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The Oral/Literate Continuum in Discourse*

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I
ORAL VS. LITERATE TRADITION

A number of scholars in varying fields pioneered research in the sixties examining the effects of writing on cognitive and social processes (Goody and Watt 1963; Havelock, 1963; Ong, 1967). The seventies brought continued work by the same scholars (Goody, 1977; Havelock, 1971; Ong, 1977) as well as others (Cole & Scribner, 1974, Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz 1981; Kay, 1977; Olson, 1977; Scribner & Cole, 1980).

Lord (1960), following Parry, had demonstrated that oral epics were not memorized but reconstructed at each telling through the imposition of formulaic phrases on the skeleton of a familiar plot. Havelock (1963) surmised that the difference between oral reconstruction and rote memory associated with oral vs. literate tradition, respectively, is not just a habit of expression but represents a difference in approach to knowledge and thought. In literate society, knowledge is seen as facts and insights preserved in written records. As Ong (1967) also points out, in oral culture, formulaic expressions (sayings, cliches, proverbs, and so on) are the repository of received wisdom.

Formulaic expressions function as wholes, as a convenient way to signal knowledge that is already shared. In oral tradition, it is not assumed that the ex-

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pressions contain meaning in themselves, in a way that can be analyzed. Rather, words are a convenient tool to signal already shared social meaning. Thus, in an oral tradition, as has been pointed out elsewhere (Tannen & Oztek 1977), it does not matter whether one says 'I could care less' or 'I couldn't care less'. The expression is, in either case, a handy way to make reference to a familiar idea. As Olson (1977) puts it, 'the meaning is in the context'. In contrast, in literate tradition, 'the meaning is in the text'.

Ong observes that in oral tradition, thought is 'exquisitely elaborated' through a stitching together of formulaic language which he calls 'rhapsodic'. In literate tradition, thought is analytic, sequential, linear. Olson notes that truth, in oral tradition, resides in common-sense reference to experience, whereas in literate tradition it resides in logical or coherent argument. It is the oral sense of truth that comes naturally. Hence, says Olson, most people cannot distinguish between a conclusion that is logical and one with which they agree.

Ong explains furthermore that 'knowing' in oral tradition is achieved through a sense of identification with the speaker or the characters in the spoken discourse. This follows Havelock's assertion that understanding in oral tradition is subjective. It explains the fact—puzzling and disturbing to modern scholars—that Plato would have banned poets from participation in education in the Republic. Because of their ability to move audiences emotionally, poets were a dangerous threat to the transition to literacy, by which people were to learn to suspend their emotions and approach knowledge through analytic, logical processes.

Olson points out that children learn language through use of formulas; Wong Fillmore (1979) has demonstrated this for second language acquisition. That is, children do not learn the meanings of individual words and rules for putting them together, like Tinker toys and sticks. Rather, they learn strings of words associated with fixed intonation and other paralinguistic features, to be uttered in certain social settings. By trying the expressions out in various settings, they arrive at correct associations—or at least they approximate correct associations more and more closely.

I have noticed that when children do learn that words have literal meanings, they go through a stage of overapplication of this principle. This accounts for their inclination, at a certain age, to interrupt their parents during adult conversation with complaints like 'That's not what he said', and offer corrections that do not change the sense at all, to the parents' great annoyance. This stage of language development furnishes Hank Ketcham with numerous Dennis the Menace jokes which derive humor from the boy's literal interpretation of words that were meant formulaically.

In a broad sense, then, strategies associated with oral tradition place emphasis on shared knowledge and the interpersonal relationship between communicator and audience. In this, they 'elaborate' what Bateson (1972) calls the metacommunicative function of language: the use of words to convey something about the relationship between communicator and audience. Literate tradition emphasizes

what Bateson calls the communicative function of language: the use of words to convey information or content. This gives rise to the idealization that language can be 'autonomous' (Kay, 1977)—that is, that words can carry meaning all by themselves, and that it is their prime function to do so.

