Conversational Style

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In 1927, Sapir included "style" as the fifth level of speech contributing to judgments of personality. Devoting only a paragraph to it, he defined style as "an everyday facet of speech that characterizes both the social group and the individual" (1949, p. 542). Ervin-Tripp defines style as "the co-occurrent changes at various levels of linguistic structure within one language" (1972, p. 235). Robin Lakoff (1979) notes that style refers to all aspects of a person's behavior that are popularly thought of as "character" or "personality."

Anything that is said or done must be said or done in some way, and that way constitutes style. If you sit in a chair, motionless, you are nonetheless sitting in a certain position, dressed in certain clothes, with a certain expression on your face. Thus you sit in the chair in your own style. You can no more talk without style than you can walk or sit or dress without style. Anything you say must be said at a certain rate, in certain words, at a certain pitch and amplitude, in certain intonation, at a certain point in interaction. All these and countless other linguistic choices determine the effect of an utterance in interaction and influence judgments that are made both of what is said and of the speaker who said it.

Style is not something extra or frivolous, added on like frosting on a cake. It is the stuff of which the cake is made. Conversational style is a semantic process; it is the way meaning is encoded in and derived from speech.

My notion of conversational style grows out of R. Lakoff's work on communicative style as well as Gumperz's on conversational inference: the function of paralinguistic and prosodic features, which he calls contextualization cues, to maintain thematic cohesion and signal how conversational contributions are intended. When a speaker says something, s/he signals what "speech activity" (Gumperz, 1977) or "frame" (Bateson, 1972) is being engaged in (joking, lecturing, arguing, etc.), that is, how the message encoded is to be taken. Ways of signaling frames or "metamessages" about the relationship of interlocutors

(Bateson, 1972) seem self-evident to speakers but in fact are culturally specific and make up the speaker's style. Insofar as speakers who come from similar speech communities use contextualization cues in similar ways, style is a social phenomenon. Insofar as speakers use features in particular combinations in various settings, to that extent style is an individual phenomenon.

Interest in style is not new, but no one, to my knowledge, has tried to describe the specific linguistic features that constitute style. This is what I set as my task. Initial findings are discussed in detail in Tannen (1979a); the present paper draws upon these findings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Style is the result of automatic linguistic and paralinguistic cues that seem self-evident and natural, based on previous interaction in a speech community (Gumperz, 1964, 1977) which has conventionalized their use. Although "style" is thus automatic, we may nonetheless seek to understand the broad strategies motivating stylistic choice. This is what I will do in the remaining pages. Toward that end, I will trace some theoretical developments in a number of related fields and then show how they contribute to a theory of conversational style which explains strategic differences found in the present data.

Much current theory in pragmatics derives from Grice's (1975) *conversational maxims*, said to govern linguistic choice in talk:

1. Quantity. Say as much as necessary and no more.
2. Quality. Tell the truth.
3. Relevance. Be relevant.
4. Manner. Be clear. Don't obfuscate.

When a speaker violates these maxims, a hearer looks for an explanation in *conversational implicature*.

R. Lakoff (1973, 1979) observes that speakers rarely opt to follow these maxims, preferring to avoid saying what they mean in the interest of social goals which they pursue by adhering to one of three *Rules of Politeness* (later renamed the *Rules of Rapport*). Each rule is associated with a communicative style growing out of habitual application of that rule:

R1. Don't impose (Distance)
R2. Give options (Deference)
R3. Be friendly (Camaraderie)

To illustrate (with my own examples), if a guest responds to an offer of something to drink by saying, "No, thank you; I'm not thirsty," s/he is applying R1. If s/he says, "Oh, I'll have whatever you're having," s/he is applying R2. If s/he marches into the kitchen, throws open the refrigerator, and says, "I'm thirsty. Got any juice?" s/he is applying R3.

