Research Article

Trader-Customer Communication Survival Strategies on the Kenya-Uganda Cross-Border Trade: A Communication Accommodation Theory Perspective

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Abstract: Initial encounters with people from different linguistic and cultural affinities during trading activities are likely to cause anxiety, mistrust, and uncertainty that can compromise effective communication. Despite the ongoing trade in Busia town, invoking a theoretical framework may help develop strategies to improve communication by reducing misunderstandings. This paper examines how Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) can provide insights for developing communication survival strategies for traders and customers during an initial intercultural business encounter. Data were collected through observations (non-participant) and recorded conversations from traders and customers who were purposively sampled and analysed using CAT's five sociolinguistic strategies at the Kenya-Uganda cross-border trade. Results indicate that discourse management, interpretability, approximation, emotional expression and interpersonal control strategies are often employed by traders and customers during their interactions, respectively. Findings also revealed that traders applied more of the five sociolinguistic strategies than customers. As such, this accommodation stance allowed seamless interaction, which minimised communication frictions. In view of these findings, this paper, therefore, affirms CAT's utility in providing effective communication survival strategies to traders and customers to help them transcend intercultural communication problems, thereby enhancing cross-border trade.

Keywords: Communication Accommodation Theory, Trader-Customer Communication Survival Strategies, Business Communication.

INTRODUCTION

Cross-border trade, both formal and informal, is considered a significant activity that contributes to economic, political and social development. It is thus regarded as one of the hallmarks of an individual's survival, especially in a continent where there are limited employment opportunities and are on the verge of dwindling over time (FAO, 2017). More importantly, cross-border trade is observed to alleviate poverty and promote economic empowerment among women and youths (Njikam & Tchouassi, 2010). Hence, it remains a critical contributor to creating job opportunities, reducing the poverty rate and wealth creation (Msiza, 2010). Central to this type of borderland trade is the vital role of using an appropriate cross-cultural language. According to Frankel & Rose (1998), two countries that share a common official language are likely to record 1.8 times higher trader returns compared to two countries with dissimilar linguistic affinity. Considerably, Fidrmuc & Fidrmuc (2009) avow that the ability of people to speak a similar language from different countries discerns effective communication between them and makes trade between them effective and affordable.

It is plausible to note that cross-border trade in Busia Kenya and Busia Uganda provides a classic case where there is increased mobility of people from different linguistic, cultural and nation-states backgrounds who crisscross the border for trading purposes. One key point to note is that Busia-One –Stop border, is a porous border that acts as an exit and entry point for landlocked countries (Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and DRC) from the port of Mombasa. For this reason, individuals from these countries meet at Busia town to exchange goods and services (retailers, wholesalers and transport personnel). A more apparent problem is communication which is exacerbated by the lack of an appropriate cross-border language that explicates uncertainty, anxiety and misunderstandings during encounters. The multiplicity of languages is deemed to breed language barriers (Meagher, 2003), which may complicate language choice, thus negatively affecting trader-customer interactions and cross-border trade in general.

Of particular significance is the need to develop effective communication survival strategies for both vendors and customers to deploy to remain afloat from misunderstandings. These survival communication strategies can be canonised using an appropriate cross-border language to augment their interaction. Profoundly, trader-customer discourse interactions are cardinal to any form of trade. Because traders want to maximise profits while customers want to have a good bargain the goods and services, it is necessary to accommodate their communication styles. Attenuating their communication behaviours akin to their

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counterparts in informal settings promises to effect cross-cultural interaction and increase trade sales. In hindsight, both verbal and paralinguistic cues can be lessened between traders and customers during initial encounters to create shared meaning.

In business communication analysis, even though the notion of traders and customers interaction has been examined (Ayeni, 2021; Alo & Soneye, 2014; Scollon & Scollon, 1980), the bulk of this work has been limited to examining communication survival strategies that traders and customers deploy in a bargaining and other social interaction settings in a polyglosifed setting at Busia border between Kenya and Uganda. There is a dearth of research on the impeccable role of the use of an appropriate cross-cultural language in cross-border trade, which, according to Fikken (2017), surmise that where language exists as a barrier in cross-border cooperation, it makes other barriers like administrative, communication and cultural barriers more severe. To fill this gap, this paper invokes the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) propounded by Gallois & Giles (2015) strategies (approximation, interpretability, interpersonal control, discourse management, and emotional control) to provide insights into how traders and customers can effectively accommodate each other in an intercultural business encounter, particularly, where there is a multiverse of languages, cultural asymmetry, and people from differing nations and states.

