
Emotionality and Second Language Writers: Expressing Fear through Narrative in Thai and in English

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Writing to express emotions can be a challenging task for second language (L2) writers, especially because it tends to be a process that is less addressed in language classrooms. This paper aims to expand thinking on L2 literacy and writing by exploring how L2 writers can express emotion (fear) through narratives both in their first language (L1) and second language (L2). With a small number of participants, the study reports that narrative writing can be helpful in creating venues for L2 writers to become aware of linguistic and cultural aspects of their first (Thai) and second (English) languages. By providing personally significant writing prompts, L2 writers can reflect on their personal experiences and gain understanding about themselves linguistically, culturally, and emotionally. The paper concludes with pedagogical suggestions for how writing teachers can introduce both positive and negative emotions in L2 classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

Where is emotion in the pedagogies of second language writing? In the work of researchers such as Hanauer (2010), Pavlenko (2005) and Kramsch (2009), there is recognition that the personal histories and emotional lives of language learners are significant for second language learning. But language teaching research tends to avoid emotionality as a result of an overreliance on the belief that language learning is solely a cognitive activity (Hanauer, 2012). In contrast to this mainstream position, Hanauer (2012) states that learning another language is “a significant, potentially life-changing, event” (p. 1) because language learning process involves emotions such as happiness, frustration, excitement, fear, anger, etc. By neglecting emotional aspect in the process of language learning, learners would be ill-equipped in expressing selves to others. Aneta Pavlenko (2005) asks, “What is the nature of the emotional bonds that tie individuals to their languages? How do these ties influence self-expression? What happens when one falls in love across a language boundary?” (p. 22). Considering emotion in second language writing is at the heart of the pedagogy and research presented in this paper.

Pavlenko (2001) asserts that the use of narrative in second language classrooms “allows the authors to reinvent themselves...[and] it allows second language (L2) users to assume legitimate ownership of their L2 and to provide the readers with new meanings, perspectives, and images of ‘being American—and bilingual’ in the postmodern world” (p. 317). Accordingly, integrating narrative writing into language pedagogy may enhance what Hanauer (2012) has termed *meaningful literacy* – the approach that addresses language learners

to recognize “the symbolic transformations in relation to self and world that learning a language entails” (p. 4).

From my perspective not only does narrative have the potential to enhance ownership or even meaningfulness for language learners, but also to facilitate their emotional expression. In particular, I am interested in promoting the ability to express a range of emotions in a second language. Second language literacy teaching has been far too safe. Usually emotion is avoided all together and if it is addressed it is through the safer emotions of positive interaction (Dewaele, 2008). But life can be traumatic, stressful, scary as well as happy and fun. In this paper, and through my specific methodological prompts, I will try to stretch the boundaries of what is considered and developed in relation to L2 writing by looking at personal fear expressed in narrative and considering the differences between L1 and L2 expression of this emotion. On a more general level, this project focused on the following research questions:

1. In what ways do undergraduate Thai students understand and experience/perceive emotional writing in expressing fear in Thai as their first language?
2. In what ways do undergraduate Thai students understand and experience/perceive emotional writing in expressing fear English as their second language?

PRIOR RESEARCH ON EMOTION AND L2 WRITING

So what do we know about emotion and L2 writing? Some studies focus on the differences in lexicon levels, pointing out that there is often no equivalent representation in written forms for emotionally related lexical items such as “the Anglo concept of ‘frustration’ [that] is impossible to translate into Russian with one word” (Pavlenko, 2008a, p. 151, 2008b). Other studies focus on autobiographical narratives, including memoir writing (Besemeres, 2006; Schrauf & Durazo-Arvizu, 2006). As Hanauer (2003) notes, “the advantage of narrative as a research method is that it presents a subjective reworking of the individual’s biographical concept and thus allows the researcher an insight into the hidden conceptual and emotional world of the individual” (p. 78). It is unsurprising that many narrative stories were chosen by applied linguistics as an approach to study student writers’ emotional struggles. However, Clachar (1999) states that the empirical study of second language writing and emotion is scarce, as so far the study of narrative and emotion has been discussed by analyzing published memoirs such as Eva Hoffman’s (1990) *Lost in Translation*, or a collection of stories written by those who emigrated to another country and had to use English in daily activities (Novakovich & Shapard, 2000).

Hanauer (2003, 2004, 2010) proposes the use of poetry for studying emotion in second language writing, as poetry can be reflective of negotiated experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the writers. The most recent scholarship on emotions and L2 writing is Hanauer’s (2010) study of poetry writing and L2 writers. He creates a second language poetry corpus from over 800 poems written by L2 writers. The corpus shows that L2 writers are better able to express their emotions by using “affective words, positive emotive words, and sadness” in their poems (Hanauer, 2010, p. 51).

