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Speech accommodation and Japanese Emperor Hirohito

Shoji Azuma
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

ABSTRACT. The present study examines the speech style of the late Japanese Emperor Hirohito during *chihoo jyunkoo*—'visits to countryside'—which were conducted to encourage war-defeated Japanese during 1946–54. Speech accommodation theory claims that speakers will attempt to converge linguistically toward the speech patterns of the addressee when they desire social approval from the addressee, given that the perceived costs of so acting are proportionally lower than the rewards anticipated. Documented speeches of the Emperor show that he converged his speech style (often to excess) to that of listeners who were lower in social status. The Japanese people reacted enthusiastically to the way the Emperor spoke and treasured it, although it is unusual for Japanese to treasure lower class speech from upper class people. The analysis of the Emperor's speech style supports the claim of the speech accommodation theory and further suggests that the attribution of the meaning of the message is determined by the listener's evaluation of its appropriateness.

KEY WORDS: convergence, discourse, Japanese, politeness, post-war Japan, power, solidarity

1. INTRODUCTION

Various factors affect the way we speak: for example, the informality of context may cause a speaker to produce casual speech (Labov, 1966) or the topic of the speech may also cause a speaker to choose a certain speech style (e.g. Blom and Gumperz, 1972). Recently, the role of the addressee has been brought to our attention by Giles and others (e.g. Giles and Powesland, 1975). The idea that the addressee is a full participant in the formulation of message has led to the development of Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) (Giles and Smith, 1979). According to SAT, linguistic convergence is defined as a strategy whereby speakers adapt to another's communicative behavior in order to gain social approval. Communicative behavior includes linguistic, prosodic, and nonverbal behaviors (e.g. Natale, 1975; Street, 1983; Hale and Burgoon, 1984).

For example, in her phonological analysis of a travel agent's talk in Cardiff,

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Wales, Coupland (1984) has shown that the agent converged her phonology to her clients of various socioeconomic status in telephone conversations. One variable Coupland (1984) studied was the pronunciation of intervocalic /t/ as in *better.* There are two variants for the intervocalic /t/ in the region she studied: voiceless [t] and voiced [d]. When the agent was speaking to a client of similar social background to herself, the percentage of pronouncing /t/ as voiced [d] was about 26 percent. But, interestingly, when the agent spoke to clients pronouncing about 13 percent of /t/ as [d], her [d] pronunciation decreased to 12 percent from 26 percent. On the other hand, when the agent spoke to clients who were pronouncing about 80 percent of /t/ as [d], her percentage of [d] increased to as high as 67 percent. In other words, the agent's phonological behavior had shifted in such a way to accommodate that of the addressee. More specifically, the agent converged her speech style to that of the addressee. The findings support the claim of SAT: speakers adapt to another's communicative behaviors in order to gain social approval.

Linguistic convergence can be classified into two types: upward convergence and downward convergence (Giles and Powesland, 1975). A shift toward a prestigious variety is an upward convergence and a shift toward a less socially valued form is a downward convergence. If accommodation is in excess, it is called over-accommodation.

Much of the study in speech accommodation has been conducted in the West and in English language settings. In this study, I examine the virtually unexplored speech of the late Japanese Emperor Hirohito and show that speech accommodation is at work even for someone at the very top of society. Specifically, I argue that downward over-accommodation can be met with psychological convergence from the listeners and that the attribution of message meaning is determined by the listener's evaluation of its appropriateness.