Scollon and Scollon (to appear) caution against generalizing the 'bard and formula' notion of orality propounded by scholars whose work I have discussed here. The Scollons note that oral traditions can differ strikingly, and they demonstrate this with Athabaskan examples. They suggest instead a distinction between focused and nonfocused situations. The former is one in which 'there are strong limitations on negotiation between participants'; the latter is one in which 'the highest value is on mutual sense making among the participants.'

This analysis reinforces the hypothesis that it is not 'orality' per se that is at issue but rather the relative focus on communicator/audience interaction on the one hand, as opposed to the relative focus on content on the other, or, as John Gumperz would put it, to what degree interpersonal involvement or message content carry the signalling load.

All the scholars whose work I have cited point out that literate tradition does not replace oral. Rather, when literacy is introduced, the two are superimposed upon and intertwined with each other. Similarly, no individual is either 'oral' or 'literate.' Rather, people use devices associated with both traditions in various settings. Goody & Watt (1963) suggest that oral tradition is associated with the family and ingroup, while literate tradition is learned and passed on in the decontextualized setting of the school. Certainly this is typically true (although surely the school has its own context and is considered decontextualized only by reference to the different contexts of home and family). But strategies associated with one or the other tradition can be realized in any setting and in any mode, as my own research and other chapters in the present volume demonstrate.

Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1981) point out that strategies associated with literate tradition have been conventionalized in Western countries for oral use in public settings. In fact, it is clear that many middle class families employ strategies associated with literate tradition in the home. This can be seen in their prodding children to 'get to the point' and 'stick to the point'. An outgrowth of such attitudes, too, can be seen when parents and teachers tell children that their talk ought to be 'logical', that, for example, 'two negatives makes a positive', as if sentences can and ought to be analyzable from constituent parts, like mathematical equations. In fact, in interaction, it does not matter how many negative particles a sentence contains, except insofar as more may be better, as in vernacular Black English, which requires negative concord (Labov, 1969).

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I would like to sketch briefly how I have found the notion of oral vs. literate tradition—or, more precisely, an oral/literate continuum reflecting relative focus

on involvement vs. content—useful in my own research on discourse. It is important to stress that it is the awareness of strategies that have been associated with oral and literate tradition that has been enlightening. I have come to believe, and the present collection of papers demonstrates, that these strategies are not limited to orality vs. literacy, and certainly not to spoken vs. written language, but rather can be seen to interplay in spoken and written discourse in various settings.

GREEK AND AMERICAN NARRATIVES

I first applied the oral/literate paradigm when I was analyzing narratives told by Greek and American women about a film (Tannen, 1980b).[1] The film, commissioned in connection with a project directed by Wallace Chafe at the University of California, Berkeley, takes about six minutes and has sound but no dialogue. It shows a series of simple events: a man is picking pears; a boy comes along on a bike and takes a basket of pears; he falls off his bike and is helped by three other boys; they start to leave but find and return his hat, and he then gives them three pears; they eat the pears as they walk past the pearpicker, who has just discovered that he is missing a basket. The movie was shown to twenty American women who were asked to tell what they had seen. I took the film to Greece and elicited narratives from twenty Greek women in a similar format.

In comparing the narratives told by American women in English and Greek women in Greek, I found that the Greeks told 'better stories', constructing them around a theme and omitting details that didn't contribute to that theme (hence their narratives were considerably shorter). In contrast, the Americans tended to include many details—seemingly, as many as they could recall—and list them, as though performing a memory task. The Americans were also concerned with getting temporal sequence right.

Second, the Greek speakers often made judgments about the characters' behavior (for example, the boy should not have stolen the pears or should have thanked his helpers sooner), or about the film's message (for example, that it showed a slice of agricultural life, or that little children help each other). In contrast, the Americans used their judgment to comment on the filmmaker's technique (for example, that the costumes were unconvincing or the soundtrack out of proportion). To do this, they often used jargon associated with cinema ('soundtrack', 'camera angle', 'the camera pans').