MacIntyre (2002) states that “[e]motion has not been given sufficient attention in the language learning literature” (p. 45). When discussing emotion and language learning, researchers have highlighted learners’ motivation (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Schmidt, Boraie, & Kassabgy, 1996; Schmidt & Savage, 1992), anxiety

(Oxford, 1999), and attitudes (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) reference Lambert's (1955) study of motivation and point out that "an interest in learning another language often developed because of emotional involvement with the other language community or...a direct interest in the language" (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993, p. 1).

The concept of emotion or affect and language learning has evolved around learner's styles and strategies, willingness to communicate/anxiety in language production, or Myers-Briggs personality types (Ortega, 2009, p. 194). Like the proposals made by composition scholars such as McLeod (1987) and Brand (1991; Brand & Powell, 1986), Arnold and Brown (1999) maintain that the concepts of cognition and affect in learning another language should be seen and understood as being interconnected. They argue that we should pay attention to affect in language learning because it can help learners acquire another language effectively and can demonstrate to us how to "overcome problems created by negative emotions and how we can create and use more positive, facilitative emotions" (p. 2). They claim there are a few teaching methods that take affect into consideration, notably Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Imai, 2010; Rinvolucri, 1999), collaborative learning in EFL contexts (Imai, 2007, 2010), or the Natural Approach with its affective filter (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

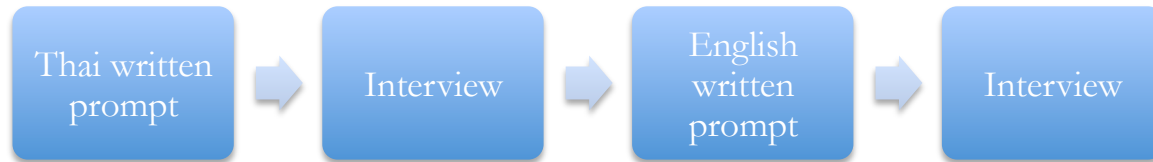
From a sociolinguistic perspective, Ochs and Schieffelin (1989) discuss the concept of affect in different languages. To them, the term "emotion" includes "feelings, moods, dispositions, and attitudes associated with persons and/or situations" (p. 7). The work of Ochs and Schieffelin (1989) is considered to be one of the earliest works on linguistic features in emotions. The authors listed discourse and grammatical features of expressions of emotions in different languages such as French (e.g., "t/v pronouns – intimacy/distance, respect/disrespect" (p. 12), Spanish (e.g., "*se* – intensification") (p. 12), Thai (e.g., "adversative passive") (p. 12), English (e.g., the use of "*-ing* progressive stative") (p. 12), and Japanese (e.g., "adversative passive") (p. 12). Their study has provided the theoretical framework for many subsequent studies (e.g., Pavlenko, 2005; Rintell, 1990).

Rintell (1990), following the lead of Ochs and Schieffelin, conducted a study on the narrative of emotion among second language users using a pragmatic approach. She argues that "to express emotion is to perform a speech act...both as a pragmatic function and with respect to its place in the discourse" (p. 77). Rintell's (1990) study compared the narrative structures elicited by native speakers and L2 users in expressing their emotions and she concluded that there are differences on how narrative stories are structured between these two groups in terms of stylistics and discourse.

As discussed above, the study presented here enters into new territory by focusing directly on a negative emotion – fear. This study takes a comparative approach by presenting samples of L2 writers' fear-expressing narratives in both Thai and English as well as their perceptions on their experiences writing these narratives in both languages. The differences in expressing fear through L2 writers' narratives suggest that the nuanced definitions of emotive words as well as cultural aspects of both languages play important roles in the expression of fear in their writing. This study aims to expand the conversation of how L2 writers perceive their emotions in writing.

METHODOLOGY

This is a small-scale qualitative study that focused on four Thai college students. These participants graduated from a Thai high school and had not spent more than 3 months outside of Thailand. Data collection consisted of presenting a written prompt in Thai, conducting a post L1-writing interview, presenting an English writing prompt and following this with an exit, post L2-writing interview. Schematically this data collection process can be presented as follows:



The writing prompts asked four participants to present a personal narrative about a fearful experience. Emotion has a cultural component, and because of the importance of saving face in Thailand, expressing fear in front of others can potentially threaten the self or ego. In addition, public Thai self-perception focuses on having fun and being cheerful (Komin, 1991). Izard (1971), utilizing a standardized emotional rating scale, reports that for Thais fear is a “low frequency [emotion]...which we do not like to acknowledge, and which we are not likely to spend much time contemplating or trying to understand” (p. 291).

The feeling of fear can be the result of traumatizing experiences; hence, writing narrative “is a way for us to reflect upon the significance of what happened. It connects our experience to other experiences in our lives” (DeSalvo, 1999, p. 60). Furthermore, this written genre can be socially and culturally transformative to the author’s self (Schiffirin, 1996). In other words, the fear narratives that the participants composed can be seen as potentially significant and meaningful moments that transform the way they perceive the world and this emotion.

