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1 Setting the Narrative Scene: How Children Begin to Tell a Story

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This chapter deals with one facet of its ambiguous title. It concerns how children *begin* the stories that they produce, rather than how they first learn or when they first begin to tell stories. The segment of a narrative text that constitutes its start or opening has been the subject of considerable interest in literary theory, and the *exposition* is generally recognized as a critical component of narrative fiction (e.g., Oz, 1996; Said, 1978; Sternberg, 1978). As a psychological counterpart to this notion, the *setting* constitutes an integral part of narrative structure in cognitively oriented "story grammar" analyses (Rumelhart, 1975; Shen, 1988). Discourse linguists, too, have paid attention to elements that set the narrative scene, analyzed as *orientation* in Labov's (1972) study of personal-experience narratives, or as *initial background information* in Reinhart's (1984, 1995) discussions of literary and other texts. In this line, Polanyi (1985) referred to *contextualizing state clauses* in her analysis of conversationally embedded narratives. Labov identified the orientation as belonging to the narrative rather than the evaluative elements that constitute a story, whereas Reinhart suggested that scene-setting elements constitute part of the narrative background, as distinguished from its foreground. In line with Reinhart's proposal, I have suggested that scene setting, or background orientation, may include both interpretive evaluative elements and informative descriptive elements as precursors to the third type of narrative element, the sequential or eventive elements that make up the story plotline (Berman, 1997a).

Researchers agree that the opening of a story typically relates to the state-of-affairs existing prior to the onset of the plot. As such, it provides a backdrop to the ensuing chain of events by specifying the who, where, when, and why of the events to be reported. In the present context, story setting is defined as serving several functions, termed here *presentative, informational,* and *motivating,* respectively. The *presentative* function serves to introduce the characters that will be referred to subsequently as participants in events. The *informational framing* function provides a spatio-locative and/or temporal framework for the events. The *motivating* function explains what sets the chain of events in motion and why an account of these events is relevant to the hearer/reader or of

interest to the narrator. These three functions have the shared aim of orienting the audience toward what is to come.

This analysis suggests that "how to start a story" constitutes an important feature of the development of both narrative knowledge and storytelling performance among children (Berman, 1995; Reilly, 1992). The ability to provide adequate background setting information is of considerable interest for research on narrative development for a number of reasons. First, understanding how the different functions of narrative setting develop should throw light on important cognitive abilities that relate to how children develop "a representation of the listener" (Berman & Slobin, 1994, p. 604). This shows that they take into account audience needs — in the case in point, by providing adequate background information to the story they are about to tell (Menig-Peterson & McCabe, 1978). Giving a suitable setting to the story also means that the narrator can construct a text autonomously, by means of a self-sufficient monologic narrative rather than through interlocutor queries, prompts, and other scaffolding devices. Moreover, it requires preplanning of the text as a whole, which in the case of narrative discourse implies a hierarchical, global view of the chain of events that are about to be related. These are complex cognitive demands, which take a long time to evolve.

Related to the development of these abilities is command of narrative-specific knowledge. Being able to provide adequate setting information and motivation will depend on more overall narrative competence, in the sense of global plot-organization or "action-structure," as defined by cognitive theories of narrative discourse (Giora & Shen, 1994; Rumelhart, 1975; Van Dijk, 1976). That is, children must have recourse to a narrative schema, with an initiating event or problem, one or more episodes directed at solving that problem, and an eventual resolution. This suggests that in order to "begin a story" adequately, children need to be able to structure the rest of the text appropriately.

The present study was undertaken on the assumption that, with age, the scene-setting elements provided to narrative texts will change along three interrelated dimensions: amount, content, and expression. Thus, young preschool children provide little or no such information (Peterson, 1990; Umiker-Sebeok, 1979). And while children from as young as age 4 provide some orienting background information to the stories they produce, younger children relate to fewer, and to different, types of setting functions than do older storytellers (Kernan, 1977; Peterson & McCabe, 1983). One aim of the present study, then, is to go beyond these relatively few studies that have analyzed children's story beginnings by extending the analysis to a database consisting of picturebook based narratives as well as personal-experience accounts, comparing preschoolers with school-age children as well as adult storytellers. A second aim, one to the best of my knowledge not addressed in prior studies of scene-setting, considers the linguistic *forms* used to express this component of narrative discourse.

The present study is thus embedded in earlier work that has focused on the relation between linguistic forms and narrative functions across development (Berman, 1996, 1997c; Berman & Slobin, 1994; Slobin, 1993). And it considers three interrelated developmental predictions. First, what we termed *scene-setting elements* (Berman & Slobin, 1994, p. 86) will change with age both in quality and quantity. In quality, preschool children will mention different types of setting elements than older speakers; for example, they may make explicit reference to participants but not to motivations (*who* vs. *why*) and they will mention place more than time (*where* vs. *when*). And in quantity, settings will constitute a larger proportion of texts produced by older speakers. Second, *elicitation context* or genre will affect the nature of setting elements provided, but this effect will be less marked with age. Third, with age the *linguistic forms* used for scene-setting will become less formulaic, more explicit, and more varied, in meeting different narrative functions.

Findings are based on monologic narrative texts produced by children and adults in different elicitation settings. Narratives elicited with the pictured storybook, *Frog, where are you?* by Mercer Mayer (1969), constitute the "frog stories" and accounts of a personal experience elicited by asking subjects, "Have you ever had a fight or quarreled with someone? Tell me about it," constitute the "fight stories." Supplementary data come from an additional set of oral and written "fight stories" elicited from older school children and adults, from other personal-experience accounts, where children were asked to tell a story about something that had happened to them, and from texts based on pictures and picture-series. The bulk of these analyses are from texts produced by speakers of Israeli Hebrew, on the assumption that the language in which they are constructed has little effect on the quality and narrative functions of setting elements, when speakers share similar literate, western-type cultural backgrounds of the kind considered here. Our findings for Hebrew-specific linguistic forms used for the narrative functions of marking story openings, the transition from scene-setting to narrative events, and the distinction between background setting elements and narrative events can and should, however, be extended for comparison with other languages.

NATURE OF SETTING ELEMENTS IN "FROG" AND "FIGHT" STORIES

Earlier research has shown that children favor some types of setting elements over others. Specifically, they tend to provide more "framing" information at an earlier age about the place rather than the time at which events took place, and they give relatively little information about participants and even less about background motivations or reasons for the events (Peterson, 1990; Peterson & McCabe, 1983). Such studies have typically related to personal-experience narratives, whereas the present analysis starts by considering the different kinds of setting elements provided on the basis of a picturebook (the "frog story").

TABLE 1.1
Percentage of Subjects Mentioning Different Setting Elements in the Hebrew and English Frog Stories, by Age (N = 24 per agegroup)

Setting Element		*3 yrs*	*5 yrs*	*9 yrs*	*Adults*
"who" [by noun]= boy		58	75	83	92
"where"	= jar	17	25	33	79
"when"	= at night	—	—	8	33
"why"	= feeling	—	12	12	63

Distribution of Setting Elements in English- and Hebrew-Language "Frog Stories"

The picturebook *Frog, where are you?* (Mayer, 1969) has been the basis for numerous studies of narrative development in different languages and from different perspectives over and above the database relied on here (Berman & Slobin, 1994). These include both published works (e.g., Bamberg & Damrad-Frye, 1991; Bazanella & Calleri, 1991; Berman, 1993; Kail & Hickmann, 1992) and doctoral dissertations (Herman, 1996; Kern, 1997; Wigglesworth, 1992). Yet to the best of my knowledge, the nature of the background scene-setting to this story has not been the subject of separate study apart from considerations of referent introduction (Kail & Sanchez-Lopez, 1997) and a brief note on formulaic openers (Berman & Slobin, 1994, p. 86). The 24-picture booklet in question tells a story about a boy and his dog who go out in search of their pet frog, which escapes from its jar during the night, when the boy and dog are sleeping. The setting scene is provided by the first picture in the booklet, which stands alone, to the right of the title page. It shows the boy and his dog at the foot of their bed, looking at the frog in its glass jar. Table 1.1 gives the breakdown of setting elements mentioned in the frog story texts produced by speakers of (American) English and (Israeli) Hebrew.

