2 Spoken and Written Narrative in English and Greek*

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BACKGROUND

This chapter reports findings of a study that represents the convergence of a number of strands that have run through my research on American English and modern Greek discourse: spoken and written narrative, relative focus on involvement as the dynamic motivating linguistic choice in discourse, and the application of frames theory to discourse. In accounting for features of discourse, I have drawn upon theories of orality vs. literacy, first thinking in terms of oral vs. literate tradition (Tannen 1980), then of an oral/literate continuum (Tannen 1982a), then of oral and literate strategies (Tannen 1982b), and finally of strategies reflecting relative focus on involvement (Tannen in press-a), hoping thereby to eschew a dichotomous view of speaking and writing in favor of the view that both can display a variety of features depending on the communicative situation, goal, genre, and so on. (The considerations leading to these developments in terminology and concepts are discussed in Tannen in press-a.) I have shown the power of frames theory to account for features of discourse in oral narratives in English and Greek (Tannen 1979) as well as in conversation in a medical setting (Tannen in press-b).

In most of my research, I prefer a microanalytic case-study method, but my work on spoken narratives in English and Greek has been based on a group of 40 narratives elicited in a naturalistic experiment. My approach in these studies was nonetheless more hermeneutic than quantitative, but the analysis of 20 narratives in each category rather than a single one made possible more generalization. At the time that I gathered the oral narratives in modern Greek in Athens, I also gathered narratives written in Greek by different subjects, and Wallace Chafe had collected narratives written in English, all about the same film. This chapter presents findings of analysis comparing these hitherto unanalyzed written narratives with the previously analyzed spoken ones.[1] Analysis focuses on evidence of the operation of cognitive frames in the narratives.

Earlier analysis (Tannen 1979) of the Greek and American spoken narratives focused on linguistic evidence for frames, structures of expectation about aspects of the situation and content of talk. Extending this analysis to the written narratives indicates differences in (a) the subject-of-experiment frame, (b) the oral storytelling frame, (c) the film frame, and (d) interpretation. These can be briefly summarized. (a) Writers show less verbal evidence that, in producing their narratives, they are subjects of an experiment, a finding related to the fact that whereas the spoken narratives all exhibited fairly similar narrative stances or voices, there was great variety in the narrative stances taken by the writers. (b) Many of the written narratives recreate an oral storytelling frame, suggesting that all narrative, including written, is modeled on the oral storytelling context. (c) The written narratives show less verbal evidence that they are telling about a film, suggesting that writers were less influenced by the presentation-of-self demands of the oral communicative context. (d) An interpretive continuum was found by which Greeks more than Americans and speakers more than writers

[1] I collected the Greek narratives, spoken ones at the Hellenic American Union in Athens, Greece, for which I am grateful to Bruce Houston for permission to tape and Cleo Helidonis for interviewing and transcribing, and written ones at Derce College in Psychico, Athens. I am grateful to Vasso Vassiliou for allowing and arranging for me to do so in her class, and to Rouli Ghemeni for help in deciphering Greek handwriting and morphological forms

Original collection of the English narratives was done under NIMH Grant MH25592 to Wallace L. Chafe, at the University of California, Berkeley. Other members of the project, all of whom were involved in collection, transcription, and analysis of English narratives, were Robert Bernardo, Patricia Clancy, Pamela Downing, and John DuBois. Publications resulting from that project include Bernardo 1979, Chafe 1979, Downing 1977; Tannen 1979; as well as papers collected in Chafe 1980b, in which complete transcripts of the English narratives, including precise measurement of pauses, appear. Narratives based on this film are also analyzed by Michaels and Collins in this volume. Beaman, in this volume, analyzes the same spoken and written English narratives that are the subject of this chapter. The chapter by Clancy in the companion volume to the present one (Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy) analyzes spoken and written pear stories in Japanese. In view of all this talk about pear stories, the reader may, like the writer, begin to be feeling a bit pearsick and may rest assured that this writer, at least, considers this to be her swan song to pears

evidenced cognitive frames, or expectations, in a phenomenon I call interpretation.

These hypotheses and findings will be discussed and demonstrated with examples from the spoken and written stories.

SPOKEN AND WRITTEN PEAR STORIES

The film that provided the subject matter for narratives to be analyzed, informally called 'the pear film,'[2] has sound but no dialogue. It shows a man picking pears from a tree, then filling baskets with pears. A boy comes along on a bicycle and takes a basket of pears. As he rides away with the pears, he passes a girl; his hat blows off his head; the wheel of his bike hits a rock; and he falls to the ground. Three other boys help him up and help him replace the pears in the basket. He gives three pears to one of the three boys after that boy returns his fallen hat to him. The three boys (eating pears) pass the tree where the man has just discovered that one basket of pears is missing.

