



EXPLORING CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE IN TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BY ADOPTING JOOS'S MODEL OF FORMALITY: A CASE FROM A JORDANIAN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract:

This paper aims to investigate the use of convergence to or divergence on from the addressee by using Joos's model of formality. For this purpose, three Jordanian secretaries have been asked to provide the researcher with their telephone conversations during two weeks using an application called "automatic call recorder". This application is used at universities with both with the academic staff and the administrative staff. The data were qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. The results revealed that the instructors use the formal style more, the secretaries use the intimate style is used more, and the administrators use the causal style more. None of the participants have used the frozen style.

ملخص: تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى دراسة استخدام أسلوب التقارب أو التباعد عن المرسل إليه باستخدام نموذج جوس للشكليات. لهذا الغرض، طُلب من ثلاث سكرتيرات أردنيات تزويد الباحثة بمحادثاتهن الهاتفية خلال أسبوعين باستخدام تطبيق يُسمى "مسجل المكالمات الآلي". يُستخدم هذا التطبيق في الجامعات مع كل من أعضاء هيئة التدريس والهيئة الإدارية. حُللت البيانات نوعيًا وكميًا. أظهرت النتائج أن الأساتذة يستخدمون الأسلوب الرسمي أكثر، والسكرتيرات يستخدمن الأسلوب الودي أكثر، والإداريون يستخدمون الأسلوب السببي أكثر. لم يستخدم أي من المشاركين الأسلوب المُجمّد.

Keywords: communication accommodation theory, convergence, cross-cultural communication, divergence, level of formality, social context

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية التكيف في التواصل، التقارب، التواصل عبر الثقافات، التباعد، مستوى الرسمية، السياق الاجتماعي

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1. Introduction

Social situations play a vital role in determining the way of speaking. Deciding when and how to use one strategy over another is affected by many factors. These factors can be summarized in the following way: social distance, social context, topic, and participants.

Holmes (2013) clarified that there are four essential factors that have a great role in choosing the speech style. These factors are the participants, settings, topic and functions. The factor of the participants covers more than one side, such as to whom the speaker is talking and who the speaker is. Mirzaiyan, Parvaresh, Hashemian and Saeedi (2010, p. 5) stated that *"The speakers should adjust their way of talking in order to fit particular situations."* Settings refer to the social context in which the situation takes place, such as a wedding or an academic lecture. Topic refers to the what the speaker and the hearer are talking about and finally, the functions which refer to the motivations of the talk, the aim of the talk. It can be noticed that all these factors form together one unit that plays a vital role in delivering the intended meaning and message. The concept of moving from one style to another is defined as *"style shift"*.

Mayerhoff (2006) claims that the concept of style-shifting refers to the *"variation in an individual's speech correlating with differences in addressee, social context, personal goals or externally imposed tasks"* (p. 28). This definition reveals that the process of style-shifting depends on the context, the intention of the speaker, the social distance among the speakers and the hearers.

According to the Communication Accommodation Theory, there are many reasons for moving from one style in conversation to another. Giles and Qgay (2007, p. 293) stated that:

"Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) provides a wide-ranging framework aimed at predicting and explaining many of the adjustments individuals make to create, maintain, or decrease social distance in interaction. It explores the different ways in which we accommodate our communication, our motivations for doing so, and the consequences."

It can be noticed that there is a strong tie between CAT and Speech style, which is defined by Joos (1967, p. 156) as *"the form of language that a speaker uses and it is characterized by the degree of formality"*. CAT tries to expect the way and the reasons for choosing one strategy over another in social interaction and speech style focused on the used styles by the readers in social interactions.

Giles (2016, p. 36) stated that *"Convergence refers to adjusting one's communicative behaviors to be more similar to another's"*. According to Soliz (2016, p. 33), *"Convergence refers to the process where a speaker adjusts their communication style to become more similar to others"*; however, *"Divergence refers to adjusting one's communicative behaviors to be more dissimilar to another's."* (p. 37).

In other words, convergence occurs when the speaker tries to minimize the social relation with the interlocutors, and divergence occurs when the speaker tries to maximize the social relation with the interlocutors. In fact, the concept of convergence and divergence are inconsistent with audience theory by Bell (1984), which stated that the response to a speaker's audience is the main factor for linguistic style shifting. Bell (1984, p. 145) stated that *"In*

audience design, speakers accommodate primarily to their addressee." Bell (1984) stated that there is a strong tie among the concepts of audience design and style shifting; however, "*Audience design is wider than style shift*" (Bell 1984, p. 161).

