdoors “smoke dissipates and there is virtually no health risk to anyone who is more than a few feet away" (Young, 2011).

Groups like C.L.A.S.H (Citizens Lobbying Against Smoker Harassment) planned to challenge the ban by staging a “smoke-in” throughout public areas of the city (Kloeffler, 2011), while companies, like Philip Morris, were forced to relocate their headquarters from Manhattan to Virginia (AP, 2009).

"People who smoke have the right to do it," said ex-smoker Shirley Scott, on holiday in New York with her 3-pack-a-day smoking, husband (Dobnik, 2011). Her response was similar to many others who could only express anger and misunderstanding over the proposed ordinance. "I think it's absolutely ridiculous," said a woman in a ABC News article, who felt that the law would be “counter-productive,” driving “smokers into their home, forcing them to light up in much more confined spaces than city parks” (Dobnik, 2011). Besides criticizing its infringements on individual rights, critics also questioned the scope of the ban, noting that it was far too broad (Khan, 2011) since many of the outdoor areas of New York were both considered both public and private. How would the public know or determine where it might be (un)lawful to smoke?

Converging Discourse?

Sellnow (2009) tells us that discourse convergence is an important part to any risk communication since it brings together ideas, promoting possible resolutions. However, in the case for New York City’s outdoor smoking ban, little convergence takes place. Or, in other words, as arguments interact in discourse, there should be some level of resolution; yet, in the NYC case, there is little compromise between the two conflicting views of the ordinance.

On the one hand, the pro-ordinance language argues that the ban will create a cleaner, healthier city for humans; therefore, cigarettes should be banned indoors as well as outdoors. The most important issues to them relate to the public safety and health of both individuals and the city itself. They want clean air with no health risks, alongside unpolluted, green parks.

On the other hand, anti-ordinance discourse questions the validity of the health claims, while fearing a loss of individual rights. Many individuals voice untrusting concerns over the

frequently discussed “health risks” of outdoor second-hand smoke, to which they choose not to believe for various reasons. Alongside this, others worry that freedoms (as well as the image of the city) are being taken away.

The tricky part of this battle lies in the fact that there exists much scientific evidence to support claims (whether on a small or large scale) that smoking (first or second-hand) is bad for one's health and the health of those around the smoker. Therefore, what shall we do? Do we get away with smoking or continue to allow individuals an opportunity to be "responsible" smokers? The pro-ordinancers want to rid cities clean—inch-by-inch—of smoking to ensure health safety. Doing so, they are directly prohibiting any and all smoking in public, without any accommodation for individuals that do smoke. In this way, convergence doesn't seem to happen, since it's all or nothing in the eyes of the city officials.

The main concern of the public is that they do not lose their rights or choices to smoke in public, which here is the direct target. The only way, it would seem, to ensure instances of convergence, in this case, would be to offer opportunities and choices for smokers in the public to ensure that they are still offered the "right" to smoke. Though it is unhealthy, it is as much of a right as drinking alcohol, chewing tobacco, or eating fast food; therefore, they shouldn't be completely marginalized.

Though it has a ring to it and sounds a bit utopian to completely—all or nothing—ban smoking in a city, the message doesn't offer instances of negotiation. For the sake of negotiation, and/or convergence, it would in ways seem wiser to make the city 90% smoke-free to accommodate to both sides of the issue. The city could protect the public, while the public would still have the right to smoke. 90% doesn't have the utopian ring to it as 100%; however, the plan might offer greater opportunities for convergence now and in the future. Interacting arguments could then more easily come together to work out beneficial outcomes on all ends.

Post-Ordinance Discourse

On May 23, 2011 the smoking ban was officially put into effect. Along with the already smokeless bars and restaurants in New York City, the law now prohibits smoking in “more than a dozen miles of beaches, boardwalks and pedestrian plazas” (Kahn, 2011), including places like Central Park, Times Square Plaza, Coney Island’s boardwalk and Yankee stadium. This put New York City in the lead for the “largest metropolitan area to attempt to cut down on the amount of second-hand smoke by enacting smoke-free laws for open areas” (Kloeffler, 2011).

After the ordinance was approved, completely banning smoking in NYC public parks, both the city officials and the public were anxious to see how the new law would be enforced and followed. The leader of the smokers’ advocates group, C.L.A.S.H (Citizens Lobbying Against Smoker Harassment), noted that “[w]hen the law is something with no justifiable reason behind it -- scientific or otherwise -- they leave us no other choice but to affect change with civil disobedience,” (Colvin, 2011), threatening to disobey by staging a “smoke-in” in various areas of the city in protest (Kloeffler, 2011).

C.L.A.S.H. wasn’t the only one upset with the passed ordinance. An NPR internet poll posted on the day the ban was implemented revealed that 55.52% of people felt that “[NYC has] gone too far!,” standing out in comparison to 20.42% claiming that “Smoking should be banned altogether” and 24.06% thinking that “The ban is just right” (Memmott, 2011). If these percentages represented an accurate understanding of the public’s perspective on the issue, many were not happy with the passed ordinance, posing a threat to the enforcement of the new law. And, if someone refused the law, what would happen to them?

Yet, this is where city officials really lacked clear and open communication. In terms of the enforcement of the new anti-smoking law, the city was ambiguous and, itself, seemingly (a bit) uncertain over the means by which enforcement would occur. For example, Bloomberg spokesman, Marc LaVorgna, said that indoors, in restaurants, "we don't have officers patrolling.

And I don't see people smoking." He said, "New Yorkers generally follow the law, and we don't believe any crackdown is necessary." (Dobnik, 2011).

Rather than putting the New York Police Department in charge of handling violations against the ordinance, anti-smoking enforcement was, instead, left to the responsibility of park officials and the New York public. "We expect that New Yorkers will ask people to follow the law and stop smoking," City Hall says" (Pilkington, 2011). These expectations then, ambiguously, left the authority for monitoring and enforcing the new law up to park officials and the public—non-smokers and smokers. Looked at closely enough, smokers might now have to authorize the outdoor behaviors of other smokers.

The unclear language from the city officials after the ordinance was passed was a bit unsettling; it, in a way, signaled that the city may have not thought the action through. They did not yet have any rules or policies in place to manage the new law that had been approved, which caused a lot of skepticism and uncertainty over the effectiveness of the new law. Geoffrey Croft, a NYC Park Advocate, said it's "ridiculous" to think that the new law will be "self-enforced" (Saul and Autry, 2011). Croft continued, "They say, 'Well, if it's not going to be enforced, why should we stop smoking? People are going to continue to flout it, if there's no pressure to deal with it'" (Saul and Autry, 2011). And, this is exactly what happened. Smokers knew that they (initially) would not be punished for neglecting to follow the law; therefore, they looked the other way and continued to smoke, regardless of whether or not other citizens attempted to "self-enforce" each other.