The spoken and written stories were elicited from different individuals under similar conditions, with some adjustments. For the spoken stories, speakers watched the film in groups of five and then went into another room one at a time to 'tell what happened in the movie' to someone of similar culture, age, and gender. Their stories were recorded and later carefully transcribed and put through a pitch extractor so that pauses could be measured precisely. The written stories were all written at the same time, after the writers had viewed the film in a group. (A consequent difference is that the writers all wrote immediately after viewing the film, whereas some of the speakers had to wait for their turn to tell their stories.) The English narratives were all gathered in undergraduate linguistics classes at a California university. The volunteer Greek speakers were taking English language courses at a binational center in Athens; the Greek writers were students at an English language college in an Athens suburb. Twenty stories were analyzed in each category, except for the written Greek stories, of which only 17 usable narratives were available.[3]

First, it is important to keep in mind that the data under analysis are

[2] John Lawler, in a tongue-in-cheek narrative, suggested 'the pears do seem (they carry through to the end) to be the topic of the piece, since they persevere as movement and exchange metaphors and tokens. Perhaps the movie is . . . showing the way pears get themselves from one place to another, and the multiple frames they create'.

[3] Only 19 subjects showed up to participate. Of these, one was eliminated because she wrote in English, and another because she indicated on the required questionnaire that she had been born in India and educated in Switzerland, and that she spoke English at home as a child. The other Greek subjects had spoken Greek at home all their lives and had never lived outside Greek-speaking communities. Hence, it seemed the interference from English discourse patterns was minimal, despite the fact that the writers were studying English in school.

narratives, a special kind of discourse genre that has its own conventions and constraints. (Most earlier research comparing spoken and written discourse compares spoken conversation, which may or may not include narrative, and written expository prose, which typically does not include narrative. When narrative data are included, the fact that they are narrative is generally not taken into account.)

Most obviously, the structure of narrative discourse is influenced by the temporal sequence of events reported (Labov 1972). Furthermore, the fact that narratives are typically about people rather than abstract ideas or objects, predisposes greater recognition of the speaker's personal involvement with the subject matter as well as the audience. It seems possible, and the present study furnishes some evidence, that the narrative genre is primarily a spoken one, and that written narrative borrows many conventions from the spoken storytelling model.

FRAMES IN SPOKEN NARRATIVES

In turning to analysis of the spoken and written pear stories, I will begin by comparing the operation of frames in the written narratives to previous findings for the spoken ones. The term *frame* is used here in the sense of *structures of expectations* (Tannen 1979) or sets of associations based on prior experience.[4]

Earlier analysis of the narratives spoken in English and Greek (Tannen 1979) indicated that it was possible to view in the discourse, frames or structures of expectation operating for the speakers. The frames identified in the spoken stories included, for example, a subject-of-experiment frame. This means simply that the speakers had expectations about being subjects of experiments, and evidence of these expectations could be seen in their narratives. Other identifiable frames in the spoken narratives included a storytelling frame, a film frame, and a film-viewer frame.

A few examples from the many presented in the earlier study will illustrate what is meant by frames and how they are seen in verbalization. The SUBJECT-OF-EXPERIMENT FRAME is seen when a speaker asks, 'how picky do you want?', indicating that she is talking to fulfill the interviewer's requirements. The STORY-TELLING FRAME is seen when a speaker asks whether she should include certain elements in her narrative because 'I hate to take away the suspense or anything,'

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[4]In subsequent work (Tannen in press-b, Tannen and Wallat 1983) I distinguish between two types of frames, one interactive, in the sense of anthropology (Bateson 1972; Goffman 1974) and one pertaining to knowledge structures which I call 'schemas,' in the sense of research in artificial intelligence (Schank and Abelson 1978) and cognitive psychology (Rumelhart 1975). For the purposes of the present analysis it is not necessary to make this distinction, but the term is used more closely to the sense of knowledge structures.

indicating an assumption that the interviewer is a listener who may sometime see the film for her own enjoyment and might not want that enjoyment spoiled by foreknowledge of plot. The FILM FRAME is seen in evidence that the narrative is being told about a film, for example in mention of camera angles, sound effects, actors, scenes, and the like. Finally, a FILM-VIEWER FRAME includes expectations, not about films per se, but about the speaker as someone viewing a film. For example, one speaker reports her thought processes as she watched the movie: 'and you think Aha. ...uh... Are we gonna go back to the man over there but no'. Thus, frames are sets of expectations related to specific aspects of the context and content of talk.

FRAMES IN WRITTEN NARRATIVES

The written stories, as distinguished from the spoken ones, contained no overt evidence of the subject-of-experiment frame. The writers made no comments evidencing the fact that they were taking part in an experiment.

Expectations often become overt when they are violated. Thus, references to the subject-of-experiment frame in the spoken narratives generally grew out of the speakers' discomfort with the context—they were performing for the interviewer's benefit, but they did not know what the interviewer wanted and, therefore, were unsure of what to say. As Goffman (1974) has pointed out, people need to know what the requirements of a frame are; if they do not, they experience confusion and discomfort. This was seen, for example, in the question cited earlier, 'how picky do you want?' Other evidence of such discomfort was seen in comments such as 'I don't know if this is important.'