The figures in Table 1.1 show a marked increase with age in elements counted as belonging to the setting, together with a change in the type of such elements mentioned by different age groups. Only half the youngest children, aged 3 to 4, introduce the main protagonist, the boy, by an appropriately explicit noun phrase, not just as "he," compared with nearly all the older subjects. Few children provide the relevant spatial setting for the frog, as being inside a jar from which it subsequently escapes; even fewer subjects mention that the events took place at night (as shown by the moon shining in at the window). These findings seem to clearly confirm the first prediction, particularly because very few children provide evaluative or motivational elements to set the background for how the boy came to have a frog, and why he might want to go out looking for it. Examples of such motivational elements taken from the English-language texts are given in (1).

(1) Motivational Elements in English Language Frog Story Texts

a. Well—there was a little boy, he liked his—pet frog and his his pet dog—very much [boy, aged 5;2]

b. Um—once there was like—a dog—who liked a frog, but the frog didn't like him, so he decided . . . [girl, aged 9;7]

c. This is a story about a boy—a dog—and his frog. Right now, in the beginning of the story—he's—the boy and his dog are just basically admiring his frog, looking at the frog in the jar. The frog looks kind of happy—obviously he's not real satisfied with his existence, because when . . . [female adult]

The figures in Table 1.1 indicate a clear age-related development in the ability to begin a story with scene-setting information. But these figures need to be evaluated qualitatively as well. First, in relation to character introduction, the task at hand, where both child and investigator have the picturebook open in front of them, may bias the cognitive issue of shared knowledge and required level of informativeness in referring to the main protagonist. Indeed, this has been shown to be the case in a series of studies on children's ability to introduce story characters using this same picturebook, but comparing our design with a situation where there is no mutual knowledge shared between the subject-narrator and the investigator-audience (Hickmann, Kail, & Roland, 1995; Kail & Hickmann, 1992; Kail & Sanchez-Lopez, 1997). Second, over half the 9-year-old and adult subjects do in fact explicitly mention 'at night, nighttime' as the temporal setting for their narratives. However, they do so not only at the outset in talking about the first picture but subsequently, to introduce the event which initiates the plot, for example: "At night, when the boy and his dog were sleeping, the frog jumped out of the jar and escaped." This is in marked contrast to the preschoolers, only one of whom started to describe the event by saying "Then one day at night [*sic*]." Moreover, the examples in (1) are not typical of the frog-story sample: Their settings are more elaborate than most, including the adults' texts. Again, this could be task related, inasmuch as both narrator and interlocutor have the same pictures in front of them.

The figures in Table 1.1 thus need to be somewhat hedged. Methodologically, picture-based elicitations create problems for character introduction and the need for providing detailed background information (see the Comparisons Across Elicitation Settings section). This analysis also suggests that, in principle, story-setting elements cannot be defined by a prescribed list of categories such as *who, where, when*, and *why*. Rather, story settings need to be analyzed in relation to the particular story that will unfold. In the case of the frog story, this means taking into account the relationship between the boy and the frog, as motivating the events to come. This was minimally achieved by subjects who started out by saying that the boy has or keeps a frog, that he thinks the frog is cute, more elaborately by those who described how the frog came to be in the boy's possession (he found it, got it as a present). Again, almost none of the

3- to 4-year-olds refer to motivating circumstances, about one third at age 5 to 6 (37%), and twice as many 9-year-olds and adults.

Nature of Setting Elements in Hebrew-Language "Fight" Stories

The data set for this analysis also includes 12 Hebrew-speaking children at ages 3, 5, 7, and 9, compared with a group of 12 adults.[1] To elicit a "fight" story, subjects were asked if they knew what a fight or quarrel was, and to tell about one they had been involved in.[2] *Scene-setting* elements were defined as all material that preceded the event that initated the quarrel or fight, that is, any verbal reference to when, where, why, or under what circumstances, as well as with whom, the altercation took place. These elements were analyzed into the following categories, ranging from least to most explicit, from less to more elaborated, from juvenile to mature, as in (2).

(2) Ranking of background-setting elements in personal-experience narratives:

1. No background
   - 1.1 Background element provided by adult input
   - 1.2 Initial Event
   - 1.3 Initial Event plus formulaic opener, for example, *pa'am* 'once', *yom exad* 'one day'
2. Minimal informational or framing background
   - 2.1 Name of antagonist plus specifying sex or relationship to narrator = protagonist
   - 2.2 Mention of place or time of initial event
3. Specific framing information
   - 3.3 Specification of a particular time and/or place
   - 3.4 Temporal distancing to specify circumstances surrounding initial event
4. Motivational background, scene-setting orientation
   - 4.1 Temporal distancing to set events off in past time
   - 4.2 Metacognitive orientation to the act of storytelling and/or the nature of quarreling

1 The texts used in the Hebrew-language data-base were elicited from different groups of subjects in the various studies referred to in these sections. However, it seems legitimate to compare results across these populations, since the subjects all shared the following background: they are children of educated, middle-class speakers of Hebrew as a first language (like the adult subjects who serve as controls in each study); the preschoolers attend Hebrew nurseryschool or daycare from the age of 2 and enter kindergarten at age 5 to 6; and the schoolchildren are in gradeschool from 6 to 11 or 12 years of age, they enter junior high in Grade 7, and complete high school at the end of Grade 12.

2 Instructions were worded as follows: *ata yodea ma ze la-riv, meriva? hayita pa'am bi-meriva? saper li al ze, saper al pa'am fle ravt (a).* 'Do you know what it is to-quarrel, have a-quarrel? Have you ever been in-a-quarrel? Tell me about it, tell about a time when you-quarreled'. If the subject hesitated, a prompt was provided: *saper li sipur al riv fle hayita bo.* 'Tell me a story about a quarrel/fight you were = took part in'.

This ranking, as suggested, corresponds to a clear developmental pattern in amount and type of background setting information provided by respondents. Thus, as illustrated by the excerpts in (3), the youngest children in our sample, 3- to 4-year-old nurseryschoolers (mean age 3;6), typically gave no background at all, but plunged straight into a report of the events. The only exceptions to this were when children used a formulaic opener such as words meaning *once, one day*, as semantically nonspecific markers of discourse initiation (see the Story Openers section) or gave the name of the antagonist, without further identifying comment. Older preschoolers, in this sample 5-year-old kindergartners (mean age 5;4), in some cases did the same, but many of them also added a locative frame, specifying the place where the incident occurred, as illustrated in (4).

(3) No background scene setting

a. *ravti im El'ad ve baxiti*
'I-quarreled with Elad and I-cried' [Adi, girl, 3;5]

b. *pa'am Orly hi natna li be'ita al ha-rosh im sir gadol kaze*
'Once Orly she gave me a kick on the-head with (a) big kinda pot' [Yafit, girl, 3;10]

(4) Minimal background scene setting

a. *ba-gan yalda axat daxfa oti me-ha-nadneda*
'At kindergarten a girl pushed me off-the-swing' [Efrat, girl, 5;4]

b. *etmol ba-gan ravti im xavera sheli Roni*
'Yesterday at-kindergarten I-quarreled with my (girl)friend Roni' [Meital, girl, 5;4]

In contrast, some preschoolers, nearly all the 7-year-old (Grade 2) and all the 9-year-old (Grade 4) school children, provided additional framing information, often in the form of some surrounding circumstances or event, as in (5a), or by being highly specific about the exact place or time as in (5b) and (5c), respectively. Older children also quite often gave two or more different types of framing information (5d, 5e).

(5) More specific framing by circumstances, time, and/or place

a. *yom exad sixakti xevel ba-xacer*
'One day I-played [= was playing] jumprope in-the-yard'[Galit, girl, 5;1]

b. *pa'am hayinu ba-kantry ba-brexa, ve haya li mishkefet kazot . . .*
'Once we were at-the-sports-center in-the-pool, and I had kinda goggles' [Liron, boy, 5;6]

c. *hayom še yaradnu ba-ma'alit mi-safta . . .*
'Today when we took the-elevator down from Granny . . .' [Amit, boy, 7;6]

d. *pa'am haya li vikuax im ima sheli, ze haya ba-telefon, še ani cilcalti la'avoda shela . . .*

'Once I had (an) argument with my Mom, it was on-the-phone, when I called her at work' [Dafna, girl, 9;2]

e. *ani ve xaver sheli Ronen halaxnu la-xanut matanot liknot matana la-yomuledet shel Dan . . .*

'Me and my friend Ronen went to-the gift store to buy (a) gift for Dan's birthday' [Tal, boy, 9;5]

Interestingly, these more elaborated settings illustrated in (5) were also quite generally set off explicitly from the onset element, or plot initiation, by an overt segmentation marker, typically in the form of expressions such as *ve-az* 'and then' or *pit'om* 'suddenly' (see the Transition Marker section).