Individuals differ with regard to which sense of politeness they tend to observe and how they observe them. Cultural differences are reflected in the principles favored by most members of a group under most circumstances. Lakoff suggests that Japanese speakers are more likely to opt for R1 politeness, whereas American speakers are more likely to opt for R3, giving rise to mutual stereotyping of Japanese as formal and Americans as brash (or Japanese as polite and Americans as friendly, depending upon the bias of the judges). Of course, application of one form of politeness or another is not an on/off matter but rather a range on a continuum (Lakoff, 1979).

Speakers, more often than not, prefer not to say just what they mean directly, for two reasons: *defensiveness* and *rapport*. Defensiveness is the desire to be able to renege, to say (perhaps sincerely) "I never said that," or "That's not what I meant." Rapport is the fine feeling of being "on the same wave length" that accrues when one gets what one wants without asking for it, when one feels understood without having explained oneself. Defensiveness is associated with Distance and R1 "Don't impose." Rapport is associated with Camaraderie and R3 "Be friendly."

Another quite separate yet deeply related strand of research in sociology is brilliantly elaborated by Goffman, following Durkheim. Durkheim (1965) distinguishes between negative and positive religious rites. Negative rites are religious interdictions, a "system of abstentions." However, "the negative cult is in one sense a means in view of an end: it is a condition of access to the positive cult." That is, by denying the profane, one prepares for union with the sacred. Goffman (1967) builds upon this dichotomy in his notion of *deference*, "the appreciation an individual shows of another to that other, whether through avoidance rituals or presentational rituals" (p. 77). Presentational rituals include "salutations, invitations, compliments, and minor services. Through all of these the recipient is told that he is not an island unto himself and that others are, or seek to be, involved with him and with his personal private concerns" (pp. 72–73). On the other hand, avoidance rituals are "those forms of deference which lead the actor to keep at a distance from the recipient" (p. 62) and include "rules regarding privacy and separateness" (p. 67), such as use of polite forms of address, avoidance of certain topics, and so on.

Building upon the work of Lakoff and Goffman, Brown and Levinson (1978) suggest two overriding goals of politeness in human interaction: positive and negative face. Negative face is "the want of every adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others." Positive face is "the want of every adult member that his wants be desirable to at least some others." These goals are served through positive and negative politeness.

All these schemata for organizing interaction draw upon the two basic human needs to be involved with other humans, and to be left alone: the dual human needs for community and for independence. The tension between these two conflicting needs motivates linguistic choices, just as it motivates so many (per-

haps all) personal choices. Stylistic choices such as those that will be described below are conventionalized devices for honoring one or the other of these needs.

Another related strand of research is relevant as well. In much of my recent writing (Tannen, 1980b, 1980c) I have tried to glean insight from work comparing oral vs. literate tradition (Goody, 1977; Havelock, 1963; Olson, 1977; Ong, 1967). I suggest that strategies which have been associated with oral tradition grow out of an emphasis on the interpersonal dynamic of communication: involvement between communicator and audience. In contrast, strategies that have been associated with literate tradition grow out of emphasis on decontextualized content, de-emphasizing involvement between communicator and audience. Thus written fiction and letters often employ features expected of spoken language, because they depend on communicator/audience identification, which Havelock (1963) and Ong (1967) note is the basis of knowledge in bardic oral tradition.

Scollon and Scollon (1984) point out that Athabaskan oral tradition differs strikingly from the "bard and formula" notion outlined by Lord (1960) and taken as the basis for the above research on oral and literate tradition. In Athabaskan oral tradition, storytelling is a matter of joint sensemaking between speaker and audience, a process of negotiation for the point of the story. An Athabaskan speaker does not try to make singlehanded sense and impose it on a hearer. In contrast, the bard and formula approach suggests that oral presentation is a matter of draping fixed formulas on the skeleton of a familiar narrative structure. What these quite different oral traditions have in common, I suggest, is their recognition of the relationship between audience and speaker. For Athabaskans, speaker/audience independence is signalled. For westerners, shared meaning is cued by familiar formulas, signalling community. Thus involvement can be signalled by honoring positive or negative face.