The following specific prompts were used:

Prompt in Thai.

**กรุณาเขียนเรียงความเกี่ยวกับเหตุการณ์ที่น่ากลัวที่เคยประสบ
หรือเห็นด้วยตนเองประมาณ ๑ ถึง ๒ หน้า**

Prompt in English. Please write a one- to two-page essay in English about the (most) fearful events that you have witnessed.

After the participants finished responding to each written prompt, they were immediately asked to participate in an interview regarding their experience of expressing fear through writing in each language. The questions investigated each participant’s self-reflection and their perceptions of expressing their emotions through writing. A semi-structured interview was conducted, guided by the following questions:

- Could you tell me about the narrative you just wrote?
- What emotions were you trying to express in this piece?
- Do you think you conveyed emotion successfully?
- What are the challenges you faced in emotional writing?
- How was the experience of writing emotionally?

The interview questions allowed participants to verbalize their reasons for composing the narratives. These questions helped the participants internalize their process of writing and explicate their self-evaluation of emotional expressions. In other words, these questions allowed the participants to reflect on their performance on these emotional writing tasks.

RESULTS

This section reports on the analysis of each participant's understanding of expressing emotions through writing in Thai and in English. Participants' privacy is protected through the use of pseudonyms.

Chalit's Narratives

For Chalit's Thai narrative of fear, he wrote about an experience of extreme turbulence when he was flying to China. It is presented in the following short excerpt:

**ช่วงแรก ในการเดินทาง ก็ปกติอย่างเคย จิบชาคุยกับเพื่อนที่ไปด้วยกัน
อย่างสนุกสนาน แต่สักพักต่อมา ก็ปัดันแจ้งว่า มีพายุ ฝนฟ้าคะนอง
ขอให้ผู้โดยสาร คาดเข็มขัด นั่งอยู่กับที่ อย่าลุกไปไหน เหตุการณ์ กลับแย่งลง
เมื่อเครื่องบิน ตกหลุมอากาศ หลายต่อหลายครั้ง ประกอบกับ มีการสั่น
อย่างรุนแรง ของเครื่องบิน จากซ้าย ไปขวา หน้าจากถั่วย ที่ผู้เขียน ถือ อยู่
กระฉอก ออกมา มากกว่า ครั้ง ตอน นั้น คิดว่า อาจ ไม่รอดแล้ว ได้
แต่ภาวนา สวดมนต์ ขอให้ สิ่ง ศักดิ์ สิทธิ์ คุ่มครอง**

(Chalit, Thai narrative)

At the beginning of the trip, everything was fine. I sipped tea and casually talked to my friends. Later, the captain announced that there was a thunderstorm. He asked everyone to put on their seat belt and sit in their seats. The situation was getting worse when the plane faced turbulence so many times. Also the plane was shaking heavily from the right to the left. Half of my tea spilled out of the cup. At that moment, I thought to myself that I might not survive. I was praying for the sacred spirit to protect me.

(Chalit, Thai narrative, my translation)

The contrast of two scenes, before and during the turbulence that Chalit wrote about was very descriptive. He used signaling phrases such as “at the beginning,” “later,” “when,” and “at the moment” to help readers build up their participation in the story. He narrated the scene so vividly that readers could paint the scene. For example, when he wrote about how heavily the plane shook, he described its effect in the sentence, “Half of my tea spilled out of the cup.” The last sentence from the excerpt showed the intensity of fear he had during that flight; he could not do anything but “pray” for his life. The choice of words that he used in his Thai narrative was easy to understand. The emotion that he tried to express in his Thai narrative was a feeling of hopelessness and doubt whether or not the plane would crash.

When Chalit was asked to reflect on his Thai narrative writing experience, he shared this perspective on his writing:

For example, I wrote in Thai, *‘At that moment, I thought to myself that I might not survive. I was praying for the sacred spirit to protect me.’* This sentence alone could not truly describe or express my feelings at that moment because the feeling at that moment was so deep. It’s so deep that I don’t think any language could express that emotion.

(Chalit, personal interview, my translation)

When he reflected on his narrative writing experience, he pointed out a sentence that he thought was laden with emotion, “It’s so deep that I don’t think any language could express that emotion.” The “deep” emotion that he was referring to was caused by the life-threatening experience he had gone through on his turbulence-filled flight. Though he expressed this emotion in the Thai narrative, he was not fully satisfied with what he wrote to express his fear. As he stated, intense emotions cannot be captured or described through any language, not even in his L1. In the Thai narrative, he employed detailed descriptions – *“shaking heavily from the right to the left. Half of my tea spilled out of the cup”* – to depict his fearful incident, so that readers could infer the emotion from such description.