The subject-of-experiment frame surfaced less for Greek speakers than for American speakers, indicating that Greek speakers experienced less discomfort than Americans with the oral task. This fact might at first seem surprising, since Greeks have less experience and, hence, fewer expectations of being subjects of experiments, so the task should make them more uncomfortable. However, they seem to have simply referred to their frame for storytelling and told a story. The subject-of-experiment frame, repeatedly evidenced in the American spoken narratives, did not surface in the written ones at all, indicating that the American writers experienced less discomfort with the assigned task than the American speakers. It seems likely that, for both Greeks and Americans, TELLING a story to someone they did not know for a purpose they were not sure of was more disturbing than WRITING a story for someone they did not know for a purpose they were not sure of.

This points up a difference between spoken and written discourse. A writer may—indeed must—posit a context, a frame or stance with regard to the audience, in order to proceed. A speaker, on the other hand, needs to perceive the actual, externally constrained frame and act accordingly. This notion of frame

corresponds to Goffman's (1981a) concept of 'footing': the actual and meta-phorical stance of the speaker toward the hearer.

Narrative Stance

The footing (Goffman 1981a), or narrative stance growing out of the posited context or frame, is established at the beginning of each narrative. The spoken narratives differed with respect to what they focused on in the beginning, but they were similar in the narrative stance created by their choice of register.

The spoken narratives differed from each other in whether they began by commenting on the scene, a character, or the film as a whole. For example, ES17 began by describing the scene, as did 6 Americans and 7 Greeks:[5]

> *ES17* Well, first thing you see, is: .. uh: .. the landscape is: .. u:m .... sort of an agricultural .. area, it's quite green,

ES13 began by describing a character, as did 11 Americans and 12 Greeks:

> *ES13* Okay, well, ... there .. is .. ay uh ... there's a man, ... who: looks of Latin descent, ... a:nd .. he: is: on a ladder he's rather large.

Finally, they could open with a comment on the film as a whole, as did 3 Americans and 1 Greek:

> *ES4* Okay. The movie seemed very..sound oriented

Despite these differences, however, in all of the above, and in all of the oral narratives, the speakers' stance, that is the speaker/hearer relationship posited, as created by lexical and syntactic choices, is roughly the same: the context of informal narration.

In the written narratives, however, there was great diversity in the speakers' footing or narrative stance, as seen and established in their first lines. For example, a writer could establish an UNMARKED NARRATIVE stance, comparable to that of the spoken stories:[6]

> *EW1* A man was picking pears from a tree, putting them into his apron & then transferring them to a bushel/baskets/.

A number of writers, however, used a kind of STYLIZED DICTION that seems to play on a more formal register:

> *EW2* The film begins with a rather portly Mexican picking green pears. He is using a small wooden ladder & proceeds to dump a number of them from his pouch into one of his three baskets at the foot of the tree—pausing to wipe one in his large red bandana.

The formal register is identified by such devices as lexical choice ('rather portly,' 'proceeds,' 'pausing,' 'large'), adjective strings ('small wooden ladder,' 'large red bandana'), and the integrated syntactic constructions (see Chafe 1982, Beaman this volume, and discussion below), which packs more information into discourse units. These devices are found throughout this narrative, for example, in words such as 'consequently,' rather than the informal 'so.'

In contrast to the integrated syntactic constructions used by EW2, another writer uses noticeably short sentences to create a kind of STACCATO effect:

> *EW5* It opened w/ a country scene. A Latino man was picking apples/pears?/ off a tree. All the colors were very bright.

EW5's use of the shorthand convention 'w/' for 'with' contributes to this staccato effect.

Even more staccato in effect were narratives written in a kind of TELE-GRAPHIC SHORTHAND, for example that of EW17, whose number of words per sentence averaged 9.2 in contrast to the overall average of 17.1 words per sentence in all English written narratives:[7] (See Appendix.)

> *EW17* Scene Opens with view of fields and trees. Man with mustache and apron picking pears from a ladder in the tree.

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[5]In transcription segments, ES denotes English Speaker, EW English Writer, GS Greek Speaker, and GW Greek Writer. Numbers denote subject number
Transcription conventions:
. indicates perceptible pause of less than half second
... indicates a half second pause
Each additional dot represents another half second of pause
. indicates sentence final falling intonation
, indicates clause final intonation more to come
: indicates lengthening of preceding sound

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[6]Segments from written narratives are reproduced as closely as possible to handwritten versions / indicates a caret in writing, the following word(s), continuing until the closing slash, having been inserted above. Ampersands (&), cross outs, parentheses, brackets, punctuation, spelling errors, and capitalization are reproduced as written.

[7]Capitalized O in the second word, 'Opens', is as in original. I hypothesize that the writer first started with this word, which appears about where a paragraph indentation would put it, then thought the deletion of the subject too staccato in effect and added the word 'Scene', which appears at the margin.

The effect is created not only by short sentences but also by deletion of articles ('Scene,' 'view,' 'Man,' 'mustache') and auxiliary verbs ('is' or 'was' deleted before 'picking pears').

