03

Patricia Díaz-Muñoz

Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence in Intergroup Encounters

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
   in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

35

PROFESSIONAL PAPER

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ
Complutense University of Madrid

Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence in Intergroup Encounters

Linguistic strategies are frequently used in fiction so as to create a sense of reality. One of the most common of such resources in many anglophone TV series is the creation of groups of friends, who develop some rituals and conventions that the viewers are able to recognise as the show goes by, and one of the most common linguistic strategies in the creation of rituals and conventions is accommodation, which is usually used to create a sense of convergence or divergence towards the interlocutor(s). Although considerable research has been devoted to the concept of accommodation, less attention has been drawn to its use in fiction and the effects it triggers. Thus, the aim of this paper is to analyse the use of convergent accommodation as a linguistic strategy used to create a sense of reality in intergroup encounters within fiction. Hence, Communication Accommodation Theory (Dragojevic et al., "Communication Accommodation Theory", "Accommodative Strategies") was chosen as the framework to develop the study because it provides a thorough analysis of accommodative moves, considering speakers' orientation, goal and subsequent evaluation. The samples were gathered from the TV series How I Met Your Mother, for the characters in the series are a group of friends consisting of two women and three men, which also allows for the study of possible gender differences as regards trends in accommodation. The samples were analysed both in a quantitative and qualitative manner, considering speakers' initial orientation and gender. The results from the analysis show that convergent accommodation has an important role in the creation of rituals and conventions to provide the show with the desired sense of reality. Besides, the results also show some interesting differences in the way women and men are depicted regarding accommodation trends.

KEYWORDS
accommodation, convergence, fiction, intergroup encounters

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
    in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

36

INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been growing interest in the concept of accommodation as a social phenomenon (Gasiorek and Giles; Dragojevic et al., "Communication Accommodation Theory"; Kádár and Marsden, among others). Accommodation is defined as a communicative adjustment produced by the participants of a conversation in order to adapt their linguistic behaviour to the context of the ongoing interaction in either verbal or non-verbal ways (Dragojevic et al., "Accommodative Strategies" 36). Consequently, it is mainly aimed at creating rapport and convergence among the participants of the conversation. However, Dragojevic et al. claim that it can also be considered as a divergent or maintenance strategy ("Accommodative Strategies" 36-37).

Since Giles proposed the Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT henceforth) in 1973, many scholars have expanded on the concept of accommodation (Coupland et al.; Ylänne; Gasiorek and Giles; Dragojevic et al., "Communication Accommodation Theory", *inter alia*). Nevertheless, little attention has been drawn to its use in fiction and the effect it produces. Hence, the aim of the present study is to analyse the use of convergent accommodation as a linguistic strategy in intergroup encounters within fiction. For that purpose, Communication Accommodation Theory (Coupland et al.; Dragojevic et al., "Communication Accommodation Theory", "Accommodative Strategies") has been chosen as the framework to design the study, as this theory provides a thorough analysis of accommodation, considering speakers' orientation, goal and subsequent evaluation. Thus, three research questions have been posed:

RQ1: What are the main functions and effects of convergent accommodation within intergroup encounters in fiction?
RQ2: Does convergent accommodation contribute to the creation of rituals and conventions to engage the viewers with the show?
RQ3: How are women and men depicted regarding accommodation trends within fiction?

The present paper is divided into five sections, with the introduction as the first one. In the second section, the theoretical background will provide the framework and define some important concepts concerning accommodation and fiction. The third section will include a brief description of the dataset gathered for the purposes of this study, as well as the participants, the tools and the procedure employed to design the study and analyse the samples. The fourth section will analyse and discuss some of the functions and effects of convergent accommodation on fiction, and possible gender differences. Finally, in section five, the

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

37

conclusion will be given, alongside possible future research directions concerning the topic.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section is divided into two subsections to introduce some theoretical notions that are necessary to develop the analysis, namely the concepts of accommodation, and rituals and conventions.

