

Academic Speaking

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Academic Speaking  
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One style of language that may be deserving of more attention than it has been given up to now is the kind used by academic people--professors and graduate students--when they are speaking academically. It is a way of speaking that is somewhat different from the style these people use, say, in ordinary conversation: the style they are most apt to use in lecturing to a class or "giving a talk" to an academic audience. It is one of the options available for "presenting a paper" at an academic conference, even though the majority of such papers are read aloud from prepared texts.<sup>1</sup> What I am going to present here is not a full-blown study of academic speaking based on many samples from that genre. I hope to present more broadly based findings in a later, larger work. Here I will discuss four brief samples taken from tape-recordings of four different academic speakers, each of whom was lecturing to a class or other academically oriented audience. These examples are typical of the styles of at least these four speakers.

One thing we will find is that not all academic speaking is the same. There is a range of styles that fit along a continuum from language very much like that of ordinary conversation to language that more closely approximates the style of academic writing. Figure 1 provides a way of visualizing this continuum.

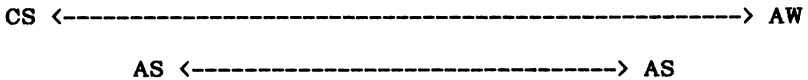


Figure 1

"CS" on the upper left stands for "conversational speaking." What I will say about this kind of language is based on samples taken from twenty recorded dinnertable conversations.<sup>2</sup> At least two caveats are in order. These were the conversations of academic people, who may have imported academic features that would be less common in conversations by other kinds of people. Since, however, these conversations did take place in a relaxed atmosphere among people who knew each other reasonably well, and since the topics of the conversations were quite diverse and by no means restricted to academic matters, the conversational findings I will mention do appear to reflect at least the colloquial style of academic people. It must also be said that not everybody converses in the same way; there is obviously a range of conversational styles (Tannen 1984, 1986). It is quite likely that one's academic speaking style bears a relationship to one's conversational style. That, however, is another study, and to simplify matters here I will pretend that conversational speaking is homogeneous.

"AW" on the upper right of Figure 1 stands for "academic writing," the kind of writing people do for publication in academic books or journals. The data I will refer to come from academic articles chosen by each of twenty subjects as representative of their work in that genre.

The two-way arrow at the top of Figure 1 implies that there is a continuum of styles between the most conversational speaking and the most academic writing. This, too, is an oversimplification, but it will serve our purposes here.

The lower two-way arrow in Figure 1 represents the continuum of styles we are focusing on here. "AS," of course, stands for "academic speaking." The point is that academic speaking styles range from something close to conversational speaking to something that has much in common with academic writing. In no case, apparently, does academic speaking coincide with conversational speaking in all respects, nor does it ever coincide completely with academic writing. Different speakers do, however, produce language at very different points along this continuum.

Since academic speakers are in fact speaking, and not writing, it is useful to think of academic speaking as the borrowing into spoken language of various features whose origins lie in academic writing. In other words, we can take conversational speaking as a baseline for spoken language, and consider how the baseline is distorted when speakers are more heavily under the influence of academic writing. We will see that some academic speakers are very heavily under that influence, while others remain closer to the conversational norm.

What factors might be responsible for such variation within the academic speaking style? Certainly academic speakers must be influenced by a variety of factors: their personalities, their self-images, their goals, as well as the extent and nature of their experience with academic speaking. Certainly the nature of the audience is not irrelevant: whether it is a large lecture class or a small seminar, whether the students are sophomores or advanced graduate students, how well the lecturer knows them, and so on.

If factors like these may be responsible for variation among academic speakers, there are also constraints imposed by the nature of language production itself that keep academic speaking from being, on the one hand, indistinguishable from conversational speaking, and on the other hand from converging fully with academic writing.

An academic speaker is never in a balanced interactive situation, as a conversationalist usually is, but is to a large extent engaged in a monologue. Even though the audience may ask questions and make comments, the speaker has a hold on the floor that considerably exceeds what is normal for a conversation. Furthermore, academic speakers are in a didactic role, where they are imparting knowledge or stimulating thought along channels known better to them than to the audience, channels at least partially thought out in advance. The fact that academic speaking tends to be monologic, didactic, and more highly planned than casual conversation inevitably puts at least some distance between it and ordinary conversational style.

