



Relating Events in Narrative: A Crosslinguistic Developmental Study

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This volume represents the culmination of an extensive research project that studied the development of linguistic form/function relations in narrative discourse. It is unique in the extent of data which it analyzes--more than 250 texts from children and adults speaking five different languages--and in its crosslinguistic, typological focus. It is the first book to address the issue of how the structural properties and rhetorical preferences of different native languages--English, German, Spanish, Hebrew, and Turkish--impinge on narrative abilities across different phases of development.

The work of Berman and Slobin and their colleagues provides insight into the interplay between shared, possibly universal, patterns in the developing ability to create well-constructed, globally organized narratives among preschoolers from three years of age compared with school children and adults, contrasted against the impact of typological and rhetorical features of particular native languages on how speakers express these abilities in the process of "relating events in narrative."

This volume also makes a special contribution to the field of language acquisition and development by providing detailed analyses of how linguistic forms come to be used in the service of narrative functions, such as the expression of temporal relations of simultaneity and retrospection, perspective-taking on events, and textual connectivity. To present this information, the authors prepared in-depth analyses of a wide range of linguistic systems, including tense-aspect marking, passive and middle voice, locative and directional predications, connectivity markers, null subjects, and relative clause constructions. In contrast to most work in the field of language acquisition, this book focuses on developments in the use of these early forms in extended discourse--beyond the initial phase of early language development.

The book offers a pioneering approach to the interactions between form and function in the development and use of language, from a typological linguistic perspective. The study is based on a large crosslinguistic corpus of narratives, elicited from preschool, school-age, and adult subjects. All of the narratives were elicited by the same picture storybook, *Frog, Where Are You?*, by **Mercer Mayer**. (An appendix lists related studies using the same storybook in 50 languages.) The findings illuminate both universal and language-specific patterns of development, providing new insights into questions of language and thought.

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