

## CROSS - CULTURAL ASPECTS OF WRITING DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** While considerable research has been conducted on the way in which socio-cultural practices shape the process of language acquisition, significantly less evidence has been attested on later writing development, i.e. on the way school-age children across cultural groups use written language to create a unit of social action. Beginning with Hunt's (1965) research, most relevant proposals forward a static approach to written text production that equates writing development with an increase in syntactic complexity (measured via a number of features including subordinate clauses). Invoking a functionally-oriented approach to writing development, this study, which draws on Greek and American data, while reaffirming the existence of age-specific differences in the amount and types of syntactic complexity employed, suggests the need that we proceed beyond the simple quantitative count of specific linguistic forms (such as subordinate clauses) to illustrate the (universal or culture-specific) motivations underlying their choice.

**Keywords:** writing development, cross-cultural narrative style, subordination, cohesion, foregrounding.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

While with the shift of research interest from sentence to discourse-level phenomena, interesting proposals have been formulated on the way in which socio-cultural practices shape

the process of language acquisition, it is worth noting that most of this research has been primarily concerned with identifying the nature of discourse development during the preschool years (Berman and Slobin, 1994, Peterson and McCabe, 1991) and/or illustrating the types of discourse-level problems characterizing early written text production (Collins and Michaels, 1986). The latter line of work, drawing upon Gumperz's (1982) framework of interactive sociolinguistics, illustrated that the transition from orality to written text production (situated within the wider context of community-shaped discourse practices) should be reconceptualized as the result of a dynamic process during which children acquire a new or enrich an already-in-use system of modality-specific ways of signalling meaning. While important insights have been attested on the types of problems facing children of different socio-cultural groups in performing the transition from orality to literacy, relatively less evidence has been documented on the discourse-related aspects of later writing development, i.e. on the way in which school-age children (i.e. children beyond second grade) use written language to produce a culturally appropriate unit of social action. Apart from studies focusing on dialect interference (Cronnell, 1983) and error analysis (Shaughnessy, 1977), the bulk of research on writing has been conducted by composition theorists and developmental psychologists, focusing respectively on the identification of the features constitutive of writing quality (Witte and Faigley, 1981) and/or the documentation of age-specific differences in writing style (Hunt, 1965, 1970; Loban 1976). Building on Hunt's (1965) construal of writing development as the gradual increase in syntactic complexity, developmental research seems to suggest that writing development be conceptualized as the static process of acquiring certain sentence-level features (such as sentence combining techniques, adverbs, adjectives, etc.), a-priori taken as measures of a mature writing style. While in more recent work (Kress, 1994; Perera, 1984) the analysis of writing has been recast in linguistic terms, the basic premise forwarded by Hunt seems uncontested: The notion of syntactic complexity - used in reference to a homogeneous and internally undifferentiated entity created through the aggregation of specific linguistic forms such as subordinate clauses - remains one of the main indices that measures writing development.

*Invoking a different, functionally-oriented approach to written text production, this study, while reaffirming the existence of age-specific differences in the amount and types of syntactic complexity employed, suggests the need that we proceed beyond the simple quantitative count of specific linguistic forms to illustrate the functional motivations underlying their choice and delineate their effect on the style of the produced text. Integrating the notions of functions, strategies, and text style into a coherent model of age-specific variation, I suggest that writing development be conceptualized in dynamic terms as a functionally-oriented process during which children across age-groups select from their available linguistic resources those that are conducive to the attainment of the functional concerns that are expected to be implemented in the specific text type under construction. In addition, by extending relevant research conducted by Berman and Slobin (1994) on narrative acquisition, the inquiry into writing development is integrated with the examination of cross-cultural aspects of narrative text style. On the basis of the evidence attested in the data (Greek and American texts), a further set of issues is raised pertaining to the cross-cultural applicability of the types of functions that instigate narrative text development. Succinctly, it is suggested that writing development be construed of as a process during which children*



across cultural groups proceed from an initial stage where they explore their limited and orality-shaped resources to attain single, isolated (and possibly vaguely-defined) goals to a stage where children succeed in coordinating different literacy-based strategies (expressed via a set of linguistic forms) to attain a multiple (and yet to be identified) activity-specific set of goals.

### *1.1. On cross-cultural aspects of writing development: A functional approach*

The issue of universality versus culture-specificity as it pertains to language use dates back to the «Sapir-Whorf» hypothesis - or linguistic relativity - which advocated that the perception of social reality is strongly influenced by language. As Sapir (1921) noted, people experience the world through the constraints imposed by their language which predisposes certain choices of interpretation.