There are other factors that keep academic speaking from being exactly like academic writing. Above all, it is speaking and not writing, and thus it is subject to the same constraints on the production of language that shape any form of spoken language. Producing speech and producing writing are such radically different activities that the resulting language can never be exactly the same. This is true in part because of the cognitive demands of producing language on-line, without

the writer's leisure to deliberate and revise. But in addition academic speakers may feel the need to communicate directly, to interest and excite their audiences, to have a meeting of eyes and minds in a way that is intrinsically impossible for writers. The fact that academic speaking is subject to the limitations and opportunities of on-line language production and direct audience contact keeps it from ever being exactly the same as academic writing.

The following samples of academic speaking from lectures by four different people show conspicuously different styles. In a rough way they fit from left to right along the continuum represented in the bottom line of Figure 1. Example 1 is closest to conversational speech, showing the smallest amount of importation from academic writing, while Example 4 is farthest from conversation and shows maximum influence of academic writing. Experience, situation, and personality may all have played a role in these differences. The speaker of Example 1 was a graduate student whose lecturing experience was more limited than that of the established professor who produced Example 4. Example 1 was spoken to a smaller group in a maximally informal situation where there was a great deal of ongoing discussion with members of the class. Perhaps it is not irrelevant that Example 1 was produced on the West Coast, Example 2 in the East.

Example 2 is different in style from Example 1, but shares with it a preponderance of conversational features. By a rough count, both 1 and 2 show about twice as many distinctly conversational features as features borrowed from academic writing. Example 3, on the other hand, has more in common with Example 4. Although Example 3 may not be influenced by academic writing to the same extreme, both 3 and 4 show an overwhelming preponderance of writtenlike as compared with spokenlike features.

#### Example 1

- (1)(a)(i) .. But ... you notice some
- (b) ... it's a very nice kind of .. uh--
- (a)(ii) ... configurations in the thing,
- (c) ... tha--t ... that are .. have some ... sort of ...  
compelling musical value,
- (d) like .. like this-- uh .. cycling in the end,
- (e) .. that relates ... um-- for very ... very nicely  
to-- ... a figure ... in which there's a-- uh--  
two bar phrase that .. that .. repeats three times.

#### Example 2

- (2)(a) ... but if we wait lo--ng enou--gh,
- (b) .. then .. the .. the encoding would have taken place  
back when the guy was a kid.
- (c) ... o--r was still young.
- (d) ... before the first fatal glass of beer.
- (e) .. and uh-- .. there encoding would have been normal,
- (f) ... and sure enough,

- (g) if we were to test b .. for that kind of stuff,
- (h) .. we should find with a normal trace and normal retrieval we get nice normal data.
- (i) .. right?

### Example 3

- (3)(a) ... Well,
- (b) .. one of the factors that people ha--ve .. uh-- ... talked about as being important .. i--n ... the development .. o--f ... a high level of performance on this task,
- (c) ... i--s ... uh-- ... the making o--f .. comparisons between--n .. the referent,
- (d) .. the thing you're talking about right no--w,
- (e) ... a--nd the other objects .. from which the-- ... listener has to-- choose.
- (f) ... OK?

### Example 4

- (4)(a) .... Now remember .. that one of the principles of mythopoetic thought,
- (b) ... is .. its tendency ... to collapse time.
- (c) ... in--to a kind of time capsule in which time present and time past and time future.
- (d) ... are ... rolled into one,
- (e) ... so that ... in a sense ... the model .. on which ... the past .. is based,
- (f) ... is ... sort of the eternal present.

I will discuss these four examples in terms of five different categories of stylistic features, speculating when possible on the reasons why particular features should belong to a particular style. First, I will point out features that appear to be specific to academic speaking itself. Second, I will point out features of conversational speaking that appear to be retained in academic speaking no matter what its style. Third, I will point out features of conversational speaking that may be lost in the styles more influenced by academic writing. Fourth, I will point out features of academic writing that are present in all styles of academic speaking. Fifth and finally, I will point out features of academic writing that influence only some academic speaking styles.

### Features Specific to Academic Speaking

There are a few features that appear to be more favored by academic speakers than by any other users of language, and that are thus diagnostic of that style. Figure 2 is meant to suggest that these features are independently appropriate to academic speaking, rather than being importations from either conversational speaking or academic writing, and that they suffuse academic speaking of all kinds. In our sample

these features, while they were present with greater or lesser frequency in other styles of language, appeared more often in academic speaking than anywhere else. They are, furthermore, features with an understandable appropriateness to the academic speaking situation.