I shall now present findings from an empirical study of conversational style, demonstrating the effects in interaction of sharedness and lack of sharedness of stylistic expectations. Following the presentation of these data, I shall suggest how the theoretical framework outlined above accounts for the stylistic strategies described.

THE STUDY

In order to account for the use of linguistic features by certain speakers in prolonged interaction, I taped two and a half hours of naturally occurring conversation among six participants at a Thanksgiving dinner in 1978. The dinner took place in the home of Kurt,[1] a native New Yorker living in Oakland, California,

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[1] With the exception of my own, names of participants have been changed. I want to express here, as I have before, my gratitude to all of them for their initial permission to tape, and their patient and perceptive subsequent comments.

and the guests included his brother, Peter; his friend, David; his former wife, Sally; David's friend Chad; and his "best friend," me. Thus I was both perpetrator and object of my analysis. My role in the interaction was not so much participant-observer—typically an observer who becomes a participant for the purpose of observation—but rather a natural participant who simultaneously, or rather, subsequently, also observed. At the time of the dinner I was in the habit of taping many interactions in which I participated, and I had not yet decided to use this conversation in particular.

In carrying out the analysis, I had to confront my lack of objectivity. I suggest that while such unavoidable lack of objectivity is a danger, the danger is minimized by the process of playback (a term from Labov & Fanshel, 1977), by which all interpretations are checked with others, both participants and nonparticipants; and that it is outweighed by the advantage of insight into what was going on, which would be impossible for a nonparticipant to achieve. Moreover, only by taping an event at which one is a natural participant is it possible to gather data which are not distorted by the presence of a non-participant analyst, or an analyst whose participation would not ordinarily be a component of the event.

My initial intention in approaching this study was to analyze the features making up the styles of all participants. It soon became clear, however, that I could not do this. For one thing, three of the participants, those who were natives of New York City, had in some way "dominated," according to the perceptions of some of those present. This is not to say that there is anything inherently dominating about the styles of these three, or of New Yorkers (although this may be the case). Rather, as Sapir (1958) notes, "It is always the variation that matters, never the objective behavior as such" (p. 542). Thus the styles of the participants can only be judged as they surfaced in interaction with these other participants. As Scollon and Scollon (1984) put it. "What is critical is the difference. Where one is faster and the other is slower relative to each other, the two tend to polarize into a voluble one and a taciturn one."

A second factor which is also, in part, a function of pacing differences, was that there were numerous examples throughout the conversation of talk between two or three New Yorkers, to the exclusion of the others, while there were no examples of talk among non-New Yorkers in which the New Yorkers did not participate. Thus I had no examples of co-stylistic talk among the non-New Yorkers.

Finally, it became clear that I could not equally rely on my native speaker judgments—that basic linguistic tool—in accounting for the speech behavior of all participants. Like everyone, I am a speaker of a particular style. During playback, I found that my intuitions about the speech of the other New Yorkers were, for the most part, corroborated by them. However, understanding the speech behavior of the non-New York participants (two from Los Angeles and one from England), was at times like doing field work in an exotic language.

Their explanations and comments during playback often were revelations to me. In other words, I was able to understand intuitively the nature of many of the linguistic devices of the New Yorkers, whereas I could arrive at an understanding of many of the others' devices only by intellectual processes.

For these reasons, I decided to limit my task to an analysis of the styles of these three participants, and to consider the styles of the others as they contrasted. I would like to note here that throughout this discussion I shall talk about two styles, that of the New Yorkers and that of the non-New Yorkers, as if they were discrete entities. Of course, this is a falsification, an idealization for heuristic purposes. The longer discussion (Tannen, 1979a) makes clear that each individual had a distinctive style, made up of clusters of features. But to the extent that particular features are used more often and in similar ways by certain participants, and used not at all or in different ways by other participants, to that extent style may be said to be shared or not shared.