In current discussions of the relation between language and culture, and given the shift of interest from sentence to discourse-level phenomena, research focus has been directed to exploring the way in which culture-specific practices are instantiated and/or reinforced through the dynamic process of language use. While considerable research has been conducted on the contrastive analysis of monologic (written) discourse, much of this work, building on Kaplan's (1966) framework of contrastive rhetoric, has been primarily concerned with singling out the types of discourse-level problems facing students in L2. An interesting example of cross-linguistic work on monologic texts that actually integrates the cross-cultural analysis of language use at the text level with aspects of narrative acquisition is the research project undertaken by Berman and Slobin (1994). Based on a detailed analysis of linguistic features in texts produced by children and adults across different languages (English, German, Hebrew, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish, Russian, Turkish and Icelandic), the study raises the issue on the relation between language and underlying cultural logics or rhetorical styles. Data analysis is directed toward singling out the types of forms (morphological, lexical, syntactic, and discourse) employed by language producers to implement five functional categories, presented as follow:

**TEMPORALITY:** the expression of the location of events on the time line, temporal relations between events, and temporal constituency of events (contour, phase) by means of: tense/aspect marking on verbs, lexical marking of aspect (particles, verbs, adverbs), temporal conjunction and subordination.

**EVENT CONFLATION:** the encoding of components of events in relatively compact or expanded expressions by means of: verbs and satellites (especially verbs of motion and locative particles), adpositional phrases, nonfinite verb forms (participles, gerunds).

**PERSPECTIVE:** the choice of topic and focus, foreground and background, agent-patient relations by means of: voice alternations of verbs (active, passive, middle), pragmatic word-order variation, reference form (NP, pronoun zero), topic markers).

**CONNECTIVITY:** «knitting the fabric» of narrative discourse by means of: syntactic conjunctions and subordinations (subordinating conjunctions, relative clauses), nonfinite verb forms, nominalizations, topic ellipsis.

**NARRATIVE STYLE:** establishing a personal level of discourse (e.g. colloquial, racy, matter-of-fact, literary, poetic) by means of: all the devices listed above, plus lexical choice, prosody, tempo and so forth.

Table 1: Berman and Slobin's functional categories and their formal expression  
(Berman and Slobin, 1994: 19)

According to Slobin, the language or languages that we learn, far from being neutral systems of objective reality, orient people and human experience, and this orientation affects the ways in which we think while we are speaking.

While Berman and Slobin's approach to narrative text acquisition and development is proposed to be a functionally-oriented one (the notion of function is used in reference to «the roles played by forms to convey structured characteristics of events in narrative», 1994: 19), important objections may be raised on a number of issues, pertaining, among others, to the types of functional categories singled out and their assumed relation to culture-specific aspects of narrative style. First, and given Table 1, it is worth questioning whether some of the categories enumerated in this Table do in fact capture functional concerns (see also Hickmann, 1998). Is, for instance, «connectivity» a functional category or would it be more appropriately used in reference to a general term subsuming a variety of linguistic forms (including those enumerated by Berman and Slobin) to attain certain other (to be identified) functions? As relevant research has illustrated (Fox 1987), such goals may include narrators need to demarcate the hierarchical structure of a text and establish linkage between its episodes, contributing ultimately to the creation of an intelligible text. Furthermore, while suggestions may have been put forward as to the hierarchical nature of the proposed set of functions - according to Berman and Slobin, all devices enumerated above (and many more whose nature and number is left unspecified) help create narrative style-, in actual analysis this integration is seriously missing. Consequently, issues pertaining to the way in which different functional categories relate to each other, on one hand, and to patterns of language attested in the data, on the other, though of central importance, are not raised. Such an inquiry, if undertaken, would have yielded a more interesting approach to cross-cultural analysis, redirecting research focus from the contrastive analysis of specific (and disjointly construed of) functional categories to the examination of the way in which the above attested and universally assumed functional domains are realized via the linguistic forms available in the language(s) under examination, creating ultimately what is referred to as culture-specific narrative style. Given space limitations, the focus of the following discussion will be directed to the exploration of a more specific issue: the direct relation posited between subordination and the functional category of connectivity. Berman and Slobin's discussion of this issue seems to reinforce two sets of premises that used to typify research conducted on spoken versus written language, namely that (i) subordination is a homogeneous and functionally coherent notion that can be strictly differentiated from coordination and that (ii) a positive correlation exists between subordination and syntactic complexity.