The concept of accommodation

According to Dragojevic et al., "Upon entering a communicative encounter, people immediately (and often unconsciously) begin to synchronize aspects of their verbal (e.g., accent, speech rate) and nonverbal behavior (e.g., gesture, posture)" ("Accommodative Strategies" 36). This phenomenon is termed *accommodation* and can be considered a communicative adjustment. The present study focuses on verbal accommodation occurrences in intergroup encounters in fiction. It occurs when the characters adapt their linguistic behaviour to their interlocutor(s) so as to promote mutual understanding and convergence, as in example [a][1]:

a) A: We should start a band!
   B: Of course, we **should start a band!**

Moreover, Dragojevic et al. claim that accommodation is not always aimed to create rapport and convergence among people ("Accommodative Strategies" 36-37). It might also create a sense of divergence and, therefore, be used by the speakers so as to highlight that they are different or they have different opinions:

b) A: It's freezing out there. Where's your coat?
   B: Ted, **I'm Canadian. I don't need a coat.**

Finally, it can be used to maintain the flow of the ongoing interaction as well:

c) A: So, uh… Do you want to get a taco?
   B: **A taco?**

In 1973, Giles proposed the SAT, suggesting that speech variability might stem from the interpersonal accommodation processes (Dragojevic et al., "Communication Accommodation Theory" 2). Since then, many scholars

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
    in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

38

(Coupland et al.; Ylänne; Gasiorek and Giles; Dragojevic et al., "Communication Accommodation Theory", among others) have been adding new concepts to this framework for the analysis of communicative adjustments. The framework is currently termed *Communication Accommodation Theory* (CAT henceforth) and "seeks to explain and predict such communicative adjustments, and model how others in an interaction perceive, evaluate, and respond to them" (Dragojevic et al., "Communication Accommodation Theory" 1). Therefore, they suggest that accommodation can be analysed in terms of a set of principles that are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. The main principles of CAT (based on Dragojevic et al., "Accommodative Strategies" 37-39) (cf. Dragojevic et al., "Accommodative Strategies")

Social value	Upward: use of more refined speech patterns.
	Downward: use of less refined speech patterns.
Degree	Full: fully accommodative behaviour.
	Partial: partially accommodative behaviour.
Symmetry	Symmetrical: mutual accommodation among the speakers.
	Asymmetrical: lack of mutual accommodation among the speakers.
Modality	Unimodal: accommodation affecting a single dimension.
	Multimodal: accommodation affecting more than one dimension.
Duration	Short-term: accommodation occurring in some turns.
	Long-term: accommodation occurring in many interactions.

Dragojevic et al.'s CAT framework is one of the most recent frameworks for accommodation and it provides a thorough approach to communicative adjustments, as can be seen in Table 1 above. However, the framework of CAT should not be understood as a set of rules and regulations that speakers follow or reject consciously. It is important to mention that speakers use accommodation in an idiosyncratic and unconscious manner and, hence, their reaction towards accommodation is also different.

Ritual and convention

As regards rituals and conventions, Goffman was one of the first scholars who worked on rituals in interactions. Since then, many researchers have studied rituals and conventions as social phenomena (Gilbert; Bax and Kádár; Kádár and Marsden; Kádár and Terkourafi). Kádár and Terkourafi highlight the differences between rituals (see examples [1],

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
   in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

39

[2] and [3] in the *qualitative results* section) and conventions (see examples [4], [5] and [6] in the *qualitative results* section) and they claim that these two concepts do not have to be used interchangeably. According to them:

> "We take convention to be a recurrent and schematic practice, which provides a readymade solution to a frequently encountered problem; conventions are normative, in that by acting in conventional ways interactants meet contextual expectations and their behaviour is positively evaluated as a result. We take ritual, on the other hand, to be a recurrent action, which re-enacts the ideologies or ethos of a relational network or broader social group as a 'performance', and generates intense emotions and affect (relational emotions)." (Kádár and Terkourafi 171)

Nevertheless, applying these distinctions to discursive examples remains challenging because the boundaries between ritual and convention are still blurred. Hence, empirical examples need to be analysed in order to clarify these differences and to apply them in the study of accommodation.

In this vein, many scholars (Bax and Kádár; Kádár; Kádár and Marsden) have studied the effects of accommodation in rituals and conventions from the perspective of (im)politeness; however, they have not considered CAT principles to analyse the main traits of the samples and classify them. In addition to that, the effects of accommodation on fiction have been largely neglected in the research on accommodation. Thus, this paper is aimed at analysing some discursive examples of convergent accommodation within the framework of CAT and the effects they have on fiction. The findings might contribute to the recently growing scholarship on the effects of different linguistic strategies on fiction (see Juez; Fernández Fontecha and Martínez Fernández) and the role of pragmatics in fiction (see Jucker and Locher, ed.).