Another writer established and maintained a LITERARY style:

EW20 The film opens on a beautifully clear day, with green trees blowing in the wind & the fields browned by the blazing sun.

Not only EW20's choice of words ('blazing') and syntactic constructions ('fields browned'), but also the ideas expressed conform to expectations of literary rather than expository prose.

Finally, one writer chose an ORAL STORYTELLING stance:

EW8 There was this guy, see, and he was on a ladder picking pears from this pear tree, and putting them in his apron.

EW8 establishes an oral storytelling frame by her choice of colloquial lexical items ('guy' instead of 'man'), avoidance of adjectives, use of the deictic ('this guy', 'this pear tree'), a feature identified in oral narrative (Ochs 1979), as well as the colloquial interjection 'see'.

Thus the written stories differ from each other with regard to the narrative stance established, whereas the spoken stories all establish more or less similar narrative stances. What I am calling narrative stance is related to what has been called point of view by literary critics, but it is more precisely the footing or posited relationship between speaker and audience, perhaps a narrative voice. It seems, then, to be characteristic of written discourse that if the speaker/hearer relationship is not determined by the task—as, for example, in a letter to a specific person—then the writer must make some decision about context that will govern linguistic choices. The fact that this habit of positing a context is familiar to a writer (one might say it is part of a writing frame) can account for the fact that subjects asked to write what happened in the pear film without knowing quite why they were doing so nonetheless did not evidence discomfort in the form of linguistic evidence of the subject-of-experiment frame. The speakers, in contrast, looked, sometimes with confusion, in the actual interaction for a context which would provide a narrative stance. This accounts for the fact that the written narratives did not show evidence of the subject-of-experiment frame, as did the spoken narratives.

ORAL STORYTELLING FRAME

Another level of frame previously found in the spoken stories is storytelling. There were two distinct kinds of evidence that a storytelling frame was operating in the written narratives. Both seemed to grow out of an oral storytelling frame.

The following segment from a written narrative, for example, makes use of some oral storytelling conventions:

EW4 During the scarf episode, ~~an old man leading a big goat (or lamb?) by a leash walked by between the man & his baskets and the pear tree~~ [oops! I forgot the sequence] a goat (or lamb) was heard bleating. As the man re-climbed the ladder, an old man leading a goat by a leash walked past, just below the tree. [Oh, the events are getting muddled.]

In speaking, what's said is said and can't be unsaid. In view of this, speakers often make use of the device of taking back something said, knowing full well that its effect has occurred; the message has been heard. In writing, however, a crossed out passage can be effectively expunged—either by cross-hatching or lining out with a thick pen, so that the words cannot be deciphered, or by preparing a final draft in which the deleted parts do not appear.[8] By convention, a draft containing crossed out parts, even still legible ones, is to be read as if those parts were not there. A reader who chooses to try to make them out under the deletion marks understands them as remnants of an earlier draft not part of the present one.

In letter writing, however, a written genre that shares many features with the typical spoken genre of conversation because it is highly interactive, a first and only draft is often mailed. Crossed out words may, therefore, be legible, and the writer may make some explanation of them, just as a speaker may make some explanation of words that have been spoken and then taken back (for example mumbling quickly, 'Oh I was thinking of . . .'). Thus the writer EW4 in the preceding example used the conventions of oral rather than written discourse when she treated a crossed out line as accountably rather than conventionally deleted. Setting written metacomments off by brackets is parallel to lowered pitch and loudness and speeded pace marking oral metacomments.

Two other conventions of oral storytelling used in EW4's written narrative create the effect of immediacy. First is the insertion of 'oops' and 'oh', 're-sponse cries' (Goffman 1981b) which in speech convey surprise by an utterance presumably out of the speaker's conscious control. Second, the report of mental processes ('I forgot the sequence', 'the events are getting muddled') as the speaker checks on her own memory is also common in oral narrative—and in fact is found far more frequently in the spoken than the written pear stories. If the writer is unsure of temporal sequence, she may stop to think about the order in

which to report events. A speaker, however, must account for the silence if she takes the time to think and, therefore, is likely to report her memory process, to let her audience know she has not mentally checked out.

A similar use of oral conventions in the written narratives is seen in the following segment from another narrative:

> EW14 Oh—when the man was first putting the pears in the basket he dropped one & picked it up & shined it a bit—it was brownish on one side not bad brown but a natural ripening. Anyway, there were 3 boys standing there—

The use of 'oh' to signal a digression and 'anyway' to signal a return to the narrative proper is typical of spoken language (Jefferson's [1972] 'side sequences'). Again, the writer has the time to think about sequence and get things in where they belong, as do many of the other writers in the study, making use of carets, insertions, and the like. When the writer chooses to make the narrative into an on-line report, including marking adjustments to sequence, she is modeling in writing a primarily oral process. For example, a Greek writer:[9]

> GW7 Xechasa na po oti o megaliteros eiche ena paichnidi sta cheria tou me mia raketa kai 1 balaki
>
> I forgot to say that the biggest one had a toy in his hands with a racket and a littleball.