The first premise has guided early research on spoken versus written language (see also Redeker, 1984). Generally, it has been proposed that patterns of clause linkage - subsumed under the general headings of coordination versus subordination - may be instrumental for differentiating text types as well as the varieties of language produced by children across social groups (i.e. the elaborated from the restricted code). Furthermore, subordination, representing the embedding of one clause within another in a hierarchical relationship - taken as a measure of linguistic complexity - has been proposed to typify the integrative and syntactically complex nature of written language (Chafe, 1982). It should be noted, however, that while the force of these two premises has been since invalidated and a more complex account has been developed as to the relations between coordination, subordination and complexity, the implications that these new findings entail to our understanding of writing development (and ensuing pedagogical practice) have remained rather unexplored. Note that it is by now widely acknowledged that subordination cannot be construed of as a unitary and internally homogeneous construct (Matthiessen and Thompson, 1988; Thompson, 1985a,b; Longacre and Thompson 1985) but that different types of subordinate clauses (which may mark the ideational weight of the sentence) may serve distinct sets of functions that interrelate to define the multidimensional notion of discourse complexity (Biber, 1992). Interestingly, despite these developments, most research into children's written language has been primarily concerned with singling out the proportion of main versus subordinate clauses employed by children across age groups, failing to raise issues pertaining to (i) the functional concerns underlying and giving rise to the different types of subordinate clauses employed by children across social groups in their texts and (2) the effects yielding by the co-occurrence of different and functionally-distinct categories in defining the types of complexity attested in the texts produced by children of different ages. This is the task undertaken in this paper.

Specifically, exploring the basic premise forwarded by the emergent grammar framework (Hopper, 1988) - which suggests that the use of grammatical constructions be interpreted in strategic terms as emanating out of discourse-related concerns, - I illustrate that the types of subordinate clauses attested in children's texts be accounted for as realizations of a distinct set of text-building strategies employed by children for (i) the creation of a cohesive text at the macro-level of discourse organization and (ii) the need to indicate his/her evaluative stance toward the material narrated. Alternatively, it is posited that subordination be interpreted as part of the contextualization cues that cooccur with other linguistic forms to create a specific text style; defined, in Gumperz's (1982a,b) terms as a speech variety that signals the language producer's implicit (and possibly culture-specific) definition of the activity or text type under construction, the goals to be pursued within it, as well as the appropriate (culture-specific) ways of structuring information.

## 2. DATA

The data consists of 98 elicited narrative texts written by 9 and 12 year-old Greek and American children. The subjects were presented with two picture sequences, each consisting of nine (9) pictures depicting activities of various characters.. The pictures were drawn in such a way that characters' activities would interlock in a number of relations (succession, simultaneity, causality). Subjects were asked to write the story for a friend who could not see

the pictures. Picture-based narration is frequently used with children (see the collection of papers in Berman and Slobin 1994) as it constitutes a speech event with which children are familiar from prelinguistic period. Wordless pictures ensure against content-related influences on language, facilitating thus the measurement of text-building differences across age and cultural groups. Given that the present study is concerned with the contrastive analysis of text style, it is necessary that the data collected be equivalent. The notion of equivalence has been variably defined in the literature on the basis of grammatical, semantic and functional terms; text equivalence is the issue under consideration. This is defined in terms of the following four parameters, namely text type (the texts collected are narratives rather than procedural or argumentative texts), mode of information transmission (the data consist of written narratives), story-content (the content of the stories was constrained, facilitating thus the cross-cultural analysis of text-building strategies and ultimately of text style) and social group (the children come from working-class communities). (1)-(4) are representative examples of the way 10 - and 12 year old children use language at the text level.

#### *10 year-olds*

- (1) One day Jack and Jill were playing catch. Their friend Corinne was painting in a corner. Jack threw the ball past Jill and hit the painting. Paint got all over Corinne. She went up to take a bath. She got up there. She took off her clothes and went in the tub. Jack and Jill cleaned up the yard. Five minutes later Corinne got out of the tub. She put her clothes back on and went outside. Jack gave her flowers for saying he was sorry. This is the end of story 1. (Dennie).
- (2) Mia fora itan mia zoyrafos ce dio pedja. Ta pedja epezan ce i zogafos zografize. I bala tus efiãe ce leroise ti zografo. Tote afti pi je sto spiti ce ekane baño. Eno ta pedja kaθarizan. Se ligo to koritsaci vjice apo to baño. Otan vjice ekso to mikro ayori tis edose merika luluđja ce zitise siynomi. Tote ta peđja simfilioθikan ce den ksanamalosan.