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this section is to describe the tools and the procedure employed in the present study. Furthermore, a brief description of the dataset and the participants will be provided. Hence, this section is divided into two subsections: dataset and participants description, and tools and procedure.

Dataset and participants description

In order to analyse accommodation in fiction, a dataset was gathered. The dataset is composed of the script of three episodes from

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
    in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

40

the TV show *How I Met Your Mother*. This TV show was selected because all its scripts are easily available online[2] and therefore they offer a rich quantity of data to analyse intergroup encounters. Given that the show has nine seasons, the three episodes were randomly selected from the middle of the fourth season so that the examples reflect a well-established community of practice, which is necessary to conduct the analysis. Once all the scripts were collected, each one was given a code to prevent potential problems and confusions.

The show starts in 2030, when a father, Ted, is telling his children how he met their mother. Ted's story begins in 2006 and recounts the adventures Ted and his friends had until he married his wife (the children's mother). Thus, the participants of the study (actually, the fictional characters) are five friends, two women and three men[3] in their thirties, which facilitates the analysis of the gender variable. At this point, it is important to mention that Lily and Marshall are a couple instead of friends.

Tools and procedure

Given that accommodation lies in participants' own evaluations within a conversation, verbal metalinguistic comments[4] were found by means of Wordsmith Tools[5] so as to gather convergent accommodation instances and start the analysis. Afterwards, every interaction among the participants was manually examined in order to check if those verbal evaluations were related to accommodation occurrences, and to find non-verbal evaluations and other verbal evaluations with a different linguistic realisation than the ones found through Wordsmith Tools. This thorough search was conducted so that no samples were left out. Finally, the total of samples collected was 74.

After analysing all the accommodation occurrences in the dataset within the CAT framework, they were classified into three groups considering their orientation (namely convergent, divergent and maintenance). Then, gender aspects regarding the aforementioned classification were also addressed. Finally, the results from the analyses, quantitative and qualitative, were compared and discussed, focussing on convergent orientation to reach some final findings and conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into two subsections. Firstly, the results of the quantitative analysis will be shown. Afterwards, taking the results from the quantitative analysis as a starting point, some representative

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
  in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

41

examples of convergent accommodation occurrences will be discussed in a qualitative manner.

Quantitative results

Accommodation occurrences have been classified into three groups considering their orientation, namely maintenance, divergence and convergence. Special attention has been given to convergent orientation. Furthermore, two tables have been created so as to show the frequency of accommodation occurrences in rituals and conventions.

Table 2 illustrates the comparative analysis of maintenance, divergent, and convergent orientations in accommodation occurrences acting as rituals, with gender as a variable. The number of instances in which these orientations appear can be seen on the left side. Convergent accommodation is the only type employed as a ritual, with 16 instances, 7 of which are performed by women, while the other 9 were performed by men. The percentages representing the number of instances appear on the right side of the table.

Table 2. Accommodation occurrences as rituals

	Maintenance		Divergence		Convergence	
	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%
Female	-	-	-	-	7	43.75
Male	-	-	-	-	9	56.25
Total	-	-	-	-	16	100

Table 3 shows the same comparative analysis for the three orientations but considering accommodation occurrences as conventions. The same gender variable and distribution are included. In this case, the number of instances is balanced. The most repeated orientation is convergence, with 20 instances, followed by maintenance orientation with 19 instances. Lastly, divergent orientation has 9 instances, making a total of 48 instances concerning accommodation acting as a convention. Regarding the gender variable, the number of accommodative moves performed by men is slightly higher than the number of accommodative moves performed by women (27 instances and 21 instances, respectively).

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
    in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

42

Table 3. Accommodation occurrences as conventions

	Maintenance		Divergence		Convergence	
	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%
Female	9	18.75	6	12.5	6	12.5
Male	10	20.83	3	6.25	14	29.17
Total	19	39.58	9	18.75	20	41.67

In addition to the above presented results, it is also important to consider deviant cases, which is the case for 10 of the accommodation occurrences found within the dataset (see *deviant cases* section).

Qualitative results

This section will discuss the different roles of convergent accommodation in rituals and conventions within this dataset. Moreover, some deviant cases will be also addressed.

Convergent accommodation in rituals

According to Bax and Kádár:

> In-group ritual refers to the ritual practices formed by smaller social units (relational networks). In terms of typology, in-group ritual represents a different type of ritual practice than 'social ritual', i.e. ritual practice which counts as 'normative' on a wider, 'social' level. (23)

Given that the present study is based on five friends' interactions, some of the examples to follow would belong to verbal intergroup rituals, according to Bax and Kádár's definition.