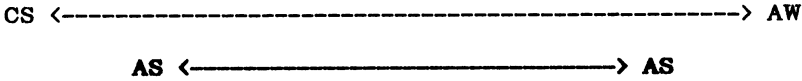


Figure 2

Both Example 1 and Example 4 begin with invitations to the audience to pay attention to something: "you notice" and "now remember." "You notice" seems not to be an imperative, but rather an impersonal construction more or less equivalent to "one notices." Nevertheless, it invites the audience to join the speaker in focusing attention in a certain way. "Now remember" in Example 4 is more clearly a command. Expressions like these are appropriate to a didactic situation in which one speaker is guiding the thoughts of others along prepared channels.

Academic speakers are also motivated to make sure that the audience is following them. Hence the frequency with which they use expressions like "right?" (2i) or "OK?" (3f).

There are certain hedges, of the kind represented here by the phrase "in a sense" in (4e), that signal academic speakers' reluctance to commit themselves to the absolute truth of what they are saying, while allowing them to say things for which they would not want to be held fully accountable in the long run.

The first person plural pronoun "we," which is so frequent in Example 2, is a didactically useful generic reference that conveys not just "people in general," but "people in our group, people interested in the things we are interested in." It is often used in academic writing as well, but in our data it appeared more often in academic speaking than anywhere else.

Finally, the fact that (2a) is an if-clause is interesting in a way that becomes evident only from a detailed comparative study of several styles. In our data we found that if-clauses are more common in academic speaking than in any of the other styles we examined. Whatever the reason, academic speakers particularly like to say "if."

These, then, are features which seem more at home in academic speaking than anywhere else: invitations to pay attention to something, like "notice" and "remember"; attempts to reassure oneself that attention is being paid, like "right?" and "OK?"; academic hedges like "in a sense"; the first person plural generic pronoun "we"; and if-clauses. All the remaining features to be discussed are either features of conversational speaking that have been retained in academic speaking, or features of academic writing that have been borrowed into academic speaking.

**Features of Conversational Speaking  
That are Always Present in Academic Speaking**

Because, as we have noted, academic speaking remains in some fundamental way speaking and can never literally be writing, it cannot avoid having some characteristics of spoken language, no matter how heavily the speaker may be influenced by academic writing in other respects. Our examples provide us with at least a few instances of basic spoken traits that none of these speakers could avoid. Figure 3 is meant to suggest this importation of certain conversational features into all of academic speaking.

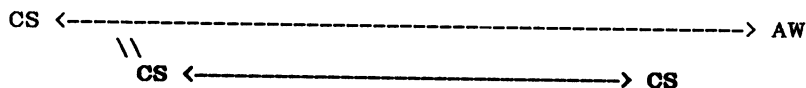


Figure 3

One feature of this sort involves the production of speech in the format of relatively brief spurts, or "intonation units" (Chafe in press). These intonation units typically contain five or six words (in English), one intonation peak (or sometimes more), and an initial pause (there may also be internal pauses). All styles of speaking--conversational, academic, or otherwise--adhere closely to this format. For instance, (1d) of Example 1, "like this cycling in the end" with six words (counting only the successful words), and (4b) of Example 4, "is its tendency to collapse time" also with six words, are both typical in this respect. I have speculated elsewhere (Chafe 1980, in press) that intonation units result from the continual flow of small chunks of information into and out of the speaker's focus of consciousness. Since all speakers, conversational or academic, must go through this process of successively activating small pieces of information to be verbalized, it is not surprising that all varieties of spoken language would tend to be limited to intonation units of approximately the same size.

It may be noted that both Example 1 and Example 4 also contain intonation units that are conspicuously longer, such as (1e) and (4c). Units like these will be a matter for discussion below. For the moment we are interested in the fact that none of these four samples differ noticeably with respect to intonation unit length.

