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# CULTUS

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2009, Volume 2

TRAINING AND COMPETENCE

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# CULTUS

*the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication*

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## Cross-cultural Accommodation through a Transformation of Consciousness

Patrick Boylan

### *Abstract*

*This paper<sup>1</sup> discusses a little-described but essential competence for successfully communicating in intercultural contexts: the ability to 'accommodate,' redefined here as the capacity to 'decentre oneself' into the world view of an interlocutor – or of a text to translate. In fact, this paper holds that achieving genuine **entente** with culturally diverse interlocutors and realizing truly communicative translations are behavioural competencies that require the same superordinate attitudinal competence: the ability to situate oneself empathetically within a diverse world view and, as a quasi member of that world, interpret and generate discourse. How strange it is then that, while learning to accommodate is the heart of intercultural training for diplomats and negotiators, it is absent from the syllabi of most university language courses and translation seminars!*

*The theoretical contribution of this paper will therefore be to widen Giles & Coupland's (1991) traditional definition of 'accommodation' – focused largely on linguistic convergence – and assert that, in intercultural exchanges, successful accommodation requires, above all, cultural (existential) convergence. Less demanding forms of verbal accommodation are also possible, of course. This paper lists five kinds in all and rates their relative effectiveness. But accommodation by **unilateral cultural convergence** is claimed to be generally the most effective interactional mode and thus the primary competence to be taught to language students, translators, and international negotiators.*

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1 Presented at the 1st SIETAR-UK Conference, *Globalisation, foreign languages and intercultural learning*, South Bank University, London, 9-10 Feb. 2001 (proceedings unpublished). This version incorporates the comments and suggestions of the discussants (and, subsequently, of the *Cultus* reviewers) to whom the author is deeply grateful.

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## 1. Notion of accommodation

The sociolinguistic term *to accommodate* (Giles & Coupland, 1991) means to make one's expressive behaviour converge with that of linguistically and/or culturally diverse interlocutors.<sup>2</sup> An international negotiator will, in fact, routinely alter her delivery when dealing with interlocutors of other cultures, by adjusting her speech rate to match their comprehension level or by being more (or less) ceremonial to match their interactional style (Donaldson, 2007). To be truly accommodating, she might even accept to speak their language.

Let us focus on language accommodation, then, and examine the various options available to international negotiators (or to anyone who communicates cross-culturally).

In the first issue of *Cultus*, Anthony Pym (2008) addresses just this issue. He lists, as a premise to his paper on translation, the language-choice options available in international encounters when it is economically unfeasible to make use of translators and interpreters – when, for example, a negotiator must sojourn at length abroad or when, at home, she will have to deal on a long-term basis with a foreign client. Since continually hiring interpreters would become prohibitive, a negotiator must somehow find a way, on her own, to accommodate linguistically to her alloglot interlocutors.<sup>3</sup>

She can do so by developing and using one of five different linguistic competencies.

## 2. Accommodation Levels, corresponding linguistic competency and effort required

Reworking Pym's categories somewhat, we can identify and classify five major Levels of Accommodation. Each corresponds to increasingly sophisticated linguistic competencies and are increasingly difficult and/or costly to realize. These five levels will be preceded by a 'Level Zero' as a starting point.

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2 Negative accommodation – through divergence – also exists but will not be contemplated here.

3 The term 'alloglot' indicates a person who speaks a language different from one's own. Cf. 'homoglot.'

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## 2.0 Level 0 - no adaptation or change

Participants at international encounters can make zero effort to accommodate by speaking their L1 as they would to any L1 speaker<sup>4</sup>. Many tourists opt for this solution during their trips abroad, however arrogant it makes them sound to the local inhabitants. An international negotiator generally does not, since her goal is to create *entente*<sup>5</sup> with her interlocutors and this is facilitated by creating a 'bond of solidarity' with them through expressive convergence, i.e. through closing the gap between the way they speak and the way she speaks (Giles & Coupland, 1991).