In addition, proficient narrators, mainly adults but also some 9-year-olds as shown in (5d) and (5e), typically provided some background motivation for the quarrel. They did this by talking about the relations between the antagonists beyond this specific incident, by distancing themselves from the events, by going back in time and setting the reported incident in a more general frame of memories, and also by volunteering "metacognitive" or "metatextual" comments relating to fight scripts in general, or to the storytelling situation. These strategies are illustrated in (6).

(6) Maturely elaborated scene settings

a. *nizkarti. ani ravti im baxur še haya iti baxeder bakibuc, kše hayiti gar bakibuc. al ze še hu haya maklit lo flirim al ha-kaseta šeli, hu haya (h)ores li et ha-kasetot . . .*

'I remember quarrelling with a fellow that was my roommate on the kibbutz, when I was living on the kibbutz, he used to record songs off my tape-cassettes, ruining them' [Yuval, male, 22]

b. *be-bet sefer yesodi haya pa'am yeled še hecik li. kar'u lo Zohar S. hu nahag laruc axaray ve lehatrid oti . . .*

'In grade school there once was a kid that gave me trouble. He was called Zohar S. He used to run after me and bother me' [Yair, male, 28]

c. *tov, ani xoshevet le-saper al mashehu me-ha-gan. hayta li xavera nora tova, Enav, ba-gan. ve kol hazman hayinu ravot al miney shtuyot . . .*

'Okay, I think I'll tell you about something from kindergarten. I had a very close friend, Enav, in kindergarten. And all the time we used to quarrel about all kinds of stupid things' [Havatselet, female, 22]

d. *racit še ani asaper lax sipur al riv, aval loh ravti im af exad. ani loh ish še rav im axerim. ve af pa'am loh ravti im af exad. Ka'asti po ve sham, ka'asu alay po ve sham, betor yeled xatafti makot . . .*

'You wanted me to tell you (a) story about a quarrel, but I never quarreled with anybody. I'm not a person that quarrels with others. And I've never quarreled with anyone. I've gotten mad here and there, people have gotten mad at me here and there, as a kid, I got beaten up' [Eran, male, 24]

The picture that emerges from these excerpts, one that is reinforced by findings from other personal-experience accounts in Hebrew as in English (e.g., Peterson & McCabe, 1983) is of clearly age-related patterns in the ability to take the listener into account in providing adequate background information and scene-setting orientation. These can be summed up in terms of four developmental phases: juvenile, transitional, structured, and proficient: (a) *Immature, juvenile* narrators provide no setting elements at all, or else only formulaic starters, as in the example in (3). This is consistent with other studies that have noted that young preschool children tend to give little or no background setting, but instead start their stories with "immediate action," whether they are making up fictive stories (Pradl, 1979), embedding them in conversational interaction (Minami, 1996), or basing them on familiar scripts (Seidman, Nelson, & Gruendel, 1986). This is followed by (b) a *transitional phase*, when minimal information is provided to identify the relevant participants (in the case of the "fightstory" sample, the antagonist) or the location of the event. Next, older, school age children typically provide (c) *structured scene-setting frames* by specific identification of the place and/or time of the events, combined with some temporal distancing, and with sequential events being clearly set off by overt marking of the transition from background to foreground, plot-initiating events. Finally, (d) *maturely proficient* narrations are not only fully structured and temporally distanced by means of initiating elements that distinguish the events to be reported from the time and place of their reporting, they often contain personalized or other evaluative commentary concerning the relationship between the participants, the narrator's attitude to the events reported and to others like them, and/or to the act of storytelling and reporting on these events.

COMPARISONS ACROSS ELICITATION SETTINGS

The two sets of analyses presented here, on the "frog stories" and "fight stories," respectively, differ along a number of dimensions, although both deal with narrative texts produced by similar groups of subjects (see note 1). These differences suggest that analysis of *scene-setting elements* must take account of the particular *kind* of story being told. In the present case, for example, the frog story is based on the script of an adventure story, and it is in the genre of children's storybooks. The fight stories, in contrast, are based on the script of a conflict situation and belong to the genre of personal-experience accounts.

In fact, the type of task and the context of text-elicitation turns out to have an impact on the *amount* as well as the nature of the setting elements provided across different ages. This was revealed by analysis of the overall

amount of scene-setting, analyzed as the proportion of clauses serving this function across the two types of texts.[3] As shown in Table 1.2, the prediction of development with age in amount of scene setting was *not* confirmed for the frog story sample. The first line of Table 1.2 shows a consistently low proportion of clauses dedicated to scene setting (the first picture out of a total 24 pictures in the book), between 4% to 7% of all clauses across age-groups. In marked contrast, as shown in the second line of Table 1.2, the "fight story" reveals a clear and consistent rise in mean proportion of setting clauses with age, up to 10% among preschoolers, around one quarter at school age, and over one third among adults.

These findings are robust, as they tally with findings for similar types of elicitation across other populations. Analyses of frog story texts in other languages from the Berman and Slobin (1994) study, together with French data elicited by the same methodology by Kern (1997), reveal similar trends. The first picture, providing the background antecedent to the plot-initiating event of the frog escaping from its jar, yields the same low figures for adult narrators in English (mean of 5.5% of all clauses in the sample), Spanish (mean 7.6%), and French (mean 7.3%). In marked contrast to these low figures, analysis of the setting element in a range of other "fight stories" elicited from other Hebrew-speaking school children and adults reveal a closely parallel trend to the original "fight story" sample in Table 1.2. This additional database consisted of other Hebrew-language fight stories elicited in much the same way as the original set from eight second graders (aged 7 to 8), 12 fourth graders (aged 9 to 10), and 12 students (aged 17 to 18) and adults, each of whom produced two narratives about two separate experiences with a quarrel or fight, one in speech and one in writing (balanced for order of modality). In these fight stories, similar to the figures in the second line of Table 1.2, the second and fourth graders produced an average of 20% to 25% background setting clauses out of the total clauses in their narratives, whereas the adults devoted as many as one third (33%) to one half (49%) of their narratives to background setting clauses. Further evidence for these general trends for "personal experience" stories is that there was no notable difference between the figures for the narratives produced in writing compared with speech.[4]

3 The *clause*, defined in Berman and Slobin (1994) as "any unit that contains a unified predicate . . . that expresses a single situation (activity, event, state)" constitutes a unit of analysis highly relevant to the characterization of narrative texts in both form and content (p. 660).

4 Written narratives reveal another, unique feature marking background scene-setting which also has developmental consequences: More than half of the adults but almost none of the children marked off their story-setting from the initial episode or enabling event graphically, by a separate paragraph. In fact, one adult, a young computer scientist called Itay, set off his first paragraph by a heading in the margin with the word *reka* 'background' and started his second paragraph (both indented, with a two-line space between them) with the one-word heading in the margin *ha-ma'ase* 'the incident'. I am grateful to Nurit Assayag of the Tel Aviv University project on developing literacy for bringing this subject to my attention.