Considering the results from the quantitative analysis, all the accommodation occurrences taking place in rituals within the dataset are performed in order to converge towards the interlocutor(s) (16 instances) and, hence, to create rapport among the participants. It would mean that no accommodation strategy is aimed at diverging from the interlocutor(s) in intergroup encounters regarding rituals. This may be due to the fact that rituals entail emotions and affection, as Kádár and Terkourafi claim, and they are better conveyed through convergent orientation (171). In the

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
  in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

43

same way, accommodation is not simply aimed at maintaining the flow of the ongoing interaction either. It may be due to the fact that maintenance accommodation goes unnoticed in most cases and it might prevent the participants of an interaction from recognising it as an intergroup practice, which is one of the main features of rituals, according to Kádár and Terkourafi (ibid.). Regarding the gender variable, the number of convergent strategies used by women and men is quite similar (7 instances and 9 instances, respectively), considering that the participants are two women and three men.

That said, the two main macro-functions of convergent accommodation cited by Dragojevic et al. have been found within the dataset: as a strategy to affiliate and agree, and as well as to show fear of the consequences of disaffiliation ("Communication Accommodation Theory" 10) . Consider the following examples:

In the first example, Ted and Barney come up with the idea of buying a bar and that is how both agree to do so:

> [1] T: We should buy a bar.
> B: **Of course, we should buy a bar!**
> T: We should totally buy a bar!
> B: **We should totally buy a bar!**
> T: Our bar would be awesome.
> B: (speaking loudly) And **dude! Dude! Dude! Dude!** The name of our bar:
>   Puzzles. People will be like "Why is it called 'Puzzles'?" That's the puzzle.
> T: That is… a great name for a bar! And also, at Puzzles, no last call!
> B: **No last call!**
> […]

As can be seen in the first example, Barney agrees with Ted by imitating his speech patterns and tone of voice during the interaction. In addition to that, Barney addresses Ted as 'dude', which is a vocative that male characters use to address other male characters throughout the show. Hence, this vocative can be employed as an upgrader to strengthen the convergent attitude towards each other. However, the use of nicknames, mainly this kind of nicknames, usually goes unnoticed in interaction and they are therefore considered conventions rather than rituals. On the other hand, agreeing by repeating each other's speech patterns is a practice that characters keep employing throughout the show, making it a ritual with a humorous effect. As a ritual practice with a pinch of humour, the viewers are able to recognise it and to get involved in the show. Consequently, it is an example of long-term accommodation to converge not only towards the characters, but also towards the viewers. It is also worth mentioning that

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
    in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

44

this excerpt also exemplifies multimodal and symmetric accommodation since both characters agree and imitate each other's speech patterns and tone of voice in the conversation.

In the second example, Robin realises people in a club dislike Canadians and tell jokes about them. She is trying to converge towards them because she fears their reaction when they realise she is Canadian.

> [2] R: That is insane. Why do you think that Canadians are afraid of the dark?
> M: Well, where does any prejudice come from, Robin? A stereotype starts, then all of a sudden it spreads like wildfire. Like Asians can't drive, Scotsmen are cheap, Brazilians always put on way too much postage. I just don't think this is gonna work out, Robin. You can't be hanging out with people who belittle your beloved homeland, so I'll walk you out.
> R: No, wait. I have something to say.
> R: Hey, everybody! Let me tell you something about people from Canada.
> M: Hey, Robin, please don't make a scene.
> R: Shh! **Do you know why Canadians never get a birthday wish? Because they are too afraid to blow out the candles!**
> X: (laugh)
> R: Oh, God! I love it here. God!

In this sample, Robin is using convergent accommodation so that her interlocutors cannot realise that she is Canadian. Hence, she converges towards them because she fears the consequences of being different and losing the respect she has gained from them. Although she is trying to be accommodative with them, they are not being accommodative with her. Even though they do not know she is Canadian, they are making fun of Canadian people. Thus, accommodation in this example is very asymmetrical. It is also worth mentioning that Robin thinks she is being accommodative, whereas Marshall perceives her intervention as overaccommodative (Dragojevic et al., "Communication Accommodation Theory" 15). In other words, Marshall thinks she is accommodating more than needed. As a result, Robin is very proud because people in the club evaluate her in a positive way. On the contrary, Marshall is getting angrier since he thinks that Robin is going too far. He shows his disapproval with his gestures and his facial expression. Hence, accommodation is a matter of perception, as they evaluate the situation in a different way. Finally, it has been categorised as a ritual since telling jokes about Canadian people is a common practice among this group of friends from Minnesota.