In the remainder of this paper I shall outline the main features of the style of the New Yorkers in the group as they surface in the interaction and demonstrate their operation in (a) talk with those who share expectations about their use, and (b) talk with those who do not share expectations about their use. Finally, I shall suggest how the theoretical framework presented above may explain the motivating principles underlying the linguistic choices which have become conventionalized in the speech of these participants.

THE NATURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN INTERPRETATION

Before presenting the findings, I would like to say a few words about the nature of this kind of discourse analysis. It is, in some sense, an extension of frame semantics (Chafe, 1977; Fillmore, 1976; see Tannen, 1979b, for summary and discussion of theories of frames, scripts, schemata, and so on). In order to understand any word in context, one must be familiar with a set of associations based on cultural experience. Similarly, successful participation in a conversation depends upon shared expectations about how meaning will be signaled, and what the expressive vs. conversational signals are. For example, what use of pitch is normally expected to show contrastiveness, as opposed to pitch shifts marked to show expressiveness? Agrawal (1976) and Gumperz (1978) have shown that speakers of Indian English use heightened pitch as a device for gaining the floor, but they are misunderstood as showing annoyance by speakers of British English.

Such analysis is not available simply by observing surface features of talk; it is a matter of interpretation, as Bennett (1978) has shown for analysis of overlaps. Such analysis may be congenial to anthropologists and students of literature, but less so to psychologists and linguists. Experimental psychologists are likely to look for accountability in data through control groups, statistical significance, and quantifiability. Linguists, on the other hand, are little troubled by the

use of one kind of data rather than another—they have been in the habit of thinking up their data—but they expect analysis to yield predictive rules. In discourse analysis, however, as Fillmore (1974) puts it:

> The concern is neither with prediction nor with prescription but rather with norms of interpretation. Discourse grammarians are responsible, not for making probabilistic statements about what people will actually say in given situations, nor for giving advice on what people should say, but rather for characterizing the competence which reliable interpreters of a language possess which enables them to judge appropriateness of given utterances in given contexts. (p. V-7)

If an interpretation is not provable in a statistical sense, it can nonetheless be accountable—that is, demonstrable. The present analysis rests on tangible evidence of three sorts:

1. recurrence, and redundancy of channels;
2. internal and external evidence;
3. the aha factor.

I shall illustrate these with reference to the question of when an overlap is to be interpreted as an interruption (Tannen, 1983).

(1) Recurrence and redundancy. Interpretation is not based on a phenomenon that occurs once, but on recurring phenomena. Furthermore, it is not based on a single feature such as lexical choice, syntax, intonation, or the content of an utterance. Rather, it is based on mutually reinforcing features. As Labov and Fanshel (1977) note, human communication is overdetermined: messages conveyed in one channel are reinforced by messages in others, and within a channel there are multiple indicators of intent.

(2) Internal evidence of participants' interpretations of utterances is found in (a) rhythmicity, synchrony (Erickson, 1979), and other surface features of conversation flow; and (b) content of responses. Thus, if a person feels interrupted, the flow of her/his talk will be discontinuous, and s/he may say something like, "I didn't finish." External evidence is deduced from playback, in which the tape is played and responses are again taped from (a) participants and (b) other informants. Thus a participant, listening to the tape later, comments: "I never got to say what I meant," or nonparticipants, upon listening to it, may comment, "I think s/he wasn't finished."

(3) If an interpretation is correct, a majority of people, upon hearing or reading it, will exclaim, "Aha!" It will make sense, will "click," will seem to explain something they have experienced. Sapir again is our guide: "It therefore becomes the task of an intellectual analysis to justify for us on reasoned grounds what we have knowledge of in pre-scientific fashion" (1949, p. 537).

Finally, an interpretation such as is about to be presented is not intended to be the only one possible. The process demonstrated, certainly, is going on; but so are innumerable other processes. As Goffman states for his analysis, "for every

event cited additional interpretations would be in order, for instance, psycho-analytical ones" (1967, p. 48).