TABLE 1.2
Mean Percentage of "Setting" Clauses out of Total Clauses in Hebrew Frog Stories Compared With Hebrew Fight Stories, by Age ($N = 12$ per age group)

	Age Group				
Story type	*3 yrs*	*5 yrs*	*7 yrs*	*9 yrs*	*Adults*
Frog story	6.6	5.2	4.5	5.5	7.2
Fight story	6.4	9.8	20.6	27.7	36.4

These figures appear, moreover, highly consistent with other findings for amount of background setting material compared with overall text length as defined by number of clauses across a range of other materials, in English and in Hebrew. The analyses in the rest of this section derive from less detailed but similarly motivated examinations of background setting elements in narrative texts produced by three distinct methods of elicitation: narration of content of picture series, recapitulation of personal-experience accounts, and make-believe, fictive stories. The database for *picture series* consists of Hebrew-language materials based on three sets of four pictures each told by preschool children aged 4, 5, and 6, compared with 10-year-olds and adults (Berman & Katzenberger, 1998; Katzenberger, 1994), on a Hebrew replication of the "cat and horse" series used by Hickmann and her associates (Hickmann, 1991; Hickmann, Hendriks, Roland, & Liang, 1996), which elicited texts from 15 Hebrew speakers aged 5, 7, and 11 years compared with 10 adults (Kahanowitz, 1995), and on oral stories based on a series of pictures about a visit to the zoo by seven Hebrew-speaking preschoolers, and written versions from 14 adults (Berman, in press). The database *for personal-experience accounts* consists of a range of Hebrew-language materials on various subjects elicited from children aged 3 to 12 and adults (described in Berman, 1995, 1997a). These are supplemented by written and spoken versions of two different fight stories by 48 Hebrew-speaking grade-school and high-school students and 16 adults, and combined with the English-language texts in the appendix to Peterson and McCabe (1983). And the materials surveyed for *make-believe stories* are based, again, on a range of Hebrew-language texts culled from various sources, combined with the large number of stories collected by Pitcher and Prelinger (1963), as published in Sutton-Smith (1981).

This survey of a wide range of materials provides strong support for my earlier claim regarding "intertask differences in children's narratives" (Berman, 1995, pp. 295–302). There, the issue at hand was how the type and context of elicitation affects children's ability to give expression to principles of narrative discourse organization. In developmental terms, this ranges from immature expression of isolated events, via encoding of temporal sequence and local

relations of causality, on to a global, hierarchically organized action structure. Comparison across different narrative genres and varied methods of elicitation (recounting of familiar script, of a personal experience, of the contents of a picture series, a pictured storybook, and a film without words) yielded the conclusion that "narrative abilities . . . do not develop along a uniformly linear curve . . . [since] divergent results emerge in different settings and across different tasks" (Berman, 1995, p. 298). In the present context, I wish to make an analogous claim for the development of children's ability to start a story by providing relevant, and adequate, background, scene-setting information. That is, here as in other domains of development, *task effect* needs to be taken into account. Children proved able to demarcate setting elements better and earlier in personal experience accounts than in narratives based on a picturebook story. They did so as young as age 3 when they were free to tell about anything that had happened to them, but only from around age 5 when asked to tell specifically about a fight they had experienced. In general, personal experience accounts appear to provide more authentic contexts for elaborating on scene setting than picture-based elicitations. The examples in (7) are based on a series of six pictures depicting what happens to two children visiting a zoo, when the monkey snatches the ice cream from the younger child (Berman, in press). They suggest that young children may not bother to provide setting elements at all in picture-series narrations.

(7) Opening clauses of three children's picture-series based "zoo stories"

1. *pa'am hayu shney yeladim ve hem halxu im ima shelahem le-gan xayot*
'Once there were two kids and they went with their mom to the zoo . . .'
[Doron, boy, 6;8]
2. *po ani ro'e yeled ve yalda ve xayot ve az hem . . .*
'Here I see a boy and a girl and animals and then they . . .' [Tibi, boy, 5;8]
3. *po hem be-gan xayot ve po hem mistaklim al arye'im.*
'Here they're at the zoo and here they are looking at lions . . .' [Batya, girl, 4;8]

Although they all clearly recognized the "zoo" script situation in the pictures, only from school age were children able to provide any kind of scene setting as a frame for their texts, and only children aged 6 and older produced stories organized around an acceptable action structure. This finding is consistent with results for another set of picture series as analyzed in Katzenberger (1994). In contrast to these picture-series elicitations, nonpicture-based *fictional* accounts, where children are asked to create imaginary stories, appear to provide a particularly rich context for expressing early scene-setting abilities (as can be inferred from what kindergarten children do in a "pretend-reading" task, as in Segal, 1996). After all, in prose literature, background exposition plays a crucial role in construction of narrative texts.

Against this background, I suggest that some types of narrative-elicitation

tasks and certain communicative situations will promote earlier, and richer, expression of background settings than will others. These can be ranked as in (8), from most to least likely to elicit appropriate background material from relatively early on.

(8) Ranking of scene-setting evocation, by narrative genre, elicitation method, and communicative context

1. Fictive	Make-believe fantasy	a. based on own imagination
		b. based on known film or book
2. Veridical	Personal-experience account	a. outside investigator
		b. familiar interlocutor
3. Fictive	Picture-storybook based	a. no mutual knowledge
		b. mutual knowledge
4. Fictive	Picture-series based	a. no mutual knowledge
		b. mutual knowledge

We can thus explain the disparity in Table 1.2 between the amount of textual material given over to background setting elements in the "frog story" database (type 8.3b) compared with the "fight story" materials (type 8.2a) as a function of the differences in narrative genre and in the elicitation context. I suggest that, in general, as indicated by its ranking in (8.1), make-believe fantasy will be the first type of narrative in which children will provide some scene-setting information. In fact, it is in the context of familiar materials that young preschoolers have seen, heard, or had read to them (as listed in 8.1b), that they will first acquire the conventional markings of story openers such as 'once upon a time' or its Biblical style classical Hebrew counterpart *hayo haya pa'am* 'be was once = once there was' (see Story Openers section). Because the interlocutor needs to be introduced to the fantasy world being created or recreated in the narrative text, adequate background information is essential for orienting the audience to what is about to be told. And this is more critical in the case of a story that is unfamiliar to both narrator and audience, as in (8.1a), than to one they have shared knowledge of (e.g., a favorite fairytale or well-known fable) as in (8.1b). Next in rank as "setting-evocative" are personal experience accounts. Here, the factor of mutual knowledge is critical. As shown by the excerpts from the 3-year-olds in (3) compared with those from the 5-year-olds shown in (4), young children often fail to provide the minimal referential information necessary for an unfamiliar investigator, as in (8.2a), in situations of "no mutual knowledge," to identify the participants in the event. On the other hand, in fight stories elicited in Hebrew in a situation where school children recounted a personal experience to a friend or classmate, often one who had been present at the event, (e.g., situation 8.2b), even teenagers felt no need to specify details of the other participants' identity, beyond their names, and they tended to provide minimal locative framing if the event took place at school. But these high-school students,

like the adults telling a fight story to a friend, all gave overt expression to other setting elements, by providing suitably detailed and distanced temporal framing. They also often gave extensive motivational background in terms of the general relationship between the narrator and the other participant(s) in the events, personal predilections of the narrator and/or other participants, and so on.

In contrast to such rich setting-evocation in self-constructed narratives, whether fictive or veridical, picture-based elicitation procedures of pictured storybooks (8.3) or picture-series (8.4), appear far less accessible to explicit verbalization of setting elements. This is shown, as noted, for the relatively small amount of background information provided in a wide range of frog-story texts in different languages, even among adults. And Katzenberger's (1994) large sample of Hebrew-language texts elicited on the basis of several different picture series from 4-, 5-, and 6-year-olds compared with 10-year-olds and adults, reveal that from age 5, children often give some standard "opener" such as the word for 'once' (Story Openers section) plus a minimal referent introduction without any additional background information prior to the initiating event. The single exception was one 10-year-old, nearly half of whose clauses about a series of four pictures showing a woman in a hat store buying a new hat were given over to "distanced" and motivational background setting.[5] True, situations of no mutual knowledge, that is, (8.3a) and (8.4a), enrich the amount and form of referent introduction, as noted for frog story-based studies of this kind (Setting Elements section), and as such they are better suited to meeting the "presentative" function of establishing story background. But they, too, fail to stimulate much in the way of the other two functions of story settings: locative and particularly, temporal framing and evaluative motivation. This is noteworthy, because picture-based elicitations have yielded particularly rich analyses of children's narrative abilities across different languages.

These findings highlight a general point of both principle and methodology: Different types of elicitation procedures and communicative contexts promote, or at least allow expression to, some types of abilities earlier or more than others (Berman, in press). True, in developmental terms, once both narrative competence and storytelling performance are well established, older and more proficient narrators will prove less susceptible to effects of task and context with respect to narrative story-setting as in other domains. Nonetheless, the ranking tentatively proposed in (8) is worth examining under suitably controlled conditions, using comparable materials (e.g., based on the same theme, topic, or script) across different types of tasks and different developmental phases, to further test the prediction that setting evocation will be strongest at level (8.1a), weakest at (8.4b).