Nevertheless, there are other functions of convergent accommodation in rituals that should be addressed, even if they are not

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

45

as common as the ones mentioned by Dragojevic et al. ("Communication Accommodation Theory"). Take the following example:

> [3] R: Look, guys. This is a private thing between me and Ted.
> R and T: (at the same time) **Private thing!**
> L, M and B: (groan).

Example [3] is similar to example [1] in that it also exemplifies a long-term ritual for agreements that both characters keep doing throughout the show. In the same way, viewers are familiar with it, so it can be considered as a tool for creating rapport and convergence among characters and viewers. However, there is a difference between this example and example [1]; convergent accommodation here is not only aimed at creating rapport and agreement, but also at excluding the other members of the group, for it is a ritual performed only by Robin and Ted. As a consequence, the other participants evaluate it in a negative way by groaning, whereas Ted and Robin use it in order to show the other participants that they are close friends. Thus, this example proves again that accommodation is a matter of perception and, therefore it can have two or more functions at the same time.

Convergent accommodation in conventions

As claimed by Kádár and Terkourafi, conventions are schematic and conventionalised practices, while rituals are recurrent actions that only take place in intergroup situations (171). As regards conventions within the dataset, convergent accommodation is the most employed strategy by the participants, with 20 instances. Nevertheless, there are many cases in which accommodation is used so as to maintain the flow of the ongoing interaction, hence going unnoticed (19 instances). Therefore, it can be considered as a schematic and conventionalised way of accommodation, which are two of the main features of conventions, according to Kádár and Terkourafi (ibid.). Finally, divergent orientation is the least employed strategy within the dataset (9 instances) probably because it analyses intergroup encounters, where the participants are a group of friends. Concerning the gender variable, men tend to use more convergent strategies than women (14 instances and 6 instances, respectively), while women tend to use more divergent strategies than men (6 instances and 3 instances, respectively). On the other hand, the number of maintenance strategies performed by men and women is quite similar (10 instances and 9 instances, respectively).

That said, the same two main macro-functions of convergent accommodation found in rituals have been found in conventions: as a

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
    in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

46

strategy to affiliate and show agreement, and as well as to show fear of the consequences of disaffiliation. Consider the following examples:

In example [4], Robin is apologising for pretending to be from Minnesota and trying to steal Marshall's friends. Marshall is apologising as well for telling the others that Robin is Canadian. Marshall ends up comforting Robin.

[4] M: **I'm so sorry for what happened back there. I acted like a total jerk. I... I shouldn't have said anything.**

R: **No, look, I'm sorry. That was your place. I shouldn't have tried to make it mine.** It's just every year at the holidays, I get homesick. And so far, every year I've had a reason to stay: a boyfriend, a job, or something. But... This year for the first time, I don't.

M: Yes, you do.

R: What?

M: **We all love you, okay? If you ever moved back to Canada, we would hope on a plane and we would track you down, and after Barney dragged us to a few of those strip clubs you talked about...**

R: (laughs)

M: ... **we would bring you back right here where you're supposed to be. It's... It's not New York without Robin Scherbatsky.**

R: (smiles) Thanks.

M: Yeah.

In this example, the participants accommodate towards each other's emotional needs. Although emotion and affection are properties mainly associated with rituals, it does not mean that conventions cannot entail them in some cases. In this situation, both characters are apologising to each other, and Marshall even tries to comfort Robin since she feels homesick. Concerning the orientation of this set of accommodative moves, it creates rapport and convergence between the characters, for they are being apologetic to each other after having an argument. In addition to that, it can be considered an example of symmetrical accommodation because both participants know they did wrong and they want to solve the problem. It is Marshall who apologises first, but Robin answers back with an apology as well. In the end, Robin thanks Marshall for his support, showing her approval and a positive evaluation of Marshall's convergent attitude. It is also important to mention that apologising and comforting are conventional ways of accommodation since they can be recognised by everyone and not only by smaller social units. The same occurs with other cases of emotional accommodation such as thanking or cheering. Finally, although there are only two participants, who are not involved in any kind of intergroup ritual, this sample is labelled as an intergroup encounter, for

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
    in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

47

Marshall is speaking on behalf of the group when comforting Robin ('We all love you', 'we would bring you back'…).