## 2.1 Level 1 – linguistic adaptation but not change

Participants at international encounters may accommodate to their alloglot interlocutors by speaking their native language slowly and emphatically, simplifying vocabulary and syntax, using redundancy, etc. This 'careful' diction is called 'foreigner talk' (Clyne, 1981) when used, for example, to give street directions to an alloglot.

British and American managers sent abroad often consider **Level 1** accommodation to be sufficient for dealing with office staff who have only a schoolbook knowledge of English. In fact it is not. For one thing, slow and emphatic diction eliminates the prosodic and paralinguistic signals that reveal speaker intent. Indeed, since **Level 0** accommodation (no accommodation at all) conserves prosodic signals, it can – ironically – be preferable to **Level 1** accommodation whenever conveying intentionality to alloglots is paramount.

In any case **Level 1** accommodation is clearly unsuitable for an international negotiator seeking to create *entente*: it makes her seem condescending and it gives her interlocutors only the illusion that they have fully understood her.

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<sup>4</sup> L1 = one's mother tongue; L2 = any second language, usually the language that one studied at school.

<sup>5</sup> *Entente* is used here in its affectively-connoted French meaning of 'mutual understanding founded on a community of views and sentiments' – see the *Trésor de la Langue Française*, <http://atilf.atilf.fr>

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## 2.2 Level 2 – linguistic change (but not cultural change)

Negotiators may accommodate by using a mutually-intelligible, culturally-indeterminate **conventional idiom**, be it an artificial language such as Esperanto or a conventional subset or derivation of some natural language, such as a **pidgin**. We may include among 'pidgins' such international professional lingoes as 'pilot talk' (used in international airport control towers – Henry, 1991) or the 'Eurospeak' of many EU officials (Wagner, 2001).<sup>6</sup>

Thus, while at **Level 1** one accommodates simply by slowing down one's delivery, at **Level 2** one accommodates by changing one's language to a mutually shared conventional code – but **without changing one's cultural mindset or world view**: one's frames of reference, affects and wants remain substantially unmodified.

**Level 2** accommodation has its advantages. For example, Anglo negotiators attending a EU commission meeting conducted in English are usually wise to adopt Eurospeak (minus the waffle and fudging) in place of their native variety of English and their usual delivery style. Such **Level 2** accommodation, by reducing the linguistic gap, promotes bonds of solidarity with the non-Anglo commissioners and limits misunderstandings.

**Level 2** accommodation also includes the use of an **L2 learned 'scholastically'**, i.e., learned chiefly as a lexico-grammatical system made semi-automatic through exercises and 'communicative' tasks. **Scholastic**

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6 Eurospeak English is the derisive term used to indicate the European Community bureaucratic lingo that is: 1. regulated phonologically and lexico-syntactically by a subset of usages taken from British, American and outer/expanding-circle Englishes (the latter are those used outside areas where Anglo English is the first language [Kachru, 1986] and characterized by calques and constructions from local languages); 2. augmented terminologically by numerous neologisms, acronyms, metonyms, code words and politically-correct euphemisms; 3. pragmatically marked by vagueness and wordiness (waffle), by fewer uses of the personal and imaginative functions of language (for example, facetiousness and original metaphors are avoided), and by non-confrontational, highly cautious argumentation (fudging); 4. claimed to be culturally indeterminate and thus 'neutral,' although in fact shaped by non-British Northern European discourse styles and interactional habits, plus EU 'house' norms for documents and legalese. Typologically, Eurospeak is a subset of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF: Seidlhofer, 2001) used mostly for EU transactions. It is thus not a jargon, which is a transactional sociolect created within a single language, but rather an English pidgin, i.e. a linguistically-hybrid transactional subset, *in fieri*.

**L2's** are what most of us learned at school; few of us, in fact, were taught to assume a new cultural mindset when using our L2, as occurs today in schools using cultural-communicative ('CC') L2 learning methods (see ahead).