A second conversational feature that is common to all these samples is the use of the colloquial hedges "kind of" and "sort of" observable in both Example 1 (in 1b and 1c) and Example 4 (in 4c and 4f). Since speakers are under an obligation to keep speaking, they cannot normally introduce long silences during which they search for the best lexical items to match their thoughts. Spoken language must be produced on the run, and a consequence is that lexical choices are often judged by speakers to be at best approximations to what they have in mind. This approximate quality is often signaled by "kind of" or "sort of," hedges that are entirely absent from academic writing but, as we see here, are present across the full gamut of academic speaking styles.<sup>3</sup>

A third feature of conversational speaking that may suffuse all styles of academic speaking is the tendency to become "hung up" on a particular word or phrase. This tendency, too, relates to a speaker's need to make lexical choices on the run, so that a particular choice, once made, is likely to remain available in the speaker's mind for subsequent repeated use. In Example 1 we find the phrase "very nice" in (1b) and "very nicely" in (1e). Just preceding Example 1 the speaker said "It's doing a very long kind of retard through the whole piece." He then said "kind of" again in (1b). Several intonation units later he said "and there's this kind of subtlety." The word "time" was obviously a favorite of the Example 4 speaker. Another reference to "mythopoeic thought" directly preceded this segment, and a repetition of "time past, time present, and time future" followed shortly after it. Lexical hangups are endemic to speaking of whatever kind, whereas conscientious writers have been trained to avoid them (Tannen in press).

Finally, conversational language easily falls prey to a certain amount of illogicality, which passes without notice in fast-moving speech but becomes evident in a transcription that remains in place to be examined at leisure. A possible, if subtle example is the "so that" which introduces (4e), a colloquial equivalent for what might appear as "thus" in academic writing. Its resultative function here has to do with the flow of language--"based on what I have just said, this follows"--rather than the flow of content. The logic of language flow is often signaled in speech but seldom in expository writing. Another possible, though equally subtle example of illogicality may appear in Example 2, intonation unit (2h), where "with a normal trace and normal retrieval" evidently belongs with the "test" mentioned in the preceding intonation unit: "if we were to test with a normal trace and normal retrieval."

To summarize, among the features of conversational speaking that may be preserved in academic speaking of all kinds are the organization into short intonation units, the use of the colloquial hedges "kind of" and "sort of," lexical hangups, and instances of illogicality.

#### Features of Conversational Speaking That may be Lost in Academic Speaking

There are other features of conversational spoken language that are present in the more colloquial styles of academic speaking, but are absent from those styles that come closer to academic writing, as suggested in Figure 4.

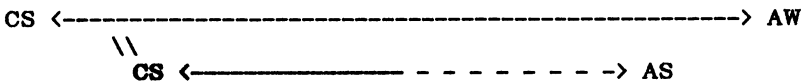


Figure 4

The most obvious feature of this kind, and the one over which the speaker presumably has the most control, is use of colloquial vocabulary. Let us suppose that a speaker's choices of words and phrases fall roughly into three categories. There are those words and phrases that are

appropriate in casual conversation but not in formal writing, those that are appropriate in formal writing but not in casual conversation, and those that are neutral to this distinction. For the moment we are considering the use in academic speaking of the first type: colloquial words and phrases.

In Example 1 the words "nice" and "nicely" are of this kind, as is the word "like" rather than "such as" in (1d): "like this cycling in the end." The use of "thing" in (1a) also qualifies: "but you notice some configurations in the thing." The largest number of colloquial words and phrases appear in Example 2: "back (when)," "guy," and "kid" in (2b), "sure enough" in (2f), "that kind of stuff" in (2g), and "nice" in (2h).

Examples 3 and 4 contain no colloquial vocabulary. Evidently academic speakers have the power to decide whether they want to sprinkle their language with words and phrases appropriate to conversational language or not. The first two speakers chose to do so, the last two did not.

Another conversational feature that may or may not be present in academic speaking is expressive involvement (cf. the "evaluation" devices of Labov 1972:366ff). I have in mind those features that add interest and color to what one is saying; that make it appear to be worth saying; that make the audience sit up and take notice. The only clear instances are in Example 2, where there are two such devices. In (2a) the speaker introduced expressive, sound-symbolic lengthening into the words "lo--ng enou--gh." In (2d) he introduced a touch of humor with "before the first fatal glass of beer." Humor is anomalous in academic writing, which, if it is anything at all, is serious.

There is another characteristic of conversational speech which academic speakers who are operating toward the more writtenlike end of the continuum have the power to minimize. It is what might be called disfluency: the false starts, repetitions, and afterthoughts that are a natural consequence of producing spoken language on-line, but that would be edited out if one were transcribing speech for publication.