The "smoke-in," mentioned earlier in this article, held by C.L.A.S.H in New York City's Bright Beach during the weekend after the ban had been passed, "was attended by 25 smokers, none of whom were cited by officials or heckled by beachgoers" (Pope-Chapell, 2011). Each of which knew they were now breaking the law; yet, the smokers were not stopped or punished for their behavior.

Examining public behavior shortly after the new ordinance, one reporter found that people did little to stop others from smoking (Feuer, May 24, 2011). People simply neglected to follow the new law and were not punished for their behavior. Neither park officials, nor other members of the public stepped in to regulate the ordinance. In fact, two weeks after the ordinance was passed, the city had only issued one citation and given out 302 warnings to smokers (Pope-Chapell, 2011).

These behaviors simply resulted from the lack of planning on the part of the city officials. The minimal, unclear communication expressed by the officials showed the unprepared nature of the city. The officials spent too much time on passing the ordinance, and too little time on creating and implementing policies that would ensure the ordinance was effective. As expressed by Saul and Autry (2011), “the dearth of tickets, coupled with the reality that many people are flagrantly violating the law, has left some questioning whether the city is truly committed to keeping these new smoke-free zones actually smoke free.”

Discussion

In essence, NYC officials met uncertainties over smoking and its health risks with the new creation and implementation of public policy. Enough scientific evidence—or, even, uncertainty—exists to support the notion to ban smoking outdoors in public places for the sake of public health. If we look at this case in this perspective, in terms of city officials protecting the public from the potential (health) risks of smoking, the anti-smoking ordinance was a success.

Although scientific evidence continues to support the notion that smoking is, indeed, bad for the health of the smoker and those around the smoker, there still lingers elements of uncertainty of the subject. Many agree, while many disagree to the extent to which this evidence is valid and reliably. Dealing with this, city officials did well to confront the uncertainties of the risks associated with smoking. Throughout much public discourse, officials were sympathetic to the expectations of smokers; yet, they managed dialogue by supporting claims with scientific

evidence to promote the ideas that NYC would be a cleaner and healthier city without smoking in outdoor, public places. Doing so, they confronted the problem at hand with honesty and the implementation of public policy. Specifically, they met risk with law.

However, the means by which the city reached this goal may not deserve so much praise. Considering Sellnow's (2009) ideas with convergent communication and/or ideas in discourse, which aim to ensure resolution benefiting many parties, we find that NYC officials communicated on a one-way street, mostly ignoring or not acknowledging the cries of opposition from voices of the public. It was city officials who created the policy, city officials who argued for the policy, and city officials who finally implemented the policy. During the policy process, there was little to no shared, converging discourse from the public over the matter. The public was being "protected" from the risks; yet, they had no say in the matter. Sellnow (2009) mentions that a one-way, dominant voice—like the city officials of New York—can be dangerous, noting that:

...dominating communication in a risk event mutes the opposition, thereby denying the lay public the opportunity to consider any potential points of convergence between the two bodies of knowledge. Whenever the opportunity for convergence is lost, there is an increased likelihood that the quality of the decisions ultimately emerging from the discussion will be diminished. (ch. 1)

And, this diminishment of decision quality essentially was what followed after the ordinance was passed. Both smokers and non-smokers in the public were unhappy that they had been spoken for. Much of their discourse was ignored, not having fallen into the dominant, one-way stream of communication over the issue. Therefore, once the smoking ban took effect, the "quality of the decisions" about the policy was diminished, specifically because it lacked information, consistency, and overall depth.

Lack of Openness and Public Involvement

Weeks after the ordinance had been passed there were still many issues unclear to both the city and the public. Aside from the ambiguous nature of the self-enforcement rule, it was still unclear where exactly the law did and did not prohibit citizens for actually smoking. One

reporter noted this: “Officials are somewhat hazy on whether the controversial ban applies to parks which, like Hudson River Park, are operated jointly by the city and state, or parks run by the city and conservation organizations. Other parks that fall into the gray area include Battery Park City Parks and Brooklyn Bridge Park, which includes Empire-Fulton Ferry park” (Saul and Autry, 2011).

All of these uncertainties over the ordinance resulted over the lack of planning, and the lack of information, from city officials. Both the public, and the city officials (themselves), did not fully understand, follow, and/or respect the new law that was not “in effect.” So, why all of this haze? Geoffrey Croft, the president of NYC Park Advocates, blames it on Mayor Bloomberg’s attempt to save face, saying that “[Bloomberg]’s trying to play both sides: He doesn’t want to be perceived as taking away people’s rights, and he wants to look good on the health side. But if you don’t enforce the law, you might as well not have a law” (Dobnik, 2011). Sellnow (2009), too, notes that “as a best practice....meeting the information needs of the public and remaining open and accessible serves a variety of goals including promoting self efficacy, building trust, and ultimately facility convergence” (ch. 2). Yet, simply because city officials did not meet the information needs of the public, the smoking ban lacked efficacy, trust from the public that would otherwise have been created from the convergence of ideas.

New York City officials were quick to decide that a policy that prohibited smoking was best for the public. Doing so, they confronted uncertainties of risk by creating and implementing policy that protected everyone in the city. They communicated these efforts to the public to ensure that public health would not be compromised; yet, by maintaining a dominant, one-way path of discourse, and not letting public voices and ideas converge within the policy-making process, problems occurred.

First, many individuals who opposed the outdoor ban, ignored the new law and continued to smoke. This could have been avoided had city officials done more to embrace and consider the differences of opinion during the creation and implementation of the new policy. If

communication convergence had been more thoroughly embraced, ideas could have been negotiated by all parties; and therefore, shared by all stakeholders.

Second—which primarily feeds off the first problem—city officials were not even ready to implement the new policy as they had no means to enforce it. They relied on the enforcement of the public to regulate the new policy, who, many of which, did not support the policy in the first place. Along with this, officials did a poor job of clearly identifying the actual geographic regions that were and were not legal to smoke inside.

If anything, this case provides evidence that stresses the need for converging ideas throughout processes of risk policy implementation. When convergence is ignored during the risk communication and management process, new policies are simply met with new, unavoidable challenges, as can be seen in the case of New York City's outdoor smoking ban.

SECTION 3. “FREEDOM AND FEAR ARE AT WAR”: A DRAMATISTIC ANALYSIS OF ACCOMMODATIVE DISCOURSE IN GEORGE W. BUSH’S SEPTEMBER 11TH SPEECH

Nine days after September 11th, President Bush addressed Congress and the nation to address the events of that tragic day, while pitching new ideas for America’s future. Using Kenneth Burke’s Dramatistic Approach this essay focuses specifically on the ways by which Bush frames his message and his audience(s) to justify a move to war. This specific framework of Bush is important to this essay as it reveals how desired social distance can be established through discourse. After briefly addressing the historical/contextual elements of this speech, this essay will further perform a descriptive and theoretical (or Dramatistic) analysis on both the converging and diverging discourse.