There is no need for GW7 to mark her addition with 'I forgot to say', as there would be in speaking. She could simply insert what she forgot to write (the fact that she uses the verb 'say' contributes to the oral storytelling effect as well) where she thinks it belongs.

Another way that the oral storytelling frame is invoked in the written narratives is by reference to a conventionalized sentence structure or formulaic expression. For example, when EW8, cited earlier, began her story, she used sentence structure and lexical choice associated with oral storytelling:

> EW8 There was this guy, see, and he was on a ladder picking pears from this pear tree.   .

Throughout her narrative, EW8 uses the deictic to introduce each of the characters:

> EW8 Then this other guy came by, leading a goat (?)

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[9]Transliteration conventions are taken from guidelines prepared by Peter Bien and Julia Loomis for the Modern Greek Studies Association. GW7 can use the numeral 1 to represent the indefinite article a because both are realized in spoken Greek by the word ena

> Then this kid comes ridding by on this bicycle.
>
> Then these three other boys come along.

All subsequent references are with definite articles. The sentence structure, present tense, interjection 'see', and deictic 'this' are all conventions associated with oral storytelling and, therefore, trigger an oral storytelling frame, much as Jarrett (this volume) shows that blues lyrics have traditional structures and conventions by which their songs are identified as blues.

FILM FRAME

We have seen that the subject-of-experiment frame was not found in the written narratives, but the oral storytelling frame was. A third frame evidenced in the spoken narratives, the film frame, was found in the written narratives, but to a much lesser extent. Just as these conventions signal an oral storytelling frame, similarly, formulaic sentence structures and other conventions in the written narratives signal a film frame—sets of associations with the task of telling about films.

The most obvious way that American speakers kept the film frame prominent and explicit in their narratives was by direct references to the film (for example, 'the film opens . . .') as well as many allusions to the fact that they were talking about a film (for example, references to camera angles, shots, costumes, cinematic effects) which do not mention the word *film* but presuppose that a film is involved.

In the written stories, there is less preoccupation with the film frame, and for both Greeks and Americans, fewer references to the film, direct or indirect.

In the spoken narratives, 16 of 20 Americans and 5 of 20 Greeks mentioned the word 'movie' or 'film' (Greek *tainia* or *film*). In the written, 8 of 20 Americans and 1 of 17 Greeks did so. (See Table 1.) In the spoken stories, only 1 American had no allusions to the film; 14 had 1-8, and 5 Americans had 10-15. In other words, reference to the fact that they were telling about a film was repeated (for example, 'the next scene,' 'the camera pans'). In the written stories, 6 Americans had no indirect allusions to the film frame and 13 had 1-4. None had more than 4. For the Greeks, in spoken, 5 had no allusions to the film (they had talked directly about events) and 15 had 1-8. In the written, 12 Greeks had none and 8 had 1 or 2. No story written in Greek had more than 2 allusions to the film. These findings are shown in Table 2.

There were ways that the written narratives signaled the film frame, which the spoken narratives did not use. For example, two writers introduce a new scene with introductory phrases that playfully echo a familiar film voice-over, 'Meanwhile back at the ranch . . .':

EW9 Finally, back at the pear tree, the man pearpicker came back down out of the tree.

EW12 Meanwhile back at the tree, the pear picker climbed down again with another load of pears.

Without making overt reference to the fact that what is talked about is a film, the speaker brings the film frame to awareness by playing on a phrase conventionalized in radio and film. This type of film-frame trigger was available to but not used by speakers.

Another way that the film frame could be signaled, but only in writing, is by reference to a visual as well as verbal frame. Two written narratives (one English and one Greek) end with closings that bring to mind the ending of a silent film:

EW9   The end

GW3   *TELOS*
                            (THE) END

Both writers omit punctuation, and GW3 also capitalizes and centers the word. (EW9 begins slightly indented from the left, as for a paragraph.)

In general, however, the film frame dropped to far less prominence in the written stories. As was mentioned earlier, one significant characteristic of the

TABLE 1
Number of Speakers/Writers Who Mention the Words *Movie* or *Film* (Greek *tainia* or *film*)
in English and Greek Spoken and Written Narratives

English Spoken N = 20	English Written N = 20	Greek Spoken N = 20	Greek Written N = 17
16	8	5	1

TABLE 2
Number of Speakers/Writers Who Make Allusions to Movie or Film

Number of Allusion Per Narrative:	0	1–8	10–15
English spoken	1	14	5
English written	6	13a	0
Greek spoken	5	15b	0
Greek written	12	8	0

aAll in this category contained 1–4 allusions.
bAll in this category contained 1 or 2 allusions.

American oral narratives was that many of them made critical comments about the film as a film, to the effect, for example, that the costumes were unconvincing, the sound track out of proportion, the acting weak. This did not turn up nearly so often in the written stories. It seems likely that the speakers, finding themselves in the position of telling a story to another person, felt the need to show themselves to be perceptive film critics. The writers, having chosen some other narrative stance, did not feel this presentation-of-self need.