Example 1 shows a false start in (1b) that interrupts the flow of (1a). The speaker had a momentary change of plan, and then returned to what he originally intended to say:

- (1)(a)(i) .. But ... you notice some  
 (b) ... it's a very nice kind of .. uh--  
 (a)(ii) ... configurations in the thing,

In (1c) he repeats the word "that," and has a false start:

- (1)(c) ... tha--t ... that are .. have some ... sort of ...  
 compelling musical value,

In (1e), after a false start, he repeats "very," and again "that":

- (1)(e) .. that relates ... um-- for very ... very nicely  
 to-- ... a figure ... in which there's a-- uh--  
 two bar phrase that .. that .. repeats three times.

Example 2 shows only one brief false start, the initial voiced bilabial stop of some abandoned word in (2g):

(2)(g) if we were to test b .. for that kind of stuff,

There are, however, several "afterthoughts": premature sentence-final intonations which are then followed by additional material that belongs to the same sentence as the preceding. The falling pitches at the ends of (2b) and (2c) are both premature in this sense:

- (2)(b) .. then .. the .. the encoding would have taken place back when the guy was a kid.
- (c) ... o--r was still young.
- (d) ... before the first fatal glass of beer.

Conversely, the lack of a falling pitch at the end of (2e), where in fact ideational and syntactic closure was reached, is also a kind of disfluency:

- (2)(e) .. and uh-- .. there encoding would have been normal,
- (f) ... and sure enough,

There are no false starts, repetitions, or afterthoughts in Examples 3 and 4, whose speakers in this respect managed to produce something closer to edited written language. I cannot explain how some academic speakers are able to do this. Perhaps the speakers of Examples 3 and 4 had already given these lectures many times before, perhaps they were using more explicit notes, perhaps they had a natural talent for fluent speech. There are certain other hesitational and intonational peculiarities that these speakers did fall victim to, but that is something to be discussed below.

In summary, among the features of conversational speaking that are evident among some but not all academic speakers are the use of colloquial words and phrases; features that contribute color and involvement such as expressive lengthening and humor; and disfluencies such as false starts, repetitions, and afterthoughts.

### Features of Academic Writing That are Easily Borrowed into Academic Speaking

There are certain features characteristic of academic writing that are pervasive in all styles of academic speaking, and thus appear easy to borrow, as suggested in Figure 5.

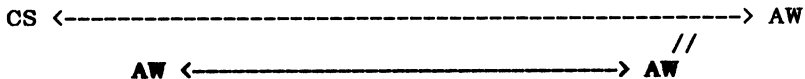


Figure 5

Lexical choices provide the clearest example. Just as we saw above that academic speakers can choose whether or not to use colloquial words and phrases, so also they are able to introduce academic words and phrases--the simplest way to make it sound academic.

In Example 1 we find such academic words as "configurations" (1a) and "cycling" (1d), as well as the phrases "compelling musical value" (1c) and "two bar phrase" (1e). In Example 2 there are various standard terms from psychology like "encoding" in (2b) and (2e), and "trace," "retrieval," and "data" in (2h). Example 3 is noteworthy for its academic phrases, such as "one of the factors" (3b), "talked about as being important" (3b), and "high level of performance" (3b). In Example 4 there is "mythopoeic thought" (4a), "time present and time past and time future" (4c), and "the eternal present" (4f).

Another characteristic of all styles of academic writing is the use of a preposition placed directly before a relative pronoun as a way of avoiding a preposition at the end of a relative clause. Example 1 shows "in which" in (1e), Example 3 has "from which" in (3e), and Example 4 has "in which" in (4c) and "on which" in (4e). Not only is this device one of the most tenacious influences of prescriptive grammar in writing (Chafe 1985b), it is apparently also one of the easiest written devices to carry over into academic speaking.

These examples also illustrate the tendency of all academic speakers to introduce occasional intonation units that are longer and more complex than those found in conversational language. Whether written language has anything analogous to the intonation units of speech is a question that deserves more discussion than it can be given here. It can at least be said that the "punctuation units" of writing (stretches of language between punctuation marks) often provide us with a reasonable approximation of spoken intonation units. One finding that holds up for most written language is that its punctuation units show more variability in size than intonation units of spoken language, and that some of them are unusually long, in comparison with the length of spoken units.

We find such long intonation units periodically mimicked in all styles of academic speaking. For example (to be compared with the modal length of 5 words for conversational intonation units):

(1)(e) .. that relates ... um-- for very ... very nicely  
to-- ... a figure ... in which there's a-- uh--  
two bar phrase that .. that .. repeats three times.