Historical Context

The unsuspected events of September 11 brought forth troubling times for an ill-prepared and uncertain nation. Citizens of the USA (and the world) had trouble grasping the ugly reality of the unfolding nightmare happening to their homeland. After two back-to-back plane crashes into the Twin Towers, the nation watched in horror as the two tallest structures in New York crumbled to the ground, killing over 3,000 people, and launching national emotions into panic and emergency. Americans suddenly realized that the strength and stability of their world was threatened. Rather than America being a strong and stable beacon of hope and friendship to the world, the public now faced an alternative dilemma. The attacks on American soil exposed the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the country, as well as the enemies of American life. Rather than feeling the power and control preached in the ideals of America, the public faced an opposite and out of order reality. Bush seized this opportunity of national uncertainty to establish a new framework of America.

According to Campbell and Burkholder (2003), “any rhetorical act is a rhetor’s effort to persuade an audience to view events and issues in a particular way. The ‘vision of reality’

presented in the rhetorical act is the author's" (p. 49). With this in mind as we look at Bush's speech, it's important to consider the ways that Bush specifically "frames" his audience(s) and his "vision of reality." To examine and understand the motives behind these frameworks, this essay performs a rhetorical criticism of the speech, using Kenneth Burke's Dramatistic Approach (or Dramatism).

Dramatism, as described by West and Turner (2010), "compares life to a play and states that, as in a theatrical piece, life requires an actor, a scene, an action, some means for the action to take place, and a purpose" (p. 330). These requirements make up Burke's pentad; or, stated by West and Turner (2010), the "method for applying Dramatism" (p. 335). All of the elements make up and serve a particular purpose to a speaker's motives, so when he or she places more emphasis or detail on one of the elements, this alters the dramatistic ratio of the rhetorical description, as well as the overall intended meaning of the message. For instance, one author might focus more attention on the people or the actors; whereas, another author may heavily describe the scene. The choice to do either may rest on one or more motives from the author, as he or she directs audience attention. By determining where and how a speaker emphasizes the dominance of one of the five pentad elements, a rhetorical critic may examine the possible motives and strategies behind this dramatistic selection.

Campbell and Burkholder (2003) note that Dramatistic criticism is "particularly interested in the form of the message—that is, in the kind of symbolic act that occurred" (p. 92). In this way, the critic must pay particular attention to the style and symbolic use of the rhetoric's language to understand how and why the speaker chose to construct reality in a particular way. Applying the pentad to Bush's discourse will help us to isolate which elements are more dominant and determine how this affects the dramatistic ratios of his rhetoric. West and Turner (2010) explain that this Dramatism and the Pentad "allows a rhetorical critic to analyze a speaker's motives by identifying and examining" the above stated elements (p. 330).

Method

This essay intends to apply the pentadic method to the rhetoric of Bush to identify the particular rhetorical strategies and motives within the speaker's discourse. Bush's discourse can then be separated into two different representations of reality, each emphasizing different elements of the pentad. The first construction of reality occurs between paragraphs 1-10, reflecting on the past and present, while highlighting the scene (or a broken, yet strong and perseverant nation), the agents (or the identities of the terrorists), and purpose (or evil), while Bush's second representation of reality happens between paragraphs 11-25, and focuses on the future, placing emphasis on a new act (or the war on terror), accompanied with new agents and a new overall purpose.

Furthermore, this essay will apply Burke's pentad to Bush's discourse—and specifically the two described interpretations of realities stated above—to reveal the rhetorical strategies and motives behind these particularly described representations of the world. In other words, this essay examines how and why Bush frames his audience and the "war" scene in the way that he does. Why and how does he use a combination of message convergence and divergence to frame the scene and reinforce his justification of war?

Results

Bush's Reality of Past and Present

The first ten paragraphs of Bush's discourse construct a dangerous, yet hopeful reality of the world. The discourse points to the "courage of passengers" (para. 3) on the airplanes, "endurance of rescuers" (para. 3), "unfurling of flags, the lighting of candles" and "the giving of blood" (para. 3); all of which reveals "the decency of a loving and giving people" (para. 3). Symbolic acts of American goodness are the focus. Immediately, the rhetoric describes a scene of strong and resilient behaviors coming from the American people, carrying a caring tone. Campbell and Burkholder (2003) note that "because tone reveals the rhetor's attitude, it also often reveals the connotative meaning the rhetor intends to convey" (p. 23). Therefore, as

Bush's tone changes within the text, his attitude and motives are revealed in the discourse, displaying an attitude of relief and encouragement.

It is both through the welcoming tone and positive content that Bush can initially frame a scene of community. He constructs a scene of common, Patriotic attitudes and feelings of togetherness; thereby, establishing communication convergence and close social distance. He cares for the well-being of Americans. He aims to reassure the American public that everything will be alright by presenting himself and them to be strong, compassionate, and prideful people. Bush points out the positive values and aspects of the country which are thought to make it great. This positive and knowledgeable tone makes Bush out to be a wise, passionate, and caring leader. The public would most likely place trust into the hands of such a figure.

This tone also aids in the establishment of a particular persona, which Campbell and Burkholder (2003) describe as the "role or roles that a rhetor takes on for strategic purpose, much as an actor assumes a role or character in a play" (p. 21). Throughout the speech, Bush appears to jump between alternating personas. At times, he appears to take on the immediate and obvious role of the American President, or trusted leader; yet, at times, he also assumes a position with the American people, a representative of the American public who speaks for the nation.

This presidential or leader persona becomes apparent throughout most of the speech, as he initially provides comfort and support for a fearful nation. This gentle and caring side is complemented with an aggressive and authoritative side, which demands for immediate surrender from the terrorists, bringing out strong and determinative leadership characteristics. This leader persona continues until the end of the speech, providing a steady assurance and confidence that the American people and their President are, indeed, moving in the right direction. This, accompanied by the focus on scene in the opening paragraphs reinforces the point.

Though the country has been attacked, he portrays the scene of a nation unwilling to give up; one which can persevere and endure hardships. The symbol of America is unbreakable. With this emphasis on the current scene of American affairs, Bush manifests an injured, but courageous, perseverant, and unbreakable nation bound together. With this initial, positive emphasis on the scene, Bush identifies with his audience through the various American symbols already mentioned above. The symbolic images or actions of depict the strength and resilience of the nation, and also, illustrate the connection that exists between the American people. He then further extends this connection and/or unity internationally, noting America's many "friends" (para. 4 -5) around the world. His ethos as president and confidant, along with his use of symbolic language, reinforce audience confidence in his words and actions to come.