FEATURES OF A CONVERSATONAL STYLE

Following are the main features found in the talk of three of the six Thanksgiving celebrants. (More detailed discussion of these can be found in Tannen 1979a, 1980a, 1980b, 1983.)

1. *Topic* (a) prefer personal topics, (b) shift topics abruptly, (c) introduce topics without hesitance, (d) persistence (if a new topic is not picked up by others, reintroduce it. Data show persistence up to a maximum of seven tries).
2. *Genre* (a) tell more stories, (b) tell stories in rounds, in which (i) internal evaluation (Labov, 1972) is preferred over external (i.e., demonstrate the point of the story rather than lexicaling it), (ii) omit abstract (Labov, 1972) (i.e., plunge right in without introduction; cohesion is established by jux-taposition and theme); (c) preferred point of a story is the emotional experi-ence of the teller.
3. *Pace* (a) faster rate of speech, (b) pauses avoided (silence has a negative value; it is taken as evidence of lack of rapport—Tannen, 1984); (c) faster rate of turntaking, (d) cooperative overlap (the notion of back-channel re-sponses [Duncan 1974] is extended to include lengthy questions and echoes, resulting from a process of participatory listenership).
4. *Expressive paralinguistics* (a) expressive phonology, (b) pitch and ampli-tude shifts, (c) marked voice quality, (d) strategic pauses.

A fifth category, discussed elsewhere (Tannen, 1979a), is humor, but this ap-pears to be more individual, or perhaps sex-linked, and is therefore excluded from the present discussion.

All of these features were marshalled in service of an "enthusiasm con-straint" which has previously been found to operate for speakers of modern Greek (Tannen, 1981). That is, speakers who employ these features in linguistic devices in conversation expect a more elaborate show of enthusiasm if ex-pressions of rapport (i.e., interest, approval, understanding) are to be taken directly.

The present forum does not allow for a detailed presentation of these phe-nomena in co-stylistic interaction; therefore I shall present just two examples. The features outlined above co-occur in the speech of the three Thanksgiving participants who are natives of New York City; the features combine in identifia-ble linguistic devices. One such device is the machine-gun question (Tannen, 1980a). In its prototypical form, this is a question uttered quickly, timed to overlap or latch (Sacks, 1970) onto another's talk, and characterized by reduced syntactic form, and marked high or low pitch. It asks for information relevant to

the other's talk, often of a personal nature. Often, it comes in a series. Questions such as these are used only by the New Yorkers: Kurt, Peter, and myself. When directed at other New Yorkers, these questions do not disrupt the rhythm of conversation. They are either answered in like fashion (quickly, with marked high or low pitch); answered in the course of talk (so that the answer cannot be distinguished from the ongoing talk, since the speaker continues without a hitch in timing); or not answered at all. In the last case, there is no evidence that the one who asked the question is disconcerted that the question is ignored. In contrast, when machine-gun questions are asked of the non-New Yorkers, there is disruption in conversational rhythm; the response is asynchronous and other-wise paralinguistically different from the question; the question is never ignored; and the non-New Yorkers report having felt "caught off guard" or otherwise imposed upon.

I suggest that the form of the machine-gun question: its rapid rate of utterance and timing, reduced syntax, and marked pitch signal the metamessage that the question is not turn-claiming but rather "by-the-way." In other words, the form of the question is intended to convey, "I'm so interested that I can't wait to ask for this extra information, but of course it's still your turn; I don't want to interfere with your talk; answer quickly if you can and if you feel like it, and then go on." The testimony of participants, my own intuition, and evidence in the form of its effect on interaction all support this hypothesis. Those who are not familiar with this stylized form of questioning—are not accustomed to its for-mulaic nature, one might say—miss the metamessage and take the question as they would any other: a demand for immediate information. To the extent that the particular paralinguistic features are perceived, they are interpreted to show impatience, boredom, lack of interest, and so on.