Using CAT framework (Gallois & Giles, 2015), this paper argues that the lack of an appropriate cross-border language in Busia Kenya and Busia Uganda can be seen as an avenue of advancing communication distance between traders and customers and thereby hindering cross-border trade. The study contends that the five sociolinguistic strategies of CAT can provide appropriate communication survival strategies to vendors and customers to enable them to transcend their differences and create a shared meaning by mitigating intercultural communication problems, thus increasing customer satisfaction needs and increasing sales to vendors.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) has been suggested as one of the most pragmatic approaches critical to interpersonal and intergroup communication between speakers of diverse backgrounds whose interdisciplinary nature (Coupland & Jaworski, 1997) can be utilised in analysing studies of language and communication. CAT emphasis is not only on the ability of interlocutors to shift their language but also on their paralinguistic cues to each other's conversational needs (Farzadnia & Giles, 2015).

Although CAT has been deemed appropriate in interpersonal and intergroup studies in various domains, its five sociolinguistic strategies has received little attention for their ability to provide effective communication survival strategies during trader-customer interaction, especially in Busia town in Kenya and Uganda. In so doing, this study contributes to the usefulness of CAT with respect to its potential to enable an understanding between traders and customers and, in the context of this study, reveals the role of language in trade and critical strategies that can be adopted to ease intercultural tensions. In other words, it underscores the need for a framework that can effect appropriate intercultural communication based on the assumptions of CAT. By focusing on cross-border trade in Busia Kenya and Busia Uganda, this paper, therefore, aims not only to explore trader-customer business interaction but also invoking CAT's five sociolinguistic strategies in providing a framework for effective accommodation strategies and promises to minimise intercultural problems and increase trading activities.

This paper is structured as follows. The next section discusses the communication accommodation theory (CAT) framework, which underlies its origin and the underlying presuppositions underpinning the paper. Next, it reviews relevant studies that have used CAT in different domains and its utility in the current study. It also describes the methods used in the study succinctly. Then, the results are presented by a discussion of the main findings. Lastly, the article concludes in detail the study findings with a brief section on the strengths and limitations of the research.

Theoretical Framework
This section details the overview of the communication accommodation theory by delimiting its genesis and underlying assumptions and supports its applicability in the present study.

Communication Accommodation Theory
A commitment to adjusting linguistic and non-linguistic patterns during interpersonal and intergroup communication is the central underlying tenet of CAT. Howard Giles conceptualised CAT in 1973, initially known as Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT). Its primary focus, as suggested by Giles, is to explain how speakers of dynamic groups consciously or unconsciously adjust their communication behaviours to attune to others during interaction to maintain a positive social identity, induce social approval and promote effective communication goals (Beebe & Giles, 1984; Giles et al., 1991; Giles, 2016; & Wilson, 2019). In practice, it demonstrates how individuals adjust their speech and non-speech aspects of interpersonal communication (Soliz & Giles, 2014).

CAT initially focused on three fundamental accommodation and non-accommodation strategies, including convergence, divergence and maintenance. Convergence relates to individuals' ability to adjust their communication styles (verbal and non-verbal) akin to their interlocutors to advance communication or gain social acceptance (Giles, 2007). Unlike convergence,

divergence pertains to "an accentuation of speech and non-verbal differences between the self and the other. Often (but not always), the motive behind divergence is precisely the desire to emphasise distinctiveness from one's interlocutor, expressively highlighting contrasting group identities" (Soliz & Giles, 2016, p. 112). Maintenance, on the other hand, involves speakers outright sticking to their linguistic and non-linguistic repertoires even when they are bilingual or multilingual. Non-accommodation behaviours, as noted by (Gasiorek, 2016), can arise from using inappropriate adjustments of communication styles or dissimilarities with each other's communication patterns. Pines et al. (2021) warn that this behaviour may have "cognitive and behavioural consequences, such as miscommunication, misunderstanding, communication breakdown and hostility", which could deter effective communication.

In light of this, CAT framework is adopted in this study based on its value in advancing theoretical understanding that "…can be beneficially applied to any situation where people from different groups or cultures come into contact" (Griffin, 2009). In other words, it offers an appropriate framework to examine how and why traders and customers from differing linguistic and cultural orientations communicate during bargaining. Practically, CAT usefulness in this research is anchored on the assumption that its five sociolinguistic strategies can provide insights into communication survival strategies for traders and customers in diversified intercultural business settings. As well, it offers a new impetus in advancing interpersonal and intergroup studies by suggesting ways in which communication costs, misunderstandings and communication breakdowns can be minimised, thereby enhancing a shared understanding and achieving common communication goals. Taken together, accommodation strategies allows seamless interactions whereas non-accommodation strategies impede effective interpersonal and intergroup communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the extant literature on using CAT across domains and identifies the knowledge gap that the current study fills.

Communication Accommodation Theory in Contexts

CAT's utility has been observed in several studies as one of the most appropriate frameworks for analysing interpersonal and intergroup communication. Hitherto, it remains "one of the most influential behavioural communication theories" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005, p. 147). CAT has been applied in studies relating to media, healthcare, education, business, courts and other social interaction settings, as discussed below.