The initial emphasis on the scene, from paragraph 6 –11, then becomes overshadowed and, more or less, defeated by Bush's new focus, as he eventually shifts onto the agents—Al Queda, the Taliban, Osama Bin Laden and/or the "enemies of freedom" (para. 6). Campbell and Burkholder (2003) note that "an emphasis on the agent reflects idealism or individualism" (p. 95) and "assumes that agents can overcome any obstacle" (p. 95). This concept of individualism is familiar to the America psyche; therefore, Bush's emphasis on the image of evil agents penetrating the goodness of American society has the potential to evoke much fear from his audience. Bush introduces the agents by constructing the wicked reality which they desire to live in, noting a dark "world where freedom itself is under attack" (para. 6) where these agents "are trained in the tactics of terror" (para. 7), which they use "around the world to plot evil and destruction" (para. 7). With this such description, the discourse highlights in detail the wickedness of the individuals behind the attacks on the world trade center, and further portrays the agents as mere evil—an evil threatening the goodness of American society and the world. This emphasized focus on the terrorists as evil agents allows Bush to symbolically identify with his audience in terms of morality and ideology. The viral and dangerous, evil acts and ideas of

these agents threaten the goodness of America, its ideology, and its people. Bush reinforces this notion by noting “[t]hey stand against us, because we stand in their way” (para. 12).

In a sense, Bush portrays America and its people as good victims, acted upon evilly by bad agents. Victimhood, described by West and Turner (2010), is “the way in which we attempt to purge the guilt that we feel as part of the human condition” (p. 334). One of the ways we may do so is through scapegoating, or blaming others. Using Bush as an example, West and Turner (2010) illustrate how scapegoating can be used in political rhetoric. They note that when Bush “used stark contrasts between good and evil, he operated within Burke’s concept of scapegoating” (p. 334). With the terrorists as the scapegoat, Bush reinforces the idea that Americans are indeed the victims of September 11th, which caters to the very human need of purging guilt, while manifesting moral separation into Bush’s constructed world—where good is under attack from evil.

To create and define these categories, Bush reaches out to his audience. Campbell and Burkholder (2003) note that “[e]mpowering an audience is just one form of a larger process of creating one’s audience—that is, of symbolically transforming those addressed into the people the rhetor wants them to be” (p. 23). So, after encouraging and praising the American public, transforming them into a representation of the surviving goodness of American society, Bush addresses other nations of the world to welcome and celebrate their wholesome support for the American (good) ideology. “And on behalf of the American people,” he says, “I thank the world for its outpouring support” (para. 4). He continues, acknowledging support from Seoul, Cairo, Australia, Africa, Latin America, and Great Britain. By reaching out, and speaking directly to this international community, Bush is able to connect multiple nations to his cause and, ultimately, include construct and define them as a “friend” on America’s side, making up the side of “good” in the world.

Then, in paragraph 10, after defining the side of “good,” Bush dramatically shifts his attention to aggressively confront the enemy or Taliban audience with specific demands. “Give

the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating” (para. 10), Bush states, requesting immediate action from his enemies. Such a direct request isolates and separates this audience—the bad audience—and further transforms them into an irresponsibly dangerous and reckless; yet, controllable audience. Such words from Bush, in effect, construct an opportunity to tame the evil beast, restoring order and peace in the world.

Bush’s Reality of the Future

This moral, ideological, and symbolic separation between sides structures the remaining discourse of the speech, and also allows Bush to shift his attention from the past and present, into the future reality—where, it is expressed, that a new and necessary “War on Terror” must be acted out to reinstall order and goodness, symbolically changing the world.

At this point, Bush escapes his leadership persona every few paragraphs to serve as the voice for the American public. It starts early in paragraph 6, when he says, “Americans are asking: Who attacked our country?” Providing questions and answers in such a way allows Bush to participate in the American public whom he’s been addressing, granting himself permission to answer his own questions. He continues onward with this persona a few more times in paragraph 12, saying, “Americans are asking: Why do they hate us?” and in paragraph 13, saying, “Americans are asking: How will we fight and win this war?” In paragraph 18, Bush poses his final question, saying “Americans are asking: What is expected of us?” These who’s, why’s, how’s, and what’s allow Bush to temporarily become the American people—his audience, while, at the same time, allowing his other, leader persona an opportunity to answer important questions. This persona shifting assists Bush in carrying out a new focus on the pentad in the remaining portions of the speech.

Unlike the opening portion, where Bush emphasizes descriptions on the agents, scene, and purpose of that particular dramatic sequence, the second half of the speech concentrates mainly on the construction of a new act, agent, and purpose. The shift occurs after Bush defines a clear and symbolic separation between the attackers—the terrorists—and the victims—the

America—the evil and the good, approximately around paragraph 11. At this point, Bush slips in the first reference of the new war, noting that “[o]ur war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated” (para. 11).

Suddenly, the act is no longer the past attacks of September 11th, but rather a fresh and necessary war, meant to exterminate the world’s evil. Campbell and Burkholder (2003) note that “[a]n emphasis on act reflects behaviorist or empiricist beliefs” (p. 95) and; therefore, “focus on what people do” (p. 95). So, in this case, what people do is wage war on evil or on terrorists. The emphasis on the act of war allows Bush to construct a reality that balances on a dichotomy of good and bad, which simplifies, but solidifies the black-and-white nature of the world.

“Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen” (para. 14), he notes and continues by further explaining that “[w]e will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is not refuge or no rest” (para. 14). It will take time, in other words, to perform a deed that may ultimately cleanse the world of evil and badness; however, such an act presented to the American public, with pragmatism in mind, can and will accept such a concretely presented plan. “These measures are essential,” Bush explains, “But the only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows” (para. 16). With this explanation, no alternatives to this act exist, as Bush portrays the plan as already concrete and perfect.

As for those who may not believe such an act to be feasible, necessary, or even rational, Bush doesn’t leave much of an option. “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” (para. 14), he explains, reinforcing his constructed black-and-white view on reality. In Bush’s world there is peace and terror, friends and enemies, good and evil, and us and them. Either you’re one or the other, or nothing at all. The motives behind this rhetorical strategy seem to attempt to automatically position the audience into categories which have already be constructed

and defined. Therefore, roles and ideas have already been forced upon the audience; and, now, they are expected to comply.

Bush notes multiple times that “[w]e will come together” (para. 20-21) to perform tasks necessary to eliminate terrorists. Such a declaration only assumes that all of the audience will be on board, without giving them a choice—a concrete expectation, and also, demand that the act be followed. The tone of the discourse at times provides welcomed guidance and instruction, as well as emitting power, aggression, and authority. Bush utilizes the specific context and timing of the speech to play off both styles, while also blending the two into a rather unrecognizable but effective and commanding discourse. “We will rally...,” “We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail” (para. 23) he notes, and in a way, asking and telling, the nation to perform their expected duties.