Once upon a time there was a painter and two kids. The kids were playing and the painter was painting. The ball slipped away from them and made the painter dirty. Then she went into the house and took a bath. While the kids were cleaning up. In a little while the little girl came out of the bathroom. When she went out the little boy offered her some flowers and apologized, Then the kids made up and they never had a fight again.

#### *12 year olds*

- (3) The accident with the Paint Little Joe and Mary, brother and sister, were playing catch. Their sister, Maria, was painting for her art class. Joe went to throw the ball to Mary too far and hit it to hit Marie's painting. The painting fell and she got paints all over her. Marie was frustrated. Mary and Joe started laughing. The paints had spilled all over the ground. Marie went to take a tub and get on a pair of, unpainted, clothes. While she took her tub Mary and Joe picked up the yard. Marie got out of the tub and

got dressed. When she got outside little Joe gave her flowers. «I'm sorry» he said. «That is ok» said Marie. Then she gave him a big hug. (Kurstin)

- (4) Mia fora itan mia mitera pu içe ena aȳori ce ȳio koritsia. Ta ȳio mikrotera peȳja, to aȳori ce to koritsi, itan poli tebelika ce epezan oli ti mera. I meȳali tus aȳerfi tis arese na zoyrafizi oli mera. Ce eno ta ȳio peȳja epezan me ti bala kataλαθos tin eriksan ston pinaka pu i aȳerfi tus zoyrafize ce tin lerosan me boja. Tote i meȳaliteri aȳerfi tus pije sto baȳio, evȳale ta ruȳa tis, bice sti baȳiera ce ekane baȳio. Eno i meȳali aȳerfi ekane baȳio ta ȳio mikrotera aȳerfia kaȳarizan ti boja. Otan i meȳaliteri aȳerfi teliose to baȳio ce vȳice ekso ta vrice ola taktopiimena...

Once upon a time there was a mother who had a boy and two girls. The two younger children, the boy and the girl, were very lazy and they were playing all the time. Their eldest sister liked to paint all day. And while the two kids were playing with the ball they accidentally threw it on the easel their sister was painting and they covered her in paint. Then their eldest sister went into the bathroom, took her clothes off, went into the bathtub and took a bath. While the eldest sister was taking a bath the two younger children were cleaning the paint. When the eldest sister finished her bath and went out she found everything in order....

### *2.1. On subordination and narrative complexity: A functional perspective*

While incorporating Biber's (1992) premise as to the multidimensional notion of complexity, due to my focus on narrative discourse, the parameters identified as constitutive of narrative complexity incorporate but do not coincide with those proposed as instrumental for differentiating the notion of complexity as it pertains to spoken versus written language. The argument to be outlined below integrates proposals forwarded by Chafe (1982) and Tannen (1982 a,b) summarized below:

Proceeding beyond initial construals of spoken versus written language as two internally coherent notions definable via a distinct set of linguistic forms, Chafe suggested that similarities and differences between the text styles arising out of different modality requirements be examined in terms of groups of features that interrelate to create two distinct parameters of differentiation, namely (i) integration versus fragmentation (arising out of the way in which cohesion is attained at the local level) and (ii) involvement versus detachment (arising out of features signalling speaker's involvement with subject matter and in this case, the point of the story). While initially, spoken and written language were associated with the poles of the two continuua, subsequent research (Tannen, 1982a,b) illustrated that oral and literate strategies may variously interlock in both spoken and written texts.

Integrating research on orality versus literacy with the cross-cultural analysis of storytelling patterns, Tannen has further illustrated that cross-cultural differences in language use (such as those attested in Greek versus American oral storytelling) be interpreted as reflecting culture-specific definitions as to the nature of narrative activity under examination. It has thus been proposed that Greek storytelling arises out of strategies that aim at interpersonal involvement, creating in the listener the sense of identification with the characters and tellers of stories - a

strategy linked to oral tradition. The alternative way of presenting experience, through detachment (which is principally linked to literate tradition that favours intellectual or objective understanding), is proposed to characterize American storytelling. According to Tannen, Greek and American speakers, responding in culturally conventionalized ways, created distinct narratives, the differences arising out of the fact that the focus or signaling load was placed on different aspects of the interaction - on message content (by American narrators) versus on interpersonal involvement (by Greeks).