In healthcare contexts, for instance, CAT has been used to study communication behaviours in patient-provider health interactions (Farzadnia & Giles, 2015). In their analytic review, the authors reveal that patients and providers had challenges in approximating each other. Similarly, both partners attempted to comprehend each other's knowledge and differences. However, interpersonal control was much more evident in the provider's interaction behaviours. Regarding discourse management, providers were seen as more responsive than patients. Lastly, the study showed that most studies only focused on the provider's emotional expression but not on the patient's side. The study thus concluded that" CAT is a productive approach to understanding linguistic as well as socio-psychological aspects of patient-provider health interactions" (Farzadnia & Giles, 2015).

Furthermore, Pines et al. (2021) sought to investigate how to manage patient aggression in healthcare by invoking the Communication Accommodation Theory as an initial test to provide interventions to increase self-efficacy and promote patient collaboration. The study adopted a longitudinal mixed-methods paradigm and was conducted in an American primary care clinic targeting healthcare professionals. The study recounted that CAT training as an intervention significantly increased the healthcare profession's efficacy and reported patient cooperation over time. The findings also indicated that those who employed more of the five CAT strategies considerably reported that they could de-escalate aggression effectively. As such, the study concluded that the initial testing of CAT training in reducing patient-perpetrated workplace violence (WPV) showed its potential in applying CAT strategies to minimise patient aggression and the need to apply it to settings of high WPV prevalence.

Hajek et al. (2006) aimed to investigate police-civilian relations in Louisiana and South Africa. The study induced a new model to test how police officers perceived accommodation, trust in the police and the voluntary compliance from the civilians was demonstrated. The findings indicated that despite cultural differences between nations and ethnicities of the participants, police officers accommodative stance illuminated civilian compliance through trust. Likewise, Christopher et al. (2008) deployed CAT in law enforcement to investigate communication behaviours demonstrated between police officers and civilians. Using China and America as case studies, the study explored the vitality of communication accommodation in interactions. Findings indicated a positive connection between police officer communication accommodation and civilian trust in the police and their compliance with police demands.

In family relationships, communication accommodation strategies are usually employed to strengthen values and other social interaction behaviours. Harwood et al. (2006), for example,

modelled the relationships between intergenerational contact, IOS, and stereotypes of warmth and incompetence in predicting attitudes towards older adults in a young community sample. The main finding was that interlocutors did not reveal differences in the use of complex linguistic forms; their voices sounded higher in pitch and were more babyish, feminine, and unpleasant when conversing with grandparents as to parents. Hence, the authors' findings reveal that respecting divergent values is the most influential communication accommodation strategy and is among the most adversely affected by political differences in the family. Colaner et al. (2014) examined the communicative management of religious differences in parent-child relationships. The findings showed that religious differences between parents and adult children might preclude relationship well-being. Put differently, there was a reduced shared family identity and relational satisfaction, especially where individuals demonstrated religious asymmetry in both interfaith and intrafaith families.

Yet again, several studies employed CAT to investigate communication accommodation in online interactions, electronic ecosystems and social media. In such interactions, there is a high level of uncertainty and intercultural tensions exhibited by conversational partners. In electronic interactions, for instance, Bunz & Campbell (2004) investigated politeness accommodation in email conversations, particularly, whether people accommodate verbal and structural politeness indicators. Results indicated that interlocutors accommodated specific politeness indicators during email interactions. Specifically, there was an accommodation of verbal makers and greetings in the body of a message. Subjects that demonstrated these accommodations strategies in their emails recorded reciprocity from their recipients than those who did not incorporate those cues. Knox (2020) used the social psychology theoretical framework relating to human interaction and explored the impacts of communication accommodation theory on interpersonal communication on social media. The study revealed that most participants (Saudi female international college students) reported some changes to their identities after going to the United States. Considerably, there was a positive change among participants in how they expressed their identities on social media more freely and enjoyed using it to connect with others.

In educational settings, Chen (2019) used speech accommodation strategies to explore how teachers interacted with older students in Taiwan's senior educational environment. Findings revealed that teachers employed a number of communication strategies when interacting with older students, including the use of secondary baby talk, reduced death or illness discussions, politeness, and using code-switching and mixing to attune their communication style to older student's preferred language variations.

Weizheng (2019) adopted the communication accommodation theory to scrutinise how teachers and students interacted in the EFL classroom. Analysis from the conversation showed four salient communication accommodation strategies employed by three participants in each EFL class, including approximation, interpretability, emotional expression, and interpersonal control. Moreover, interpretability and discourse management strategies were reported to occur more frequently during classroom interaction.

Previous studies have also demonstrated CAT's utility in analysing studies related to business settings. In particular, Ishak & Rafik-Galea (2015) focused on how participants accommodated linguistic differences and difficulties during life insurance sales by employing convergent and divergent communication strategies. Results suggested that both insurance vendors and prospective buyers demonstrated frequent communication accommodation strategies in their interactions which more or less augmented insurance sales. Ayeni (2021) probed how buyers and sellers employed inclusion strategies and their effects in Nigerian business settings. Findings unveiled that traders and buyers adopted a series of inclusive strategies, including salutations, jokes, flattering, and pleading, notwithstanding the use of code-switching and code-mixing.