2. ROLE OF ADDRESSEE IN JAPANESE

Before going into the discussion of the emperor's speech, a brief introduction to Japanese language is in order. One of the fundamental differences between Japanese and languages such as English is the relationship between an utterance and the social context in which the utterance is made. Unlike an English speaker, a Japanese speaker has to choose an appropriate verb form weighing his or her relation to the listener for every single utterance he or she will make, because there is no safe all-purpose form in Japanese. In other words, every single utterance reflects the speaker's perception toward the addressee. Matsumoto (1989: 209) illustrates this important point in the following sentences, all of which means *Today is Saturday.*

(1)

a.	Kyoo	wa	doyoobi	*da*
	today	TOPIC	Saturday	COPULA-plain
b.	Kyoo	wa	doyoobi	*desu*
	today	TOPIC	Saturday	COPULA-polite
c.	Kyoo	wa	doyoobi	*degozaimasu*
	today	TOPIC	Saturday	COPULA-super polite

Matsumoto (1989) points out that English speakers can say *Today is Saturday* to anyone ranging from a professor, a friend, or, for that matter, even to a dog. However, in Japanese there is no neutral form as such, and a Japanese speaker always has to choose an appropriate form depending on to whom he or she is speaking. According to Matsumoto (1989), the verb form *da* in (1a) can be used in casual speech to people with whom the speaker has a close relationship. The verb form *desu* in (1b) would be appropriate when addressed to a stranger or an acquaintance who is not a close friend. The verb form *degozaimasu* would be used on formal occasions among adults. Thus, the speaker has to choose one of the three even when the conveyed referential message is as simple as *is* (see also Inoue, 1979). Given the characteristic that every utterance reflects the speaker's attitude toward the addressee, Japanese serves as an interesting case for a study of speech accommodation in which the crucial factor is the addressee.

3. EMPEROR HIROHITO IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Emperor Hirohito (1901–1989) ruled Japan for 63 years, longer than any of his predecessors. From the time of the Meiji Restoration until the end of World War ll, the Emperor of Japan had enormous sovereign rights, as enumerated in the Constitution of 1890. As to the political role Emperor Hirohito played before and during the war, there are different views, ranging from no direct political involvement to certain indirect involvement in national politics (e.g. Kato, 1995). However, it is widely accepted that Emperor Hirohito was a god-like figure in the eyes of Japanese people at that time. Indeed, the nation was encouraged to believe Emperor Hirohito to be a god through every available channel, including public education. Invisibility was a way to ensure his authority; thus the Emperor was not to be seen or heard by ordinary people, and it was beyond their comprehension that they could have even a one-word conversation with him. However, this divine status was suddenly shattered and transformed into that of an ordinary human on 1 January 1946, following the unconditional surrender of Japan to the Allies on 15 August 1945. Emperor Hirohito spoke to the nation in his 1946 new year's proclamation, in which he denied his divinity. Observe a part of his speech to the nation:

> We are with you, the people, and wish always to share common interests, joys, and sorrows, with all of you. The bondage between us and you, the people, is constantly tied with mutual trust, love, and respect. It is not brought about by mere mythology and legends. It is never founded on a chimerical conception which describes the Emperor as a living deity . . . (translation from Hoyt, 1992)

This script, known as the *Ningen Sengen* 'Human being Declaration', made it clear that the Emperor was not a god but rather an ordinary man.

An interesting question to be asked is how the Emperor spoke to Japanese people immediately after declaring himself as a human being.

What was the communication strategy he employed in a situation he had never faced before?

4. DATA

One type of the best primary data is taken from spontaneous speech in a natural setting. Participant observation is an ideal method, in which a researcher is accepted as an in-group member by the speech community he or she is interested in (Labov, 1972). However, data of this type are simply not available for this study, due to the unique environment surrounding the Emperor. Virtually nobody except a few chamberlains and others close to the Emperor had an opportunity to speak with him or hear directly from him. Thus, the available data are strictly limited to the reported data in published materials such as newspapers and diaries by chamberlains during that period. One of the major disadvantages of data of this type is the possibility of bias by the persons who documented them. The data might be different from the original form and might be distorted in some way. However, the fact that the reported linguistic forms and variations by the Emperor are consistent across various documents among different authors suggests that the data are valid enough to draw a tentative conclusion. The historical setting surrounding the Emperor at that time offers us a unique opportunity to examine the virtually unexplored speech of the Emperor with respect to SAT.