In example [5], Ted and Barney are drinking in a bar. They are waiting for two girls to come and Barney wants Ted to ask him about a 'game' he has made up.

> [5] T: It's pretty nasty out there. I don't think they're coming.
> B: Of course they are coming. They have to. If I can land just one of these girls, I'll have party school bingo.
> B: Come on, Ted. You're the only one here.
> T: Oh, sorry. **What's party school bingo?**
> B: Every year, Playboy releases a list of the top party schools in the country. I take the top 25, and I make up a bingo card. All I need is Arizona Tech, which is crazy. In league play, that would normally be designated a free space.
> […]

As can be seen in example [5], Ted does not want to be accommodative with Barney, but he urges him to be. Finally, Ted gives up and asks Barney for further details. In this situation, Ted is kind of obligated to be accommodative since he does not want to disrupt the flow of the conversation and to damage his relationship with his interlocutor. Finally, Ted might think that he is not being accommodative, however, as can be seen, he acknowledges Barney's request and accommodates towards him. On the other hand, Barney perceives Ted's behaviour as underaccommodative[6] at the beginning and urges him to be accommodative. In the end, Barney obtains what he wants. Nevertheless, it can be considered as an example of short-term accommodation, for Ted is not showing interest in Barney's explanation after the question. Finally, it has been classified as a convention since asking for development is a schematic and conventionalised way of accommodation that is socially recognised.

In the case of conventions within the dataset, some other functions for convergent orientation can be also found. Take the following example: In example [6], Robin and Ted just had sex and they do not want their friends to know. That is why Ted is suggesting to Robin to keep it as a secret. Nevertheless, Marshall appears in an unexpected way.

> [6] T: Okay, listen. If this is gonna happen on occasion, we can't tell anyone about this. Deal?
> R: **Deal**.
> M: (suddenly appears) **Deal**.
> R and T: (surprised).

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
    in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

48

Example [6] would be labelled as a common example in the category of accommodation as a strategy to agree; however, it has an extra nuance. The actual aim of this excerpt is to create a sense of humour more than a sense of convergence between Ted and Robin. According to McGhee and Pistolesi, "Something unexpected, out of context, inappropriate, unreasonable, illogical, exaggerated, and so forth, must serve as a basic vehicle for the humor of an event" (10). When two people are making an agreement after having sex, we do not expect a third participant getting involved in it, which produces the humorous effect in this scene. Although Robin is imitating Ted's speech patterns so as to agree with him, Marshall's intervention doing the same is the core part here, humour comes before convergence. While Marshall's reaction in this situation might be unlikely in real-life encounters, similar and equally incongruent events can occur in everyday life. The main aim in both cases would be the accomplishment of a humorous effect.

Deviant cases

Although some examples regarding both rituals and conventions have been discussed, the boundaries between them remain blurred. That is why some deviant cases can be also found within the dataset. Two representative examples will be addressed in this subsection.

In example [7], Marshall is in a meeting at work, however it is time to phone Lily and this is how he manages to deal with this situation:

> [7]L: Hey, baby, it's lunch time, and I love you.
> M: **I reciprocate in principle, although with the caveat that there seems to be a bit of a surplus here on my end.**
> L: No, I love you more.
> M: **Do we need to get in a room together and bang this thing out?**
> M: **Those sound like agreeable terms, although I may need to adjust my briefs.**
> M: (lower) Love you too.

Marshall is talking to Lily on the phone by using business vocabulary so that his colleagues cannot understand the conversation. On the one hand, Marshall appears to be underaccommodative with Lily in order to be, actually, accommodative. Consequently, it can be considered as an example of partial accommodation. On the other hand, his colleagues think that he is maintaining his default way of communication at work, while he is diverging from them so as to exclude them from the conversation. As a result, Marshall's move is underaccommodative and divergent for his colleagues, but accommodative and convergent for Lily. Furthermore,

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

49

Lily perceives it as accommodative since she answers back to him in a sweet way: 'I love you more.' The opposite case is presented in example [8], where Robin addresses Ted as 'buddy' in a sarcastic way in order to disagree with him. She seems to have a convergent orientation by using a positive vocative, however, she is diverging from him:

> [8] T: Oh, I get it. No problem, buddy.
> R: Yes, a problem, **buddy**.