In his final push to finalize his construction of the act and its purpose, Bush offers the symbolically-charged message of “[f]reedom and fear are at war” (para. 23). Such a declaration removes the actual agents or players—the ‘us’ and ‘them’—from involvement in the game; instead, simplifying the war into a fight between moral and symbolic concepts. This statement reveals the core of the discourse in that it suggests that the people, countries, and world are mere bystanders to an ongoing and unstoppable fight of morals and righteousness. Freedom and fear are nothing but ideological symbols that represent good and bad in American society. The audience can fully identify with the symbols as they represent ideological polarities in America; therefore, it’s easy to assume this message (or rhetorical device) would stir the emotional responses of the audience toward support for freedom and agreement for war. The description of symbols at war simply solidifies the act as concrete and empirical; or, as an unavoidable event in the course of nature. In this way, the audience must accept the act to be inevitable, and therefore, place support in the better selection of two options—freedom over fear, good over evil, peace over terror, and America over terrorists.

Discussion

George W. Bush's speech was delivered at a pivotal moment in American history. The events of September 11th and the effects thereof on the American audience opened a rhetorical window for Bush to address the public. He used the opportunity to provide support and encouragement to the American people, emphasizing the need for national and international unity to construct and define a concrete concept of "goodness" and "freedom" in the world. Bush positioned these symbols against the evil forces which threatened them—specifically, Al Qaeda or, generally, terror or badness—to justify a new international "War on Terror." This constructed social distance, placing a priority of on a dichotomy of sides made it difficult for Bush's audiences to avoid accepting the overall justification of war, as they must either identify "with America" or "against America." Bush directly and unambiguously used rhetorical convergent tactics to overcome and secure social ground with one audience, while using a divergent communication to create and separate distance with the enemy audience. In this context, Bush displays how easily a rhetor can create and manage his or her content or audience using these basic concepts.

Considering Bush's obvious communicative tactics used in this speech to both overcome and further create social distance between audiences, it's important to consider how and why other rhetors might choose to use similar rhetorical devices. This essay reveals how easily a rhetor can create and define a rhetorical game, as well as choose the participating teams.

SECTION 4. COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION IN THE ESL CLASSROOM: PERCEIVED INSTRUCTOR USE AND AFFECT ON STUDENT LEARNING

Communication accommodation is a vital part of any classroom discourse, especially in intercultural contexts; however, there has not been much for previous research regarding this topic within the field. An important and widely taught subject now prevalent in classrooms around the world is ESL (or English to Secondary Learners), in which a (commonly Native) English speaker teaches the English language to a class of non-native English-speaking students. In these classroom contexts, teachers must wrestle with an array of accommodation options when considering appropriate communication to create and establish meaning to promote student learning success. The problem; however, lies in the fact that the consistency of teacher accommodation styles can vary greatly, potentially affecting student performance in a negative light. The purpose of this study is a) to examine how ESL teachers differ in the use of communication accommodation strategies in the ESL classroom; and b) to examine how the perceived uses of communication accommodation are correlated with student affect toward course content.

Literature Review

Communication in the classroom is no new topic in the field. It's been examined in a number of ways throughout the years, providing exciting and rich research. Topics have included teacher self-disclosure (Cayanus & Martin, 2008), social identity (Edwards & Harwood, 2003), communication willingness (Peng & Woodrow, 2010) "cool" classroom communication (Mazer & Hunt, 2008), carnival lives and communication (Blackledge & Creese, 2009) and even verbally aggressive communication (Myers & Knox, 1999). Each study has sought to isolate and explain, in its own way, the curious nature of the various forms of communication within the realm of the classroom between both teachers and students. A topic, however, which has not yet been researched much within the classroom, is the role of communication accommodation, specifically in the ESL classroom. The classroom research contexts of the past offer great

insights as to how particular language and communication comes to be, functions, and/or changes.

These studies help us to recognize that classroom communication is dynamic in a number of ways, often making it difficult to maintain levels of communicative understanding, which should be of our highest regard in the classroom. Therefore, this essay proposes that another area worthy of much attention in the field is that of communication accommodation in the classroom (specifically, the ESL classroom). Before moving forward with this topic, it is important to first lay down the conceptual framework for the subject will be examined.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

West and Turner (2010) tell us that Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)—developed by Howard Giles-- “considers the underlying motivations and consequences of what happens when two speakers shift their communication styles” (p. 467), which is “primarily done in two ways: divergence and convergence” (p. 467). Harwood, Giles, & Palomares (2005) further break this down, pointing out that communicative harmony “is key to promoting cooperation between” individuals (p. 122), which is a general, yet poignant way to examine our abilities to accommodate communication with each other, as we strive to maintain meaningful communication. In this way, using CAT within the ESL classroom we would be able to isolate and examine particular instances of communicative accommodation at work. We would be able to understand the consistencies at play. What communication is effective? What is not?

Harwood, Giles, & Palomares (2005) put forth four strategies for examining communication accommodation: 1. Accommodation, 2. Under-Accommodation, 3. Over-Accommodation, and 4. Non-Accommodation. By becoming aware of each of these strategies and equipping them into our social artillery, the study assumes that we may effectively overcome and/or avoid “communicative grenades” (p. 122) or social conflict in our daily lives. In the past, researchers have used these strategies to examine other communicative issues that reside outside of the classroom to recognize the various roles that CA plays within our social world.

Rogerson-Revell (2010), for example, uses these accommodation strategies to examine communication in international business meetings. The study aims to “explore some of the conversational resources and mechanisms that participants use to facilitate understanding and accommodate communicative differences in a series of international business meetings” (p. 433) and finds that CAT “lends itself well to the analyses of intercultural communication” (p. 435). The study finds that communication accommodation occurs through a variety of “linguistic and procedural strategies” (p. 451); however, each strategy is dependent on and determined by the specific cultural context.

This study, then, proposes to use the fore-mentioned concepts of CAT within the walls of the ESL classroom to locate and examine the differences and similarities of teacher communication accommodation. To do so, teacher styles will be documented using a survey that calculates degrees of both communication divergence and convergence, which will then tell us the specific accommodation style used by each teacher—Then, after documenting the (in)consistencies between teacher accommodation styles, the study will examine how each of these styles affects student learning.

The ESL Classroom

The specific cultural context for this study aims to examine how English teachers in classrooms in Thailand are perceived to communicatively accommodate to the interpersonal and intercultural expectations of the students, the classroom, and the culture. In this context, it's important to consider the interpersonal classroom and/or intercultural concepts prominent in the field. In the past, McCann & Giles (2007) have examined the relationship between communication and age-differentiation in Thailand and the USA, while Tien (2009) has provided rich insight on communication conflict and accommodation in Taiwan. Both of which inspect communicative issues that often arise from intercultural expectations in particular environments; therefore, by applying these same concepts to a new context in Thailand classrooms, this study has the potential for rich results.