(18 successful words)

(2)(h) .. we should find with a normal trace and normal  
retrieval we get nice normal data.

(15 words)

(3)(b) .. one of the factors that people ha--ve .. uh-- ...  
talked about as being important .. i--n ... the  
development .. o--f ... a high level of performance on  
this task,

(24 words)

(4)(c) ... in--to a kind of time capsule in which time present  
and time past and time future.

(16 words)

Academic speakers, like academic writers, achieve this greater length in various ways. In (1e) the speaker managed to combine three relative clauses, but not without many pauses and false starts. The length of (2h) was extended with conjoining and repetition in the phrase "normal trace and normal retrieval." In (3b), the longest of all these examples, there was significant hesitating, but there was also the use of three academic formulas, as discussed above, as well as an exuberant use of prepositional phrases, as we will note again below. (4c) also made use of conjoining and repetition. All of these intonation units have more in common with some of the punctuation units of academic writing than with the usual intonation units of conversational speech.

It appears, then, that all academic speakers succeed in imitating academic writing through the importation of academic words and phrases; the avoidance of final prepositions by placing a preposition before a relative pronoun; and the occasional use of intonation units which are considerably longer and more complex than those of conversational speech.

#### Features of Academic Writing That are Less Easily Borrowed into Academic Speaking

Other characteristics of academic writing, however, appear to be more resistant to borrowing into academic speech, to judge from their tendency to appear only in academic speaking that is closer to the academic written style, as suggested in Figure 6.

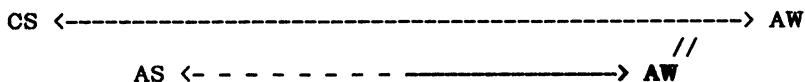


Figure 6

There are several features which, while they are by no means absent from conversational speech, occur with much great frequency in academic writing. Among them are (1) the use of several prepositional phrases within the same intonation (or punctuation) unit, and (2) the use of nominalizations.

While prepositional phrases are certainly present in conversational language, they tend to occur with no more than one per intonation unit, and often they constitute an intonation unit in its entirety. In contrast, the following intonation units in Examples 3 and 4 follow a pattern more typical of academic writing in containing multiple prepositional phrases. The prepositions are underlined. The "and" is underlined in (3e) as the second element in the compound preposition "between ... and":

- (3)(b) .. one of the factors that people ha--ve .. uh-- ...  
talked about as being important .. i--n ... the  
development .. o--f ... a high level of performance on  
this task,
- (3)(c) ... i--s ... uh-- ... the making o--f .. comparisons  
between--n .. the referent,
- (3)(e) ... a--nd the other objects .. from which the-- ...  
listener has to-- choose.
- (4)(a) .... Now remember .. that one of the principles of  
mythopoeic thought,
- (4)(c) ... in--to a kind of time capsule in which time present  
and time past and time future.
- (4)(e) ... so that ... in a sense ... the model .. on which ...  
the past .. is based,

Another device that is many times more common in academic writing than in conversational speaking is the use of nominalizations. We can distinguish between "dead nominalizations" like "configurations" in (1a) and "encoding" in (2b) and (2e), which have become established lexical items, and "live nominalizations" which represent the productive reification of basically verbal concepts. Instances of live nominalizations are present only in Examples 3 and 4. In (3b) there are three of them:

- (3)(b) .. one of the factors that people ha--ve .. uh-- ...  
talked about as being important .. i--n ... the  
development .. o--f ... a high level of performance on  
this task,

(Some of the prepositional phrases in this intonation unit are not unrelated to the occurrence of these nominalizations.)

Intonation unit (3c) contains another such nominalization, as does (4b):

- (3)(c) ... i--s ... uh-- ... the making o--f .. comparisons  
between--n .. the referent,
- (4)(b) ... is .. its tendency ... to collapse time.