5. LINGUISTIC VARIANTS BEFORE THE VISITS TO COUNTRYSIDE

The Emperor never spoke to the Japanese people face-to-face before the end of the war. Thus, there are no data available as to how he would have spoken to them if he had had an opportunity to do so. However, examples of linguistic variants reserved for the Emperor can be found in his speech to end the war broadcasted to the nation by radio on 15 August 1945, which is known as *Gyokuon Hoosoo* 'Divine voice broadcasting'. This speech is unprecedented because the Japanese people had never heard the Emperor speak before. The following is a part of the speech.

(2)

Chin	fukaku	sekai	no	taisei	to	teikoku	no
I	deeply	world	GEN	situation	and	imperial country	GEN
genjyou	toni	kangami		hijyou	no	soti	o
situation	with	consider		unusual	GEN	method	ACC
motte	jikyoku		o	syuusyuu	seshimu to		hossi
by way of	present situation		ACC	solve	do COM		desire
kokoni	tyuuryou	naru	*nanji*	shinmin		ni	*tugu.*
here	loyal	be	you	emperor's people		to	inform

'I, upon considering the world situation and the surroundings of our country, speak to my loyal people, in order to solve the situation with an urgent method'. (Takeyama, 1989: 122)

The language is the classical Chinese writing style which carries the maximum authority of the Emperor. Due to this classical Chinese style, most Japanese did not understand exactly what the Emperor was saying, but the mere fact that the Emperor himself was speaking directly to them was enough to convince them how serious the speech was. We can see characteristics of the Emperor's speech in his choice of vocabulary. For example, the pronouns he used to refer himself are distinct from what ordinary Japanese people use.

(3)
'I'
a. chin
b. watashi
c. watakushi

(4)
'you'
a. nanji
b. anatagata
c. minasan

The Emperor referred to himself as *chin*, as in (3a), not as *watashi* or *watakushi* as in (3b) or (3c), which are commonly used first person pronouns. Likewise, the Emperor used *nanji* as in (4a) to refer to the Japanese people, not *anatagata* or *minasan* as in (4b) or (4c), which are commonly used second person pronouns. The Emperor's verb forms are also distinct in the sense that they are typically reserved for the person who possesses the highest authority.

(5)
'to hope'
a. hosshi
b. nozomi
c. omoi

(6)
'to inform'
a. tsugu
b. tutaeru
c. shiraseru

Verb forms used by the Emperor such as *hossi* in (5a) and *tsugu* in (6a) are reserved for the highest authority. Their equivalents in (5b), (5c) and (6b), (6c), respectively, which were commonly used by ordinary people, were not used by the Emperor.

The 'Divine voice broadcasting' was part of a prepared speech, which would be far from the Emperor's spontaneous speech. Since the Emperor had never spoken to Japanese people face-to-face before the end of the war, there are no data available regarding his spontaneous speech to Japanese people; however, there are some data in which the Emperor spoke to chamberlains. The following utterance took place when the Emperor heard the chamberlains' idea that they should bring their own lunch in order to cut the imperial household budget during the war.

Emperor: *Mina* ni shyokuryou no shinpai wo
you to meal GEN worry ACC
sasete kinodoku *da* na.
make pity be-PLAIN TAG
shikashi, bentou no kaisyoku wa yoi kangae *da*.
but lunch GEN eat together TOP good idea be-PLAIN
'It's a pity to make you worry about meals, but to eat lunch together is a good idea'. (Fujita, 1960: 118)

Notice the second person pronoun *mina* 'you' the Emperor used to address chamberlains. The pronoun is used only by the Emperor and highest authorities. Also notice that the plain verb form *da* 'be' is used for the utterance. The speech style shows that the speaker possesses the highest authority over the listeners, and the form is distinct from that of an ordinary person.