The two examples above not only confirm that accommodation is a matter of perspective, but also highlight the importance of context when analysing accommodation. It means that accommodative moves are not convergent or divergent *per se*, but it is context that determines their final orientation.

Now, let us consider the second example in this category. After Marshall's previous talk about 'reading a magazine' at work, they keep on using this euphemism, as can be seen in example [9]:

> [9] R: So, you checked into a hotel room just so you could **read a magazine** there?
> M: Hey, Robin, do you want me to see if the waitress has any giant sugar cubes for that high horse of yours? Nobody likes to **read a magazine** at work, and if they say that they do, then they're not human.
> B: Dude, I **read a magazine** at work every day. I can't tell you how many meetings I've been late to because I was busy reading a magazine.
> [...]

At the beginning of the episode, Marshall uses a euphemism to say that he needs to go to the bathroom: 'to read a magazine'. In following conversations, they keep on using the same euphemism, as shown in example [9], where Robin and Barney accommodate towards him by using it. Thus, it can be considered as an accommodative move because of cognitive motives (cf. Dragojevic et al., "Communication Accommodation Theory" 10, 11), if we consider that they are employing the same euphemism so as to increase the communication efficiency. Nevertheless, the problem arises when labelling this example as convention or as a ritual. On the one hand, euphemisms are conventionalised expressions performed to avoid impolite or coarse language and, hence are easily recognised by the speakers of a language. On the other hand, 'to read a magazine' is not a conventionalised euphemism in the English language and it starts being used by this group of friends as a long-term expression in several conversations, even if its meaning can be easily decoded with an appropriate context. It can therefore be concluded that conventions

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
   in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

50

and rituals are not based on clear-cut categories containing clear-defined instances. They are rather defined as a continuum, whose extremes contain prototypical examples with fuzzy cases in-between. Thus, conventions and rituals are a matter of degree much more than a matter of categories and features.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined the role of convergent accommodation in intergroup encounters through three episodes of the TV show *How I Met your Mother*. The analysis has been developed following the framework for accommodation occurrences proposed by Dragojevic et al. , which is a framework developed for real-life encounters. The first and the second research questions addressed the functions and effects of convergent accommodation, and its role in the creation of rituals and conventions. First of all, it is worth mentioning that convergence has an important influence in both cases: while in rituals it is the only orientation employed by the speakers due to the emotional effect it provides, in conventions it is the most used one, although maintenance and divergence are also performed by the participants. Moreover, as claimed by Dragojevic et al. ("Communication Accommodation Theory" 10), the two macro-functions of convergent accommodation (in both rituals and conventions) are: to affiliate and agree with other people so as to create rapport, and to generate a false sense of affiliation for fear of being different. In addition to that, other functions are found: convergence in order to exclude other people or outsiders and convergence as a tool to create a humorous effect. These functions of accommodation within fiction coincide with the functions proposed by Dragojevic et al. for real life encounters, which suggest that accommodation is frequently used in fiction in the same manner as in real life (both in rituals and in conventions). This argument is supported by the fact that, in both cases, accommodation strategies have a concrete aim and are addressed to an intended audience, viewers or conversational partners depending on the case. Humorous situations are examples proving this idea, for accommodation instances have a specific goal i.e., the creation of humour, and are intended to a specific audience i.e., the viewers, even if the premises are different in each case. On account of these common elements between fiction and real life in terms of accommodation, the viewers are able to recognise what is going on in each situation. Thus, the viewers are engaged in the show and, at the same time, that desired sense of reality is achieved.

Furthermore, the results from the analyses suggest that there are no specific patterns or features associated to each function of convergent

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
   in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

51

accommodation. It is the context that determines the final orientation and function of accommodation instances instead. It can therefore be said that accommodation is better considered as a matter of degree and self-perception rather than clear-cut categories based on theoretical studies. The same happens when trying to establish a clear-cut distinction between rituals and conventions in terms of accommodation features. Hence, it can be concluded that rituals and conventions are better understood as a continuum than as a clear-cut dichotomy.

The third research question of the paper was intended to check possible gender differences regarding the use of accommodation in intergroup encounters within fiction. Within the dataset, men are depicted as more accommodative than women, in general terms, since they tend to maintain the patterns developed in intergroup encounters more than women. Men addressing their male friends with vocatives such as 'bro' or 'buddy' are examples of that, whereas women do not tend to use this kind of vocatives among themselves. Consequently, men use more convergent strategies, while women use more divergent strategies regarding conventions. Concerning rituals, both use a similar number of convergent strategies.