In summary, then, the Greeks seemed concerned with presenting themselves as acute judges of human behavior and good storytellers, while the Americans were concerned with presenting themselves as acute recallers (or good experimental subjects). Put another way, the Americans seemed to be operating on a set of expectations ('frame' or 'script') for being the subject of an experiment, while

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[1] Narratives about this film are also the basis of analysis in Clancy (this volume), Tannen (to appear), Michaels and Collins (to appear), and a collection of papers in Chafe (1980).

the Greeks seemed to refer to expectations ('frame' or 'script') for everyday conversation. (See Tannen, 1979a, for an extended analysis of this notion of 'frame').

Given these patterns, there remained a question in my mind about what these differences meant. Here the oral/literate paradigm proved illuminating. By referring to expectations about being the subjects of an experiment, the Americans were drawing on their willingness to approach a school task for its own demands. Furthermore, they were focusing on the content of the film (its details and temporal sequence), treating it as a decontextualized object. Finally, when they called in their critical faculties, they turned them on the film as a film, again drawing upon a tradition of critical objectivity. In contrast, the Greeks tended to draw upon interactive experience which was more focused on interpersonal involvement: telling the story in way that would interest the interviewer, and regarding the characters in the film not as actors wearing costumes but as people exhibiting certain behavior. Equally adept at marshalling critical faculties, the Greeks applied them in a different way: to interpret the film's human message (no small task in a short film with minimal plot). Thus, cultural differences resulted in elaboration, or focus, or signalling load, being placed on different aspects of the interaction—on the one hand, message content, and on the other, interpersonal involvement. In both cases, speakers were responding in culturally conventionalized ways. (The foregoing analysis is presented and discussed in detail in Tannen, 1980b).

FORMULAIC LANGUAGE

As I thought about these dimensions, I realized that they cast light upon work I had done earlier on modern Greek. One early study (Tannen & Oztek, 1977) examines formulaic expressions.

Most Americans feel that they ought not to use formulaic language. They feel that fixedness implies insincerity; hence the word 'cliche', with its negative connotation. This attitude persists despite the fact that no one can talk without extensive use of formulaic speech. Fillmore (1979) suggests that 'a large portion of a person's ability to get along in a language consists in the mastery of formulaic utterances'. Nonetheless, many Americans, when uttering formulas, make apologies ('I know this is a cliche, but. . .' 'Everyone must say this, but. . .') or otherwise mark their expressions with verbal or nonverbal equivalents of quotation marks.

In contrast, many speakers of Greek and Turkish seem to be happiest if they can find a fixed way of saying what they mean. For one thing, this lends to their utterance the weight and legitimacy of received wisdom: if everyone says it, it must be true. Second, it assures them that they are making a socially appropriate conversational contribution.

Situational formulas of the type found in Turkish and Greek are rigid collocations that are always said in particular social settings. Their omission carries meaning; it is perceived as a social gaffe or an intended slight, just as in American

culture hanging up the telephone without saying 'goodbye' constitutes a positive act that might be reported: 'S/he hung up on me.' Rigid situational formulas are a prototype of formulaic language, or one end of a continuum of fixedness in language use, the other end of which might be a totally new thought expressed in a totally original syntactic pattern. There is a range of relative fixedness and relative novelty along the continuum, including use of familiar combinations of words, familiar syntactic patterns, and so on. As Jarrett (1978) demonstrates for blues lyrics, all utterances are 'inevitably traditional', although the degree of fixedness may range from use of clearly recognizable formulas to totally new lines which are formulaic in their adherence to recognizable patterns of rhythm, metaphor, register, syntax, and so on. Similarly, in everyday interaction, individuals differ with respect to the relative frequency of their use of more or less formulaic language, and cultures differ with regard to value placed on relative fixedness vs. relative novelty in expression. These differences with respect to value placed on formulaicness vs. novelty of expression corresponds to Olson's (1977) and Ong's (1967) observations about oral vs. literate tradition. Formulaicness is valued when wisdom is seen as knowledge passed down through the generations. Novelty is valued when wisdom is seen as new information. (A similar argument about relative value placed on two kinds of knowing is the thesis of the chapter by Goody in this volume).