What does **Level 2** accommodation using an L2 learned 'scholastically' sound like? Let us imagine that our relocated British or American managers (described above), want to improve communication with their staff and take a 'scholastic' course in the local language. A few months go by and now they are able to address the staff in grammatically-correct (though not always idiomatic) L2 sentences.

What the staff continues to hear in every sentence, however, is, above all, the managers' British or American mindset. The managers seem to be speaking English as before, although now clothing it in L2 words. It is not their fault, of course: that is how their teacher taught them the L2 – as though it were an inventory of culture-free linguistic paradigms to manipulate 'logically', like Esperanto or any conventional lingo.

That said, it is likely that the managers' effort to accommodate by speaking the local language, however stiltedly, will be repaid with greater *entente* than if they continued to accommodate at **Level 1** only (speaking slow and emphatic English to their staff). Good will inspires good will.

### **2.3 Level 3 – both linguistic and cultural change (by one of the sides)**

A negotiator may accommodate by moving both linguistically and culturally onto her interlocutors' terrain, speaking their language 'like them' – i.e., in such a way that they hear, in her L2 utterances, an L2 mindset. This 'decentring' facilitates creating *entente*.

One way of acquiring such a 'cultural-communicative' competence is by taking a CC language course based on bracketing one's native ways of 'seeing and saying things' and introjecting a new *will to be* that produces a new *will to mean* (Boylan, 2003). Through this transformation of consciousness one becomes able to 'speak the other party's language' – in both senses of the term – and to 'translate oneself' in ways she can relate to.

**Level 3** accommodation is therefore at a crossroads where translation theory, language learning theory and intercultural accommodation theory converge. In fact, all three describe the same key superordinate

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attitudinal competence: **the ability to co-construct shared meanings across cultural divides, through empathetic decentring and introjection.** **Decentring** is the momentary bracketing of one's habitual world view (which, while sidelined, remains nonetheless present) and the momentary assumption of that of another person, through foregrounding appropriate beliefs, affects, wants, hitherto latent (Redmond, 1983). **Introjection**, in our adaptation of Anna Freud's term, is the stabilized internalization – within our superego – of the maxims of the cultural world of a target person; this internalized representation keeps that other world alive within us.

The above formulation is the first theoretical contribution of this paper. The second is the claim that accommodation at **Level 3** – that of shared intentionalities – does in fact exist. Current descriptions of accommodation contemplate only **Levels 1** and **2**.

The third contribution of this paper is the theorization of **Level 3** competence as the 'end product' of CC teaching. Whether in an L2 classroom, a translation seminar or an intercultural training session, **decentring** and **introjection** can be – and in fact are – achieved by the same CC activities (some of which are indicated ahead).

Since establishing the existence, learnability and utility of **Level 3** accommodation is the heart of this paper, let us proceed to describe this competence more fully, beginning with its linguistic manifestations.

Accommodating to interlocutors linguistically at **Level 3** means making their *will to mean* one's own. One uses their language not only grammatically (at least, to the extent that they do) but also *as they might*, i.e. in a way that fits with their cultural *will to be*. Thus in a CC French course aiming at **Level 3** competence in accommodating, learning to say “no” does not simply mean learning to say a nasal-sounding *no*. Nor does it simply mean learning to use typical expressions like "*Mais non!*", "*Non non non...*", "*Ab non!*" and so on. Rather, it means assuming one of the existential stances that a French person takes when using one of these expressions. This in turn will produce one of the characteristic postures, facial expressions and vocal set-ups that mark in-group membership as a Francophone. Note that one does not try to imitate these physical realizations: one changes one's existential stance and this in turn produces (generally unconsciously) the appropriate delivery.

What **Level 3** entails, then, is introjecting the cultural values that these various *no*'s are used to transmit and, according to the *persona* one has chosen to be with one's French interlocutors, saying spontaneously the

*no* that best renders one's stance. In doing so, one creates *entente*: that is, one assures better understanding (for not all 'no' answers carry the same weight!) while creating a bond of solidarity with one's interlocutors by communicating a shared value (here, the *will to be* of a certain *persona* who seems part of their world).