INTERPRETATION

The tendency of American speakers to show themselves as perceptive film critics and of Greek speakers to show themselves as perceptive critics of human behavior represents the intersection of the film frame with a phenomenon I call interpretation. One of the findings of my earlier comparison of the Greek and American oral narratives was the greater tendency among the Greek speakers to interpret rather than simply to report elements shown in the film. In addition to telling about the film in terms of a theme or message and judging the characters and their behavior or criticizing the film-maker, interpretation includes reporting as fact what was conjecture and philosophizing about meanings suggested by the film. In this sense, all interpretation grows out of speakers' cognitive frames.

The phenomenon I call interpretation is closely related to Labov's (1972) notion of evaluation. Labov notes that in telling a story, speakers constantly mediate between themselves and their material, presenting it in such a way as to answer in advance the 'withering rejoinder, "So what?"' (p. 366). In other words, everything in the story must contribute to a point, and evaluation is the way it does so, including such devices as sequencing, timing, choice of adjective and adverbs, direct quotation—all the ways in which narrators manipulate material to make it add up to the points they have in mind.

What the point of a story can be is a function of cultural convention (Mills 1967; Polanyi 1979). How that point can be demonstrated—i.e. evaluative devices—is also culturally constrained. Interpretation is based on cultural conventions as well. So it is not surprising that evidence of expectations and frames in general, and of interpretive processes in particular, have much in common with what Labov has called evaluative devices.

I suggest that the tendency to interpret in part grows out of a need to tell a good story, in response to recognition of speaker/hearer interaction and involvement. The tendency to interpret, that is, to interest the hearer with a good story, was found to be relatively stronger in Greek than in American narratives and in spoken than in written narratives. Another way to interest a hearer, one associated with what has been called literate but should more properly be considered school-related (Scribner & Cole 1981), is to get the information correct. Interpretation, then, is the way of acknowledging the interpersonal involvement of

peaker and hearer to which the spoken mode, and Greek communicative style, re more disposed. Focus on information is the way of acknowledging audience iceds to which written and American school-related communicative style are lisposed.

Film Critic

Another kind of interpretation was seen in the spoken stories in the Americans' endency to show critical acumen as film critics by criticizing the film's cinemat-ic technique, whereas Greeks tended to show critical acumen as film critics by interpreting the film's larger meaning. This is seen in only one written Greek narrative:

> GW16 Ta paidia moiazoun na einai plousia. Einai san mia katapiesi. O enas echei anagki (o agrotis) o allos (to paidi) to agnoei (thelei na to agnoisei) kai dra pros to symferon tou.

> The children seem to be rich. It is like an oppression. The one has a need (the farmer) the other (the child) ignores it (he wants to ignore it) and acts in his own interests.

The written narratives are similar to the spoken in the tendency of the Americans to take the stance of perspicacious film critic, while the Greek are more inclined to personalize. Compare the two, Greek and American, who are reminded by the film of something else:

> EW19 The action of picking fruit into his the apron reminded me of The Grapes of Wrath.

> GW17 Stin archi eida mia eikona me oraia chromata pou mou thimise to chorio mou sto Pilio.

> In the beginning I saw a picture with lovely colors that reminded me of my village in Pilio.

Whereas the American speaker made reference to another public work, a novel, he Greek speaker made reference to something personal in her real world: her village. (Note that the Greek use of 'my village' does not imply that she was born and raised in that village but rather that her family has roots and ties there.)

Interpretive Naming

One revealing kind of interpretation that distinguished the Greek from American spoken stories was the tendency I have called interpretive naming: the choice of a noun to describe a character, which conveys more information than was actually

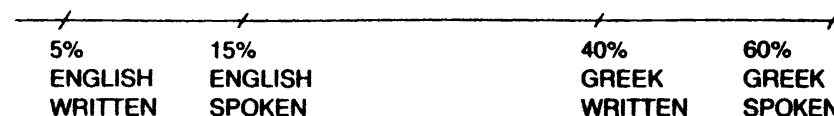| 5%	15%	40%	60%
ENGLISH	ENGLISH	GREEK	GREEK
WRITTEN	SPOKEN	WRITTEN	SPOKEN

FIGURE 1. Percentage of Greeks and Americans Using Interpretive Naming for the Man

presented in the film and represents, therefore, an interpretation supplied by the speaker. A striking example of interpretive naming was the tendency of Greeks to call the man picking pears a 'farmer' or 'worker' rather than 'man' or 'guy.' Comparison of the spoken stories told by Americans and Greeks showed that 3 of 20 Americans as opposed to 12 of 20 Greeks named the man in such a way as to convey an interpretation of his way of life. When the written stories are added to the data base, the result is a continuum of interpretiveness, with the Greek spoken at one end and the English written at the other, as seen in Figure 1.