2. Types of Speech

There are many styles or modes for speech however, there is no clear-cut classification for the styles or modes of speech. For example, Quirk *et al.* (1973) classified language into four styles ranging from formal to very informal, casual and familiar over a spectrum. In this study, Joos's model of formality is adopted.

Joos (1967), stated that there are five styles in spoken language. The styles have been classified according to the degree of formality: frozen, formal, consultative, casual and frozen.

According to Simamora and Sherinab (2022, p. 81) "*Frozen style is utilized in public speaking in front of a big audience; text is carefully arranged in advance, tone is somewhat overdone, and several rhetorical techniques are acceptable.*" It can be noticed that the frozen style is used in very respectful social contexts such as weddings.

The formal style occurs in the context of speaking or narrating in front of a large audience, such as a graduation audience or political speeches. Joos (1967) described this style as "*one-way communication*".

The third style is the consultative style. This style occurs when there is a parallel background between the speaker and the interlocutors, such as an instructor and student. According to Mirzaiyan, Parvaresh, Hashemian and Saeedi (2010, p. 5), the consultative style is a "*Two-way participation with a shared background*".

The causal style can be described as the friendly style. It occurs among friends and co-workers. Such as two workers in the same office. The last style is the intimate style, which occurs when "*Talking with relatives, loved ones, siblings, and really close friends is typically where you tend to express your true self in a personal manner.*" (Simamora, Sherina 2022, p. 81)

There are two types of accommodation: convergent and divergent. Fitzpatrick, Mulac, & Dindia, (1995, p. 44) stated that "*the convergent accommodation refers to how one attempts to adapt one's communicative behavior to the other speaker in other words it is a strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviors in terms of a wide range of linguistic-prosodic nonverbal features including speech rate, pausal phenomena and utterance length. The divergence accommodation strategy used to accentuate the verbal and nonverbal differences between the communicators.*"

According to Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021), language can be defined as "*a system of linguistic communication particular to a group; this includes spoken, written, and signed modes of communication*" (p. 2). Convergence and divergence are used to determine the social distance between the speakers and the hearers.

This paper aims to explore convergence to or divergence from the addressee by using Joos's model of formality. There is a significant research gap when it comes to exploring these strategies within the Arab world (Jordan), especially in an academic institution such as a university.

3. Research Questions

- 1) To what extent can talking with different people affect the level of formality?
- 2) What are the underlying motivations for using certain patterns of accommodation within authentic conversations?

4. Literature Review

Different studies have been conducted on convergence and divergence. Coupland (1980) shed light on the way of speaking. He examined if the speakers use different ways to speak to different people. In this study, an assistant in a travel agency in the middle of Cardiff was asked to speak to different persons in order to investigate the different ways of speaking. The revealed that the situation is an essential aspect in dealing with other people, it showed that *accommodation* is crucial in communication.

Anna Mirzaiyan, Vahid Parvareh, Mahmoud Hashemian, and Masoud Saeedi (2010) investigated the processes of speaking to different people in the course of everyday telephone conversations. Using Joos's (1961) model of formality in spoken English, the researchers try to explore *convergence to* or *divergence from* the addressee. The results showed that the style differs according to the person being addressed.

Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) examined the linguistic concept of formality by proposing an empirical measure for formality (F-score). The classified formality into two parts: surface formality and deep formality. Surface formality focuses on the convention. However, the deep formality focuses on understanding the conversation.

The study revealed that nouns, adjectives, articles and prepositions are more frequent in formal styles while pronouns, adverbs, verbs and interjections are more frequent in informal style.

Kurt Braunmüller and House (2009) investigated how the converging and diverging processes can affect the language contact situations. It provides perceptions into the several forms of language contact and the conditions under which bilingual speakers master their every-day life in bilingual communities. They focused on the classification of languages, the role of language contact, linguistic complexity and spontaneous speech innovations, and convergence and divergence processes in translation, (morpho)syntax and phonology/phonetics. Taken together, these studies provide challenges for linguistic theories that generalize from situations of monolingualism, suggesting instead that a sound linguistic theory cannot be a theory for just one single, isolated language but must be a theory for at least two languages. It must also account for the fact that some structures involved in contact situations are not kept apart but develop in such a way that the distance decreases between the languages involved.

What makes this study different from other studies is the focus on the use of Joos's model of formality in Arabic context especially Jordanian context. What makes this study different from previous studies is the focus on the Arab culture, especially the Jordanian context and dealing with the Arabic language.