Note that this does **not** mean imitating a stereotype. In a CC French course, students are shown videos featuring strongly-typed native speakers of French and encouraged, through incentives, to identify with one of them. This decentring produces in them a 'transformation of consciousness.' But students are **by no means** encouraged to imitate their L2 double. Instead, their goal is to become 'recognizable' within French culture by recognizing as real the values their double sees as real. They are then free to speak and act *any way they want*. Of course, many students have fun imagining themselves their double, and even compete to see who is the most convincing. But most do not, preferring to remain themselves – albeit in an updated version, since once latent values have since been foregrounded. Thus, while these students are not quite part of French culture, they now talk and act as if French culture (or a slice of it) were part of them. Their delivery in French may be only marginally authentic, but they come off sounding to native speakers of French like someone who somehow belongs to the *francophonie*. *Entente* is assured.

In a nutshell, **Level 3** accommodation means *willing to be* a (quasi) member of an interlocutor's linguistic-cultural community – at least for the duration of the communicative event – and speaking like it. If one rejects an interlocutor's mainstream culture and has no desire to identify with it, one can always choose a marginal L2 variety, closer to one's own values, and learn to interact that way. *Entente* is equally assured.

What counts is that one chooses to 'be one' with the other culture – yet 'not of it' – by redirecting one's will to embrace wants, feelings and beliefs that one did not have *consciously* before, but that one has rekindled within oneself – by means of CC didactic activities, for example. These activities differ radically from traditional “lecture hall” instruction in that they develop not only (R) receptive but also **(P) productive** competencies. A few examples (see Boylan, 2003, for the details) are:

- (R) seeing anthropological videos of the L2 culture and then **(P)** playacting characters;
- (R) reading an L2 narrative and then **(P)** writing *pastiches* in which L1 personal experiences are transposed into a



- similar L2 context;
- (R) making cultural identikits of L2 doubles and then (P) acting like them at home for a day and reporting it ethnographically;
- (R) interviewing L2 tourists on controversial subjects and then (P) defending *their* views for *their* reasons with L1 friends in recorded conversations;
- (R+P) doing participant-observation in an L2 family in one's home town.

Note that these activities do not pretend to inculcate 'genuine' L2 culture into students – the 'genuineness' of which would inevitably be a stereotype anyway. Rather, they help students acquire an intimately felt affinity for the values they perceive, rightly or wrongly, in *specific instances* of the L2 culture. This suffices to change the way they speak and act in (and translate from) the L2. With time their perception improves and the values they internalize ring truer.

Admittedly, an L2 course based on accommodation through cultural introjection is demanding for teachers. But not for students: tired businessmen in company L2 courses, restless pupils bored with L2 exercises, grammar-centric graduate students who hardly remember any more why they started studying languages in the first place, all come to life. That said, less challenging methods are also possible. Based on cognitive more than on affective-volitional change, these aim at formal (not substantial) **Level 3** accommodation. Practical illustrations of **both** kinds of teaching may be found on the following international web sites: <http://cilt.boylan.it>; <http://tinyurl.com/tw-hwang>; <http://tinyurl.com/usa-mit>; <http://tinyurl.com/uk-llas>; <http://tinyurl.com/fr-crapel>; <http://tinyurl.com/wz-berlin>.

For the psycholinguistic justification of CC teaching – which holds that languages are products of 'shared intentionality' and so must be acquired as such – see Boylan & Micarelli (1998) and, in particular, Tomasello *et al.* (2005) who write:

As the key social-cognitive skill for cultural creation and cognition, shared intentionality [underlies] the uniquely powerful cognitive skills of *Homo sapiens* [... Human language] derives from the uniquely human abilities to read and share intentions with other people [...] where again sharing means having psychological states that include

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within them as content the psychological states of others (p.687, 690).

We may conclude this lengthy section by repeating our three theses:

- **Level 3** accommodation does exist;
- it requires a superordinate attitudinal competence: the ability to converge existentially through shared intentionality;
- this competence – which is the heart of L2 proficiency, translation expertise and intercultural communication skill – is learnable (for example, in a CC L2 course).