The above-stated dimensions seem particularly pertinent in accounting for aspects of writing text development. Given the two continua - the integration and the expressivity (or involvement) continuum, it is reasonable to hypothesize that as they grow older, children would employ linguistic forms that help create texts that are integrative and involved. This hypothesis is examined below.

### 3. DATA ANALYSIS

#### *3.1. Temporal adverbial clauses as cohesive devices: Cross-cultural evidence*

Beginning with Haiman's (1978) research on if-conditionals in Hua, a Papuan language, adverbial clauses have been treated as the topics of their main clauses. Building on the definition of topic as given or old information, adverbial clauses have been analyzed accordingly as the given part of the sentence sequence to which they belong. Subsequent discourse-oriented research (Chafe, 1984; Thompson, 1985a, b) added new parameters to the investigation of adverbial clauses, illustrating that their topical nature cannot be understood apart from considerations of their position vis-a-vis the main clause. A distinction has thus been introduced between initial (or preposed) versus final (or postposed) clauses. Chafe (1984) proceeds further to single out four distinct types of adverbial clause: preposed and bound, postposed and bound (the adverbial clause in question and the main clause are contained within a single punctuation or intonation unit), preposed and free, postposed and free (the adverbial clause is separated from the main clause by a prosodic break or, in written language, by a punctuation mark such as a comma). As Thompson (1985a,b) has attested, though sharing the same morphology, initial versus final adverbial clauses differ substantially in their text-building role. Initial adverbial clauses are integrative devices, used to perform (Givon 1990): (i) a cataphoric grounding function: initial adverbial clauses introduce a frame in relation to which the event in the main clause is to be interpreted (Chafe, 1984) and (ii) an anaphoric grounding function: by containing given information, adverbial clauses link different (successive and/or non-successive) episodes into an integrative unit (Givon, 1990; Ford 1993; Longacre and Thompson, 1985). In contrast, final adverbial clauses have been shown to be local in scope, merely providing semantic limitation, or quantification to the main clause to which they are related. Such clauses tend to appear in the middle of a tightly-coherent thematic chain (or an episode in our terms), adding a piece of information (an «afterthought») to the prior utterance after its initial planning and production.

Given the progression from local- to global-level connectivity attested in early narrative text production (Berman, 1988), and the role of initial adverbial clauses as the instantiation of a

global-level integrative strategy that facilitates readers' text processing at points of discontinuity (Givon, 1983, 1990), it is reasonable to expect that age-specific differences would be documented with regard to the types of forms employed to signal higher-level episodic connections. This hypothesis was borne out. In both Greek and American texts, age-specific differences are attested with regard to the frequency of temporal adverbial clauses employed at the level of global cohesion to indicate the relations between episodes. Interesting differences were documented between Greek and American children. Corroborating relevant research, it was found that by conveying known or given information (Chafe, 1984; Givon, 1990; Thompson, 1985a, b), preposed adverbial clauses are used as integrative devices that (i) connect back into the previous discourse by repeating, paraphrasing or presenting an action closely linked to the one undertaken by the same or different character(s) in a preceding episode and (2) provide the frame in light of which the information in the main clause is to be interpreted. In light of this discussion, consider (5):

(5)

*Orientation*

Alexander and Melina are playing volleyball and their sister Martha is painting.

*Complicating Action*

(a) But accidentally the ball slipped away from them and Martha's painting was knocked over and so was the paint. Then Martha took a bath.

(b) **While Martha was taking a bath** Alexander and Melina were cleaning the garden.

(c) **When Martha finished** she changed clothes and Alexander gave her flowers and they never had a fight again.

The analysis of the data is based on the following claims about narrative text structure. Integrating relevant suggestions forwarded by Labov and Waletzky (1967) with Chafe's (1980) proposals on the flow and hierarchical model, I suggest that narrative texts be interpreted as a structured sequence of two types of units, functional and thematic. Discourse units may relate to each other in (i) functional terms-these concern the type of functional relationship (i.e. orientation, asides, comments) linking clauses to one another, and (ii) thematic terms - these refer to what is being talked about in a series of clauses. The texts under examination were demarcated into functional units in light of Labov and Waletzky's (1967) model of narrative structure. According to Labov and Waletzky, a fully developed narrative contains the following units: The Abstract (a brief summary of the narrative as a whole: what was this about?), the Orientation Section (answering questions on who, what, when and where events occur), the Complicating Action (outlining what happened), the Evaluation (conveying the point of the story), the Result or Resolution (usually the final clause in the CA, presenting what finally happened), and the Coda (explicating the way the story relates to the present context). In the data under examination, two units were identified,



the Orientation, and the Complicating Action. (I assume that evaluation is not a separate unit; rather, internal and external evaluative devices may permeate the whole narrative).