Interpretive Description

Another kind of interpretation that was found in the spoken stories is in the description of action. In telling that the man was picking pears, a speaker could simply report that a man was so doing or describe how he did so. For the spoken English stories, 17 of 20, or 85 percent, of the Americans reported that the man was picking pears without describing his actions. For example:

> ES7 there was: .. a man, .. who was picking pears,

The three Americans who describe the man's actions do so in terms of comments on the film rather than on the man, for example:

> ES17 A:nd ... he's..it..the camera spends a lot of time watching him ... pick these pears,

In this case, one can almost see the speaker shifting focus from the man as a person to the man as an actor in a film. A similar process is seen in ES18's description of the man picking pears:

> ES18 He's very deliberately ... plucking the..the um ... the pears off the tree, ... and ... you know you hear this ... a sh:arp little crunch as..as he pulls each one off, and he's doing it..very slowly, and putting them in ...[breath]... his apron. .....tsk And then..climbing very carefully..down the..ladder, and placing them in baskets, and he'd never make it as a fruitpicker.

ES18 describes the man's actions in detail, with much interpretation (seen for example in adjectives and adverbs), but she invokes the film-viewer frame ('you

hear . . .') and the film frame by referring to the man as an actor ('He'd never make it as a fruitpicker').

In contrast, 7 of the 20 Greek speakers (35 percent) described the man's pearpicking in a way that constitutes both comment and interpretation:

> GS11 *Evlepe to...eh me mia evla:via xeris t'achladi. Poli evlavika.*
>
> He looked at the..uh with a piety you know the pear. Very piously.

> GS12 *...Kai: mm tsk epemene oti: afto pou ekane to :ouse. ... To n: diladi: mm ... to oti: kaliergouse ti gi:, oti mazev'afta: ... to sigomidi, ... itane vi'afton kati to idiaitero. ... Axize kati: ...... tsk to :ouse afto pou ekane, tou arese.*
>
> A:nd mm tsk it insisted tha:t that which he did he lived it. ...The n: in other words: mm ... the fact tha:t he was cultivating the earth:, that he was gathering the:se ... the harvest, ... was for him something special. ... It was worth someth:ing ...... tsk he lived what he did, he liked it.

Comparing the written stories, one finds less interpretation in both cases and on several counts. Of the Americans, again (as in the spoken narratives) 17 of the 20, or 85 percent, reported the pearpicking without comment, and with less detail. The written stories, as previously noted, are shorter by half, but despite this difference, they show less description per length of narrative than do the spoken.

Those 3 Americans who do describe the man picking pears in writing make rather subtle and low-key comments about his actions without criticizing the film-maker (interpretive material is indicated by underlines):

> EW8 We saw him do this a couple of times, always <u>slowly</u> and apparently <u>with great care</u>—the ladder creaked <u>like it would fall apart</u>, so he had to be carefull, but also he <s>also</s> treated the pears <u>carefully,</u> stopping to wipe one with the kerchief he had around his neck.

> EW19 When he emptied the fruit into the already full basket, he laid some of it in gently and seemed to be rather <u>careless</u> with other pieces of fruit. <u>I was surprised</u> that he would toss the fruit.

> EW18 The worker was /in a tree,/ picking bright green pears /and stuffing them into his apron, <u>almost furtively</u>./[10]

Thus the interpretation that is found in the written stories is less interpretive than that found in the spoken, and less time is spent on it. This is related to the general phenomenon that, in the written stories, the film frame becomes far less prominent and the critical stance of the speaker toward the film is likewise far less prominent. This seems to reflect, again, the need in the face-to-face setting to present oneself in a certain light.

As opposed to 7 of 20, or 35 percent, of Greek speakers, 4 of 17, or 24 percent, of Greek writers include descriptions of the man's pearpicking activity that is interpretive. Nonetheless, they spend less time describing the man's actions than do the Greek speakers who do, fewer of them do so, and with one exception the interpretive comments are very short indeed and less interpretive. For example, a writer calls the man strange, as compared to speakers previously cited who describe a complex relationship between the man and his pears. Examples of written Greek descriptions follow.

> GW3 *I emfanisi tou einai kapos periergi. Den m'arese.*
>
> His appearance is somehow strange. I didn't like him (it).

> GW4 *Enas chorikos me yfos antipathes kai filidono—logo tou kokkinou mantiliou pou foraei sto laimo tou kai tis kokkinis fanelas kai ton tonismenon cheilion tou—mazevei achladia apo mia achladia mesa se chorafia.*
>
> A villager with a repulsive and voluptuous air—because of his red scarf that he was wearing on his neck and his red shirt and his accentuated lips—is gathering pears from a pear tree in the middle of fields.

> GW11 *Fainotan varyestimenos.*
>
> He seemed overburdened.

> GW17 *ta matia tou itan ligaki chazoulika kai ta cheilia kai ta magoula tou poli kokkina.*
>
> his eyes were a little stupid and his lips and cheeks very red.