5. Methodology

The study has been conducted with three Jordanian secretaries as the main subjects of the study and some other addressees who trigger variations in the subject's speech. Some examples from the recorded data have been selected and analyzed in relation to the concept of speech accommodation. The three female secretaries who work at a public Jordanian university have been asked to provide the researcher with their telephone conversations during two weeks using an application called "automatic call recorder". This application is used at the university with both the academic staff and the administrative staff. The academic staff consists of the students and the instructors. The administrative staff consists of the administrators and other secretaries at the university. Some examples from the recorded data have been selected and analyzed in relation to the concept of speech accommodation. The secretaries were chosen because their work would require them to have several calls with a range of different people. The secretaries conducted 30 natural conversations with different people over two weeks. Not surprisingly, a number of conversations were too short to have any informative data to the purpose and some others, although of a reasonable length, did not include any revealing information. The duration of conversations that have been chosen is one minute at least. The first secretary works at the school of architecture and built environment, the second secretary works at the deanship of admission and registration and the third one works at the school of applied humanities and languages.

6. Results and Discussion

After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed the recordings in light of the questions of the study. In order to investigate convergence to or divergence from the addressee by using Joos's model, the researcher employed qualitative and quantitative analyses of the conversations.

6.1 Quantitative Analysis

The study adopted a rigorous mixed-method approach to comprehensively dissect and interpret the speech styles within the corpus. The initial phase of analysis involved a quantitative assessment utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to determine the frequencies and percentages used by the participants. The speech style that was uttered by the participants is explained in Table 1.

Table 1: The frequency and percentages of language styles

Type of Language Style	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Frozen style	0	0.0%
Causal style	4	13.3%
Intimate style	7	23.3%
Consultative style	10	33.3%
Formal style	9	30.0%
Total	30	100.0%

As observed in Table 1, the most frequent style employed is the consultative style, followed by formal and intimate, and the least frequent style employed is the causal style, and the style that has not been used at all is the frozen style.

The classification and the frequency of the Speech styles that the participants uttered is explained in Table 2.

Table 2: The classification and the frequency of speech styles

Style	Staff			
	Academic Staff		Administrative Staff	
	Instructors	Students	Administrators	Secretaries
Frozen style	0	0	0	0
Causal style	0	0	4	0
Intimate	0	0	0	7
Consultative style	0	10	0	0
Formal style	9	0	0	0

Table 2 explained the classification and frequency of the speech style used by both the academic staff and the administrative staff. It can be noticed that the consultative style is used more by the students, the formal style is used more by the instructors, the intimate style is used more by secretaries, and the causal style is used more by the administrators. The frozen style hasn't been used by any of the participants.

6.2 Qualitative Analysis

Below is a presentation and discussion of the styles, along with illustrative contexts. For further clarification, the contexts are provided in Arabic, followed by transliteration then the translation. The secretaries are referred to as A and addressed as B, and the transliteration symbols for Arabic vowels and some consonants are provided in Appendix 1. Notice that extracts 1 and 2 are taken from the recording of the first secretary, extracts 3 and 4 are taken from the recordings of the second secretary and extracts 5.

6.3 Consultative Style

Extract 1:

أ: صباح الخير ، معك غدير من كلية العمارة ، كيف بقدر اساعدك ؟
 ب : اهلا صباح النور لو سمحتي بدي اسالك عن مواعيد تقديم طلبات الماجستير
 أ: اه والله ما عندي فكرة بس ممكن احولك على كلية الدراسات العليا همة ببساعدوك
 ب: اه يعني الدراسات العليا هم يلي بيحددوا طيب يا ريت تحولينني
 أ: ثواني

6.3.1 Transliteration

A: Saba:h elKhar, mCk Ghadeer mn kulyat el Camara, keef momken ?saCdk ?

B: ?hla Saba:h Anoor law sama Hti bdi ?s2lk Cn mawCeed ta?deem Talabat el majester

A: Wallah ma Cndi fekra bs momken ?Hwalk ʃala kuleit elderasat el Culya huma besaCduk

B: Ah yCani huma eli beCrafo ya reet t Hawlini

A: Thawani

6.3.2 Translation

A: Good morning, I am Ghadeer from the school of architecture and built environment, how can I help you?

B: Good morning. I would like to ask about the MA application.

A: mm, I have no ideas, I will transfer your call to the deanship of Graduate studies and scientific research.

B: Ok, you mean that the deanship of Graduate studies and scientific research decides ...so please transfer my call.

A: ok one moment.

In Extract 1, an unfamiliar person called the secretary to ask about the MA applications. We can notice that the secretary answers with just short phrases and simple sentences. The secretary and the speaker have spoken quite formally. In Joos's model, this is regarded as a consultative style because there is a lot of back-channeling. This style requires two defining features: the speaker supplies background information, and the listener participates continuously. Here, the subject finally converges toward the way the speaker speaks by repeating what the secretary has said at the end of the conversation. The consultative style is normal for speaking to strangers or persons who are neither acquaintances nor friends or relatives.