I have made reference to the formulaic nature of machine-gun questions. This is an important concept. There has been much recent interest among linguists in formulaic expressions and the fixed rather than analytic nature of semantic struc-tures in language (Bolinger, 1976; Coulmas, 1980; Fillmore, 1979; Matisoff, 1979; Tannen & Öztek, 1977). The present study represents a furthering of this approach. Conversational style reflects the tendency to use particular familiar patterns, like machine-gun questions. As Jarrett (1978) has demonstrated for blues lyrics, strings of words that have never before been uttered can nonetheless be formulaic by adhering to fixed patterns in recognizable contexts. In this sense, we are all "inevitably traditional," and our ability to send and receive meaning through language depends upon ability to manipulate and recognize these patterns.

The following examples, selected from many in the data, will illustrate the operation of a series of machine-gun questions in co-stylistic and cross-stylistic talk. In the first segment, I am asking Chad, a native of Los Angeles whom I have just met, a series of questions about himself. As seen in his hesitant responses, the rhythmic asynchrony of the interchange, and Chad's later com-

mentary, the questions failed to "get him talking" because they made him feel "on the spot."[2] (Arrows mark machine-gun questions.) (See Appendix for explanation of markings.)

→ (1) DT   ⌐Yoù live in LÁ?
  (2) Ch   Yeah.
→ (3) DT   ⌐Y'vísiting hére?
  (4) Ch   Yeah.
→ (5) DT   What do you ⌐dó there?

. . . .

  (6) Ch   uh: I work at Disney Prosuh? . . . Walt Dísney . . . .
           ⌐a:nd
→ (7) DT   └Yoù an ártist?
  (8) Ch   N: no.
→ (9) DT   Writer?
  (10) Ch   Yeah: . I write . . . ádvertising copy.

In contrast, observe the following excerpt in which I ask a series of machine-gun questions of Kurt. In this segment, Kurt and Peter are operating a duet (Falk, 1979), since they are brothers and equally expert on their childhoods. The subject is the effect of television on children.

  (1) K   I think it's basically done . . . dámage to children. . . . . That what
                                          p   dec→
           góod it's dòne is . . . outwéighed by . . . the dàmage.⌐
→ (2) DT   └Did yóu
           two grow up with télevision?
  (3) P   Véry little. We hád a TV ⌐in the quonset
→ (4) DT   └How old were you
           when your parents got it?⌐
  (5) K   └We hád a TV̀ but we didn't wátch it
           all the time. . . . We were véry young. I was fóur when my
           parents got a TV.⌐
→ (6) DT   parents got a TV.└You were four?

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[2] The following transcription conventions have been gleaned from a variety of sources, including Schenkein (1978), and those developed by Gumperz and his collaborators and Chafe and his collaborators at the University of California, Berkeley.

. .   noticeable pause or break in rhythm
. . .   half second pause, as measured by a stop watch
           an extra dot is added for each half second of pause
           marks primary stress
           marks secondary stress
           underline marks emphatic stress
           CAPS mark very emphatic stress
           high pitch on word

(7) P   I even remember that. . . . . . ⌐I don't remember / ? →
(8) K   ·   └I remember they got a →
     P   ??   /⌐
     K   TV before we moved out of┘ the quonset huts.
          In níneteen fifty foùr.⌐
(9) P   └I remember we got it
          in the quonset huts.
→(10) DT   (chuckle) ⌐You lived in qúonset huts? . . . .
          ⌐When you were hów old?

. . . . .

(11) K   Y'know my fáther's dentist said to him whát's a quónset hut.
          . . . And he said Gód, yóu must be younger than my children.
          . . . . He wás. . . . . Yoùnger than bóth of us.

Of the four questions asked in this segment, (2) is answered immediately in (3); (4) is answered, but only after the answer to (2) is completed in (5); (6) is not answered at all, since it is a back-channel response; and (10) is not answered at all, even though Kurt and Peter were not otherwise conversationally engaged at that point (witness the second and a half pause). They simply prefer not to answer, as Kurt offers instead a short story suggested to him by the topic (11). (For more detailed discussion of these and similar examples see Tannen, 1979a and 1980a.)