WHAT TO SAY: COMMONPLACES, PERSONALIZING, PHILOSOPHIZING

The use of formulaic or well-worn expressions is closely associated with what is said; form and content are intertwined. Just as Greeks find it more appropriate to use familiar expressions, so they are more disposed to express sentiments that are familiar and often reiterated.

These differing propensities showed up in the pear narratives as well. For one thing, in telling about the film, the Greeks in the study were not only more likely to try to find a theme or general meaning for the film, but in so doing they often chose culturally familiar themes such as the beauty of agricultural life. Their readiness to make use of culturally familiar explanations showed up in many ways. For example, in explaining why the boy fell off his bicycle, almost half (nine) of the Greeks made reference to the appearance of a girl, cuing a familiar boy-meets-girl 'script' (see Tannen 1979a for discussion of scripts, frames, schemata). The Americans did not do this. They only mentioned the girl if they were making reference to her in their explanation of causality of the fall.

Another related dimension is the tendency to talk in terms of personal experience and to instantiate rather than talk in abstract or general terms. For example, several of the Greeks followed up their summaries of what happened in the film with their own ideas of what it all meant, in a way that sounds to Americans like

'philosophizing'. One Greek speaker made much of the 'conflicts' in the film, and another focused on the many 'falls', relating this to her pessimistic outlook in general and the difficulty she was experiencing in her own life at the time (Tannen, 1980b).

The difference in tendency to personalize showed up in another cross-cultural study dealing with Greeks and Americans (Tannen, 1976), as well as in a follow-up study that included Greek-Americans (Tannen, 1981a). In order to investigate interpretive patterns of indirectness in conversation, I presented Greeks, Americans, and later Greek-Americans with a sample conversation:

Wife: John's having a party. Want to go?

Husband: Okay.

Wife: (Later) Are you sure you want to go to the party?

Husband: Okay, let's not go. I'm tired anyway.

In answering questions on a questionnaire, and then explaining why they chose the answers they did, many Greek respondents (and Greek-Americans as well) made reference to their own experience: 'That's the way my husband would do it', or 'That's how it happens in my house'. Others explained their answers by instantiating the conversation: 'The wife is probably home all day while her husband works, so she'd probably want to go to the party'. In contrast, most Americans answered in terms of the dialogue itself: 'The husband said OK, and Ok means yes'. Thus, the Greek respondents were more likely to instantiate, to personalize, to talk in terms of broader context. The Americans, on the other hand, were more apt to approach the task by focusing on the conversation as an artifact, to talk objectively and theoretically—or at least in ways that appear so.

Another interesting finding of this study was the 'brevity effect'. Those Americans who made reference to the brevity of the response OK explained that OK means yes; because it was brief, it was casual and hence sincere. In contrast, all Greeks who referred to the brevity of the husband's OK, explained that OK means no; because it was brief, it was unenthusiastic. Therefore there seemed to be an 'enthusiasm constraint' operating for many Greek respondents. Put another way, the Greeks expected more elaboration in expression of desire to go (at least in a conversation between husband and wife about a party)—that is, elaboration of the interpersonal or emotive channel.

STORYTELLING IN CONVERSATION

Another extended study which was informed by an awareness of strategy differences suggested by oral/literate continuum research concerned conversational microanalysis, or what I have called conversational style (Tannen, 1979b, 1981b,

1981c, in press), a notion closely related to what Gumperz (1977) calls conversational inference. The data for my study were two and a half hours of naturally occurring conversation at Thanksgiving dinner among Americans of different ethnic and geographic backgrounds. Initially intending to describe the linguistic features which made up each participant's style, I found clusters of features in the speech of participants such that those from New York of Jewish background could be said to share 'a style', and those not from New York and not Jewish clearly did not share this style. The features of the speech of the New York Jews which I am idealizing as an identifiable style could be understood as employing strategies associated with oral tradition—that is, placing the signalling load on interpersonal involvement in a conventionalized way. In contrast, the approach to conversation and its interpretation which was demonstrated and discussed (during playback) by the non-New York participants exhibited approaches to language which have been associated with literate tradition, that is, placing more of the signalling load on message content.