### 2.3.1 Level 3- (Level 3 minus) – only cultural change

In addition to the above, there exists a kind of cultural-but-not-linguistic accommodation that, while not quite **Level 3**, is clearly more than **Level 2** (languages being essentially *wills to mean*, not words). Instead of learning the native language of one's interlocutors, one introjects their culture and expressive habits and then uses one's own mother tongue or a lingua franca as the linguistic medium through which to manifest one's new self.

For example, a French sales manager, before her meeting with a French-speaking Russian client conducted in French, learns to use Russian pragmatic and cultural norms to favour *entente* (unless the client insists on keeping things French). Then, in a negotiation conducted in English with a Chinese client, she accommodates her schoolbook English to her Chinese partner by using Chinese interactional norms, imperative forms, courtesy routines, cultural references, etc. In this second case she cannot be said to be using English as a lingua franca (which, as we shall see, corresponds to **Level 4**), for many of her linguistic forms and cultural references are more Chinese than Anglo. Hers is, rather, 'virtual Chinese in a pseudo-English matrix.'

The ability to accommodate at **Level 3-** is what, around the world, intercultural trainers are currently teaching negotiators who must deal with multiple or changing geographical areas and who cannot possibly acquire the language of each one. They learn to accommodate fully at **Level 3** for a single area only (their speciality area) and then to accommodate only culturally (or at **Level 4**: see ahead) elsewhere. This mixed bag of solutions is similar to Pym's (2008:80-81) description of the

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de facto translation policy – eclectic pragmatism – current in major international organizations today.

## 2.4 Level 4 – both linguistic and cultural change on both sides

Negotiators and their interlocutors may jointly choose to abandon their native ways of expressing themselves and elect as their communicative terrain a full-fledged language and culture which is native to neither party, i.e. a lingua franca. Examples are metropolitan French or classical Arabic used in negotiations among different ethnic groups in the Maghreb, or the English used as a national vehicular language in multi-lingual ex-British colonies like India and Singapore.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise the French sales manager and her Chinese partner (described above) could opt for **Level 4** accommodation by choosing to use, in a quasi-native way, some historical variety of English (for example, Midwest General American) – provided *both* of them had a mastery of that variety. Note that in doing so, they would **not** be denying their Frenchness or Chineseness, but rather communicating it as a Midwest American of French or Chinese origin might. By momentarily identifying with the culture of the chosen lingua franca, both could avail themselves of the full expressive potential of that language. This would enable them to render shades of meaning that a conventional language (for example, Eurospeak or any L2 learned only scholastically) would keep them from even imagining. They are like artists who, instead of having to sketch their ideas with a ball-point pen on the back of envelopes, have at their disposition brushes, canvas, and an immense palette of infinite colours.

There is a drawback, however. **Level 4** differs from **Level 3** in that *both* parties accommodate linguistically. While more democratic, this doubles the stress load for each negotiator, for each must not only find the right turn of phrase to render a nuance in the L2, but at the same time calculate the other party's ability to grasp that turn of phrase. The effort is halved for one party and annulled for the other if the former accommodates at **Level 3** by using the language of the latter.

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<sup>7</sup> International auxiliary languages like Esperanto are sometimes called lingua francas; but since they lack a rich, historical culture, they are classified here as conventional languages or pidgins (**Level 2**).

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## 2.5 Level 5 – linguistic and cultural co-creation

Two trilingual negotiators may wish to accommodate to each other *without* resorting to their lingua franca (**Level 4**) or switching between their two L1's (**Level 0+3**), by devising an ad hoc common language (and ethos) that draws on the resources of both L1's (alternatively, of only one of them – radically re-elaborated however).