Unfortunately, even though few prior studies in business interactions employed CAT as their main theoretical framework, as illustrated above, none of them has shown how CAT's five sociolinguistic strategies can be adapted to provide a communication accommodation model that vendors and customers can utilise to overcome intercultural communication tensions. In particular, trader-customer interactions at the Busia-One-stop border in Kenya and Uganda have not been examined yet. Hence, this study employs five main CAT communication strategies, including approximation, interpretability, discourse management, emotional expression and interpersonal control, to bolster effective interaction (Gallois et al., 2005; Gallois & Giles, 2015). Approximation strategies are a tendency where interlocutors adjust their verbal (i.e. language, vocabulary, accent, speed, tone etc.) and non-verbal (gestures) cues to match each other's while interacting (Giles et al., 1991).

In a business environment, it is probable for both sellers and buyers to adjust their communication styles to achieve their goals. Interpretability focuses on measuring the level of understanding between speakers in conversations (Giles et al., 1991). For instance, both traders and customers may employ repetitions, easy diction, or simple sentences during initial encounters to reduce uncertainty and ensure understanding is achieved between them. Discourse management strategies relates to strategies used by speakers to ensure the goal of communication is attained. These

strategies may include feedback elicitations, backchannels, topic control, asking and answering questions, and use of turn-taking. In a bargaining context, traders may ask buyers to suggest the amount of money they have for the needed product, which helps develop a conversation.

Interpersonal control strategies reveals how interlocutors either reduce or widens communication distance by managing their hierarchical needs. Such strategies include avoiding using surnames (like John, Mary) and honorifics or interruptions. In trader-customer interaction, traders, as well as customers, may use relational terms like *bro! Mdosi* (rich person), or *ma'am* and using *directives* by traders to customers on how to use a product. Emotional expression refers to the extent to which speakers may or may not accommodate each other's emotional feelings during a conversation (Watson & Gallois, 1998; Williams et al., 1990). In business contexts, customers may display emotions like dissatisfaction, anger, and frustration, especially in hotly contested negotiating where the trader refuses to reduce the price of goods and services during bargaining. To ensure an effective bargain happens, it is pertinent both traders and customers regulate their own emotions in order to promote effective intercultural relations among them.

Overall, these studies suggest the efficacy of CAT in analysing interactions of people from diverse contexts and domains. Hence, following the communication gap experienced by traders and customers during cross-border trade in Busia town, including language barriers, intercultural problems caused by an artificial border and increased communication costs, it would be prudent to mitigate these challenges and increase understanding by employing CAT's communication accommodation strategies. For this reason, applying the strategies mentioned above would provide communication survival strategies that interlocutors in business settings may use to conduce understanding, increase trade sales of traders, customer satisfaction needs for customers and create social capital among them. Inherently, this paper is guided by the following research questions:

- In what ways do traders and customers accommodate each other during business interaction?
- How can the five communication accommodation theory (CAT) strategies provide insights into communication survival strategies for traders and customers during business interaction?

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted a qualitative research approach which, Lunenberg & Irby (2008) recounts that involves understanding people's behaviours, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs or cultures in ordinary diverse settings. The data were collected at the Kenya-

Uganda border in Busia Kenya and Busia Uganda through observations (non-participant) and recorded conversations from traders and customers who were purposively sampled as Patton (2002) surmise "to provide information richness". An observation guide was deployed to observe how traders and customers displayed emotional behaviours, particularly in hotly contested prices of goods in a bargaining context. A voice recorder, on the other hand, was used to record traders and customers conversations during an interaction.

The collected data were presented in excerpts. Recorded conversations, for instance, were carefully transcribed and presented in excerpts which were then used to analyse the survival strategies traders and customers displayed. Additionally, observed negotiations (i.e. emotional behaviours, proximity between traders and customers, communication patterns) were noted and presented. Finally, the collected data were analysed using the five sociolinguistic strategies of the CAT as espoused by Gallois & Giles (2015) to determine survival communication strategies that both traders and customers employed at the Busia border in a bid to remain afloat from the communication challenges, and their effects on intercultural interactions and cross-border trade.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The material for this study is based on three recorded texts from conversations between traders and customers at the Busia border between Kenya and Uganda. In general, the conversations reveal both vendors and customers enunciate accommodative and non-accommodative behaviours that either accelerate or derail understanding, thereby affecting communication and cross-border trade. Essentially, vendors appear to be more accommodative compared to customers during interactions. Subsequent excerpts illustrate how vendors and customers converge, diverge and maintain during a bargaining context.