For the English narrative, he translated his experiences from Thai to English. The excerpt from his English narrative is provided. This was the same section that he wrote in his Thai narrative:

...when I was traveling by plane to *** (a location). There was a big storm causing extreme turbulence. The plane was shaking as if it was shaken by someone outside. I thought at that time that I might have died that day. Everyone on the plane was so quiet. I knew that everyone had done the same thing for sure. That is “pray for their lives.” Finally, it was such a relief when the bad situation turned to normal. We survived!

(Chalit, English narrative)

In Chalit’s English narrative, instead of using a detailed description as in his Thai narrative, he employed the conjunction “as if” to demonstrate the condition of the plane during the turbulence; it had seemingly been held and “shaken by someone outside.” He also presented the sense of nervousness by mentioning the quietness inside the plane.

In the English narrative, he also used punctuation marks to present and express his emotion. The use of quotation marks around “pray for their lives” emphasized that all passengers were deep in their own thoughts. He then used an exclamation point at the end of his English narrative: “We survived!” This punctuation mark showed readers the sense of relief and happiness that he and his fellow passengers felt after the storm had passed.

In the interview, Chalit described that his body shook and his heart raced. He stated in the interview:

After I finished writing, I was shaken with a little bit of fear. It felt like I was still afraid...The feeling before I wrote the fear narrative was very intense; I saw myself during that time again. I could clearly see pictures and feel the emotion. However, when I wrote, the written language was not equivalent to the feeling. It was more difficult to express feeling through writing about bad events we encountered.

(Chalit, personal interview, my translation)

After writing his narrative in Thai and in English, Chalit reflected on his writing experience, noting that it was “very intense.” In the interview, he stated that writing about this event made him more fearful than words could represent in writing. As he stated in the interview, “I could clearly see pictures and feel the emotion.” He vividly remembered the details and could actually recall and “see” the events. This could be a sign of the ability of L2 writing to embody real emotion. When Chalit attempted to express his emotion in these traumatic experiences in writing, he could not satisfactorily or accurately express his fear in either Thai or in English because “the written language was not equivalent to the feeling.” In other words, he inferred that languages could only partially convey his emotions.

Looking back on the Thai and English narratives, he was able to express his fear through the use of descriptions. However, he thought that he needed to use exact emotive words in his narratives to express his intended emotions. The challenge for the writing experience was twofold for Chalit. As he stated in the interview after writing, “[he] was shaken with a little bit of fear” (personal interview, my translation). In a sense, he had re-experienced the life-threatening events, once in Thai and again in English. Yet, neither language helped him to express the emotion he wanted to convey. This could explain the difficulties that he had in writing to express his emotions. He perceived that he was not able to fully express his fearful emotions in either the Thai or English narratives. However, readers could perceive the emotion he wanted to express through the use of descriptions, punctuation, and choice of words.

To summarize, his understanding was to present deep emotions that he experienced. He demonstrated his understanding by sharing a life-threatening experience. By doing so, he demonstrated his understanding that this genre, narrative writing, could be used to present significant life experiences. He also employed descriptions in his Thai and English narratives, which meant that he knew how to retell his experiences in narrative writing. Though he was aware of genre conventions, he felt that neither his L1 nor L2 could fully express the fear that he wanted to express. Instead, his fear was manifested in his physical responses, such as his body shaking and his heart racing; he stated that he “was shaken” by fear from writing about these experiences.

Aon's Narratives

When Aon was asked to respond to a Thai narrative prompt, he wrote about his first encounter with a cadaver when he was in his sophomore year in college.

ครั้งแรก เดินเข้าไป ในห้องนั้น ก็รู้สึก อึดอัด อยากออกมา เพราะความกลัว อาจจะเป็นเพราะ บรรยากาศ ของห้องที่เงียบ มีศพ อาจารย์ใหญ่ เรียงอยู่จำนวนมาก รวมถึง กลิ่น formaline ที่ใช้ เก็บรักษาสภาพ เมื่อก่อน เวลาที่ต้องผ่า เปิดผ่ามาครั้งแรก ก็ยังรู้สึกกลัว เพราะได้ เห็นหน้า ของ คนที่ เคยใช้ ชีวิต อยู่ใน โลก นี้ ในช่วง เวลาหนึ่ง แต่ก็ ได้ จบ ไปแล้ว เพื่อน ในกลุ่ม ทุกคน ก็ ยก มือ ขึ้น มา ไหว้ แสดง ความ เคารพ เนื่องจาก ความกลัว หรือ ความเชื่อ ในเรื่องวิญญาณ หรือ ศาสนา

(Aon, Thai narrative)

At first when I entered the room, I felt uneasy and wanted to leave the room because of my fear. It could be the silent atmosphere in the room filled the smell of 'formaline' (sic) to preserve the bodies and lines of

bodies or cadavers. When it was time to operate, I felt even more afraid when I opened up the covered cloth because I saw a face of a person who once lived in this world for a certain period of time. My friends and I raised our hands to “wai” to pay respect to the body because of the fear we had, our beliefs in spirits, or our religious beliefs.