6. SPEECH DURING CHIHOO JYUNKOO (VISITS TO COUNTRYSIDE)

6.1. Over-accommodation

In order to encourage the Japanese people in their efforts at reconstruction, the Emperor started his visits to the war-beaten countryside on 19 February 1946 and continued until his visit to Hokkaidoo in August 1954.[1] During these 8 years, he visited every single prefecture except Okinawa, which was under the control of the occupying forces at that time. Even though he denied his status as divine, the Emperor was still the Emperor, who was escorted by his chamberlains and local dignitaries along with the motorcade wherever he went. Observe the utterance (7a) the Emperor made to a middle-aged man during his visit to a factory in Kanagawa prefecture.

(7)
a. Doko de sensai ni atta *no*?
where at war damage by met Q
'Where were you during the bombings?'
b. Doko de sensai ni atta *no da*?
where at war damage by met be-PLAIN
(*Asahi Shinbun*, 20 February 1946)

The Emperor's utterance in (7a) is gender neutral. The Emperor could have uttered the masculine plain declarative form as in (7b).[2] The newspaper *Asahi Shinbun* (20 February 1946) described the situation as follows: '... the way the Emperor framed his question is best described as absolutely gentle, which is almost considered *feminine* ...' (emphasis added). Given the historical context that the Emperor was considered a god by many Japanese, the speech style in (7a) shows convergence in its excess: the sentence was perceived to be just like the one uttered by a female (mother), who had very low status in Japanese society at that time. The Emperor shifted his speech style downward excessively: he did not merely make his statement casual so that it became similar to that of the listener, but he

made his speech like that of a female speaker. Although the speech was an instance of over-accommodation, Japanese people reacted enthusiastically to the way the Emperor spoke and treasured it. The newspaper *Asahi Shinbun* reported that the Japanese people repeated the phrase *mottai nai*—'more than I deserve'—to describe the occasion.[3]

It is not clear how deep this concept, *mottai nai,* about the Emperor's speech style prevailed among Japanese at that time, but the fact that there was no reported protest against the Emperor's speech style suggests that indeed the acceptance of downward over-accommodation was commonly shared among the Japanese. According to a poll in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* issued on 15 August 1948, the majority of the Japanese people (90.3%) supported the continuation of the Emperor system. Only 4 percent of people said that the system should be abandoned. The rest (5.7%) responded that they did not know. This suggests that the Emperor was extremely popular among the Japanese at that time, even though Japan was totally defeated by the Allies under his leadership.[4]

Observe the following utterance by the Emperor.

(8)
Kono ie wa samuku nakatta *no*?
this house TOPIC cold not Q
'Was this house not cold to live in?' (*Asahi Shinbun,* 20 February 1946)

Again, the utterance with *no* is quite different from what we expect from the Emperor, a man of absolute authority. Yet, Japanese people, instead of resenting the feminine way their Emperor spoke, extremely appreciated his speech style.

The Emperor linguistically converged in excess. He voluntarily assumed the role of the mother-like person by employing female-style speech and this was met by psychological convergence from the addressees reflected in their approval. A similar scenario might be a nurse speaking to the institutionalized elderly in baby talk, conveying affection to them (Caporael, 1981; Depaulo and Coleman, 1986): however, the psychological effect on the Japanese people was probably more than that, because it was unimaginable for the Emperor to behave in the way he did. It is not as surprising for the nurse to employ baby talk as the Emperor to employ motherese. Next observe the following utterance.

(9)
go-shyujin wa doo shite iru no?
HONORIFIC-husband TOPIC how do is Q
'How is your husband doing?' (*Asahi Shinbun*, 20 February 1946)

The Emperor, upon questioning a woman about her husband's welfare, attached a honorific morpheme *go* to the word *shyujin* 'husband'. The Emperor chose the vocabulary which linguistically functions to show respect to the addressee. The woman and her husband logically did not deserve any respect from the Emperor in terms of their relative social status, yet the Emperor framed his question in the way he did, showing his convergence to the addressee.