5 I am grateful to Dr. Katzenberger for making her summary and illustrations of these data available to me.

EXPRESSION OF LINGUISTIC FORM/FUNCTION RELATIONS

This final set of analyses focuses on the linguistic forms used for three related narrative functions: to mark narrative openings, to demarcate the transition from scene-setting to narrative events or episode inception, and to distinguish between background setting elements and narrative events.

Story Openers

An early development in marking linguistic form:function relations is use of a temporal term identifying the text as in the narrative mode. Thus Pradl's (1979) study based on the large Pitcher and Prelinger (1963) corpus of fictive stories children were asked to tell, noted that only 20% of the 2-year-olds began their stories with a formal opening device, whereas this increased to nearly three-quarters (73%) among the 5-year-olds. This is consistent with findings from the frog-story sample in English and Hebrew, in which nearly all the preschoolers plunged directly into picture description or narration, whereas 23 out of the 24 fourth graders (9- to 10-year-olds) provided some introduction, and two-thirds of them used what we termed "formulaic opening expressions" such as 'once, once upon a time, one day' or their Hebrew equivalents, as described next (Berman & Slobin, 1994, pp. 74–75).[6]

A term such as 'once' (Hebrew *pa'am*) specifies that something happened, and it happened in the past. A quarter of the 3-year-olds and nearly half the 5-year-olds opened their fight stories with this word, or with a similar expression, 'one time' (Hebrew *pa'am axat*), 'one day' (*yom exad*), and an occasional 'yesterday' (*etmol*). So did the 7- and 9-year-old school children, but their use of these terms differed importantly from that of younger children. Among preschoolers, these temporal openers were invariably text initial, whereas among older children they could be text internal. For example, 7-year-old David (7;6) started off with *halaxti pa'am la-ken im Sa'ar* 'I went *once* to the clubhouse with Saar', and 9-year-old Etti (9;7) started her story with *ani asaper lax riv še haya li im axoti ha-gdola. pa'am axat* . . . 'I'll tell you about a quarrel I had with my older sister. *One time*. . . . ' Moreover, occasionally among 5-year-olds and invariably with older children, these openers were accompanied by *additional* setting information about time and/or place, in line with the general developmental trends noted earlier. In contrast, early use of these narrative openers was very restricted in function: The children started off a story as having some generic

6 One of these fourth graders but only two of the Hebrew- and English-speaking adults started out with the highly narratively oriented comment "It's a story about . . . " This might reflect cultural conventions, since in Kern's (1997) French sample, which used the same elicitation procedures as the Berman and Slobin (1994) study, over half the adults although only one 11-year-old and none of the younger children started their narratives with a comment along the lines of *C'est une histoire de . . .*"

"prior-to-the-present" temporal location, but failed to anchor it within any specific time frame. Use of these openers is thus essentially formulaic, rather than well motivated in terms of the semantics of temporality or the discourse function of temporal framing. But they do show that children are familiar with conventional narrative devices marking story beginnings in their culture.

In the picture-based frog-story corpus, as noted, use of similar expressions, such as English 'once upon a time', occurred at the beginning of many of the texts produced by 9-year-olds but in almost none of the younger children's. The most typical such opener was in the form *pa'am/pa'am axat haya yeled* 'once/one time (there) was a-boy' (used by no fewer than 6 out of 12 Hebrew-speaking 9-year-olds and 3 out of 12 older children, aged 11 to 12). These expressions serve a rather different, though no less stereotypic, culturally conventional function than the terms *pa'am/pa'am axat* 'once/one time' in the personal-experience fight stories of the younger, preschool children; they mark the start of a children's fairytale or fictional storybook account. Moreover, four of the 11- to 12-year-old sixth-grader frog stories, but none among the 9-year-old fourth graders, used an archaically flavored literary type opener in Biblical-style Hebrew, in the form of *hayo haya pa'am* 'be was once = there once was'. This is the classic opener for Hebrew children's literature in fairytales and fables, so that this finding ties in with what was noted in the previous section about the important effect of genre on narrative setting or expositions.

These conclusions are supported by analysis of make-believe stories written by third-grade 8- to 9-year-olds compared with sixth-grade 11- to 12-year-olds asked to make up a story about a child who meets a strange creature on a journey (Argeman, 1996). Of the younger children, two started out with *yeled exad* 'a boy = child', two with *yom exad* 'one day', most (7 out of 12) with *pa'am/pa'am axat* 'once/one time', and one with the fable-marking *hayo haya* 'there was once'. An almost identical breakdown marked the openers of the make-believe stories written by the older group of 11-year-olds, except that two of them started with the classically flavored *hayo haya* opener. This suggests that mode of elicitation (written versus spoken) and narrative genre (make-believe fable versus pictured adventure story) will evoke earlier, more widespread use of strictly conventionalized story openers. That is, these children were manifesting knowlege not only of the narrative as a type of text, but of literacy-related awareness of subgenres of narrative as well.

Moreover, the different linguistic *and* textual or situational contexts in which a single term such as *pa'am* 'once' is used as a story opener supports earlier findings with regard to form:function relations in language acquisition in general, and in the development of narrative abilities specifically (Berman, 1996, 1998; Berman & Slobin, 1994; Slobin, 1993). Early uses of a given linguistic form will serve a restricted range of functions, whereas the same superficially identical forms may serve different functions across development. With age, the range of forms used to indicate that a story is about to begin not

only becomes more varied and more personalized or less stereotypic, the forms also tend to be more explicit as markers of a particular narrative genre and/or function. Thus, for example, the young man referred to in note 4 as marking off the background section not only by a separate paragraph but also by explicit mention of the word *reka* 'background' in the margin of his written story introduced an oral narrative by means of this same word when telling a friend of his about a quarrel he had been involved in at work. In the opposite direction, that of the same form serving different functions with age, *none* of the adult narratives, whether frog-book based or personal-experience fight-story accounts, started out with temporal markers like *pa'am (axat)* 'once, one time' or *yom exad* 'one day'. As noted earlier, adults start out their stories with more specific temporal and/or locative framing, e.g., *etmol halaxti lemale delek* 'Yesterday I went to take gas' [Hanan, man, 25], *lifney xamesh shanim horay, baali ve ani yacanu le-tiyul* . . . 'Five years ago my-parents, husband, and I went on a trip . . .' [Sara, woman, 40], *be-bet sefer yesodi haya pa'am yeled* 'At grade school there once was a boy' [Yair, man, 28]; or else they make some metacognitive comment on their recall or reconstruction of the event, for example, *ani rotse le-saper al mikre riv* 'I want to tell about a quarrel incident' [Shlomo, man, 32], *tov, ani xoshevet le-saper al mashehu me ha-gan* 'Okay, I think I'll tell about something from kindergarten' [Havatselet, woman, 22]. Temporal adverbs such as *yom exad, pa'am* 'one day, once' *do* occur in the adult narratives, but in a different place, not at the outset, and for a different purpose — to mark background setting off from plot initiation, as next discussed.

Transition Markers

Consider, next, how narrators mark off or otherwise indicate the boundary between scene setting and plot inception. In writing, this may be graphically marked by means of paragraphing (see note 4), but in spoken texts, some overt linguistic form is needed to perform this kind of segmentation. Young preschool children use overt, conventional linguistic means to mark story openings even prior to the development of a well-structured narrative schema, but in contrast, the *transition* from setting to the events which start the story *per se* is often blurred and not clearly marked in their texts. Table 1.3 shows the expressions used to mark the transition from introductory setting to the plot-line chain of events in the Hebrew frog-story texts, where the frog is depicted escaping from its jar while the boy and dog are asleep in the bed nearby.