Using the concepts of communicative divergence and convergence to identify where teacher accommodation style may lie, we must adopt a deductive approach to examining behavioral decisions of teachers occurring through communication in an intercultural classroom, while considering their specific roles and/or functions throughout the accommodation process. To investigate, we can consider the following research question:

RQ1: What styles of communication accommodation do ESL teachers use in the ESL classroom?

Communication accommodation can, of course, take many forms; therefore, RQ1 will allow the study to determine which styles are prevalent in the ESL classroom. As this topic has yet to be examined thoroughly by researchers, the results will provide important information about the frequency and/or dominance of certain styles.

Within these findings, it's also necessary to consider the affects on students. Instructor communication obviously impacts student behavior and the dynamics of the ESL classroom, including student perceptions of the course instruction, perceptions of the course content, as well as perceptions toward the recommended course behaviors (McCroskey, 1994). Myers & Knox (1999) note that "student reports of affective learning have been positively correlated with several perceived instructor verbal communication behaviors" (p. 35); therefore, it's highly important to consider communication accommodation within this mix to determine levels of correlation.

RQ2: How is teacher communication accommodation style perceived to affect student learning?

Convergence and Divergence

In CAT, the term convergence refers to how "individuals adapt to each other's speech by means of a wide range of linguistic features, including speech rates, pauses and utterance length, pronunciations, and so on" (Mazer & Hunter, 2008, p. 21) to establish a strong connection of understanding. Convergence brings meaning together; whereas, the term divergence oppositely means that individuals do not communicatively adapt to one another, and therefore, meaning

comes apart, or is lost in the communication process. In this way, these two concepts examine the polar nature at work throughout communication accommodation (meaning-created vs. meaning-averted), which will be explained in the following examples of teacher accommodation styles.

Non-Accommodation Communication

(Divergence = Very High, Convergence = Very Low). In the ESL classroom, the Non-Accommodation style of communication is by far the easiest to pin point and document. It will have the most instances of divergence, as the teacher does not actively seek to adapt to the students. This is because, teachers, in essence, do not change—or “transform”—into a new performer in the classroom. Although students in the classroom may have a low level of English knowledge and; therefore, comprehend a minimal amount of information, teachers resist any and all temptation to breakdown and/or adjust their styles to accommodate the communicative interaction between teacher-and-student. Before, during, and after class, these teachers always communicate in the same way.

Some instances of this style might include the rates at which teachers speak. With Non-Accommodation, a teacher’s speech rate would not slow down during the class. In exactly the same degree of speed, loudness, and seriousness, the teacher communicates with the students over the course session. Just as though he or she speaks with a colleague, the teacher makes no special communication adjustments, regardless of who the audience might be.

This may also include forms of non-verbal communication, which are typically prominent in the ESL classroom. However, if the style of the teacher is perceived to be non-accommodative, he or she will not use any more non-verbal language than is normal for them outside-of-class. The non-accommodative teaching style will have very high instances of divergence and very low instances of convergence. It is in this way that convergence remains very low in the ESL classroom.

Under-Accommodation Communication

(Divergence = High, Convergence = Low/Moderate). Many teachers use basic, but normal phrases when communicating in the classroom. Typically, they would not say or reword a sentence in a way in which they would not normally say it. Or, one could say, they do not change their style of speech at all for the classroom. Teachers using this approach might still repeat specific sentences 2 or 3 times, but they choose not to restructure or simplify the way the sentence is said. In this way, there is little attempt to accommodate communication in the classroom; therefore, an under-accommodative approach occurs.

Teachers using this approach sometimes demand that their students only speak English in the classroom as well. Whether the students speak to each other or with the teacher, the rules of the classroom might not allow for any and all forms of Thai communication. When this occurs, the classroom conversation level tends to be much lower, decreasing convergence and increasing divergence.

Teachers also stick with their normal rate of verbal speech. Many teachers choose not to slow down their speech and/or focus on key words or phrases; but rather, they speak at their normal rate and in their normal tone or accent. In this way, and to them, it's more of a normative approach to communication and language. A teacher may ask the class something like, "What'a ya gonna do t'day?" in a fast, but normal sounding speech rate, and whether or not the students respond or understand, the teacher doesn't slow down or simplify the speech. He or she continues with his or her normal speech pattern, under-accommodatively communicating with the students.

Nonverbal communication is also lacking under this approach. Teachers who choose to under-accommodate communication with students use little or no nonverbal gestures in the classroom. Many teachers may use their hands, but not in any way which might be different than how they normally communicatively operate. Some teachers taking this route even choose to sit

for large portions of the class, only relying on verbal speech to communicate. The specific style will have a high degree of divergence and a low to moderate degree of convergence.

Over-Accommodation Communication

(Divergence = Low/Moderate, Convergence = Very High). Typical patterns that stand out as far as teacher communication and behavior is concerned point us toward an over-accommodative approach to communication between the teacher and students. Commonly teachers take two approaches to over-compensate students' lack of English knowledge. First, it's a common practice for teachers to simplify language so that students may better understand the information being shared with them. An example might be something like this: rather than a teacher asking, "What are you going to do tomorrow?," he or she may instead opt to say something like, "Tomorrow, you (will) do what?" When over-accommodating, teachers focus on key words or phrases and sometimes repeat the same message 2 or 3 times. If students still look confused or unsure about the words, teachers sometimes choose to even simplify language further. For instance, a teacher may repeat this sentence 3 times—"What do you do for a living?"—but, if the student cannot understand, the teacher will simplify and over-accommodate by saying, "What is your job?". If this simplification doesn't help, some teachers choose to again simplify and over-accommodate by saying, "Job is what?" Such over-accommodations depend on the teacher, the level of the student, as well as the information being taught.

Teachers taking this path also tend to allow their students to speak Thai in the classroom. This might not be allowed predominantly; however, during student to student discussions or while seeking help, a teacher may not press the student to only use English. When this happens, there tends to be quite a mix of spoken English and Thai.

Another verbal way that teachers choose to over-accommodate communicatively with their students is by directly slowing down the rate of their speech. In this way, the teacher stops on specific words and phrases so that the student can keep up. This is also sometimes intertwined with the simplification and/or slimming down of language from the paragraph above.

For instance, a teacher may have a class of 20 students with a minimal level of education, and the teacher may say something like, “What did you do on your holiday.” If the students don’t pick up on the question, the teacher may choose to repeat with a slow “What...did you...do...on your...ho.l.i.day.” Often when there is new or difficult vocabulary or phrases, the teachers opt to take this over-accommodative approach to language teaching.

