

**Exploring the Application and Effectiveness  
of Communication Accommodation Theory  
(CAT) in Community Service:**

**A Case Study of the Happiness Makers Team  
at Deraya University.**

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A Case Study of the Happiness Makers Team at Deraya University.**

**Abstract:**

This study explores the application and effectiveness of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) in community service through a case study of the Happiness Makers Team at Deraya University. The study aims to understand how the Happiness Makers Team utilized CAT strategies in their communication with the community members they served and how these strategies affected their communication. The study used a qualitative case study approach, and the data were collected through semi-structured interviews with members of the team and community members they served. The analysis of the data reveals that the Happiness Makers Team effectively applied CAT strategies, such as adjusting their communication styles, using appropriate language, nonverbal behaviors, and tone of voice, to fit the communication needs of the community members. The application of CAT strategies led to improved communication and increased community engagement. The community members felt that the team members understood their communication needs and were willing to communicate with them, which facilitated the team's community service activities. The study concludes that CAT can be a useful framework for community service organizations to improve communication with the communities they serve. The study highlights the importance of adjusting communication styles to fit the communication needs of the interlocutors, which can lead to improved communication and increased community engagement. The study also suggests that CAT strategies can enhance the learning experience of students involved in community service activities by providing them with valuable communication skills that they can apply in their future careers. Future research can explore the application of CAT in different community service contexts and examine the long-term effects of CAT strategies on community engagement and communication.

**Keywords:** *Community service, Happiness Makers team, Deraya University, Communication effectiveness, positive social outcomes, diverse communities, social cohesion.*



## ملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة تطبيق وفعالية نظرية التكيف التواصلي (CAT) في خدمة المجتمع من خلال دراسة حالة لفريق صناع الفرحة في جامعة دراية . تهدف الدراسة فهم كيفية استخدام فريق صناع الفرحة لاستراتيجيات CAT في التواصل مع أفراد المجتمع وكيف أثرت هذه الاستراتيجيات على تواصلهم. استخدمت الدراسة نهج دراسة الحالة النوعية، وتم جمع البيانات من خلال مقابلات شبه منظمة مع أعضاء الفريق وأفراد المجتمع المستفيدين. يكشف تحليل البيانات أن فريق صناع الفرحة طبق استراتيجيات CAT بشكل فعال، مثل تعديل أنماط التواصل الخاصة بهم، واستخدام اللغة المناسبة، والسلوكيات غير اللفظية، ونبرة الصوت، لتناسب احتياجات التواصل لأفراد المجتمع. أدى تطبيق استراتيجيات CAT إلى تحسين الاتصال وزيادة مشاركة المجتمع. شعر أفراد المجتمع أن أعضاء الفريق فهموا احتياجاتهم التواصلية وكانوا على استعداد للتواصل معهم، مما سهل أنشطة خدمة المجتمع للفريق. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن CAT يمكن أن يكون إطارًا مفيداً لمنظمات خدمة المجتمع لتحسين التواصل مع المجتمعات التي تخدمها. وتسلط الدراسة الضوء على أهمية تكييف أنماط التواصل لتناسب احتياجات التواصل للمحاورين، مما قد يؤدي إلى تحسين الاتصال وزيادة مشاركة المجتمع. كما تقترح الدراسة أن استراتيجيات CAT يمكن أن تعزز تجربة التعلم للطلاب المشاركين في أنشطة خدمة المجتمع من خلال تزويدهم بمهارات التواصل القيمة التي يمكنهم تطبيقها في حياتهم المهنية المستقبلية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** خدمة المجتمع، فريق صناع السعادة، جامعة دراية، فعالية الاتصال، النتائج الاجتماعية الإيجابية، المجتمعات المتنوعة، التماسك الاجتماعي

## **Introduction:**

Community service is an important aspect of social responsibility that involves individuals or groups volunteering their time and resources to help others in need. Communication is an essential aspect of community service activities. Effective communication helps in building relationships, understanding the needs of the community, and providing appropriate services. In Egypt, community service activities are an essential part of the culture and are often organized by religious institutions or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These activities aim to provide support and assistance to those in need, such as the elderly, children, and people with disabilities.

