Variation Triggered by Language Contact: a Game Theoretical Perspective

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Recent 'third wave' initiatives suggest 'Game Theoretical' (GT) models can advance our understanding of sociolinguistic variation (Dror et al., 2013, Burnett and Levon 2016). GT can focus our discussion on interactional motivation and provide a new **methodology for discussing variation.**

Game Theory actually has two foci: **cooperative** and **noncooperative game theory**.

While our default assumption based on classic interview data is that all linguistic interactions will be cooperative, as we analyze data from other situations (Hutchby 1997, Dori-Hacohen 2015, Heritage/Clayman 2010, Gratton 2016, Yaeger-Dror et al 2011), this assumption is no longer tenable; often even conversations in Call Home and Call Friend corpora (www.ldc.upenn.edu) are noncooperative, and either no accommodation or divergence from the conversational partner(s) provides a quite different system for noncooperative interactions, or turns at talk within an interaction (e.g, Kiesling 1998; Yaeger-Dror et al 2011; Gratton 2016).

This expanded game theoretical linguistic palate permits new insights for language contact phenomena (Gasiorek/Giles 2013), and a nuanced understanding of actual situational interactive patterns.

Previous studies do not appear to supply (model) the social psychological motivators as CAT [Communication Accommodation Theory] does; however, given specific CAT parameters, game theoretical models might be appropriate for providing a more nuanced strategy based on understanding of environmental factors that are influential in language variation within a given community, as well as particular individual goals.

Recent studies argue that Game Theoretical modeling can formalize analysis of an individual speaker/listener's linguistic variation (e.g., Dror et al 2013, Burnett/Levon 2016); this paper argues that game theoretical models might be adapted for a more meaningful analysis of community patterns of variation and change which obtain when there is contact among self-defined communities.