Excerpt 1
Buyer: *Niaje! Hii ni ngapi?* (Hi! How much is this?)
Seller: *Hii ni elfu mbili mia saba.* (This is two thousand, seven hundred Kenya shillings).
Buyer: *Elfu mbili mia saba?* (Two thousand, seven hundred?)
Seller: *Eeh!* (Yes!)
Buyer: *Hakuna kubargain?* (There is no bargaining?)
Seller: *Mmmh! Fanya mbili mia tano. Hii ni ngozi yenyewe, hata si we*
unaona. (Mmmh! Make it two thousand five hundred. This is genuine leather, you can see it)
Buyer: *Mmmh! Sawa wacha niii, unajua ukitembea na upate kitu mzuri*
lakini itabidi uende ndo ukuje na hiyo pesa. (Mmm! It is ok Let me…you know when

you bump into something good, you have to go and get the money).
Seller: *We ulikua na ngapi?* (How much did you have?)
Buyer: *Nilikua nataka tu kujua bei ndo nirudi.* (I just wanted to
know how much it costs so that I can come back).
Seller: *Sawasawa.* (it is ok).
Buyer: *Lakini tutaongea hii bei irudi down kidogo.* (But we will have to talk
so that the price go,es down a little).
Seller: *Aah! tutakuja tuangalie.* (Aah! You'll come and we shall see).
Buyer: *Nitakueleza.* (I'll let you know).
Seller: *Sawa, bro.* (It is fine, bro)

Excerpt 1 happens on the Kenyan side of the border. It's a conversation between a shoe vendor and a customer in a bargaining context. In this excerpt, *interpretability strategy* is revealed. Giles et al. (1991) aver that the strategy of interpretability can vary as speakers continuously assess each other's comprehension. As mentioned earlier, this strategy can be realized by the use of repetitions, simple sentences, short phrases, tempo and speech rate, and volume. In this excerpt, the buyer employs *repetition* as an interpretability strategy to verify his standing. When the seller quoted the price (in Kenya shillings) of the shoe as "Hii ni elfu mbili mia saba" (This is two thousand, seven hundred), the buyer repeated the same statement as a question, "Elfu, mbili mia saba?" (Two thousand, seven hundred?). *Repetition* as an interpretability strategy in trade discourse can, therefore, be used to gain understanding, set an environment to bargain, and, at the same time, mitigate misunderstandings and miscommunications.

Farzadnia & Giles (2015) hold that interpretability and discourse management are the most commonly used strategies by speakers to achieve their communication goals. Fundamentally, *discourse management* is also evident as interpretability in this excerpt. The whole conversation indicates discourse management strategies such as turn-taking and in some cases, the use of back-back-channeling and topic control. The trader and the buyer use *turn-taking* by asking and answering questions. When the buyer asks, "Niaje! Hii ni ngapi?" (Hi! How much is this?) the seller takes a turn and answers "Hii ni elfu mbili mia saba" (this is two thousand, seven hundred). Here, turn-taking is evidenced through asking and answering questions. Similarly, both the seller and the buyer applied *buck-channelling* fillers like *mmmh*! so as to keep the conversation going, to give time to think, to influence a decision as to whether to reduce the price by the seller or to buy the product by the buyer. A clear example is when the buyer asked the trader as to whether there was no bargaining for the shoe, "**Hakuna kubargain**?" (Is there bargaining?), the seller uses *back-channeling* indicator "Mmmh!" as a strategy to create space to think before deciding to either maintain

or lessen the price. As evident from the excerpt, the use of buck-channeling allowed the buyer to reduce the price of the shoe and gave him or her time to explain why the price was fair when he answered, "Mmmh!, Fanya mbili mia tano. Hii ni ngozi yenyewe, hata si we unaona" (Mmmh! Make it two thousand five hundred. This is genuine, you can see it). This context therefore, demonstrates that discourse management is an essential strategy that canonises effective conversation to enable interlocutors to attain understanding.

Significantly, *interpersonal control strategies* are crucial in trader-customer interactions, particularly where there is a linguistic and cultural asymmetry between conversational partners. As previously stated, this strategy pertains using relational words to reduce hierarchical distance and exacerbate equality among dynamic speakers. In this conversation, after the buyer promises the seller "Nitakueleza" (I'll let you know), the seller responds by calling the buyer "bro", the short form of brother. The use the relational term "bro" therefore suggests that it helps to reduce tensions, anxiety and uncertainty between the buyer and the seller and creates a sense of mutual trust.

Emotional expression was also observed during negotiations between the seller and the buyer. This strategy specifically involves showing concern or understanding towards the feelings of the other in interaction (e.g. happiness, sadness, frustration, disgust, dissatisfaction etc.). These emotional expressions can be observed through verbal and nonverbal indicators like smiling, frowning, nodding or using words like please, kindly and so on. It is vital noting that when the buyer displays happiness after buying the product, that implies an accommodative stance from the seller. However, when frustrated, it shows a non-accommodative stance. In this excerpt, when the buyer suggested the price be reduced a little when he returns "Laikini tutaongea hii bei ikirudi *down kidogo*" (But we'll have to talk so you can reduce the price), the seller responds, "Aah! Tutakuja tuangalie" (Aah! You'll come and we shall see). The word "Aah!" by the e seller is a form of disgust. This disgust is shown by the seller because despite reducing the price of the shoe, the buyer ended up not buying, and instead suggested the price be modified when he returns. Apparently, this is a form of non-accommodation behaviour shown by the buyer towards the seller. However, emotional displays are always showcased by both buyers and sellers. Therefore, when both are not considerate of each other's emotions, especially in the existence of language barriers, it may compromise effective communication.