One section of the above study (Tannen, 1979b) closely examines narratives told by participants in the Thanksgiving dinner. Because narrative analysis is a research area with a long history in the linguistic literature, and because participants' narrative styles demonstrate features and devices found more generally in their conversational styles, the following discussion will recapitulate some aspects of my findings on storytelling in conversation.

A framework for the analysis of narratives in conversation is provided by Labov (1972), based on stories told by black teenagers. Labov notes that in telling a story, a speaker's main job is to make clear to the audience what the point of the story is—to answer in advance the 'withering question', 'So What?' Speakers communicate the point of a story—i.e. their attitude toward what is being said—by means of 'evaluation', either external or internal. External evaluation is the obvious kind: the teller steps outside the story to poke the reader verbally and say, 'Hey, here's the point'. This can be done by such comments as 'And this was the incredible thing', or by explaining, for example, 'When he said that, I felt awful'. Internal evaluation is not so obvious. It resides in all levels of verbalization such as expressive phonology, speeding up or slowing down, repetition, lexical choice, and so on. Direct quotation is a common form of internal evaluation. By putting words in the mouth of the characters, the teller communicates what happened from inside the story. Nonetheless, by deciding what words to put in the character's mouth, the teller is building the story toward the desired point.

Labov suggests that middle class white speakers tend to use more external evaluation, while inner city blacks use more internal evaluation. He notes as well that internal evaluation makes a better story. I believe this explains the often perceived phenomenon of 'good storytellers' among working-class people, rural people, or members of certain cultures, including Jews and Greeks. This phenomenon results from use of strategies that build on interpersonal involvement to create the sense of identification, or involvement, with characters and tellers of stories

which has been linked to oral tradition (though obviously need not be). The alternative way of knowing, through intellectual or objective understanding, has been linked to literate tradition (but, as the present analysis demonstrates, can operate in speaking just as well). In this schema, internal evaluation contributes to the sense of identification, while external evaluation makes explicit what the point is—a feature of literate-based strategies.

As Kay (1977) points out, use of language typically associated with literacy in an industrial society is 'autonomous'. Whatever is needed for comprehension is included in the words of the text (external evaluation). In contrast, nonautonomous language depends on 'simultaneous transmission over other channels, such as the paralinguistic, postural and gestural'—the basic tools of internal evaluation. Of course, this split is an idealization; what we are dealing with is a continuum: more or less reliance on features of spoken-like vs. written-like language. Lexical choice, by writers as much as by speakers, constitutes internal evaluation. However, a word may be spoken with a certain intonation, tone, gesture, and facial expression that would add to the evaluation, whereas the written word must stand alone.

In the analysis of stories told over dinner, it became clear that the New Yorkers of Jewish background employed more internal evaluation and avoided explicitly stating the points of their stories. Their strategy seemed to be—and this was supported by participants' comments upon hearing the tape—to capitalize upon shared background by not telling the point straight out, simultaneously building upon and reinforcing a sense of 'being on the same wave length'. The fact that the lack of external evaluation seemed inappropriate to the native Californians can be seen in their on-the-spot reactions as well as their comments during playback. For example, one New Yorker told the following story:[2] (K is Kurt; D is David; and I am the speaker designated T).

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[2]Transcription conventions are a combination of my own and many gleaned from the following sources: the Chafe narrative project, University of California at Berkeley; Schenkein (1978); and the Gumperz project, University of California at Berkeley, based on conventions developed by John Trim. All names are pseudonymous except mine. (A discussion of the advantages, disadvantages, and complexities of being both analyst and participant can be found in Tannen, 1979b).