Over-accommodation communication in the ESL classroom happens verbally and nonverbally. As noted above, there are two prominent ways that it may happen verbally; however, they are often mixed with quite emphasized gestures of nonverbal communication by the teacher. Teachers in the ESL classroom—some more than others—use an array of facial emphasis, hand movements, and body gestures to re-assert language to over-accommodate for the lack of knowledge from the student. An example might be when a teacher commonly tells the students to “Stand up, please,” he or she may also raise both of his or her hands from waist level up to shoulder level to signal and upward motion. Similar nonverbal gestures are used when asking students to “Sit down,” as teachers commonly reverse the motions and lower their hands from shoulder level to waist level. In the ESL classroom, nonverbal communication is prevalent with a majority of the teachers. Many express directions, emotions, verbs, and a number of other language-related concepts “over”accommodatively using this non-verbal, communicative approach.

Accommodation Communication

(Divergence = Low/Moderate, Convergence = High). It only seems natural that accommodation communication happens somewhere in between both over-accommodation and under-accommodation; however, the specific accommodative acts of communication seem to be determined by various factors and specific contexts. One may even look at it as a teacher’s ability to be on the “same level” as their students.

A teacher who successfully utilizes an accommodative style of communication accommodation will perform in a way that ensures a consistent means of convergence in the

classroom, with a low to moderate degree of divergence. In this way, the teacher seeks to establish accommodative communication with students, while still challenging them with instances of divergence to ensure progressive learning. Therefore, unlike the over-accommodative style—which has a low degree of divergence—the accommodative style may have a slightly lower range of convergence and a higher range of divergence.

Method

The Participants (The Students)

Participants for this study will be (300) ESL students enrolled in a small, non-profit language school located in Thailand. The ages of the participants will range from 15 to 50+, while the levels of English skill and comprehension will also range on levels of 1-15 (as determined by the school). 98%, or so, of the students are Thai, with the remaining percentages being made up of various other nationalities.

The School

The language institute, American University Alumni (AUA), is a non-profit institution, which has been open to public (Thai or non-Thai) for nearly 50 years. It has an enrollment of around 2,000 students. Learners at the language school may be high school students, college students, full-time workers, retirees, etc. Most of the learners take classes in the evenings during the week, or the daytime hours during the weekend. The ESL curriculum of the language school is built on 15 levels of English proficiency with each level lasting 6 weeks. Students generally test “into” a specific level that fits their English ability and are then tested at the end of levels 4, 8, and 12 to assure they are meeting learning objectives. The size and length of each class varies; however the average class size is around 15-25 students, lasting anywhere from 1 hour to 2.5 hours.

The Teachers

The language institute is home to nearly 35 foreign (native-English speaking) teachers, some of which have been around for decades, while others are brand new. Teacher ages range

from 20 –65+ but most have similar levels of education and/or training—predominantly a Bachelor’s Degree + (120 hours) and TESOL (Teaching English as a Secondary Language) certification. The nationalities of teachers include: American, English, Australian, New Zealander, South African, etc.

The Procedure

Using AUA in Thailand, the study will obtain data through student surveys. Participants will complete a checklist consisting of both diverging and converging teacher accommodative behaviors, as well as McCroskey’s (1994) Instructional Affect Assessment Instrument (IAAI). Myers & Knox (1999) found success using these two methods in their efforts to document and examine instances of verbally aggressive communication used by teachers in the classroom. This study will similarly use these procedures to investigate perceived communication accommodation.

To examine the perceived communication accommodation strategies of the teachers, students will complete a 20-point checklist, measuring the frequency of diverging and converging behavior occurring in the classroom to understand which of the four common strategies teachers used—accommodation, under-accommodation, over-accommodation, and non-accommodation. The survey will be measured using a five-point scale ranging from very often (4) to never (0).

To examine perceptions of affective learning, participants will complete the Instructional Affect Assessment Instrument (IAAI), which consists of 24 items that measure student affect in six subscales. The first two scales (A and B) will measure the students’ attitudes toward the content and behaviors recommended by the course. The next two subscales (C and D) will measure the attitude toward the instructor, as well as the degree to which the student will take another course taught by the same instructor. The last two subscales (E and F) will measure the students’ likelihood for engaging in the recommended behaviors of the course, and the likelihood for enrolling in a similar course. Each question is measured using a 7-point scale with options

ranging from good (1) to bad(7), worthless (1) to valuable (7), fair (1) to unfair (7), and negative (1) to positive (2).

My attitude about the content in the course is:

My attitude about the behaviors recommended in this course is:

My attitude about the instructor in this course is:

My likelihood of actually attempting to engage in the behaviors recommended in this course is:

My likelihood of actually enrolling in another class with similar content:

My likelihood of my taking another course with this teacher, if I had a choice is:

Results

To answer RQ1, the study will assess the perceived frequency of which the teachers performed both acts of divergence and/or convergence in the classroom to determine which accommodative style was used. A low frequency of a specific style will be counted by responses in the “0” and “1” categories for questions on the student checklist, while high frequency for a style will be in the “3” and “4” categories. Throughout the 20 questions, a frequency of “17-20” will be considered very high, a frequency of “13-16” will be considered high, a frequency of “9-12” will be considered moderate, a frequency of “4-8” will be considered low, and a frequency of “1-3” will be considered low. By examining the results of the frequencies from the checklists, the research will be able to determine which styles were most prominent utilized by teachers in the ESL classroom.

To answer RQ2, the study will examine the frequency results from above, alongside the student perceptions of affective learning on the IAAI to examine the link between the teacher’s accommodation style and its perceived affect on student learning. From these results, correlations will be noted and further explained.

Discussion

The obvious limitations of this study reside in accurately defining and interpreting what actual “accommodation” may be in the Thai classroom. It’s much easier to find and determine the non-accommodative, under-accommodative and over-accommodative approaches to communication than it is to definitively isolate and define what and where accommodation is.

The findings and reasoning of this study promote the notion that accommodation may be a selective mix of the two extremes—divergence and convergence; however, it is ultimately defined by the context and situation of specific communicative circumstances.

Yet, in terms of this study's design, we might be able to locate concrete glimpses of teacher accommodative styles at work to better understand their link with student success in the ESL classroom. Doing so, we may obtain knowledge about the prevalence and consistencies of styles that prove affective. Specifically, in this way, the research has the potential for contributing new and valuable information to the field.

Future studies may find success in examining specific (cultural) contexts that call for accommodation, as well as potentially seeking outcomes of specific accommodative approaches to determine whether or not they may be successful. Overall, however, the theoretical concepts of CAT used to examine communicative approaches to ESL teaching in this study could also be used to analyze a variety of different contexts and situations which may call for specific accommodative approaches to communication.