This is the first phase of negotiations in any peace process: substituting loaded words with anodyne expressions, creating neologisms for taboo subjects in each L1, prescribing interactional routines common to neither L1, and so on. See for example "Developing a common language and neutral terms for the drafting of a settlement" in Irwin (2002:88), describing the start of the peace talks in Northern Ireland. In a literary vein, the U.S. journalist Edgar Snow claimed to have established an exceptionally intimate rapport with Chinese President Mao Zedong – even though each man knew the other's language imperfectly and interpreters were necessary – by co-creating with Mao a highly personal, poetic metalanguage: both men were lovers of ancient Chinese poetry and indirectly discussed even the thorniest issues in politics by citing and commenting verses (Snow, 1938).

**Level 5** accommodation also occurs in the business world. When Toyota constructed its model car plant in Kentucky (USA), it invested considerably in devising management techniques and communication protocols that would **not** seem Japanese to the American managers and workmen, yet would get them to share typical Japanese values such as *Marugakae* or 'total dedication to the enterprise', *Kaizen* or 'constant quality improvement', *Jidoka* or 'team responsibility', etc. (Adent Hoecklin, 1993). In other words, the company did not impose Japanese ways on the workmen nor oblige managers to learn at least schoolbook Japanese and put up with the foreigner talk of inspectors from Tokyo, which is the policy of many American companies worldwide (**Level 1**). Nor did the company choose **Level 2**, imposing on the workers and managers a 'neutral' enterprise lingo and interactional ethos, such as IBM does internationally. Nor did the company choose **Level 3**; it did not 'localise' communication modes and ways of interacting (Sony's policy). Nor did it opt for Siemens' choice of imposing throughout its units worldwide a single full-fledged lingua franca, British English, learned well (**Level 4** accommodation). Instead, the company chose **Level 5**; it opted to spend the time and effort needed to work out a new Bluegrass-

Japanese culture and communication style. Adent Hoecklin hints that the effort, which took several years to accomplish, was perhaps not economically advantageous for Toyota. Communication, however, was optimal.

While **Level 5** accommodation is rare in business and government transactions, it is the norm in intimate relations. An extreme case is that of alloglot immigrants who marry and adopt, at home, the host country's language. As they learn to understand the language, they learn to understand each other and, in doing so, create expressions and assign meanings to L2 words that only they comprehend. They invent, to all effects, a personal creole (Piller, 2000). This is what happens, to a lesser degree, in *any* close relationship.

### 3. Summary and synoptic table

The five **Levels of accommodation** below indicate the increasingly greater amount of change that must be made to one's normal language habits to facilitate *entente*, as well as the increasingly higher expenditures (in time and effort) that are required. They do not necessarily indicate higher levels of *entente* reached, for that depends on many variables.

#### 5-Level Accommodation Scale

L1 = mother tongue; L2 = second language

- 0 Using your L1 normally (degree zero of accommodation).
- 1 Using your L1 carefully.
- 2 Using your L1 or an L2 conventionally.
- 3 Using an L2 authentically (the L2 is your interlocutors' L1).
- 3- Using your L1 or an L2 (not your interlocutors' L1) with their cultural style.
- 4 Using an L2 authentically (it is an L2 for all parties).
- 5 Using an L2 idiosyncratically, through mutual elaboration of a creole.

(If you use your L1 idiosyncratically to create a creole, you accommodate at **Level 3-** and your interlocutors – for whom it is an L2 – at **Level 5.**)

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N.B. There are two other, infrequently used, options in accommodating: *Multilateral Level 1 Accommodation*, *Reciprocal Level 3 Accommodation*.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. Effectiveness of accommodating at each Level

With the exclusion of **Level 0**, the accommodation practices listed above all seek to guarantee good reciprocal understanding in situations of cross-linguistic/cross-cultural communication. Which one ensures **optimal** reciprocal understanding?

Although the optimal level for any given situation depends on economic considerations (how much the parties are willing and able to invest in building *entente*), this paper considers **Level 3** to be, in most cases, the best guarantee of *entente* and therefore the competence to be taught in any intercultural training program, language course or translator curriculum. To see why, let us summarize the effectiveness of each Level.