There is an almost complementary distribution between the younger and older speakers in marking the transition, shown by the different clustering of the figures in each column of Table 1.3, and by the figures in bold, which stand for the favored means at each age group. Three-year-olds favor zero marking, 5-year-olds prefer 'and', and 9-year-olds rely on an explicitly temporal expression. The fact that young children generally provide no overt marker of

TABLE 1.3
Markers of Transition to Plotline Chain of Events in Hebrew Frog Story Texts, by Age ($N = 12$ per age group)

Device		*3 yrs*	*5 yrs*	*9 yrs*	*Adults*
Zero marking		6	1	—	2
ve	'and'	5	6	—	1
(*ve*) *hine*	'and here(on)'	1	—	—	1
az	'then, so'	—	2	—	—
pit'om	'suddenly'	—	2	—	—
axarkax	'afterwards'	—	1	2	—
yom exad	'one day'	—	—	1	1
benatayim	'meanwhile'	—	—	2	—
balayla	'at night'	—	—	7	2
balayla kše	'at night when'	—	—	—	2
bizman še	'while (that)'	—	—	—	3

narrative-event inception indicates failure to distinguish between background setting and foreground plotline. If 3-year-olds do mark subsequent events versus prior states, they use the vague, general connector *ve* 'and', in a way as yet lacking in conventional syntax or semantic content, and meeting no normative narrative function (Berman, 1996; Peterson & McCabe, 1991).

Older speakers almost always mark the boundary explicitly, either by the general episode marker 'one day', or by more specific terms for points in time ('at night') or duration ('while the boy slept'). Adults use a wider range of forms than other age groups, and they avoid sequential expressions like 'suddenly, and then, after that', which are favored by school-age children. Besides, where the youngest and oldest groups share surface forms, these serve quite distinct functions. Zero marking in the case of the 3-year-olds is indicative of their picture-by-picture description of isolated scenes and events. Adults who fail to use an overt marker of plot inception rely on other devices to mark the transition from background setting to foreground plot—a switch in verb tense or a shift from stative to dynamic predicates.[7] The transition markers used by the 5- and 9-year-olds, again, illustrate more general trends in the development of narrative form-linguistic function relations. Five-year-old children reveal

7 The locative *hine* 'and here' also functions differently in the younger and older texts: For the little children, it has a deictic spatial function, corresponding to the use of the temporal deictic *now*, like French *voici*; for adults, Hebrew *hine* is anaphoric, it marks off a given point in the chain of events under discussion. A similar switch from a deictic to an anaphoric, discourse-motivated function occurs with the time word *axshav*, much like its English counterpart 'now' (e.g., *The boy is in danger now that the owl has been disturbed*).

command of narrative sequentiality through markers of linear clause-chaining: multifunctional 'and', along with sequential terms like 'then, suddenly, afterwards'. Nine-year-olds are more like adults in segmenting background setting from plot initiation through use of specifically temporal terms like 'meanwhile, that night'.

In the fight-story sample, too, 3-year-olds only occasionally marked off the initial chain of events by a sequential term such as *az* 'then, so', *axarkax* 'afterwards', or *pit'om* 'suddenly'. These expressions serve this transition-marking function in the bulk of the children's fight stories from age 5 years up, for example, *az hitxilu ca'akot* 'so/then (there) started shouting' [Shay, boy, 5;0], *pit'om yeled exad shovav kafats* 'Suddenly a naughty kid jumped (out)' [Galit, girl, 5;1], *az axarey ze hu omer* 'And so after that he said" [Tomer, boy, 7;5]. The adults rarely used the term *pit'om*, which serves as a typical marker of episode initiation in children's storybooks. And if they did, it was the more literary, high-register equivalent *le-feta* 'all-of a sudden' (e.g., *le-feta xash Avi be-ra* 'of-a-sudden, Avi was taken bad = ill' [Sara, woman, 40]), in line with what was found for the Hebrew frog-story sample as well (Berman & Slobin, 1994, p. 301). In contrast to the children, adults mainly used the punctual term (*az*) *yom exad* '(then) one day' as transition markers; for example, an adult fight story of 38 clauses long about how in junior high they used to throw things down on people in the street below started with 10 background introductory clauses, then switched to the initial event as follows: *az yom exad lakaxti tapuax še heveti me ha-bayit* 'So one day I-took an apple that I-brought from home . . .' [Udi, man, 23]. In general, temporal markers of transition from background to plot onset used by older speakers are more specific, for example, *boker exad* 'one morning' [Sarit, woman, 21], corresponding to the transition-marking *ba-layla* 'at night' of the frog story. They tend, also, to be more detailed, and often introduce an embedded temporal clause, for example, *ba-yom bo hexel ha-kurs* 'on-the-day on-which started the-course' [Idan, man, 22], *yom exad še tiyalti ito* 'One day when I was out with-him = the dog' [Shlomo, man, 31], *yom exad, kše hu hecik li* 'One day, when he bothered me' [Yair, man, 28].

A similar preference for a particular form to mark the shift from scene setting to the start of the action among older Hebrew speakers was even more marked in another narrative task. Three- and 4-year-old preschool children, 11-year-old sixth graders and adults were asked to make up a story based on a large picture showing an old man carrying a sack of fish walking toward a house where a woman and children stand waiting on the porch (Ben-Haviv, 1996). More than half the younger children started their texts with the expressions *pa'am* 'once' or *yom exad* 'one day', showing that they knew they were supposed to "tell a story." The school children and adults with only one exception used similar expressions, for example, *pa'am axat* 'one time', *yom exad* 'one day', *boker exad* 'one morning' at a point three to four clauses into their narrations. These temporal adverbs served to indicate a switch from scene-setting

background description to reporting the narrative chain of events. In marking this transition, too, the identical linguistic forms serve different narrative functions at different phases in the development of storytelling abilities.

Tense/Aspect Shifts

This heading concerns the ability to encode rhetorical alternations between background setting and foreground plot elements. I examined use of *tense/aspect shifting* to distinguish story introductions from the chain of plotline events, since grammatical aspect is recognized as a key means for distinguishing foreground and background elements in narrative (e.g., Berman & Slobin, 1994, pp. 6-9; Chvany, 1985; Hopper, 1982; Labov, 1972; Reinhart, 1984). Modern Hebrew, unlike the classical Biblical language, does not mark aspectual distinctions grammatically by inflections on the verb, so that today's Hebrew speakers need only mark the inflectional distinction between finite verbs marked for past compared with present and future forms (Berman & Dromi, 1984; Ravid, 1995, pp. 42–45). Two relevant findings emerged from our large-scale crosslinguistic study in this respect. First, we found almost no evidence for *linguistic compensation*, defined as expressing by lexical means notions that are not morphologically grammaticized in the language. More specifically, we noted that "with regard to verbal aspect, we found only rare instances of attempts in German and Hebrew to *add* distinctions of punctuality or durativity that are not marked grammatically in the language" (Berman & Slobin, 1994, pp. 621–622). Second, in the Hebrew frog-story corpus, narrators "use *tense shifting* as a means of global discourse organization," one of whose functions is "to set off background settings . . . from the central body of the plot" (Berman & Slobin, 1994, p. 295). But narratively motivated deployment of tense shifting is restricted in several ways. First, tense shifts are only from past to present or present to past, depending on which tense the text was anchored in in general. Second, only some out of the 16 adults in the Hebrew sample (Berman, 1988) shifted tenses to a noticeable extent; and only some of these did so for the purpose of distinguishing background settings from the main plotline. Third, in developmental perspective, none of the Hebrew-speaking children used tense shifting as a device for global narrative organization in the frog-story sample; for example, school-age children used it as a local device to express the temporal relations between complement clauses and their matrix predicates (Shen & Berman, 1997). Global text-level tense shifting was a peculiarly *adult* device, not employed even by 9- to 10-year-old fourth graders with full command of complex syntax and global narrative action structure.

For purposes of the present study, I examined a range of other narrative texts produced by Hebrew-speaking children and adults to see whether tense shifting would serve to distinguish background setting or orientation from the foreground narrative events. My hypothesis was that in nonpicture-based narratives, present-tense *benoni* 'intermediate' participial forms would function to set off background situations from foreground events. And indeed, the findings for the Hebrew frog-story corpus were strongly confirmed in these other samples, too: Only older speakers, and only some of them, used tense shifting to serve the narrative function of marking off story beginnings from their continuation. This confirms the prediction that, with age, the particular elicitation setting exerts *less* effect on narrative production than among younger subjects. Moreover, in one sample, in which texts were elicited from older, teenage children, they behaved more like the adults in this connection than did younger grade schoolers. The impact of increased exposure to different types of narrative and other text types and well-established literacy evidently makes 12-year-olds more familiar with a range of cultural conventions and rhetorical options of the narrative genre.