Finally, it is important to highlight that there is much to do in the field of accommodation. This paper only examines the macro-functions and main features of convergent accommodation in rituals and conventions within fiction. However, it would be interesting to analyse in depth the micro-functions of convergence (such as asking for development, excluding outsiders or creating humour), and the functions and features of the two other orientations concerning accommodation (namely, maintenance and divergence) in both fiction and real-life encounters.

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
    in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

52

END NOTES

1 All the examples have been taken from the dataset gathered for the present study (see methodology section).

2 https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/episode_scripts.php?tv-show= how-i-met-your-mother. Last access: 27/09/2019.

3 Transcription conventions: R stands for Robin, L stands for Lily, M stands for Marshall, B stands for Barney, T stands for Ted and X stands for unknown characters.

4 Metalinguistic comments are participants' verbal and non-verbal evaluations of other people's use of language and can be implicitly (e.g. thanking) or explicitly (e.g. 'That was mean' as a response to what someone has said) given (see Haugh on metapragmatic comments).

5 https://lexically.net/wordsmith/version6/index.html. Last access: 27/09/2019.

6 Insufficient accommodative attitude (cf. Dragojevic et al., "Communication Accommodation Theory" 4).

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

53

WORKS CITED

Bax, Marcel M., and Daniel Z. Kádár. "In-Group Ritual and Relational Work." *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 58, 2013, pp. 73-86. PDF.

Coupland, Justine, Nikolas Coupland, and Howard Giles. "Accommodation Theory: Communication, Context, and Consequence." *Contexts of Accommodation*, 1991, pp. 1-68. PDF.

Dragojevic, Marko, Jessica Gasiorek, and Howard Giles. "Communication Accommodation Theory." *The International Encyclopedia of Interpersonal Communication*, 2015, pp. 1-21. PDF.

Dragojevic, Marko, Jessica Gasiorek, and Howard Giles. "Accommodation Strategies as Core of the Theory." *Communication Accommodation Theory*, 2016, pp. 36-59. Print.

Fernández Fontecha, Almudena, and Beatriz Martínez Fernández. "The Teachability of Pragmatics in SLA: Friends' Humour Through Grice." *Porta Linguarum*, vol. 10, 2008, pp. 31-43. PDF.

Gasiorek, Jessica, and Howard Giles. "Effects of Inferred Motive on Evaluations of Nonaccommodative Communication." *Human Communication Research,* vol. 28, no. 3, 2012, pp. 309-331. PDF.

Gilbert, Margaret. "Social Convention Revisited." *Topoi*, vol. 27, no. 1-2, 2008, pp. 5-16. PDF.

Giles, Howard. "Accent Mobility: A Model and Some Data." *Anthropological Linguistics,* 1973, pp. 87-105. PDF.

Goffman, Erving. "On Face-Work." *Psychiatry*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1955, pp. 213-231. PDF.

Haugh, Michael. "The Discursive Challenge to Politeness Research: An Interactional Alternative." *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 3, 2007, pp.295-317. PDF.

Jucker, Andreas H., and Miriam A. Locher. *Pragmatics of Fiction*. De Gruyter Mouton, 2017. Print.

Juez, Laura A. "Verbal Irony and the Maxims of Grice's Cooperative Principle." *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, no. 8, 1995, pp. 25-30. PDF.

PATRICIA DÍAZ-MUÑOZ , Accommodation in Fiction: The Role of Convergence
     in Intergroup Encounters (34-54)
Patchwork: New Frontiers (2020), Topical Issue, Zagreb

54

Kádár, Daniel Z. "Heckling – A Mimetic-Interpersonal Perspective." *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1-35. PDF.

Kádár, Daniel Z., and Liz Marsden. "The Pragmatics of Mimesis: A Case Study of Intercultural Email Communication." *Scandinavian Journal of Intercultural Theory and Practice*, vol. 4., no. 1, 2017, pp. 1-29. PDF.

Kádár, Daniel Z., and Marina Terkourafi. "Convention and Ritual (Im) Politeness." *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im)Politeness,* 2017, pp. 171-195. PDF.

McGhee, Paul E., and Edie Pistolesi. *Humor: Its Origin and Development.* WH Freeman, 1979. PDF.

Ylänne, Virpi. "Communication Accommodation Theory." *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*, 2008, pp. 164-186. Print.