Further, *approximation* is yet another strategy seen in this conversation. It principally involves switching verbal (diction, language, voice, tone, speed rate) and paralinguistic (eye contact, proximity, gestures) cues by speakers to mirror each other's to

attain a common understanding. Giles et al. (1991) affirm this assumption by arguing that approximation accounts for adjusting communicative behaviours by interlocutors to the other, which can be indicated by lexical, phonetic, and morphological features of language. This excerpt, therefore, accounts for this strategy through *intonation*. For instance, the buyer uses a low tone when asking the buyer "We ,ulikuwa na ngapi?" (How much did you have?). One prudent interpretation of this behaviour is that it can be because the seller wants to convince the buyer to buy their product. Therefore, the use of tonal variations during interactions between traders and customers may (or not) advance effective communication based on how they are vary. Perhaps, using a lower tone is likely to be interpreted as over-accommodation by the buyer which can inhibit effective negotiation.

Excerpt 2
Seller: Karibia **Kastama**. (*welcome customer*).
Buyer: Pineapple? (*Pineapple?*)
Seller: Iko ya mia, iko ya mia hamsini. (*There's for fifty and hundred shillShillings***yer:** Aai! Tumeseme matunda imepotea? (*Aaa! Does it mean there are no fruits?*) -SURPRISE
Seller: Matunda akuna. (*There are no fruits*).
Buyer: Enhe! Nilikua nmezoea kuja hapa. Sasa hii waling'oa wenye walikuanga hapa walienda wapi? (*Eeeh! I used to come here. So they removed stands that were here, sellers who were here, where did they go to?*)
Seller: Na si ndio sisi ndo tulisonga hapa. (*It's us who moved here*).
Buyer: eeeh! (*Eee!*)
Seller: Wengine wako **posta**, wengine uko chini. (*Others are at Posta, and others are down there*).
Buyer: Inaogopesha mtu. Maembe ni mia ivoivo tu? (*It turns someone away. Are mangoes the same price?*)
Seller: Maembe ni **forty** moja, tatu mia. (*Mangoes are forty shillings each, three at a hundred shillings*).
Buyer: *Forty* moja? (*a mango at forty shillings?*)
Seller: Tatu mia unachukua. (*You can pick three with 1,00 shillings*).
Buyer: Wacha niangalie mwenyewe alikuwa amenituma. (*Let me reach out to the one who sent me*).
Seller: Pale nyuma mbili hamsini, nne mia. (Those *at the back cost 50 shillings for 2 and 100 shillings for 4*).

This conversation happened at the Kenyan side of the border between a fruit vendor and a buyer. As observed by the researcher, the vendor engaged in selling fruits like pineapples, mangoes, oranges, bananas and watermelons. One key strategy in this excerpt is *discourse management* applied by both the vendor and the buyer. Particularly, when the buyer asks "Pineapple?" as a question to the seller to quote the price, the seller takes or turn and answers "Iko ya mia, iko ya mia hamsini" in Kiswahili which translates to "There's for fifty and hundred shillings" in English. This strategy is called *turn-taking* a crucial element of discourse management. Another key discourse management strategy displayed in this excerpt is the use of *topic control* or what is known as the use of *relational story*. After the seller answers the buyer's question about whether it was not the fruits season, the buyer uses a relational topic by engaging the seller in the conversation. The buyer says and asks, "Enhe! Nilikuwa nimezoea kuja hapa. Sasa hii waling'oa wenye walikuanga hapa walienda wapi?" in ungrammatical Kiswahili which translates to "*Eeeh! I used to come here. So they removed stands that were here, sellers who were here, where did they go to?*". The seller then answers ""Na si ndio sisi ndo tulisonga hapa" which means "it's us who moved here". Clearly, there is the use of a related story between the seller and the buyer which makes then continue to have the conversation.

Meanwhile, *interpersonal control strategy* is displayed in this excerpt. According to Pines et al. (2021) interpersonal control strategy involves making moves that discern rank and status of interlocutors in a conversation. In business settings, it may involve using relational words such as "Aunty" or "uncle" to not only show respect but also to enable buyers and sellers to reduce anxiety and uncertainty when bargaining, which reduces communication breakdown. Specifically, the seller welcomes the buyer by saying "Karibia Kastama" in Kiswahili which translates to "welcome customer". The word 'Kastama' here is a relational word which shows courtesy displayed by the seller to the buyer as an invitation to buy his product. This consents with Ayeni's (2021) findings which showed that traders in Nigerian business settings used honorifics or relational words as a strategy to woo buyers to buy their products.