A second finding also went beyond what emerged from the Hebrew frog-story sample. Narrators used a range of *other* formal options in addition to present/past-tense shifts to distinguish setting from story, and they did this similarly in quite different contexts. These included (a) an interview-type situation, in which Israeli adults were asked to tell about their experiences in high school and the army; (b) an elicitation setting, in which children and adults were asked to pretend they were telling a story based on a large colored picture to their friends or their pupils at nursery school; and (c) personal-experience accounts as represented by the fight-story sample. In all these settings, narrators who are characterizable as "proficient" used a range of devices to distinguish between predications in the background settings and those describing narrative plotline events. This distinction is achieved by shifting between the small repertoire of relevant tense/aspect marking forms in the language: present tense *benoni* 'intermediate' forms, which are also participial in function; past tense forms inflected for person as well as number and gender, which cover the whole range of English past-tense forms — progressive and perfect as well as simple; and the complex form of *haya* + *benoni* 'was/were + participle', equivalent to English 'would do, used to do'. The excerpts in (9) and (10) illustrate tense/aspect switches used to distinguish setting from narrative-event predicates in our Hebrew narrative sample: from present-tense (participial) forms for background setting to the past tense in event recounting (9.1); shifting from past to present tense in a historical or narrative present (9.2); shifting between the complex form of habitual past followed by the unmarked simple past tense (10.1); and simple past followed by complex habitual past, as in (10.2).

(9) Switches between Present [Participial] and Past Tense

1. Present ~ Past Tense [Present = Participial]

   a. *misphaxat Yisraeli hi omnam misphaxa ktana. yesh ba rak saba, savta, shney yeladim ve zug horim. az zo hi mixphaxa me'usheret ve smexa. ha-saba ve ha-savta garim ba-kfar ve le-yadam shoxenet brexat dagim. Yom exad ha-saba hexlit* . . .

'The Yisraeli family is actually just a small family. They have only a grandpa, grandma, two kids and parents. So this is one happy and contented family. The grandparents *live* in a village, with a fishpond that lies nearby. One day, the grandpa decided . . .' [Pnina, girl,12, 7th grade, picture-based fiction—*continues all in past tense*]

b. *tov. ani sonet še nog'im li ba-dvarim, še mit'askim li im hadvarim baxeder. yom exad axoti Yael hexlita . . .*
'Okay, I hate it when (people) touch my things, mess around with the things in my room. One day my sister Yael decided . . .' [Hila, girl, 13, 7th grade, fight story]

c. *lifney be'erex shvuayim noda li, še ani nosa'at le-xul be-ta'arix še mitnagesh im mivxan be-anglit sheli, az nigashti la-mora le-anglit sheli . . .*
'About two weeks ago I learned that I go = am going abroad on a date that conflicts with my English test, so [= then] I-went-up to my English teacher . . .' [Merav, girl, 16, 11th grade]

2. Past ~ Present [Present = Historical, Narrative Present]
etmol halaxti le-male delek ba-oto ha-tsahov ve ksehigati lesham, bederex klal ani memale ki ha-ovdim be-taxanot ha-delek mit'aclim laasot et avodatam. az yacati me ha'oto ve lakaxti et ekdax ha-delek ve samti oto betox hamexonit, hitxalti le-male delek ve hu mistakel alay kaxa, amarti lo še ani roce lemale shemen, azar li le-male shemen. axarey ze ani ba le-shalem lo im ha-viza, kmo še ani meshalem bederex klal, ve bederex klal ani tamid sam lev, bekicur, hu omer li še ha-mexir ha-kolel hu . . .
'Yesterday I went to fill up the yellow car with gas, and when I got there, I usually do it because the guys working there are too lazy to do it properly. So I got out of my car and took the hose and inserted it, I started to fill up, and he looks at me in a weird kind of way, and I told him I need oil as well, (he) helped me with that. After that, I come to pay him, with my credit card, like I always pay, I usually watch what he does, to cut a long story short, he tells me the price is . . .' [Hanan, man, 25, fight story, *continues in present tense for rest of story, until last 8 clauses out of 80 = the coda, also introduced by "to cut a long story short"*]

It is not by chance that there are three examples in (9.1) of shifting from present to past, from older school children, but only one example of shifting from past to present, from an adult. In general, across our database, there were far more examples of the first than of the latter shift between the two tense forms. This might seem surprising, because past tense (basically perfective though also possible with durative predications in Hebrew) might seem better suited to the anterior nature of background, scene-setting situations. However, as noted, in Hebrew present-tense forms also function as nontensed participials in complement and adverbial clauses expressing attendant circumstances. Thus, from late schoolage, but not before then, narrators showed the impact of

Biblical and other literary fiction for expressing narrative temporality and background-foreground distinctions by means of the participial-(generic or durative) present for setting versus use of the more completive, sequential past-tense forms for narrative events. The reverse example in (9.2) is less typical and reflects a highly individual "Damon Runyonish" type of style, which only a few adults and none of the younger subjects adopted.

As noted, shifting between present to past and past to present to mark off story scene-setting from story plotline is only one device used by proficient Hebrew-speaking narrators. Another is by contrasting the simple or perfective past with the complex habitual, durative past form. This is overtly marked by combining the past-tense form of the verb *haya* 'be' (or any of its alternants in 1st and 2nd person, singular vs. plural) as an auxiliary with the participial, present tense form of the main verb (which agrees with the subject in number and gender). This quite common verb form never once occurred in the Hebrew frog-story sample, and it is extremely rare in the conversational usage of preschool children through age 5 (Berman & Dromi, 1984). But it does serve proficient narrators as a rhetorical option for formally marking off background settings from the foreground narrative chain of events, or vice versa, as illustrated in (10).

(10) Shifting between Simple (Perfective) and Complex (Habitual) Past Tense:

1. Habitual Past [= *haya* 'was/were + *Benoni* Participle'] ~ Simple Past
a. *ze haya lifney shana, ve yeladim ba-kita sheli hayu osim shtuyot, mitkashrim habayta ve ze. az yeled exad xashav še ani hitkasharti elav . . .*
'It was last year, and the kids in my class were doing crazy-things, calling people at home and so on. So [= then] one kid thought that I (had) called him . . .' [Tal, boy, 12;5, 7th grade]

b. *hayta li xavera axat še hi hayta mexatetet ba'af ve ani hayiti koseset cipornayim, hayinu yoshvot axat leyad ha-shniya, ve hayiti rava ita, hayiti omeret la, hayiti tso'eket aleha, ve hi hayta omeret li . . . . az pa'am halaxti ita makot bemizderon bet ha-sefer*
'I had a friend in first grade, that was picking [= used to pick] her nose, and I was biting my nails, we were sitting next to each other, and I was arguing with her, I was saying to her, I was shouting at her, and she was saying to me . . . . So once I simply got into a fight with her in the school corridor. [Shani, woman, 23, *continues all the rest in simple past tense*]

2. Simple Past ~ Habitual Past
loh haya lahem musag ex le-tapel be-tinok, az hem masru ota le-imuts, aval ze sipur axer legamrey, ex ve lama kara še asu kax. ha-saba sheli axarey kama shanim nisa le-baxura tse'ira bat 17, ve haya lahem od shney yeladim beyaxad. ha-aba sheli gadal be-mosdot, haya lo aba ve ima aval hu xay kmo ba-sipurim im ima xoreget rasha'it še hayta me'ira otam be-arba ba-boker ve

me'ifa otam me ha-mita, kulam hayu kamim be-arba ba-boker lenakot et ha-bayit, hayta meshuga'at le-nikayon. be-shlav mesuyam ha-aba sheli avar le-kibuts, hu bila sham shanim, pagash sham et ha-ima sheli . . .
'They didn't have a clue how to take care of a baby, so they gave her up for adoption, but that is a whole other story, how and why it happened that they did so. My grandfather after a few years married a young girl of 17, and they had another two kids together. My father grew up in institutions, he had a mother and father but he lived like in the storybooks with a wicked stepmother who was waking [= used to wake] them up at four in the morning and (was) throwing them out of bed, all of them were getting up at four a.m. to clean the house, she was compulsive about cleanliness . . . . At some point my dad moved to a kibbutz, he spent years there, met my mother there' [Chaya, woman, 33, telling lifestory to a friend]

Along with use of tense/aspect shifting to distinguish background circumstances from foregrounded events, more mature or proficient Hebrew narrators alternate predicates in two additional ways. First, they rely heavily on the verb *haya* to indicate both copula 'be' and possessive 'have' in background clauses, in contrast to the lexically specific verbs that they prefer in the sequential part of the narrative. Second, narrators use stative–durative verbs as background predicates, and activity or event verbs elsewhere; that is, they make use of inherent aspect or *Aktionsarten* distinctions to set off background from foregrounded events.