For future areas of study, a stronger focus might be placed on the cultural aspects at work in accommodation communication. The (inter)cultural context, or communication between people of different cultures, allows us to narrow down any conflicting and/or challenging bits of communication to understand why these issues exist, while determining how we might overcome them. In this way, we may recognize and examine culture's role in affecting how we behave and communicate with each other. How might a teacher's communication abilities in and out of the classroom be affected by the cultural expectations of the country and the students? And, oppositely, how might students behave and/or communicate differently to a teacher from an outside culture?

The analysis of intercultural communication between the teacher and students would provide valuable information about language choices and behavioral motives. As the teachers are non-Thais, participating in Thai culture, the study may come to find interesting ways in

which they choose to behaviorally adapt to the cultural expectations of their students. A study might then specifically look for the ways the foreign teachers choose to adapt communicatively, providing accommodating language and behaviors that might increase the chances of understanding. The same can be said for the students in the classroom. By examining the intercultural communication between the students, as well as between the student and teacher, we may be able to consider the underlying motives of the student behavior. What cultural expectations do the students have for their teacher, and/or how might the students attempt to adapt behaviorally to the expectations of their teacher? In essence, we can search for any cultural undercurrents which may affect the communicative behavioral choices to adapt from either side—from the teacher and/or other the students—and examine how the style may be accommodating, over-accommodating, or under-accommodating. In other words, continued research in terms of intercultural contexts, classrooms, and communication accommodation has serious potential for uncovering valuable results and discoveries for the field.

SECTION 5. CONCLUSION

The results and ideas from this collection of essays bring to light many important issues in terms of communication accommodation. As we've seen, the concepts of communication convergence and divergence play a huge role in negotiating social distance between a speaker and an audience in any context. Messages can, indeed, be molded to bring people together, as well as push people apart. By further understanding the complex relationship between convergence, divergence, and social distance, communication scholars may take a step closer to recognizing the ways in which discourse and communication accommodation can be appropriately managed (and assessed) according to given social norms and/or contexts.

The results from the first essay indicate that a high-level of communication convergence is both desired and necessary when implementing new laws or policies to manage risk in a public setting. The independent, one-way communication from the New York City officials, limited opportunities for discourse interaction from the public and stakeholders, which caused divergent communication and resulted in policy implementation problems afterward. As can be seen from the case study approach, if the city officials were to have been more open to various ideas or more generous in offering opportunities for idea-sharing and public discussion, they could have ensured a higher means of message convergence, and, all around, public satisfaction and acceptance.

In Bush's speech, we find that the role of convergence and divergence is just as important. By focusing on specific word choices—such as “us,” “patriots,” and “Americans,” vivid narratives about the World Trade Center tragedy, and metaphors—like “freedom,” “justice,” and “democracy,” Bush uses discourse to identify directly with his audience and establish convergent meaning. Within these rhetorical devices, he constructs a theme encompassing the American Spirit, which helps him overcome social distance to connect and create an audience on his side. Alternatively, Bush uses similar rhetorical devices to isolate and separate the “enemies” and “them” apart from the patriot audience. By focusing on the ways in

which “they” (or the Taliban, Al Quada, and/or Terrorists) are different from “him,” “us,” and “America,” Bush uses a multitude of divergent discourse to attempt and distance the “others” from the attitudes, beliefs, and identities of himself and America. He directly uses communication convergence and divergence in his speech to dichotomize the reality of the world into good vs. evil, right vs. wrong, and us vs. them.

In the final essay and in the ESL Classroom, we, again, wrestle with the importance of convergence and divergence. In any classroom context, it is important for the teacher to recognize the ways in which he or she can efficiently and accommodatively communicate with the students. Within the context of the ESL classroom; however, this role may be even more important as teachers must take into consideration other aspects of communication other than simply speech to adapt to student needs and ensure efficient meaning making. From the proposal essay, we recognize that there is an overwhelming amount of communicative elements available in terms of accommodation, including word choices, speech rate, and non-verbal communication. Therefore, using the students’ input, it is of great importance to recognize and understand which teacher styles are the most prominent, as well as which are the most efficient in the ESL classroom. Such findings for the future would surely be beneficial for exposing successful, accommodative teaching styles, while also securing solid paths of learning for ESL students.

Each of these three essays aims to enhance our knowledge of communication accommodation used during different contexts and interactions between speakers and audiences. As we’ve seen, speakers can use either convergence, divergence, or both for specific strategic means in delivering discourse. Our knowledge of communication accommodation and social distance still remains general in the field of communication; however, by focusing in detail on how and why specific contexts call for varying forms of convergent and divergent messages, we may come to obtain a greater awareness of commonalities over this exciting and valuable topic.

Lastly, these three essays, along with the help and invaluable instruction from various

NDSU instructors, have brought forth challenging opportunities for me to recognize and understand the intricate, yet everyday communicative issues of this world, as well as practice and apply highly necessary communicative skills to successfully confront and manage these same issues. Through each of my courses and all of my essays, my knowledge of and abilities in communication have continued to grow. With the practice of critical essays such as these and with the multiple opportunities for student-to-student writing feedback, my writing style (to my delight) has improved both critically and organizationally while at NDSU, allowing me to confidently and successfully communicate vital knowledge both in and out of an academic environment.

For example, I had a handful of opportunities to more critically evaluate the work of fellow students. In both Dr. Venette's Persuasion Seminar (COMM 750) and Dr. Vevea's Risk Communication (COMM 786) course, I reviewed final manuscripts from students, assessing key points that needed further attention and revision, while clearly and constructively offering suggestive ways in which the students could do so. And most recently, I completed Dr. Platt's Communication Research Methods (COMM 700) course, where a major percentage of my final grade relied on in-depth, detailed reviews on the 15-page proposal drafts of two fellow graduate students.

Being able to offer critical feedback and support to these students on a number of topics through the various classes brought forth valuable opportunities for solving potential communicative problems and barriers (for myself and for others). I found this responsibility to be quite challenging and rewarding in the fact that other students depended on my offered suggestions and personal insights to improve their own individual work and general knowledge. To have this (earned) responsibility to help others with communicative hurdles was eye-opening and empowering; I finally came to terms with the thought that I can truly benefit others (apart from myself) with my knowledge and suggestions. My feedback skills through writing—in email, online classroom discussion boards, and various essay critiques—grew stronger and more

confident with each opportunity.

I now look back with great esteem to all of the teachers and students who have taken the time along the way to offer insights to help me improve as a student, and I fully recognize how valuable and developmental this knowledge sharing was for me (and can be for others), which continues to motivate me as both an English teacher and Graduate student. And at last, I do, indeed feel that my education, knowledge, and experiences have allowed my voice (both written and spoken) to grow and become more worthy to hold complex, critical discussions on communication topics, while also taking and giving valuable feedback along the way. This personal growth has fostered a new found confidence and enthusiasm in my abilities and awareness, which I intend to continue to apply time and again in the classroom as an English teacher and in society as a competent and capable communicator.

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