(Aon, Thai narrative, my translation)

In this excerpt, Aon described his fear when he first encountered the cadaver. The feeling of “*uneas[iness]*” and “*silen[ce]*” when he went into that room could be the feeling of nervousness because it was his first time seeing and working with a cadaver. The fear presented in his Thai narrative is evident from his choice of words, including “*afraid*” or “*fear*,” and the action that he described to pay respect to the cadaver, “[we] *raised our hands to ‘wai’ to pay respect to the body because of the fear we had, our beliefs in spirits, or our religious beliefs.*” The term *wai* in Thai refers to the act of greeting by putting two palms together in front of the chest while lowering the head to the palm. This is a Thai way of showing respect to other people and also to the Buddha statuettes in temples. This action speaks more than showing respect; it also shows the level of social rank or personal beliefs in the religious sense. The act of *wai* that Thai people do entails several social meanings, including greetings, saying goodbyes, showing respect, apologizing, and paying respect to one’s religious beliefs (Segaller, 2005). The climax of Aon’s narrative and his nervousness was the moment when he “opened up the cover” to see the cadaver that he needed to study.

When he was asked to reflect on his writing experience, he gave only a brief explanation:

I think readers should be able to perceive my fear that I tried to convey in this writing. For me, I think I could express about 80.5% of my fear.

(Aon, personal interview, my own translation)

In his interview, Aon reported that he was satisfied with his Thai narrative because he could “express about 80.5% of [his] fear” He evaluated the narrative from the reader’s perspective, feeling that other Thai readers “should be able to perceive [his] fear” from reading the story. In this sense, he felt comfortable in expressing his fear in Thai writing. From the Thai narrative, he was able to describe actions that implied the sense of nervousness like when he “*opened the cover*” or “*wai*” to pay respect to the cadaver.

Aon later translated this Thai narrative into English. An excerpt of Aon’s English narrative is provided below:

The experienced was learning human anatomy from cadaver, the first time entering the room was a very bad feeling. So many human bodies lied in front of me, the smell of formalin to preserve the tissue was very disgusting. The fear of dead take over everyone’s mind, both from religious way and knowing that one day these body will be us. The fear of dead bodies made every living person in that room don’t really know what to do. Just because of fear everyone show respect the body by “wai” before doing anything like open the wrapped clothes or make an incision by blade.

(Aon, English narrative)

At the beginning of his English narrative, he described his first experience of studying a cadaver. By walking into the room, a “very bad feeling” came upon him. This “bad feeling” could be the fact that he felt nervous about seeing and working with an actual cadaver. He

later described the smell of formalin in the room as “disgusting.” This showed the feeling of discomfort and unfamiliarity that he had when he walked into the room. The sight of these bodies reminded him of the human condition: “one day these body will be us.” He also felt fear from the presence of “dead bodies” that no one “really knew what to do.” What he described here was a feeling of uncertainty mixed with nervousness and fear. From Aon’s English narrative, the repetition of “fear” suggested that he was very afraid. This fear is also reflected in his description of paying respect to the cadaver by putting two palms together to “wai” the body.

When he was asked to reflect on his narrative writing experiences, he provided his perspective on the language as well as the cultural issues:

The Thai language was more obvious in expressing fear. It was okay in English; I still could express my feeling. I felt that I could express fear in my English narrative less than in Thai. I tried to vary my English word choice. For example, when I used the word “fear” here, I would try to use “afraid” instead. But it did not fit with the sentence structure; I switched back to use “fear” again. Writing to express fear in English was more difficult than writing in Thai because I had some problems with cultural terms such as ‘wai’ and the term ‘pay respect.’ These two are not equivalent in terms of their meanings. They looked confusing.

(Aon, personal interview, my translation)

As Aon reflected on his writing experiences, he preferred using Thai over English when expressing fear. This was because he did not have any difficulties in representing his fear with Thai vocabulary. As he discussed in his interview, he tried to replace the word “fear” with the word “afraid” in his English narrative; however, he felt that the word did not fit into his sentence structure. In his English narrative above, he used the word “fear” three times. This frustration of being unable to switch the words “fear” to “afraid” could be the result of his dissatisfaction with the expression of emotion in his English narrative. Aon’s comment on the choice of word, “fear” and “afraid,” showed that he was able to differentiate the nuanced meanings of these two terms; however, he had some difficulties in using them in his English narrative.