Most of the Emperor's utterances appear not to be answered by the addressee's response. Probably this is because writers who documented the data were interested in reporting what the Emperor said rather than how ordinary Japanese people responded. It also appears that some Japanese people were instructed by the local authorities beforehand not to respond to the Emperor in any way. One farmer remembers the instruction given to her as follows:

> You have to continue to work with your scarf on head until the Emperor arrives. When the Emperor gets off the car and comes to you, please take your scarf off promptly and tackle it to you left waist, and check your posture and bow deeply and continue to hold that *saikeirei* 'highest salute form' posture until the Emperor leaves. Even if the Emperor speaks to you, please do not respond to him by all means. You may think it may be rude, but do not respond to him. (Sekai Nippou shya, 1985: 34)

However, we can find some documented brief conversations between the Emperor and the Japanese people. The following conversation is with a miner, when the Emperor visited a mining town in rural Japan.

(10)

Emperor:	shyokuryou sono-hoka iroiro fujiyuu-na mono
	food that-other various scarce things
	ga ooi *darou* ne
	NOM many will TAG
	'I suppose there are many items in shortage such as food.'
Miner:	iie . . . betu-ni
	no other
	'No, not particularly.'
Emperor:	sekitan wa taisetu dakara *douka* zoosan
	coal TOPIC important because please increase
	no tameni ganbatte *kudasai.*
	GEN sake work hard do
	'Because coal is important, please work hard for the production increase'. (Sekai Nippou shya, 1985: 82)

It is interesting to note that the Emperor did not always use the plain verb forms; instead, he often used the polite form as well. He could have used the plain blunt form to the addressees all the time, because after all he was the Emperor and all others are below him. The first utterance of the Emperor in example (10) is marked with the plain form of *darou,* 'will', instead of its polite equivalent of *deshyou*. Yet, his second utterance is marked with the polite form of *kudasai*. Thus, it is not always the case that the Emperor used plain forms all the time. In the second utterance, beside the polite form of verb ending, the Emperor used the word *dooka* 'please', to make the request very polite.

Why did the Emperor use both plain and polite forms? The answer seems to lie in the relationship of power and solidarity. The bottom line is that the Emperor needed both. As the Emperor of the country, he had to maintain his authority, and to use a plain form was a way to keep that authority and power. However, he needed to be accepted by the Japanese people at the same time. Simply staying in the authoritative position did not

gain him any sense of being 'one of them', but using the polite form was a way to make him appear non-authoritative, and ultimately led to social acceptance by the people.

Examples of the Emperor's using polite forms are amply documented. The following dialogue was with a farmer when the Emperor visited the farmland.

(11)

Emperor: Kono o-imo wa koko de tore*mashita* ka?
this potato TOPIC here at grown-POLITE Q
'Are these potatoes grown here?'

Farmer: Hai
'Yes'

Emperor: Shikkari yatte *kudasai.*
hard do please
'Please, work hard'. (Sekai Nippou shya, 1945: 50)

The following dialogue occurred when the Emperor was inspecting bomb-damaged housing in an urban area.

(12)

Emperor: Anatano o-ie wa *yakaremashita* ka?
your HONORIFIC-house TOPIC burned-POLITE Q
'Was your house burnt down?'

Citizen: Yake masen deshita.
burn not was-POLITE
'(My house) did not burn'. (*Asahi Shinbun*, 2 March 1946)

The Emperor, who was a god just a few months previously, was speaking to Japanese people in a very polite form, which would be usual for any average stranger, but extremely unusual for the Emperor to use at that time. Clearly, the Emperor downgraded his speech style to that of addressees to accommodate them.

6.2. Asymmetrical convergence and solidarity

One of the characteristics of the Emperor's speech accommodation is that it is often asymmetrical: although the Emperor converges to the addressee employing both the plain informal speech style and the polite speech style, the addressee maintains the formal polite style to keep a distance between himself or herself and the Emperor. The following example illustrates this point. The dialogue took place between the Emperor and a factory worker when the Emperor visited a heavy-metal factory.

(13)

Emperor: Seikatu ni wa komatte *iru darou ne*?
life to TOPIC in trouble be-PLAIN probably TAG
'I suspect you have difficulty in living, don't you?'