. .noticeable pause or break in rhythm (less than .5 second)

. . .half-second pause, as measured by stop watch; an extra dot is added for each additional half-second pause, hence . . . . full second pause, and so on

` secondary stress

´ primary stress

italics mark emphatic stress

CAPS mark very emphatic stress

high pitch, continuing until punctuation

very high pitch, continuing until punctuation

' high pitch on word

, phrase final intonation: 'more to come'

. sentence final falling intonation

(1) K: Í have a little sèven-year-old student . . . a little
girl who wears those. . . . . . . ⌐   Shé . . is *too* →
    p   └She wears those? [chuckle]┘

(2) T:

K: múch. Can yóu imagine? She's séven years old,
    acc

and she síts in her chair and she goes . . . [squeals
        acc——————]
and squirms in his seat.]

(3) T: Oh:: Go::d. . . . She's only SEVen?

(4) K: And I say well . . hów about let's do sò-and-so. And
                    acc

she says . . . ˇOkay. . . .ⁿJùst like thát.
——————]   [squealing]

(5) T: ⌐Oh: : : : :
    p

(6) D: ⌊What does it méan.
    p,acc

(7) K: It's just so . . . ⁿShe's acting like such a little gírl
                p
already.

There are two listener/respondents taking an active part in this story. Our reactions are opposite. I show agreement and understanding not by lexicaling them but by responding in like style. In (3) I say, 'Oh:: Go::d,' using exaggerated tone and lengthened vowels, and I repeat part of Kurt's story in a 'disbelieving' tone of voice: 'She's only SEVen?' My tone says, 'That really is amazing.' In (4) Kurt continues his story, and in (5) I again show appreciation by use of a paralinguistically exaggerated response, 'Oh::::::.' In contrast, David asks (6) 'What does it mean?'

Here is clear evidence, in the text itself, that one listener 'got the point' of the story while the other didn't—or at least that David did not approve of the way

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→ arrow indicates talk continues without break in rhythm; see next line
? yes/no question rising intonation
: indicates lengthened vowel sound
p under line indicates spoken softly
acc under line indicates spoken quickly, continuing until punctuation unless otherwise indicated
ʔ is the traditional linguistic symbol for glottal stop, as in the expression of warning, ʔuh ʔoh
[brackets] indicate comments on nonverbal characterics
 penned brackets on two lines indicate overlapping speech.

 Two people talking at once.
penned brackets with reversed flaps indicate
 latch.

 Second speaker begins without pause following first speaker's utterance.

the story was told, as will be shown below. The most significant part of this evidence lies in my responding in like style.

Kurt's telling of this 'story' is marked by exaggerated paralinguistic and prosodic features. He uses marked shifts from high to low pitch; speeding up and slowing down; postural and gestural cues. In (1) and (4), he mimics the movements as well as the voice of the girl he is talking about; he places his hands on his knees and squirms in a stereotypically female manner. My response is similar in a number of ways. I pick up on Kurt's words and repeat them back to him, (3) 'She's only SEVen?' with paralinguistically exaggerated phonology. The result is a rhythmically and paralinguistically synchronous and matched speaker/listener interchange.

In contrast, David's question (6) 'What does it mean?' is uttered in flat intonation. Not only does the content of his question make it clear that he does not get the point of the story. In addition, the rhythm and tone of his question are in contrast to Kurt's and my utterances. In playback, David commented that perhaps he did not so much miss Kurt's point as feel annoyed that Kurt had not made it. That is, he felt that the point of the story should be stated in external evaluation. He complained that even in answer to his question (6), Kurt did not tell the point of the story. Kurt's 'explanation' (7) is 'She's acting like such a little girl already'. David commented that 'such a little girl' means to him 'just like a person' or 'grown up', as in 'such a little young lady' as opposed to 'like an infant'. What Kurt meant and should have said was that she was acting like a 'coquette.' David continued that it made him uncomfortable when Kurt squealed and squirmed to imitate the girl's manner. This acting-out of the story seemed to him a breach of good taste.

It is particularly interesting that Kurt, in answering David's direct question, still did not 'explain' the point of the story. I submit that it seemed to him self-evident, as it seemed to me.

Thus, Kurt communicated the point of his story through internal evaluation, by presenting the character in a way that seemed to him self-evidently demonstrative of the point. He made much use of paralinguistic and kinesic features—the essence of oral tradition, building upon shared sociocultural knowledge and redundancy of channels. David expected something more like Kay's 'autonomous' use of language, in which the message is carried by and made explicit in words.