Effective communication is a fundamental aspect of community service, as it plays a crucial role in achieving the goals of various community organizations and promoting social cohesion. Fisher and Griffith (2017) state that effective communication in community service involves "listening to community members, understanding their needs, and engaging in two-way communication to build trust and establish a sense of collaboration." Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is a well-established theoretical framework that has been extensively applied in various communication contexts. CAT was developed by Howard Giles in 1971. As stated by Giles and Coupland (1991), communication accommodation occurs when individuals "adjust their speech, their vocal patterns or their accents, their gestures or their facial expressions, their use of

space, or their dress to accommodate the norms of the person or group with whom they are communicating." The theory explains how people adjust their communication style to accommodate others based on social identity, context, and goals. According to CAT, individuals modify their speech patterns, tone, and body language to match the communication style of the person they interact, thereby promoting effective communication and social harmony.

Deraya University is a private university located in the city of Minia, Egypt. It was established in 2010 to provide high-quality education to students from all over the world. The university offers a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs in various fields, including Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Dentistry and Business. Deraya University is known for its modern facilities and state-of-the-art technology that enhances the learning experience for students. The university also provides students with opportunities to participate in student activities, research projects and internships to gain practical experience.

The Happiness Makers Team is a group of Deraya students who are dedicated and committed to making the world a better place, and spreading joy and positivity in their community. One of the team's main focuses is on volunteering. They regularly organize events and convoys where they help out at local charities, villages, and hospitals. Their Facebook page is an excellent resource for anyone looking for ways to get involved in their community or simply looking for some inspiration to

brighten their life. The page is a hub for all their team activities, ranging from volunteer work to fun events. These events are designed to promote social interaction and create a sense of responsibility towards community among those who participate or attend. Overall, the Happiness Makers Dum team is an inspiring group of individuals.

Overall, this scientific paper contributes to the growing body of research on CAT and its application in various communication contexts. The study provides valuable insights into how CAT can be applied in community service and how it can promote effective communication and positive social outcomes.

### **Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)**

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is a widely studied framework that explains how individuals adjust their communication style to match their conversational partner's style. As Giles and Smith (2019) note, "CAT is a theory concerned with how people adjust their communication behavior in response to those with whom they interact" (p. 1). This theory suggests that people use various communication strategies to either converge or diverge their language, vocal patterns, and nonverbal behaviors to accommodate the other person. Convergence occurs when an individual adopts a communication style that is similar to their conversational partner, while divergence happens when an individual emphasizes their differences from their partner's communication style.

One important aspect of CAT is its application in intercultural communication. As Kim and Gudykunst (2012) state, "CAT has been used to explain how individuals from different cultures adjust their communication behavior to decrease social distance and increase social similarity" (p. 364). Research has shown that people from collectivist cultures tend to converge their communication style more often than those from individualistic cultures (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). However, this pattern may not hold true in all situations, as other factors such as the power dynamics between the communicators and their personal goals may also influence communication accommodation.

Another important context for CAT is healthcare communication. As Street et al. (2009) note, "Healthcare providers who adjust their communication style to match patient preferences can improve patient satisfaction and adherence to treatment" (p. 14). However, overaccommodation, where healthcare providers use overly simplistic language or nonverbal behaviors that may be perceived as patronizing, can negatively affect patient outcomes. Thus, it is important for healthcare providers to be aware of their communication style and to use accommodation strategies appropriately to enhance communication with their patients.

In conclusion, Communication Accommodation Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how individuals adjust their communication style to match their conversational



partner's style. It has important implications for various contexts, including intercultural and healthcare communication. Future research could explore how other factors, such as the interaction context and personal goals, influence communication accommodation strategies.

### **Methodology:**

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach. The research involves collecting data through interviews and observations to understand how the Happiness Makers team at Deraya University applies Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) in their community service activities. The case study approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the team's experiences and practices, providing rich insights into the application of CAT in community service. The interview questions focused on how the team applied CAT strategies in their communication with the community members and how these strategies affected communication. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis.

The interview includes the following questions:

1. How did you first learn about CAT, and what made you interested in applying it in community service?
2. Can you describe your experience using CAT in your work with the Happiness Makers Team?