Aon also talked about the issue of “cultural terms such as ‘wai’ and the term ‘pay respect.’” As a Thai speaker, Aon was well aware of the differences in the meanings between these two terms. In both his Thai and English narratives, he did not try to translate this action; he used the term “wai” in his writing. This could also affect his perception of his English narrative that he was able to “express fear in [his] English narrative less than in Thai.” The feeling of “confus[ion]” that Aon had when he discussed the cultural concept of “wai” in Thai and “to pay respect” in English could be because he was not sure how to express “respect” in the English culture because he was educated in Thailand.

For narrative writing, his understanding was based on the emotive words used in his written responses. Though the Thai concept of “wai” was discussed, his main concern in expressing emotion in his narrative writing was the English emotive words. He felt that his English narrative was repetitive and boring because of his limited English emotive word choices, such as his perceived overuse of the term “fear” and his unsuccessful attempt to replace it.

Ton’s Narratives

For the Thai narrative writing, Ton wrote about a ghost story that he had experienced. The excerpt presented below is from the middle to the end of the story:

วันนั้น ตอนประมาณ เกือบเที่ยงคืน เหลือคน อยู่ในห้องนั่งเล่น รวมประมาณ 4 คน คือ ผม และ เพื่อนร่วมห้อง กับ คนไทย ที่เพิ่ง มารู้จัก ที่นี่ อีก 2 คน เขาเป็น พี่น้องกัน ก็นั่งคุย กันไป เรื่อยเปื่อย แต่ตาม style คนไทย พอมืดๆ ก็ชอบเปิดประเด็น เรื่องผีกัน วันนั้น คุยกันเรื่อง กุมารทอง ก็คุนๆกันไป แสร้งประสบการณ์กันไป ปรากฏว่า คู่พี่น้อง คู่นี้ เลี้ยงกุมารทอง ทั้งคู่ แล้วน้องสาว ก็เอาติดตัวมาด้วย ผมและเพื่อน ตกใจมาก แล้ว ด้วยความอยากรู้ ก็ถาม ทุกเรื่อง ที่อยากรู้ต่างๆ เกี่ยวกับ กุมารทอง หลังจากนั้น ก็แยกย้าย กัน เข้านอน พอ ขึ้น เตียง ปิดไฟ จะนอน โดยปกติแล้ว ผมและเพื่อน จะคุยกัน ก่อนนอนทุกคืน วันนี้ ก็เช่นเคย ผมและเพื่อน ก็คุยกัน เรื่องเจ้าของกุมาร เหมือนนินทาเขา แล้วก็พูด เหมือนทำทนายว่า “ถ้ามีจริงนะ ต้องช่วย พวกเรา เรื่องงาน ได้จริงสิ” หลังจาก พูดจบ มีเสียง เหมือนคนเดิน เหยียบถุง ดังมาก พวกผม ตกใจมาก ทำอะไร ไม่ถูก เลยต้อง ไปบอกเจ้าของกุมาร และเปิดไฟ นอนทั้งคืน

(Ton, Thai narrative)

On that day, it was almost midnight. There were about four of us left in the living room: myself, my roommate, and the other two whom we just made friends with. They were brother and sister. We sat there chatting. But Thai style, when it was getting dark, we like to talk about ghost stories. That day, we talked about Ku-man-thong (Golden Baby). We shared our experiences/stories. It turned out the brother and the sister that we just met raised the spirit of Ku-man-thong. The sister brought one with her as well. My friend and I were surprised. With our curiosity, we asked the brother and sister everything we wanted to know about Ku-man-thong. After that, we went to bed. When we were in bed, we turned off the light. Normally my friend and I would talk before went to bed every night. Tonight was the same. My friend and I talked or sort of gossiped about the owner of Ku-man-thong. Then we somewhat challenged it, “If you are real, you must help us with the job.” After I finished my sentence, there was a loud noise like someone stepped on a bag. We were frightened and did not know what to do. We had to go and tell the owner of Ku-man-thong and we slept with lights on for the whole night.

(Ton, Thai narrative, my translation)

Ton shared his ghost-related experience, or *Ku-man-thong* (Golden Baby), that he and his friend encountered. *Ku-man-thong* is a type of talisman in the form of an effigy that looks like a baby boy. This was a part of a certain religious practice/belief in which the unborn fetus was surgically removed from the womb of the mother to do a certain ritual. This effigy was believed to be possessed by a spirit and he would bring good luck to those who worship it.

An interesting observation that Ton made in his Thai narrative was a common practice that he claimed to be the style of Thai people: “*when it was getting dark, we like to talk about ghost stories.*” This sentence signaled to his readers that he was about to shift from exposition to conflict as a typical plot structure transition in his Thai narrative. The choice of his words, *yak-ruu-yak-ben* (curiosity) and *tok-jai* (surprised and frightened), were used to help him express the emotion he experienced at that moment.

When he was asked to reflect on the Thai narrative writing experience, he shared the difficulty he faced.