Another aspect of cross-cultural differences in storytelling has to do not only with how the point is communicated but what the point can be. Thus it becomes clear that for the New Yorkers of Jewish background, stories were most commonly told to illustrate the speaker's feelings about something. In some sense, Kurt's story is about his feelings about little girls using girly mannerisms. The non-New Yorkers, in contrast, told stories about events in which their feelings were not only not dramatized but often not expressed. This led to another set of mismatches: the New Yorkers had trouble getting the point of the non-New Yorkers' stories, since they were looking for meaning in the speaker's attitude toward the events.

At one point the conversation turned to a discussion of heredity vs. environment, as exemplified by adopted children. Kurt told the following story, again about a student:

(1) K: In fact onè of my stùdents told me for the first time,

I taught her for over a yéar. . . . That she was

adópted. And then I thought . . ?uh? . . . *that*
    acc———————*]*   *acc*
      p

explains . . *so* many things.

(2) T: What.⌐That she was →

(3) K: ⌊'Cause she's só:: different ⌐from her móther

T: ⌊smarter than she

K: should have been? or stùpider →

T: ⌐ than she should've been. [chuckle]

(5) K: ⌊ It wasn't smárt or stùpid, àctually, it was just she

was *so* different. . . . . Just '*diff*erent.

T: hm

The point of the story emerges in the first sentence in which Kurt illustrates his emotional reaction to hearing that his student was adopted in the grunt, 'uh', uttered between two glottal stops, accompanied by a facial expression of surprise. This sense of surprise in effect carries the message that the student was different from her parents, and this had been puzzling to Kurt before he learned that she was adopted. I have suggested (Tannen, 1979b) that the questions asked by me in this interchange do not show lack of understanding or lack of approval of the way the story is being told. Rather, they function as 'cooperative prompts', eliciting information which Kurt would have told anyway. They serve to encourage him to tell what he was planning to tell—a show of enthusiasm on the listener's part. Evidence for this lies in the fact that the story continues over the overlap of the question; the question does not stop the storyteller or interfere with the rhythm of his story; rather the questions and story continue in an interwoven fabric of continuous and rhythmically smooth speech.

In contrast, when David tells a story about a child who is adopted, Kurt reacts with a question that interrupts the flow of David's speech and shows Kurt's impatience.

(1) D: My u::m . . . my aúnt's two kids are adopted, and

they were both adopted from different . . . . famili?
different móthers.

(2) K: Yeah. And?

(3) D: ⌊And they're just 'different from each

other and different from anyone in my fámily. . . . .
                              K hm

They're not like each óther at áll.

All listeners to the tape of this conversation agree that Kurt's 'Yeah. And?' sounds impatient. David himself, during playback, said that it sounded like Kurt was impatient, and David hypothesized that it was his slower pace that was causing the impatience. Indeed, David speaks more slowly than Kurt, and his hesitation over 'families' vs. 'mothers' creates a stalling in the telling. I hypothesize, however, that another part of Kurt's impatience results from the fact that David has not given any hint of how he feels about what he is telling. The flat intonation is in striking contrast to Kurt's storytelling style, although in terms of actual information communicated in the content, David gives no less information than Kurt did, and both are saying that the adopted children are 'just different' from their adopted families. But in David's story there is no element of his own emotional involvement, as there is in Kurt's. This pattern is not limited to these stories but appears in numerous stories told by members of the two groups.

By focusing on personal emotions, and by using internal evaluation through exaggerated paralinguistic and nonverbal cues, the New Yorkers in this study were using strategies more inherently oral. By sticking to events and relying on lexicalization, the natives of Los Angeles were using strategies more influenced by literacy. The effect in communication between members of the two groups was slight mutual impatience and annoyance, and incomplete comprehension. Of course, these phenomena were not gross but comparatively subtle and became clear only after microanalysis. All participants left the gathering feeling they had had a good time, and friendships among them endured. However, the nature of their rapport is certainly influenced by such habitual differences, and consequences of such stylistic differences are potentially significant in interaction not favorably biased by ties of friendship and congenial setting.