Another characteristic of academic writing that is present in Examples 3 and 4 but not in 1 and 2 is the use of long, complex noun phrases with highly abstract referents as the subjects of clauses. Again (3b) is an extreme example, functioning as the subject of the predicate which begins in (3c):

- (3)(b) .. one of the factors that people ha--ve .. uh-- ...  
talked about as being important .. i--n ... the

- development .. o--f ... a high level of performance on this task,
- (c) ... i--s ... uh-- ... the making o--f .. comparisons between .. the referent,

Example (4) contains three complex, abstract subjects of this kind:

- (4)(a) .... Now remember .. that one of the principles of mythopoeic thought,
- (b) ... is .. its tendency ... to collapse time.
- (c) ... in--to a kind of time capsule in which time present and time past and time future.
- (d) ... are ... rolled into one,
- (e) ... so that ... in a sense ... the model .. on which ... the past .. is based,
- (f) ... is ... sort of the eternal present.

Also of interest here are the two passives in Example 4:

- (4)(d) ... are ... rolled into one,
- (e) ... so that ... in a sense ... the model .. on which ... the past .. is based,

Passives, which avoid mention of particular people actively doing particular things, are, like nominalizations, a manifestation of the speaker's detachment from concrete events (Chafe 1982). In that respect they represent the opposite of the involvement conveyed by the expressive lengthening and humor in Example 2.

Finally, it is worth mentioning a nonstandard kind of prosody that is apt to appear when academic speakers mimic academic writing. The simplest cases are those already noted just above, in which a long, abstract subject is spoken as a self-contained intonation unit, separate from the following subject. Spoken language is unable to support an intonation unit long enough and complex enough to embrace both such a subject and its predicate. This comma type closure is evident at the ends of the following:

- (3)(b) .. one of the factors that people ha--ve .. uh-- ... talked about as being important .. i--n ... the development .. o--f ... a high level of performance on this task,
- (4)(a) .... Now remember .. that one of the principles of mythopoeic thought,
- (4)(e) ... so that ... in a sense ... the model .. on which ... the past .. is based,

More curious, however, is the use of a falling pitch intonation at the ends of two of the intonation units in Example 4, neither of which qualifies even provisionally as the end of a sentence:

- (4)(b) ... is .. its tendency ... to collapse time.  
 (4)(c) ... in--to a kind of time capsule in which time present  
 and time past and time future.

Interestingly enough, this is the kind of intonation people often use when reading aloud.<sup>4</sup> It is maximally divorced from conversational prosody. The speaker of Example 4, though he was not in fact reading what he was saying, went so far in the direction of academic writing that he actually borrowed some of the prosody an academic person might have used in reading aloud.

Thus, features of academic writing that are borrowed by some academic speakers, but not by all, include the use of two or more prepositions within a single intonation unit; the use of "live" nominalizations; the use of long, abstract subjects; the use of passives; and the use of a prosody that is not standard for conversational speaking, even to the extent of mimicking the prosody of oral reading.

In conclusion, we have seen that academic speaking is never completely like conversational speaking, and never completely like academic writing. We have seen that there is a range of academic speaking styles characterized by the degree to which the speaker has borrowed features of academic writing, thus departing from conversational style. We have also seen a few features that are especially characteristic of academic speaking itself. Such features, however, are few in number, and it would appear on the whole that academic speaking is not so much a style in itself as a variable mixture of features that are fundamentally associated with either conversational speaking or academic writing.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> I base this statement on findings from a questionnaire returned to me by 89 professional linguists in the fall of 1985. One of the questions was "In giving a paper at an academic conference, do you usually (a) read from a prepared text, or (b) speak without a text (either with or without notes)?" 56% of the respondents replied that they usually read, 37% that they usually spoke. The remaining 7% said that they did both equally; some remarked that they read a short paper but spoke a long one.

<sup>2</sup> These data and all the other data mentioned in this paper are taken from a study of spoken and written language sponsored in part by the National Institute of Education, Grant G-80-0125, with additional assistance from the Sloan Foundation grant in support of cognitive science studies at the University of California at Berkeley. Some other findings of this study are available in Chafe 1982, 1985a, and Chafe and Danielewicz in press. I am grateful for the assistance of Jane Danielewicz, Tanya Renner, and Knud Lambrecht.

<sup>3</sup> Both "kind of" and "sort of" are ambiguous between their use as hedges and their more literal use meaning something like "variety of." The hedge use is clearer in Example 4 than Example 1; both occurrences in Example 1 allow the more literal interpretation, and we can only guess

as to the speaker's intent. The significant pause before the "sort of" in (1c) may suggest that this occurrence, at least, was intended as a hedge.

<sup>4</sup>I base this statement on preliminary findings from a study of reading aloud that I am presently engaged in.

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