The Complicating Action was further distinguished into thematic units, referred to as «episodes», capturing (but not coinciding with) «text topics». Following Chafe(1980), the term «episode» is used in reference to a narrative unit in which one or more participants are involved in a series of activities which take place in a particular temporal and spatial location and which move towards a specific goal. Alternatively, it is proposed that an episode boundary occurs when changes in the following parameters, namely character, spatial, temporal continuity and continuity in event schema (type of actions undertaken by the characters in question), co-occur. In light of this discussion, consider (5).

(5a) is part of an episode that to an accident involving certain characters. The narrator in (5a), stops at the mention of the character's performing a specific action (Martha took a bath). Other characters (the children) intervene in the meantime in (5b.) to establish a different episode. Their activities, however, are interrelated to the activities of the previous character, with the text gaining in integration. When the narrator in (5c.) refers back to the character already presented in (5a), s/he employs forms that help integrate (5c) with the two preceding episodes, (5a), and (5b). The narrator clearly and explicitly indicates the completion of the activity which in episode (5b) as an activity in progress. By referring to distinct segments of the same event, the preposed temporal adverbial clauses play a clear anaphoric role within the text while, by setting the reference time of the event mentioned in the main clause that follows the adverbial clause, the adverbial clause functions as a cataphoric devices. The age-specific and cross-cultural differences are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of texts in which preposed temporal clauses are used at episode-initial position.

Age	Greek	American
10	9 (40,9%)	12 (40%)
12	22 (73,3%)	19 (82,6%)

### 3.2. *Adverbial clauses as evaluative devices: Cross-cultural evidence*

Beginning with Labov and Waletzky's proposal (1967) a distinction has been introduced between two types of material assumed to constitute narrative text structure: material situated on the event line (referred to as *foreground* or temporally sequenced information) and *background* (material expressing information off-the-event line). The notions of foreground and background have been introduced in the linguistic literature by Hopper (1979) and Hopper and Thompson (1980) as a way of reflecting the universally attested finding that languages offer language producers with the means of distinguishing between two types of information: information belonging to the main line of the text versus background elements,



ie. information that assists, amplifies or comments on the main event line material. The classic formulation of the nature and relation between the two terms is to be found in Hopper and Thompson (1980: 280), «In any communicative situation, narrative or non-narrative, some parts of what is stated are more relevant or central than others. That part of a discourse that does not immediately contribute to a speaker's goal, but which merely assists, amplifies, or comments on it, is referred to as BACKGROUND. By contrast, that material which supplies the main points of the discourse is known as FOREGROUND.... The foregrounded portions together comprise the backbone or skeleton of the text, forming its basic structure; the backgrounded clauses put flesh on the skeleton, but are extraneous to its structural coherence».

While various criteria have been proposed in the literature for defining the notions of foreground and background (see Fleischman, 1985 for a review), the criterion most widely adopted is that of sequentiality (Hopper and Thompson 1980, Dry, 1983) and its correlates (such as causality or importance to plot development). The foreground of a narrative is assumed to be reported in PFV telic action verbs (accomplishments and achievements) in main clauses, while background (i.e. descriptive, collateral material) is typically packaged in IPFV stative and activity predicates in various types of subordinate clauses (Tomlin, 1985). This a-priori correlation between grammatical and narrative subordination was found by subsequent studies of actual data to be mistaken. As Thompson (1987) has illustrated, subordinate clauses can be temporally ordered and thereby constitute part of the main narrative line (see also Polanyi-Bowditch, 1976). Similarly, by citing some interesting examples from literary narratives involving foregrounded subordinates, Fleischman (1990) contested previous research, illustrating that the effect of subordinate clauses may be attained exactly because of the violation of the expectation of iconicity between grammatical subordination and narrative background. According to this research, subordinate clauses, in addition to their textual role in building cohesion, may serve an aesthetic role, transforming a sequence of events into an interesting narrative (Thompson, 1987).