Interpretive Selection of Detail

Another kind of evidence previously found of greater interpretation in the spoken Greek than the spoken English narratives was the tendency of Americans to

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[10]In this example, the entire phrases enclosed in slashes were inserted above the line. In other words, the sentence was first written as, 'The worker was picking bright green pears' I happen to be privy to information relevant to this narrative, which is too suggestive to omit mentioning. This is one of the few American written narratives that employs both interpretive naming (calling the pearpicker a 'worker') and interpretive description of the man picking pears. These features were much more characteristic of Greek than American narratives. In a study of indirectness in conversation (Tannen 1981) I found that when communicative styles of Greeks, Americans, and Greek-Americans were

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compared, Greek-Americans (native-born Americans of Greek heritage who spoke no Greek) fell somewhere between Americans of non-Greek background and Greeks living in Greece, in their tendencies to expect indirectness in conversation. It happens that EW18, the subject from whose narrative this example comes, is Greek-American, her grandparents were Greeks born and raised in Asia Minor. This observation underscores the phenomenon that discourse strategies may be passed on from one generation to the next even when native language is not, even as it indicates the dangers inherent in lumping together native-born Americans as culturally homogeneous.

mention as many details as they could remember that they considered appropriate, whereas Greeks tended to include only those details that fit into the theme they were developing. This was seen, for example, in their descriptions of the film episode in which the following events occurred:

1. The boy is riding a bike down a path.
2. A girl is riding a bike down a path.
3. The boy and girl pass each other.
4. The boy's hat flies off his head.
5. The boy turns his head.
6. A bike wheel hits a rock.
7. The boy is on the ground under a fallen bike.

There were three objects that might be mentioned in narrating this sequence: the girl, the hat, and the rock. In addition, each speaker chose one or a combination of these objects to explain why the boy fell off his bike. Of the English spoken stories, most (13 of 20, or 65 percent) mentioned all three objects; the rest mentioned two. Of the Greek spoken narratives, the largest number of speakers (9 of 20, or 45 percent) mentioned only one (in most cases the one that was chosen to explain causality). As with the Americans, 7 of 20, or 35 percent, of Greek speakers mentioned two, but only 4, or 20 percent, mentioned all three.

When the written stories are compared to these data for spoken stories, the English written narratives come out about the same as the English spoken: 14 of 20, or 70 percent, mention all three objects; 6 of 20, or 30 percent, mention only two. None mention only one. But the Greek written narratives move closer to the memory as opposed to storytelling task. Of the Greek written stories, 8 of 17, or 47 percent, mention all three objects; 6 of 17, or 35 percent, mention two; and only 3 of 17, or 18 percent, mention only one object. These results are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Mention of Girl, Hat, Rock in 'Fall' Scene

Mention	English Spoken N = 20	English Written N = 20	Greek Spoken N = 20	Greek Written N = 17
all three	65% (13)	70% (14)	20% (4)	47% (8)
two of 3	35% (7)	30% (6)	35% (7)	35% (6)
only one	∅	∅	45% (9)	18% (3)

Thus, in telling rather than writing about what happened in the film, both Greeks and Americans tended to use relatively more interpretation as opposed to simply reporting the film's contents, a phenomenon that seems to be a response to the immediate interactive demand of face-to-face storytelling that the teller hold the hearer's interest.

SUMMARY

In summary, then, I found an interpretive continuum by which Greeks more than Americans and speakers more than writers tended to interpret the elements they had seen in the film. This process of interpretation seems to be a way of acknowledging speaker/audience involvement by telling a good story, as compared to focusing on information associated with school-related tasks. Second, examination of evidence of cognitive frames showed that writers were less uncomfortable than speakers in having to produce a narrative for an uncertain purpose. This led to the observation that writing conventionally demands that a writer posit a footing or narrative stance which then constrains linguistic choices, whereas the speaker finds one ready made in the immediate context. Moreover, I suggested that all narrative, spoken or written, is modeled on the oral storytelling genre.

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APPENDIX

Length of Narratives

English Spoken

average	33 intonational sentences (range 6-66)
	125 idea units (range 61-256)
	653 words (range 256-1376)
average	3.8 idea units per sentence (range 2 7-10.5 individual average)
	5.4 words per idea unit (range 4.1-6 individual average)

Greek Spoken

average	21 intonational sentences (range 4-42)
	84 idea units (range 26-150)
	346 words (range 118-675)
average	4 0 idea units per sentence (range 2.8-6.6)
	4.1 words per idea unit (range 3 2-5 2)

English Written

average	21 sentences (range 9-41)
	354 words (range 208-615)
average	17 words per sentence (range 9 2-23.1)

Greek Written

average	14 sentences (range 6-32)
	235 words (range 137-491)
average	17 words per sentence (range 11 5-32 2)

Note Terms and concepts "intonational sentence" and "idea unit" are taken from Chafe (1980a) An "intonational sentence" is one or more phrases or clauses ending with sentence-final falling or rising intonation An "idea unit" is a spurt of speech typically (but not necessarily) bounded by a pause and clause-final intonation, signalling "more to come " The question of what units in spoken and written discourse are comparable would be the subject of another paper, and is (Chafe 1980a)

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