An important aspect of these examples is that the speakers whose strategies are somehow more "oral" are nonetheless highly literate people. Most examples of speakers who use "oral" strategies have been American blacks (Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, 1981; Aronowitz, to appear; Kochman, 1975; Michaels and Collins, to appear), and this phenomenon has been linked to the fact that black children frequently perform poorly on literacy tests in school. However, the group I have found using oral strategies, Americans of East European Jewish background, have exhibited no weakness in literate tasks. Furthermore, Labov's (1972) observations about middle class white speakers' narrative strategies do not hold for these middle class white speakers. This serves to demonstrate that matters are more complex than had been thought. It will not do to label some people as

oral and others as literate. Individuals and groups can make use of strategies that build on interpersonal involvement and make maximal use of paralinguistic and prosodic channels that are lost in writing; or strategies that focus on content and make maximal use of lexicalization, as these serve their context-bound needs and as these have been conventionalized in their speech habits.

SPOKEN VS. WRITTEN LANGUAGE

A recent study (Tannen, 1982, 1980a) confronts head on the question of orality and literacy and spoken vs. written language. It undertakes a close analysis of two narratives, one written and one spoken, by the same person about the same events. The study results in findings similar to those of Rader (this volume). My analysis is of a story spontaneously told by a woman in conversation with friends about a man in her office. When she was later asked to write down what she had told, she wrote not expository prose (as did most others who were given similar instructions) but a short story. Close analysis of her two versions of the narrative indicates that, in writing the short story, she combined features that might be expected in writing with others that might be expected in speaking. Specifically, her written version exhibited increased features of syntactic complexity which Chafe (this volume) calls 'integration' and which he found in expository prose. But in addition, she used more rather than fewer features which Chafe calls 'involvement' and which he found in casual conversation: details, imageability, direct quotation, repetition of sounds, words, and phrases. Thus, creative writing is a genre which is necessarily written but which makes use of features associated with oral language because it depends for its effect on interpersonal involvement or the sense of identification between the writer or the characters and the reader.

CONCLUSION

Kay (1977) suggests that the notion of autonomous vs. nonautonomous speech accounts for Bernstein's (1964) controversial hypothesis of elaborated vs. restricted codes. Kay writes (1977:22) that

> autonomous speech packs all the information into the strictly linguistic channel and places minimal reliance on the ability of the hearer to supply items of content necessary either to flesh out the body of the message or to place it in the correct interpretive context.

I suggest that the addition of background information is a kind of elaboration. Therefore, autonomous or literate-based language is not necessarily always elaborated, nor is oral-based or nonautonomous speech always restricted. Rather, there is a difference in which levels of signalling or which aspects of the communicative channel are elaborated. The use of exaggerated paralinguistic features such

as pace, pitch shifts, amplitude shifts, expressive phonology, expressive tone quality, and so on constitutes elaboration of the paralinguistic channel. Similarly, the study of conversational strategies shows that Greeks expected more 'enthusiasm' in expression of preferences and that Jewish American participants in the Thanksgiving dinner expected more active listener participation in the form of expressive reactions, prompting questions, and mutual revelation of personal experience (Tannen, 1979b). This is elaboration of another sort. In the autonomous or literate-based mode, the content and verbal channel are elaborated, while the oral-based strategy elaborates paralinguistic channels and emotional or interpersonal dynamics.

These are some of the research areas in which I have found useful the notion of an oral/literate continuum, or, more precisely, a continuum of relative focus on interpersonal involvement vs. message content.[3] The chapters that follow further elaborate these themes.

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[3]The distinction between oral and literate traditions resembles a number of other theoretical schemata, including Hall's (1977) high/low context continuum, field dependence vs field independence (Cazden & Leggett, 1978), R. Lakoff's (1979) communicative styles camaraderie vs. distance, and Diglossia (Ferguson, 1959).

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