Effectiveness of accommodating at **Level 1**: As already mentioned, the effectiveness of slow and emphatic diction in creating *entente* in an international negotiation is nil. Its usefulness, as such, is limited to non-problematic 'good-will transactions', like making small talk on the train with alloglot fellow passengers met by chance.

Effectiveness of accommodating at **Level 2**: The use of a conventional language assures perfect understanding between interlocutors since it eliminates the problem of reconciling world views (all parties adopt the supposedly neutral culture implicit in the lingo itself). But conventional languages are meant for conventional exchanges, like booking flights or

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<sup>8</sup> Pym (2008:71) lists in fact two other possible options. One is a multilateral variation of **Level 1**, used if negotiators belong to a single language area (e.g., Romance languages) and have received training in understanding the languages of their negotiation partners. Negotiators speak – carefully – in their L1 and then listen to the replies of the others in their L1s (see Blanche-Benveniste *et al.* 1998). We may call this **Multilateral Level 1 Accommodation**. The other is **Reciprocal Level 3 Accommodation**: we mentioned it in section 2.5, calling it **Level 0+3**. If two interlocutors are fluent in each other's L1, both can use one of them for a while, then switch to the other, then back again, etc. In real life, though, one of the L1's tends to prevail: accommodation stabilizes at **Level 0** for one partner and **3** for the other. Whoever gets the other party to stabilize at **Level 0** gains a negotiating advantage (more ahead).

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explaining a chemical reaction. When deeply felt affective-volitional issues are at stake, these languages fail because they cannot render the existential values that historical languages confer even on 'ordinary' words. This is why schools and universities that teach L2s as purely linguistic systems do their students such a disservice: students attain only a **Level 2** competence in accommodation – fine for a tourist trip, insufficient for life.

Effectiveness of accommodating at **Levels 3 and 3-**: Adopting the language and style of our interlocutors *without* reciprocity – henceforth **Unilateral Cultural Accommodation** or **UCA** – is, admittedly, only a one-way bridge across the cultural divide. But this is actually an advantage, for it gives us control over the translation process. We (not our negotiation adversaries) decide what goes over the bridge: what L1 words are to represent our ideas, what their final effect is to be, what false friends to block, what glosses to allow... If instead we choose **Level 0**, our adversaries get to interpret our words *as they see fit*. In negotiation as in war, whoever controls the bridges controls the outcome.

UCA is, in addition, a useful mask. It hides our L1 self behind the adopted ways of our L2 self. When Gandhi negotiated with the British Viceroy of India, he used the latter's language and interactional norms. Gandhi saw who he was dealing with. The Viceroy did not. The rest is history.

Effectiveness of accommodating at **Level 4**: Like UCA, accommodation by means of a lingua franca facilitates *entente* since both parties use a culturally dense idiom that allows them to render every shade of meaning. But this supposes that both parties know the same L2 to the same degree of proficiency and therein lies the problem: one is never sure about the other party. With UCA, one is limited only by one's own competence.

Effectiveness of accommodating at **Level 5**: Using a commonly-worked-out ad hoc language is, in principle, the best guarantee of cross-cultural understanding. However it requires that both parties be highly inventive, co-operative, and able to dedicate considerable time. Negotiators, on the other hand, typically find themselves in non-cooperative situations and with impending deadlines.

## 5. Conclusion

The optimal competence for most cross-cultural negotiators is therefore represented by UCA (**Level 3** accommodation), based on converging not only with the expressive modalities of one's interlocutors (formal accommodation) but also with their world view (substantial accommodation), by means of a transformation of consciousness. Through UCA, the words one utters to native L2 speakers, and the actions one performs, become the mirror image, reflected through their culture, of what one might have said and done in one's native language if negotiations had taken place in it. One manages to translate oneself and one's intents to one's interlocutors *communicatively* (Newmark, 1988). Only the improvident negotiator sits back and lets her adversaries accommodate to her, ceding to them control over the translation process and foregoing the chance to hear them reveal themselves in their L1. The wise negotiator, instead, welcomes every chance to accommodate unilaterally. She stoops to conquer.

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