3. What specific strategies did you use to accommodate your communication to the needs of the community members?
4. Can you give an example of a situation where you had to adjust your communication style to match that of a community member?
5. What challenges did you encounter while applying CAT in your work, such as language barriers or cultural differences?
6. How do you think the use of CAT has improved the effectiveness of your community service?
7. Have you noticed any changes in the way community members interact with you or the Happiness Makers Team since you started using CAT?
8. How would you suggest training other community service teams on the use of CAT?
9. What advice would you give to organizations or teams interested in applying CAT in their own community service work?
10. What areas of future research in CAT and community service do you think should be explored?

Using a qualitative approach to analyze interview responses involves careful reading and interpretation of the data to identify key themes and patterns. It is important to remain open-minded and flexible throughout the process, allowing the

data to guide the analysis and conclusions. Analyzing interview responses from the Happiness Makers Team in a qualitative approach has involved several steps:

1. Transcribing the interviews: the questions have been translated into Arabic, formulated in a Google form, and sent to all participating students in the volunteer activities to receive their answers into written text. This step is crucial because it allows analyzing the data more effectively.
2. Reading the transcripts: transcripts have passed a thorough reading for multiple times to get a sense of the overall themes, and patterns that emerge from their responses.
3. Draw conclusions: Based on the conducted analysis, the study draws conclusions about the data and the interview questions. The study Identifies any implications or recommendations that emerge from your findings.

### **Results:**

The data analysis revealed that the Happiness Makers Team effectively applied CAT strategies in their communication with the community members. The team members adjusted their communication styles by using appropriate language, nonverbal behaviors, and tone of voice to fit the communication needs of the community members. For instance, when interacting with children, the team members used simple language, a friendly tone, and easily understandable gestures. When interacting with

the elderly, the team members used a slower pace, louder volume, and more formal language to ensure that the message was conveyed effectively.

The application of CAT strategies led to improved communication and increased community engagement. The community members felt that the team members understood their communication needs and were willing to communicate with them. The team members reported that they were able to build rapport and establish trust with the community members, which facilitated their community service activities. Additionally, the team members reported that they learned valuable communication skills that they could apply in their future careers.

The interview questions were applied for 20 team members to answer. During the interview, the study revealed that 17 out of 20 team members (85%) reported learning about the theory through working with the Happiness Makers Team or participating in charitable activities such as medical awareness-raising convoys, and orphanage visits. All 20 students emphasized the importance of using the theory in all community services to improve communication skills and enhance service quality. The team members used various strategies based on age group and educational level to adapt communication to individuals' needs.

Ninety percent (18 out of 20) of the students confirmed an improvement in their ability to communicate with team members.

They suggested different ways of learning the theory, including workshops, pre-training before starting community activities, or through direct work with beneficiaries as a way of acquiring skills through application. However, some students faced cultural or linguistic challenges while others did not.

Overall, 95% of the students confirmed that applying the theory improved team members' performance and greatly enhanced community service results. To further improve communication skills and overcome cultural or linguistic barriers, it is recommended to provide additional training or resources tailored to individual needs.

### **Conclusion:**

The application of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) in community service has proven to be effective in promoting positive communication and building strong relationships between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The study highlights the importance of adjusting communication styles to fit the communication needs of the interlocutors, which can lead to improved communication and increased community engagement.

The case study of the Happiness Makers Team at Deraya University highlights the importance of understanding and adapting to the communication styles of others in order to achieve successful outcomes in community service projects. By utilizing CAT strategies such as convergence, divergence, and

maintenance, the team was able to effectively communicate with members of the community and achieve their goals. This study is a valuable example for future community service projects that promote cross-cultural understanding and effective communication.

Future research can explore the application of CAT in different community service contexts and examine the long-term effects of CAT strategies on community service settings.

The findings of this study have significant implications for community service organizations and practitioners. By exploring the application and effectiveness of CAT in community service, this study provides insight into how communication strategies can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities. The study also highlights the importance of effective communication in promoting social cohesion and building positive relationships between community organizations and their target audience. By analyzing the team's communication strategies and interactions with community members, we aim to demonstrate how CAT can be used to enhance communication effectiveness and promote positive social outcomes in community service settings.

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