6.4 Formal Style

Extract 2

أ: صباح الخير دكتور

ب : صباح النور ست سارة

أ: دكتور انا بس حبيت اخبرك انه اجتمع مجلس الكلية صار يوم الخميس الساعة 11 في قاعة الاجتماعات بدل يوم الاربعاء

ب: والله انا بعذر عن الحضور لانه انا ما بدوام يوم الخميس

أ: ما في مشكلة دكتور انا رح اخبر العميد ، شكرا لوقتك

ب: الله معك

6.4.1 Transliteration

A: Saba: H elKhar doctor

B: Saba: H enoor set Sarah

A: Doctor ana bs Habait aKhabrk ?no ajtemaC majls elkoleya ʃar youm elKhames asCaa 11 fi qaCt aljtemaCat bdl youm elrbeʃa2

B: Wallah ya bnti ana bCtadher cn alHdur l2no ana ma badawn youm elkhames

A: Ma fi moshkeleh ana raH akhaber alcameed shokran lawagtk
B: Allah mck

6.4.2 Translation

A: Good morning, professor.

B: Good morning, Noor.

A: I would like to inform you that the faculty council meeting will be held in Thursday at 11 am instead in Wednesday.

B: Sorry I can't, I don't come to the university in Thursdays.

A: Ok, I will inform the dean. thanks for your time.

B: Goodbye.

Joos (1967) stated that “*formal style is generally used in a formal situation where the amount of shared background knowledge is the least and where communication is one way with little or no feedback from the audience.*” (p. 35). The formal style is a speech style that is used in formal situations. The example can be seen if you, as an employee, need to talk with your boss so the conversation must be in a formal style. In this research, formal style occurs 8 times; Extract 2 includes a formal conversation between the secretary and one of the professors at the department. she wanted to inform him about the place and the date for the faculty council meeting. If we consider the motivations for speech divergence within communication accommodation theory, the secretary's speech does not seem to be strange, it seems to fit perfectly. There is a convergence toward the address.

6.5 Intimate Style

Extract 3

أ: مرحبا
ب: اهلا اهلا عاش من سمع هالصوت وين هالغيبية
أ: حبيبتي انتي تعيشي هنية يا رب و الله الدنيا تلاهي زي ما بتعرفي
ب: حبيبتي الله بعين
أ: بدني اسالك بذك تروحي على المسرحية؟
ب: بيني وبينك العميد اعطاني شغل كثير وما رح اقدر اروح
أ: يا ستي مو مشكلة كنت حابة نترافق ، خيرها بغيرها
ب: حبيبتي انتي سلمتي
أ: الله يسلمك يا رب

6.5.1 Transliteration

A: Marhaba

B: Ahlan Ahlan csh mn smc haşoot wain hal ghaiba

A: habibti enti tceshi haneya ya rab wallah aldonya talahi zai ma btcrafi

B: habibti allah bceen

A: bdi as?lk iza bdk trohI cla elmasraheya?

B: Bain o baink elcameed ?ctani shughul kteer o ma rah ?dar aruh

A: Ya sti o mushkele kont haba ntrafa? khairha bghrahra
habibti enti salmi
allah ysalmk ya rab.

6.5.2 Translation

A: Hello.

B: Hello, it is nice to hear your voice.

A: my dear as you know I am very busy.

B: No problem, dear.

A: I would like to ask you if you want to go to the play?

B: in fact, no the dean has given me many tasks.

According to Joos (1967, p. 34), “intimate style is a completely private language style developed within families, close friends, and couples”. Intimate style is a speech style that is usually used by participants who have a very close relationship, like between family members or between very close friends. This language can be seen from its characteristics such as incomplete language, short words and usually with unclear articulation, but between participants understand each other. In this research, the intimate style occurs 7 times. In Extract 3, the secretary is talking to another secretary, asking her if she wants to attend a play. We can notice that the conversation is full of informal words and phrases such as:

(csh mn smc haṣoot) –(aldonya talahi)

Likewise, in the third line of extract 3, عاش من سمع هالصوت seems to be examples of conversational accommodation, in this case convergence, toward the addressee. This conversational cooperation shows that the speaker feels free to address.

6.6 Causal Style

Extract 4

ب : صباحو
أ : اهلين صباح النور مين معي ؟
ب: هههههههه انا محمد موظف دائرة اللوازم الجديد ، بس كنت بدي اسال كم ماعون ورق بدي
أ : ههههههههه بس ماعون واحد بعت الطلب مية مرة
ب: اسف يختي حقك على راسي من فوق السلام عليكم
أ: الله معك

6.6.1 Transliteration

B: Saba: hoooo

A: Ahleen ṣabah anoor meen maci?