In addition, *approximation strategy* is also revealed in this conversation. This strategy basically involves speakers switching their linguistic and nonlinguistic repertoires to match their interlocutors in interaction. This strategy can be displayed through code-mixing and code-mixing, or increasing or decreasing speech rate, tone, or volume during conversations. When the buyer asks the seller the price of mangoes, he says "*Forty* moja?" (a mango at forty shillings?) which displays the rising of tone and , then the seller answers "Tatu mia chukua" (you can pick three with 100 shillings) in a decreasing tone. Principally, both the buyer and the seller are good users of tonal variation, which, according to this context, is exhibited through questions, statements or exclamations. Therefore, using approximation strategy is vital to encourage understanding, especially in cases

where an interlocutor may have limited knowledge of the language used during interaction.

In pursuit of enabling understanding during trader-customer interaction, *interpretability* is one appropriate strategy that both speakers commonly enunciate. In business settings, sellers and buyers use repetitions, simple dictions and or sentences either to lower each other's anxiety or to encourage understanding and minimise intercultural communication problems. In this excerpt, interpretability strategy was used by both the seller and the buyer through simple vocabulary, and short sentences. When the seller welcomed, the buyer said "Karibia Kastama" (Welcome customer), and the buyer responded by asking the price of the pineapple "pineapple?" . From these examples, it is apparent that both the buyer and the seller used simple vocabulary which are displayed through short sentences. This is congruent with Hewett's (2015) argument that the strategy of interpretability can be experienced through modification of language complexity, increasing understanding and attuning to topic similarity. However, it is worthwhile noting that sellers converged more often (accommodation) as compared to buyers. This situation accounts to the fact that the buyers main goal is to maximize profits, and in such instances, they go beyond using simple language or vocabularies to enable understanding from their prospective buyers.

Lastly, the strategy of *emotional expression* can also be seen from this excerpt. Emotional expression is one of the salient strategies which influence business success. In this excerpt, the buyer uses the strategy of *surprise* to gain sympathy, initiate a bargain and create a conducive environment for negotiations. In contrast, the seller may not show emotions simply to gain confidence from the buyer and to sell his product at a profitable price. As soon as the seller quoted the price of the fruit as "iko ya mia, iko ya hamsini" (there's for fifty and for one hundred shillings), the buyer exhibited his or her emotions through *surprise* by saying "Aai,! Tuseme matunda yamepotea?" (Aaah! Does it mean there are no fruits?). In a rejoinder, the seller responds by maintaining that "Hakuna matunda" (there are no fruits). In this case, maintaining the absence of fruits by the seller may show underaccommodation or non-accommodation which could encourage or discourage negotiation.

Excerpt 3
Buyer: Hii unauzaje hii? Hii pesa ngapi hii? (How much do you sell this?)
Seller: *Two fifty*.
Buyer: *Two fifty?*
Seller: mmh! (mmh)
Buyer: iyo ndo mwisho kabisa? (*Is that the final price?*)
Seller: eeh iyo tu. (*Yes that it is*).
Buyer: Hakuna ku*bargain*? (*No bargaining*?)

Seller: Hakuna ku*bargain*. (No bargaining).
Buyer: Punguza tafadhali. (Reduce please).
Seller: Bei niyo tu. (That's the price).
Buyer: Sawa, acha acha nita… tembeetembee kidogo.
(*Okay, let me, let me… walk around*)

Excerpt 3 above, is a conversation that took place at a phone accessories retail shop on the Ugandan side of the border. The vendor here involves in selling materials such as USB cables, screen protectors, phones, chargers and protective covers. In this excerpt, *discourse management strategy* such as asking questions, turn-taking, back-channeling are more evident as the trader and the customer negotiate prices of the commodities. One salient discourse management strategy displayed in this conversation is *turn-taking*, which according to (Ibraheem, 2017), defines the primary strategy of interaction between speakers. For instance, in this excerpt, a vendor and a customer take turns while negotiating the prices of goods and services. The discourse starts when the buyer *asks* the seller the price of a commodity in Kiswahili, **"Hii unauzaje? Hii ni pesa ngapi**?" which literary translates to **"How much is this? How much is this?"** in English. Here, the conversation is two-way traffic which allows every speaker to speak at a time. Additionally, to keep the discussion without actively getting involved in it, the seller uses *back-channeling* showcased by the use of *fillers*. For example, when the buyers seems surprised by repeating the commodity price by saying **"Two fifty?"** the seller uses a filler **"mmh!"** to ensure the conversation goes on effortlessly.