There were many layers to this story. For example, normally when a movie wants to create a ghost story, there is a speaker/narrator of the story. We do not see ghost stories in print because it is more difficult to express this emotion in writing. Especially with ghost stories, it is impossible to write so that other readers feel afraid by only reading them. These stories need tones of voice. Sometimes the historical context of the story is needed in order to understand the incident. It was difficult to write this story.

(Ton, personal interview, my translation)

The challenge that he faced while writing his Thai narrative was how to convey his emotions including fear, in writing. He reflected on his writing experience, noting that a Thai narrative needed to have a well-thought out storyline because each narrative had “many layers to the story.” He stated that ghost stories needed “speakers/narrators” that used different “tones of voice” to convey fearful emotion. He implied that writing frightening stories was challenging due to the difficulty in representing different tones of voice in print. Retelling ghost stories orally would make the story more frightening than in writing because he was not sure how to present different sounds/voices in his writing. In addition to the value of tone variation, he also stated that the historical context of the ghost stories was also important because it helped readers understand the events. In other words, he implied that if he were able to write out “tones of voice” in his Thai narrative, he would feel more satisfied with his story. This could be one of the reasons why he felt that his story was not as scary as he wanted it to be. In his story, readers who did not know about *Ku-man-thong* would not be able to understand what he and his friend referred to. The history of *Ku-man-thong* was left untold in his Thai narrative.

After the interview, he was asked to respond to an English narrative writing prompt, for which he wrote about his experience in a recent car accident.

It's all about car crash. Like a 6 months ago. I was driving back home with my mother. I did feel so sleepy, but I didn't tell my mother because she was sleeping next to me. I tried so hard to concentrated a driving, but it was failed. I slept about one minutes. After that, I woke up because of a big impact forces and then I saw my mother was screaming. I was so nervous. I tired to **ตั้งสติ** [*be calm*] and found a free space to park my car. I came out from car and saw what I have made. I almost cry. I didn't know what to do. Although, my mom said “Don't worry, it just passed,” it made me claim down. And feel relax, so it is the most fearful events that I have experienced.

(Ton, English narrative)

For Ton's English narrative, he wrote about a car accident in which he dozed off while driving. He shared his experience by providing readers some background information that he was “tired.” While dozing off “about one minute,” he was awoken by the “big impact forces.” When he turned around, he saw his mother “screaming.” He felt “nervous” because he did not know what to do. The emotion that he tried to express in this English narrative was fear from the car accident. The feeling of confusion can also be inferred from the story when he stated, “I didn't know what to do.” The emotions presented in the English narrative were changing with every sentence he wrote. At the beginning of the story,

he felt he was competent enough to drive his mother back home safely. Then the emotion shifted when he “dozed off.” He used the transitional words “after that” in his English narrative to signal readers that the emotion was about to change.

When he was asked to reflect on his English narrative writing experience, he shared his thoughts on the choice of experiences he wanted to write about when he read the prompt.

This time I felt that writing in English seemed a bit easier than in Thai. It was like I needed to write a more difficult story when I wrote in Thai. Then I thought which story that I felt the most fear. The word “fear” in Thai reminded me of ghost stories. When “fear” was written in English, I did not think of ghost stories. It looked like the meaning of the word “fear” was broader in the English language. It’s the same word, but I am not sure.

(Ton, personal interview, my translation)

Ton’s reflection was interesting in that he discussed the meaning of the word “fear” in Thai and English. Ton recognized a nuanced definition of the word “fear” in the two languages. He felt that he had expressed his fear better in the English narrative because he had written from personal experience. For his Thai narrative, he chose to write a ghost story, in which readers needed more background information and different “tones of voice” to understand the emotion he tried to express. When he read the word “fear” in Thai, he thought of ghost stories, and therefore wrote about his experience with *Ku-man-thong* in his Thai narrative. When he read the English prompt, he felt that it was not the same feeling of fear as in the Thai language. He felt that the meaning of the word “fear” was “broader.” His understanding of the word “fear” in English was not limited to a fear of ghosts, but also a fear of losing his life and his loved ones. This shows that Ton had an understanding of the word “fear” and was able to use this word in a nuanced way in his writing.

For narrative writing, Ton showed his understanding of this genre by using a conversational style. In both the Thai and English narratives, he presented his awareness of the genre by using simple word choices and incorporating conversational conventions. Another awareness that he showed in his narrative was the way they unfolded. He set up the scenes for readers, then he started unveiling his stories until he reached the turning point. After that, he concluded the stories by presenting the results of his own actions.

Nop’s Narratives

Nop wrote a fear narrative in Thai about his personal experience of being at school at night. The excerpt provided here was the ending of Nop’s Thai narrative.