EXPRESSIVE RESPONSES

One additional device using features outlined above will be illustrated:

At numerous times during Thanksgiving dinner, one or another New Yorker responds to someone else's talk with utterances that are paralinguistically exaggerated, that is, with marked high or low pitch, increased amplitude, and any of a range of marked voice qualities. When used with others who also use such devices, the exaggerated responses become part of a web of increasingly paralinguistically exaggerated talk. However, when used with those who do not share expectations about them, such responses stop conversation rather than encouraging it. One example follows.

Chad and David (good friends, both from Los Angeles), operating as a duet, are jointly telling about a mutual friend, Randy, who attended a meeting of speech pathologists discussing the origin of "the gay voice." Chad, David, Randy, and Kurt (the host) are all gay men. Therefore, the idea of heterosexual scientists analyzing homosexual voice quality is objectionable to them—and to the other participants, friends and relatives, who identify with them and therefore are "wise" in Goffman's (1963) sense.

(1) Ch   Yeah the ⌐gáy voìce.   She was talking about gáy voìces.
(2) Da   └The gay. voice┘
(3)   And Rándy was sitting there símmering.

(4) Ch Right ⌈ / ? /
(5) DT   ⌊ What was he sáying.
(6) Ch They were wondering whether or not it was . . . hormónal.
(7) Da Whether the ⌈gáy voice was hormònal.
(8)   ⌊ǁ WHAT!   ·
            ff
(9) Ch Yeah. Whether the gáy voice was hormònal.
(10) DT   ⌊You're kidding!
         . . . . . .
(11) DT Wo::w.
         . . . . . .
(12) K . Oh God!
         p . . . .
(13) Ch Or whether it was léarned behavior, or was w whether it was . . .
         uh *learned* behavior, o:r genetic, or hormonal or what.⌈/ ? as they
         were gonna/   ⌊
(14) K   Oo: that
                                                                 p, dec
         makes my skín creep. . . . . e::w. .

There is evidence that something has gone awry in the long pauses between (10), (11), (12), and (13). While such pauses would not be surprising at the end of a speaker's narrative, Chad and David were in the middle of their story about Randy when these occurred. In playback, both David and Chad volunteered, each alone and independently, that they had been stopped short by my exaggerated responses (8) and (10); they wondered what was wrong and waited to be told. Only when they got nothing but more such responses did they continue (13). David further noted something that I would never have understood: Chad's way of murmuring (13) signalled the same meaning as Kurt's exclaiming (12) and (14): they both were showing scorn for the hypothesis that the gay voice may be hormonal. However, Kurt showed it by expressive paralinguistics, while Chad showed it by listing alternatives in a voice that trailed off.

This process spontaneously recurred during playback with Chad. He made a comment which I found particularly surprising and insightful, and I showed my appreciation by exclaiming, "Oh! How INTeresting!" My response was sudden, drawn out, and uttered in a voice that showed intensity and enthusiasm through rapidity of timing, exaggerated low pitch, and thick quality. Chad stopped talking, and there was a fleeting look of astonishment on his face. I tried to repair the situation, instinctively, by repeating "That's interesting" in a more casual way: faster, more clipped, with higher pitch. Suddenly I recalled the "WHAT!" phenomenon and asked Chad if my exaggerated response had stopped him again. He said it had. I have since received testimony from many other people of this phenomenon operating in their conversation. For example, the daughters of a

native New Yorker who were raised in upstate New York and Vermont complained that when they tell their mother about their experiences, she sometimes responds with utterances that scare them. She thinks she is showing interest, and they look around to see what terrible thing has suddenly happened.