Worker:

a. Seikatu ni wa komatte *imasu* ga dounika yatte *imasu.*
be-POLITE but somehow do be-POLITE
'I have difficulty in living, but I am managing to live in the best way I can.'

b. * Seikatu ni wa komatte iru ga dounika yatte *iru yo.*
be-PLAIN but somehow do be-PLAIN TAG
(*Asahi Shinbun*, 20 February 1946)
*Not actual speech.

The Emperor initiated his question in the plain form *iru darou ne.* In response, the worker answered using the polite form *imasu*, as indicated in (13a); he did not frame his answer in the plain form *iru* as indicated in (13b). The worker could have answered as in (13b), maintaining the level of formality, that is, the plain form in this situation. However, the worker did not converge to the speech style of the Emperor, using instead the formal polite style. In other words, the accommodation was asymmetrical.

In their study of American English, Brown and Ford (1961) pointed out that it is always the superior who ultimately decides when the solidarity form is to be used. This finding has been considered to be one of the well-supported sociolinguistic hypotheses since then (Holmes, 1992). In the case of the Emperor's speech, it is only the Emperor who decides when the solidarity form to be used; the Emperor is also the sole person who can use the solidarity form.

The following is a brief dialogue between the Emperor and a fisherman who was just coming back from a fishing trip. Upon the boat approaching the port, the Emperor called to the fisherman in a loud voice.

(14)
Emperor: Douda *toreta* ka?
how caught Q
'How was it? Did you catch fish?'
Fisherman: Konna ni tore-*mashita*
this much to catch-POLITE
'I caught this much.'
Emperor: Tairyoo da ne.
big catch be-PLAIN TAG
'You caught a lot, didn't you?' (Sekai Nippou shya, 1985: 40)

Notice that the Emperor initiated the solidarity strategy by framing his question in the plain form as if he were a fellow fisherman. This plain form of solidarity style was not taken up by the fisherman. Instead, the fisherman used the very polite form of the verb *tore* 'catch' ending with *mashita.* In response to the reply from the fisherman, the Emperor did not change his style to the polite formal one; instead, he maintained the solidarity style. This suggests that the Emperor not only decided when to use the solidarity style but was the only person entitled to use the strategy.

Throughout the Emperor's visits to various parts of the country, this solidarity strategy seems to have been well accepted by the Japanese people. The following utterance was made to a group of young farmers in the rural part of Japan.

(15)
Doudai yatte iru kai.
how do be-PLAIN TAG
'How are you guys doing?' (*Asahi Shinbun*, 29 March 1946)

The greeting the Emperor used is an extreme example of the solidarity strategy. In this circumstance, a more common greeting would be *konnichiwa*, 'How are you doing', which might be the most neutral form to be used. However, the Emperor uttered the sentence in example (15), which would normally be used among acquaintances in a casual setting. The newspaper commented that the Emperor's casual utterance caught the accompanying officials by surprise. They did not expect the Emperor to adopt the speech style of the local people. Observe the following utterance made by the Emperor when he was speaking to people who had lost their homes due to the war:

(16)
Zuibun hidokatta ne.
very terrible TAG
It was terrible, wasn't it?' (*Asahi Shinbun*, 20 February 1946)

The Emperor is framing his statement as if he were a fellow inhabitant who had gone through the same devastating experience: the consoling sentence makes the addressee feel close to the speaker. Observe another example.

(17)
Zuibun hataraite *kureta* n da ne.
very work gave-me be-PLAIN TAG
'I know you worked very hard for me.' (*Asahi Shinbun*, 20 February 1946)

The morpheme *kureta*, which literally means to do the speaker a favor, makes the style of the utterance closer to that of the addressee, indicating the speaker's sense of debt to the addressee. The Emperor could have used a different sentence without *kureta*, such as:

(18)
Zuibun hataraita n da ne.
very work be-PLAIN TAG
'I know you worked very hard'

The sentence in example (18), without the morpheme *kureta*, does not effectively associate the addressee with the speaker. On the other hand, the sentence in example (17) was very effective in establishing a sense of suffering hardship together: the sense of being comrades.