While suggesting that the use of subordination is instigated by narrator's concern to create an aesthetic text, the research conducted thus far has failed to specify the way in which different types of subordinate clauses actually operate to create the style of any given text - an expressive text or various types of expressivity. First: if we acknowledge in line with Matthiessen and Thompson (1988), Longacre and Thompson (1985) and Thompson (1985a,b) that «subordination» cannot be used in reference to an internally coherent category but rather to a heterogeneous one encompassing a wide variety of grammatical constructions, important issues are raised regarding the aesthetic role played by various types of subordinate clauses be assessed with the same parameters? Furthermore, can subordinate clauses be subsumed along with forms such as adverbs and adjectives within the general single category of «internal evaluation» (Polyani, 1985) or should they, as I suggest, be construed of as components of different dimensions of evaluation? On the basis of the evidence attested in Greek and American adult data, I suggest that the relation between subordination and evaluation is mediated by the following two dimensions which different types of subordinate clauses help implement:

- (1) The signalling of foreground material: temporal adverbial clauses and participles in -ing and -ondas. (henceforth, group 2a)
- (2) The signalling of background material: (group 2b)
  - framing of events: causal, purpose clauses
  - framing of characters relative clauses

Interesting age-specific and cross-cultural differences were documented as to the use of adverbial clauses to attain these two sets of functions. Table 3 summarizes the findings.

Table 3: Age-specific and developmental differences in the use of adverbial clauses as evaluative devices (Groups 2a and 2b): Number of texts.

Age - Group	Group 2a		Group 2b	
	Greek	American	Greek	American
10	9 (40,9%)	6 (20%)	15 (68,1%)	10 (3,3%)
12	15 (50%)	8 (34,7%)	19 (63,3%)	8 (34,7%)

#### 4. DISCUSSION - CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper has been to present a new, functionally-oriented approach to writing development. In contrast to proposals suggesting that writing development be conceptualized in sentence terms as the acquisition of specific linguistic forms, I illustrated the need for a functionally-oriented approach to language use. Exploring the association between subordination and writing complexity, I illustrated that this relation is mediated by text-and activity-specific goals. Given that complexity is a notion brought about by the interlocking of various dimensions, writing development may be conceptualized as a process during which children create texts that are functionally more complex, i.e. texts containing a greater number of genre specific dimensions and/or forms realizing these dimensions. While due to space limitations, this study has focused on the increasing use of subordination in terms of its functional motivations, further research would need to address issues pertaining to the way other linguistic forms interrelate to create texts differing in the amount and types of syntactic complexity.

Secondly, by integrating the analysis of writing development with cross-cultural issues, I illustrated that children across cultural groups follow rather similar routes, producing texts that are more complex in terms of some dimensions. Generally, the texts produced by 12 year-old Greek and American children can be regarded as more complex compared to those produced by 10-year olds, since they contain in greater frequency and density adverbial clauses that realize the functions of cohesion and evaluation. In short, it can be proposed that 12 year-old children indicate in greater frequency the points of episode discontinuity and

employ adverbial clauses to link episodes to each other. While, as Table 2 illustrates, significant differences were attested across age-groups, cross-cultural differences were found to obtain only in the 12 year-old group. In the data, 9% more texts produced by 12 year-old American children were found to contain temporal adverbial clauses at episode-initial position.

With concerning the use of subordination to mark the two dimensions of evaluation (referred to as groups 2a and 2b), the following need to be noted. First, overall important developmental differences were attested - with the exception of Group 2b in Greek children - with regard to the use of subordination as an expressive strategy. 12 year-old children of both cultural groups, employed in their texts more adverbial clauses (in contrast to those used by 10 year-old children) to indicate their stance toward the narrated events. In addition, significant culture-specific differences were attested in the data. It seems that Greek children of both age-groups employed subordination as an evaluative strategy at a much greater frequency than American children did. On the basis of the limited evidence examined, we may suggest that the texts produced by Greek children lie closer to the expressive pole in the expressivity (involvement) continuum. Given, however, that some functional dimensions (such as that concerned with the signalling of background material) may be realized via a variety of linguistic forms (adverbs, adjectives, etc.), no conclusive evidence can be documented at this stage as to overall age- and culture-specific differences in storytelling patterns. This paper - focusing on a specific linguistic form: subordination, sets the direction into a new way of approaching writing development. Further research that would integrate the various threads outlined may take it further.

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