Finally, David, upon reading my analysis of the Thanksgiving conversation, realized that this stylistic difference is a source of difficulty between him and his friend Kurt. He explained that Kurt habitually responds to stories he tells by exclaiming, for example, "WHAT? How could they do *that*?" David interprets Kurt's disbelief as directed at David—that is, that Kurt doubts David's veracity. In fact, as Kurt avers and I instinctively know, the disbelief is directed at the story, not the teller, and its swift and paralinguistically gross character is intended to reassure David that he has told a good story. In effect, Kurt is taking David's point of view in his response.

These examples reveal a number of crucial aspects of the process of cross-stylistic interaction as suggested by Gumperz (1977). First, one's interpretation of interlocutors' intentions is automatic and unequivocal. One does not think, "If I said that, I'd mean X, but you may mean something else." Second, judgments are made not about linguistic style, which is "invisible," but about intentions or personality. If one feels imposed upon, one concludes that the other is rude; if one feels embarrassed, one concludes that the other intended to embarrass, or, at the very least, was "thoughtless." Finally, reactions to utterances in communication are emotional. Analysis such as is presented here can only be post hoc. If one has had a mismatch pointed out in a certain case—for example, if one is truly convinced that the other's intention was not to embarrass or impose but rather to show rapport—one is nonetheless likely to react the same way the next time the same mismatch occurs. However, having understood the process of differing styles, speakers can catch themselves afterwards and say, "Oh, it was *that* again."

The use of linguistic features which constitute style seems a self-evident way of signaling intentions and meaning in conversation. Style provides a conventionalized means of encoding messages while honoring interpersonal needs for community and independence, or positive and negative face. In the struggle to characterize the overriding strategies motivating the devices displayed in my data, I began by calling the strategy of one group "rapport-based," because they put the signaling load (term from Gumperz) on an overt show of interpersonal involvement. The strategy seemed to be: when in doubt, talk. Ask questions. Talk fast, loud, soon. Overlap. Show enthusiasm. Prefer personal topics, and so on. In contrast, I called the other style "defensive," because it placed the signaling load on distance. The strategy was: allow longer pauses. Hesitate. Don't impose one's topics, ideas, personal information. Use moderate paralinguistic effects, and so on (Tannen, 1979a). But I was dissatisfied with the apparent bias of this terminology, for rapport is the goal of both styles. Rapport is always the happy result when style is shared, and any attempt to establish

rapport can fail miserably when its intention is missed. Therefore I took to calling one style "high-involvement" and the other "high considerateness" (Tannen 1980a). Yet this terminology too seemed to ascribe to each group sole rights to properties that certainly both sought.

Considerateness and involvement can be signaled by honoring either of the two overriding, co-existent human needs for community and independence. Personal and cultural preferences for the various stylistic devices that have been discussed reflect conventionalized ways of establishing interpersonal involvement and showing considerateness (or its opposite). In interaction with others who habitually use devices based on different ways of honoring these human needs, misinterpretation of intentions is likely. Any device intended to signal involvement by honoring the need for community can be interpreted as a violation of the need for independence. Any device intended to signal involvement by honoring the need for independence can be interpreted as a violation of the need for community. "Style" is invisible when expectations about the use of linguistic devices to signal intentions and meaning are shared. Differing expectations about such devices makes the others' linguistic devices noticeable and therefore makes visible conversational style.

APPENDIX

⌐high pitch on phrase, continuing until punctuation
.   sentence-final falling intonation
?   yes/no question rising intonation
ʔ   glottal stop
:   indicates lengthening of preceding vowel sound
→   at the left draws attention to indicated line
an arrow at the right indicates speech continues →
   without break in rhythm (look for continuation)
p   piano (as in musical notation), spoken softly
pp pianissimo, spoken very softly
f   forte, spoken loudly
ff fortissimo, spoken very loudly
dec spoken slowly
/?/   indicates inaudible segment
/words/   in slashes indicate uncertain transcription
   ⌐Penned brackets between lines indicates overlapping speech.
   ⌐Two people talking at once.
   Penned brackets with reversed flaps⌐
                                        ⌐Second utterance latched onto
                                          first without pause.

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