This shared experience of being defeated in the war and suffering hardship indeed led Japanese people to accept the downward convergence from the Emperor. In this sense, it is interesting to compare the opinions about the Emperor among several generations. In the public opinion poll conducted by the *Asahi Shinbun* (8 February 1989), one of the questions asked was: 'Do you feel close to the present imperial family or not?'. According to the poll, of those who were 60 years and older (and thus had experienced the war), 75 percent responded that they felt close to the Emperor. On the other hand, among those who were in their 20s and 30s (who were born after the war), only about 40 percent responded that they felt close to the imperial family. If the present Emperor Akihito were to speak to Japanese

people as his father Hirohito did, employing the solidarity strategy, how many of them would accept such a strategy? There are no data to predict the results of such a scenario, but it is likely that the Emperor Akihito would not be accepted by Japanese people with the same quality of psychological convergence as his father was, simply because, unlike his father, the present Emperor Akihito has no shared experience of hardship with the people.

Shortly after the war, a woman wrote about her brief meeting with the Emperor Hirohito as follows: 'even though it was a quick glance at the Emperor, his image will never fade away from my memory for the rest of my life. And the immense joy I experienced when I saw the Emperor was just like the one by a child who was long waiting for his/her gentle father' (*Nishinihon Shinbun*, 21 May 1949). The social relationship between the Emperor and the Japanese people represented by the woman's writing can be best captured in terms of solidarity (Brown and Ford, 1961) or psychological distance (Shibatani, 1990), and it appears that this sense of solidarity arose from the amount of shared experience, rather than other traditional socio-demographic features such as age, sex, occupation, etc. Many Japanese did not share those socio-demographic features but they did share the wartime and its tragic consequences. This shared experience enabled people to accept the Emeperor's convergence as an appropriate one.

7. CONCLUSION

A historical event can change the way people speak and also the way people perceive speech style. The present study has examined the virtually unexplored speech of the Emperor Hirohito during his so called *chihoo jyunkoo*, visits to Japanese war-beaten sites in the post-war period. The speech was analyzed in terms of speech accommodation theory, and the Emperor's speech was discussed as an instance of downward accommodation which was met by psychological convergence by the addressees. The accommodation was characterized as asymmetrical and solidarity-oriented. It was argued that the solidarity strategy by the Emperor was well accepted because of the shared experiences between the Emperor and Japanese people during the war. This is taken to support the hypothesis that the meaning of the message is determined by the listener's evaluation of its appropriateness.

SHOJI AZUMA is an Assistant Professor in Japanese at the University of Utah. His research interests include code-switching, politeness strategies and business communication. He is the author of *Shyakai Gengogaku* (forthcoming) and has published in *Linguistics, Applied Psycholinguistics, Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* and *World Englishes*. ADDRESS: Department of Languages and Literature, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84112, USA. [email: shoji.azuma@m.cc.utah.edu]

NOTES

1. Yoshida (1992) among others argues that the visits were politically motivated: they were planned with a suggestion from the Occupying Forces in order to maintain and stabilize the emperor system.
2. For a discussion of the difference between *no* and *noda*, see McGloin (1991).
3. The phrase *mottai nai* can be interpreted as a comment on the fact that the Emperor was directly addressing the Japanese people, an unusual event, rather than a comment on the way the Emperor spoke. However, the newspaper report describing the Emperor's speech style as 'feminine' suggests that the Emperor did overaccommodate.
4. The view that the Emperor was very popular among Japanese was not just that of Japanese newspapers which were under the control of GHQ. Kawahara (1990: 162) cites one British newspaper as follows: 'Japan has lost the war and is now occupied by foreign troops, but the emperor's popularity has scarcely waned. As he traveled throughout the country, the emperor was greeted by large crowds as if he were some sort of superman'. As a chamberlain for the Emperor, Kinoshita (1990) documented that crowds were cheering *banzai* everywhere the Emperor went.

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