These findings for how Hebrew speakers alternate across predicate types in order to mark off different components of their stories illustrate several more general themes. In crosslinguistic terms, speakers will rely on the formal options made available to them by the typological structure of their native language, rather than seeking to use "compensatory" periphrastic means for marking distinctions not made in their grammar. On the other hand, proficient speakers, and they alone, resort to a full range of *textual* devices for marking relevant distinctions, across a range of forms which is not immediately obvious from grammatical or even lexical analysis at the level of the single sentence. Furthermore, proficient narrators deploy these devices in a way that is not accessible to younger, less proficient speakers in constructing narrative texts. Besides, even among fully proficient narrators, use of these devices is optional rather than obligatory. Narrative texts in Hebrew sound perfectly well formed if they are constructed entirely in past or in present tense, or without any surface marking of habitual past aspect contrasting with simple past tense. However, the ability to exploit such rhetorical options gives the narratives constructed by skilled narrators a textual flavor, a richness and variety which are the hallmark of "good" storytellers and storytelling.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has confirmed findings of prior research on narrative development to the effect that young preschool children do not appear to recognize the need to provide their audience with relevant background information. Subsequently, at a more structured, middle-level phase of development, narrators provide at least the minimal background information needed to frame events in place and time, and they occasionally add motivation for the events that will ensue. However, metacognitive comments on the task itself and/or on its thematic content or on the script itself (say, of an adventure story or a personal experience with a conflict situation) are given only by mature narrators, reflecting a quite different type and level of communicative competence. Moreover, as I have noted elsewhere (Berman, 1988, 1995), the greatest individual variation is found at the two extremes, among the youngest children and the adults. Some adults tell stories as straightforwardly informative and well structured as school children's, while other adults devote as much as 50% of their texts to background before proceeding to the onset of the action.

The question of what children's narrative abilities can tell us about their knowledge of language is not a simple one, because narrative construction is a domain in which linguistic structure interacts in complex ways with general *cognitive* faculties (Berman & Katzenberger, 1998; Shatz, 1984). These include the ability to give expression to an internalized narrative schema in the form of an action structure organized around a goal or problem, attempts to meet this goal, and a resolution. Also dependent on cognitive underpinnings is the ability to provide adequate and appropriate background information to set the scene for the story that is about to unfold. Nonetheless, certain common themes emerge to illuminate how children develop the ability to use linguistic forms for meeting such narrative functions. These themes are shared by the findings of the large-scale crosslinguistic "frog-story" study of Dan Slobin and our collaborators (Berman & Slobin, 1994); by the analysis of the expression of temporality and connectivity in five different contexts used for narrative elicitation among Hebrew-speaking subjects (Berman, 1995); and by the more specialized study of story-beginnings presented here.

First, from the point of view of form:function relations, the same surface forms (e.g., the Hebrew counterparts of 'once, one day') fulfil different narrative functions with age. Moreover, some forms initially serve in only restricted contexts, but with time come to meet a wider range of narrative functions. Thus, young children use stereotypic lexical items to introduce their stories, whereas mature narrators rely on less conventional rhetorical devices to set off background orienting elements from the main storyline. Among the youngest narrators, the distinction between background and foregrounded elements is often unmarked or initially blurred, whereas subsequently it is marked by relatively nonexplicit additive or temporal expressions like those meaning 'and

(then), after that'. Only later in development is the transition from scene setting to plot onset clearly marked by explicit lexical as well as grammatical devices, including tense/aspect shifting in some cases.

Second, and relatedly, most of the relevant linguistic forms are available from early on, for example use of past tense marking of verbs or lexical markers of temporal sequence like *one time, afterwards.* Yet even where children do have command of the relevant linguistic forms at the level of the simple clause and, later on, for relating adjacent clauses, it takes them a long time to learn how to deploy these forms both flexibly and appropriately in the context of extended discourse. In the present context, they need to know which linguistic forms to use in order to distinguish background scene-setting elements from the foreground chain of narrative events. And they must do so by using appropriate lexical markers of the transition and by flexible shifting between predicate semantics, tense, and aspect in background versus foreground elements. Furthermore, some forms do not appear to be used at all until quite late. Examples include use of the past perfect in English and Spanish (Kupersmidt, 1996; Sebastián & Slobin, 1994), use of syntactic passives in Hebrew (Berman, 1997b) and, as shown here, use of Hebrew habitual past aspect marking. These findings provide strong motivation for further examination of the more general issue of "late acquisitions" and the need to account for the delay in emergence of some forms compared with others (Berman, 1998; Ravid & Avidor, 1998).

These findings point to the importance of including adult subjects as a basis for comparison and for evaluating the range of options used by proficient speakers in different types of narratives. The present study shows that we should include teenage narrators, too, as was done to such fine effect by Labov (1972). Adolescents in general, and high school students in particular, can illuminate in important ways how developing narrative abilities and linguistic form:narrative function relations are affected by school-based literacy and increased exposure to and awareness of different types of narrative genres and the rhetorical options suited to each one. It seems to take through to adulthood until this knowledge is further incorporated into a personal style and the narrative stance that each individual selects to deploy in any given context.

Next, as in other domains of development, task effect is relevant here, too. Children proved able to mark off setting elements better and earlier in personal experience accounts than in narratives based on a picturebook story. And they did so as young as age 3 when they were free to tell about anything that had happened to them, but only from around age 5 when asked to tell specifically about a fight they had experienced. In general, personal experience accounts appear to provide more authentic contexts for elaborating on scene setting than do picture-based tasks. These preliminary findings indicate that, as noted, the methodological and developmental issue of task effect could be illuminated by in-depth, suitably controlled studies of how and when each setting element is expressed across different narrative genres and in different elicitation settings.

Additional avenues for further research that emerge from this study are in-depth examination of crosslinguistic and crosscultural differences that might affect how scene-setting circumstances as distinguished from plotline events are expressed across development, for example, in languages with rich tense/aspect distinctions or in cultures with highly conventionalized formats for this purpose. Finally, as a possible source of new insights in the domain of general as well as developmentally motivated narrative research, it would seem of interest to compare such analyses of scene-setting elements with the extent and way in which children and adults give expression to the *coda* in different types and contexts of narrative production.

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2 Representation of Movement in European Portuguese: A Study of Children's Narratives

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A significant part of recent language acquisition research has focused on the organization of information in discourse, with special reference to person, space, and time (Berman & Slobin, 1994; Hendriks, 1993; Hickmann, 1995; Smoczynska, 1992; see also Berman, chap. 1, this volume). The acquisition of spatial terminology that differs markedly between typologically different languages has been of particular interest (Bowerman, 1985, 1989, 1996; Choi & Bowerman, 1991). At the same time, a new wave of research on language and space has uncovered enormous variation in the linguistic coding of spatial relationships (Goddard, 1998). The emphasis has been, on the one hand, on crosslinguistic variation in spatial semantics and, on the other, on the semantic primes of space proposed within Anna Wierzbicka's "natural semantic metalanguage" (Goddard, 1998; Wierzbicka, 1996, 1998; see also our discussions in Batoréo, 1998b; Batoréo & Duarte, 1998).

Acquisition research on the organization of information in discourse has particularly focused on two important issues: the marking of information status and the grounding of information in discourse. In both domains, three recurrent observations that must be taken into account in any model of mother tongue acquisition are reported. These are "a relatively late developmental progress in discourse organization, interrelations among the utterance and discourse levels of analysis, and a combination of general cognitive developmental patterns with language-specific ones" (Hickmann, 1995, p. 215).

Taking into consideration both cognitively and linguistically oriented studies it can be postulated that early acquisition is based not only on universal sensorimotor concepts but also on the particular language being acquired. Earlier research across a number of languages revealed that children's production of locative expressions is determined by cognitive complexity and