Interpretability is also another basic strategy demonstrated in this conversation. For instance, *repetition* is used as a way to enhance understanding between the seller and the buyer. When the seller quotes the price **"Two fifty",** the buyer repeats the same sentence by asking, **"Two fifty?"** Similarly, when the buyer asks whether there is bargaining in Kiswahili and English as, **"Hakuna ku-*bargain?*"** the seller repeats the same sentence by insisting, **"Hakuna ku-*bargain*".** Also, there is the use of simple sentences in this conversation which extends understanding. *Approximation strategy* is also observed in this interaction. In essence, it involves interlocutors adjusting both verbal and non-verbal cues to attune to their conversational partners during face-to-face interaction. That is to say, sellers and buyers employ *code-switching and code-mixing* in their discourse to approximate to their conversational needs. When the buyers asks the seller in Kiswahili, "Hii unauzaje?, Hii pesa ngapi hii?" the seller switches to English and answers "Two fifty", which then makes the buyer to also switch to English by stressing "Two fifty?". Considerably, code-mixing is also seen in this exchange. For example, when the buyer asks, "Hakuna Ku-*bargain*?" which translates to "Is there bargaining? "The seller responds and says, "Hakuna ku-*bargain*"

(There is no bargaining). Here code-mixing is displayed by using both English (bargain) and Kiswahili (Hakuna) lexes in the conversation.

Even though, both the seller and the buyer are good approximates in their verbal cues, non-verbal cues like cultural stereotypes revealed the seller's non-approximation behavior. One point that merits understanding is that the seller seemed to be a Ugandan citizen while the buyer a Kenyan citizen. In other words, Ugandans for a long time have stereotyped Kenyans as people who like bargaining too much, which is contrary to what Ugandans do. Undoubtedly, this stereotype appears to be evident in this observation which made the buyer to turn away (non-accommodation) and can be a barrier to effective communication. This may more or less make the seller incur a loss and a buyer dissatisfied.

Again, *emotional expression strategy* is evident in this conversation. This strategy as observed by Watson & Gallois (1998); & Williams et al. (1990) happens through acknowledging and considering the other person's emotions which can show empathy. As soon as the buyer asked the price of a commodity, and the seller quoted it as "Two fifty", the buyer seems to be surprised by the price, which according to him/her seemed too high. Interestingly, the buyer uses *pleading* as an emotional expression strategy. For example, he asks the seller, "punguza tafadhali" in Kiswahili which translates to "reduce please" in English. The use of "please" by the buyer displays his or her emotions as a strategy to signal empathy from the seller, so that the price could be reduced. However, the seller remains adamant by saying "bei niyo tu" which means "that's the price". As the conversation ends, the buyer says. "**s**awa, acha acha nita… tembeetembee kidogo", which translates to "okay, let me, let me… walk around". From this exchange, it can be deduced that the buyer appeared to be frustrated, dissatisfied or disappointed by the seller's non-legitimizing his or her personal feelings. Thus, the seller showed-cased a non-accommodative stance towards the buyer which may cause overarching effects to his or her sell-ability.

CONCLUSION

To exemplify the use of language and communication in enhancing trade, this paper examined the applicability of CAT strategies to provide insights for developing communication survival strategies to traders and customers. It analysed trader-customer interactions using CAT by probing how they are used to minimise intercultural conflicts, mistrust, and understandings to galvanise effective communication. The study found that both traders and customers used CAT's sociolinguistic strategies including, discourse management (e.g. turn-taking, relational story, back-channeling, asking and answering questions), interpretability (e.g. simple language, short sentences), approximation (e.g. code-switching and code-mixing,

tonal variation), emotional expression (e.g. pleading, greetings) and interpersonal control respectively (e.g. use of relational words). It was also found that traders showed more accommodation stance towards customers compared to customers towards traders. The net effect of this accommodation behaviour exhibited by traders probably wants to woo their customers to buy their products, gain trust and create social capital.

This paper has argued that accommodation is vital during trade interactions. CAT's sociolinguistic strategies clearly assert adjusting linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours by interlocutors to mirror the others is crucial during interaction. Since it creates a sense of acknowledging personal and intergroup differences, building trust and enables creating a common understanding. Therefore, in the context of business settings, as demonstrated in this study, the use of these strategies by traders and customers can help them develop communication survival strategies to achieve their desired goals. For this reason, these findings suggest that using CAT strategies by traders and customers may reduce miscommunications, misunderstandings, mistrust, thereby enhancing effective intercultural communication and cross-border trade.

It is also prudent to note that this study was somewhat limited to only three transcribed recordings. Therefore, the study may not be suitable for generalizability. As such, this study offers a research opportunity to examine CAT's suitability in other language-discordant settings for generalizability. Notwithstanding this limitation, the study has demonstrated CAT's utility in providing insights into communication survival strategies that traders and customers can use in situations of linguistic, cultural and nation-state diversity. Therefore, this study affirms CAT's interdisciplinary (Coupland & Jaworski, 1997) and multi-disciplinary nature in augmenting bi-directional communication in any diverse settings. Finally, by analysing trader-customer interactions using CAT, this study contributes to interpersonal and intergroup research and it illustrates how communication (intercultural or cross-cultural) can be effected to advance understanding and transcend individual, personality, linguistic, cultural and nation-states differences. Thus, the insights attained from this study can be applied in other diverse settings with similar or different socio-cultural contexts.

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