B: hhhhhhhh Ana Mohammad mowadff da2rt al lawazm aljadeed bs kont bdi as2l kam macoom wara2 bdk ..

A; hhhhhhhh bs macon wahed bcatet e_talab meet marra

B: asf yakhti h_agk c_cala rasi mn fog asalam c_calekom

A: Allah m_ck

6.6.2 Translation

B: Good morning.

A: Good morning, who are you?

B: hhhhhh I am Mohammad, the new employer at the supplies and Tenders department. I would like to know how many package do you want?

A: hhhhhhhh only one, I have sent you the application hundred times.

B: I'm sorry.

A: Good bye.

Joos (1967) stated that *"the casual style is used for daily conversation in relaxed or normal situations with people who have a close relationship."* (p.23)

In Extract 4, a co-worker is talking to the secretary using a casual style. This style is used when there are no barriers to consider. This style is used among friends and acquaintances and doesn't require background information. There is a convergence toward the address. Joos (1967) stated that the two main characteristics of this style are the use of slang and ellipsis.

6.7 Frozen Style

Frozen style is used in very formal situations. This style is characterized by monotone intonation. An example of this style can be seen in declamation or sermon in the church. In this research, this style didn't occur. Joos (1967, p. 64) claimed that *"frozen speech style is a style that is proposed to be remembered orated. Frozen style is characterized by long sentences with complex grammatical sentence structure and vocabulary."*

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aims at investigating the use of the Convergence and Divergence in telephone conversations by adopting Joos's modal of formality. For this purpose, the recordings of three secretaries who work at a Jordanian university have been recorded and analyzed. The findings revealed that the frozen style has not occurred at all with 0% percentage and the most frequent style is the consultative style with 33.3% percentage, followed by formal style 30%, then the intimate style 23.3%.

This study attempts to apply the five styles of Joo's model to the spoken language in an academic context.

In summary, future research endeavors should aim to unravel the intricacies of cultural nuances, considering a broader spectrum of factors that shape the distance between the speaker and the hearer. By exploring novel dimensions and embracing the digital shift,

researchers can contribute to the ongoing evolution of speech and strategies, ensuring they remain attuned to the cultural contexts in which they operate.

Despite the comprehensive nature of this study, certain limitations should be acknowledged, influencing the interpretation and generalization of findings such as sample size and scope; the study focused on a specific spatial context (a Jordanian university) and a limited number of the participants (3 secretaries). While this approach facilitated in-depth analysis, the findings might not be fully representative of the broader style shift landscape or long-term trends.

Recognizing these limitations is crucial for interpreting the findings judiciously and inspiring future research endeavors that address these constraints, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of convergence and divergence.

In closing, this study underscores the multifaceted nature of the use of convergence and divergence in *Telephone Conversation by adopting Joos's model of formality: A Case from a Jordanian university*, offering valuable insights for writers, researchers, and sociolinguists. All in all, the present results reveal that the concepts of convergence and divergence in the social contexts are considered complex sociolinguistic phenomena as they depend on many factors and could be investigated from different aspects.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no financial, personal, or professional conflicts of interest related to the copyright or publication of this article.

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Appendix 1: Transliteration symbols for Arabic vowels and some consonants adopted from Authors' Guide and Transliteration Symbols.

Arabic alphabet	Symbol	Example	Meaning
ء	ʔ	ʔamal	Hope
ث	Th	thaclab	Fox
ج	J	jamal	Camel
ح	<u>H</u>	<u>H</u> ub	Love
خ	Kh	khubz	Bread
ذ	Dh	dhahab	Gold
ز	Z	zi:t	Oil
ش	Sh	shams	Sun
ص	<u>S</u>	Sayf	Summer
ض	<u>D</u>	Dayf	Guest
ط	<u>T</u>	ti:n	Mud
ظ	TH	THuhr	Noon
ع	C	cabd	Slave
غ	Gh	gharb	West
ق	Q	qalam	Pencil
و	W	ward	Rose
ي	Y	yawm	Day
(فتحة)	A	Kataba	he wrote

(ضمّة)	U	kutub	Books
(كسرة)	I	Sin	Tooth
ي / أ طويل مد	a:	ka:tib	Writer
و طويلة ضمة	u:	fu:l	Beans
ي طويلة كسرة	i:	fi:l	Elephant
Diphthongs	Aw	mawt	Death
(أصوات علة مركبة)	Ay	bayt	House

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