ระหว่างเดินไป ทางเดิน ค่อนข้างมืด เนื่องจาก ไม่ได้เปิดไฟ ผมจึงใช้ ไฟฉาย เปิด แล้วเดินไป พอเดินมาถึง สนามหน้า เสาธง ของโรงเรียน มีเสียง สุนัข เห่า หอนมากมาย พร้อม บรรยากาศ มี ด ครึม แต่พอถึง ห้องพัก ปรากฏว่า อาจารย์ ไม่อยู่ที่ห้อง ผมจึงต้อง เดินกลับ คนเดียว หลังจาก เหตุการณ์ วันนั้น ผม ไม่ค่อยกล้า เดินภายใน โรงเรียน เพียงลำพัง ในเวลา กลางคืน อีกต่อไป

(Nop, Thai narrative)

While I was walking, the walkway was dark because the lights were not turned on. I used my flashlight to lead the way. When I reached the school's assembly area, dogs were barking and howling. The atmosphere was gloomy. However, when I reached the office of my teacher, s/he was not there. I had to walk back by myself. After that day, I did not dare to walk around school by myself at night.

(Nop, Thai narrative, my translation)

The feeling of fear that Nop expressed in his Thai narrative was the fear of darkness and of a gloomy atmosphere, as communicated by his use of words such as “dark,” and “gloomy.” His description of dogs barking and howling also helped in setting the scene for his narrative. Through his description, he expressed his anxiety and nervousness about walking in the dark by himself. The howling sound he described captured the feeling of being alert during the walk to his teacher’s office. Thai readers would be able to recognize the emotion he wanted to express from his Thai narrative. His description of howling dogs and the darkness of the hallway were signals that Thai readers would be able to perceive the emotion he experienced in his Thai narrative.

When he was asked to reflect on his Thai narrative writing experience, he felt that his Thai narrative did not express as much emotion as he wanted it to:

I could express a minimal level of fear in my Thai narrative because the content was not much. I wrote too much background of the story.

(Nop, personal interview, my translation)

The excerpt taken from his Thai narrative was the only content that he mentioned in his interview. He felt that he should have focused his Thai narrative more on the emotion that he wanted to express. Further, he felt that he did not include much content; he was not satisfied with his “minimal” expression of fear.

When he was asked to write an English narrative, he translated the same story into English:

When I was study on a 10th grade. I was a staff of a Computer Youth Camp at my school. In a late night I have to go to my teacher’s room that far away from my room. Because my school is closed for a month. So it’s have nobody around. I had to walk alone to my teacher’s room. While I walk to teacher’s room I heard a dog start to **เห่า** **หอน** (bark – howl). In my mind I think if I met my teacher I’d walk back with him. But when I arrive that room, nobody’s there. I have to walk back alone.

(Nop, English narrative)

In this English narrative, he described the feeling of walking by himself to see his teacher at night. The feeling of fear that Nop expressed from his English narrative was the fear of walking alone at night. However, his narrative did not express much of his fear. Instead of using emotive words to express his fear, he asked readers to imply his fear from walking alone at night as it can be noticed from the narrative. In addition, the emotional expression reference he made in narrative was the sound of a dog barking and howling. The fact that Nop wrote a Thai script in his English narrative suggested that he could not successfully express his fear in English.

When he was asked to talk about his narrative writing experiences, he reflected that he preferred English to Thai in terms of content. However, Nop preferred the Thai language when it came to expressing emotion because he liked the choice of words he used in his Thai narrative.

Expressing emotion in English writing could be better than in Thai in terms of content because the story is more complete, but the wording might not be as good as in a Thai narrative.

(Nop, personal interview, my translation)

In this reflection, Nop acknowledged that he wrote the Thai narrative before the English one. When he was asked to write a narrative in English, he decided to rewrite/translate the same story. He added more information to the English narrative because he had a chance to write the same narrative again. This may be the reason for his preference of the English narrative. He felt that the completion of the English narrative helped in the expression of emotion. However, Nop also stated that the choice of words in his Thai narrative helped him better express his emotion. The issue of English vocabulary that he struggled with in everyday use came back in his English narrative writing. This implies that his perceptions of expressing emotion focused on the vocabulary that he used in his written responses.

From Nop's reflection, he was aware of the narrative writing genre because he mentioned that he provided "too much background information" in his Thai narrative. In other words, he knew that he needed to tell his stories to express his emotions. Instead, he wrote his narratives like a summary of a story. He felt that he should use more emotive words in his Thai and English narratives. Even though he felt that he was not able to express emotion well in his narratives, the word choices were appropriate for the genre.

DISCUSSION

When L2 writers are asked to express their emotions through writing about their own experiences, language and culture play a crucial role. In this study, Thai students expressed the emotion of fear in both their first and second language narratives but the patterns of responses were different for the various participants. As expressed in the exit interviews, Chalit was dissatisfied with both the L1 and L2 narratives for their inability to express the deep sense of fear he had felt; Aon and Nop felt that the English versions of their narratives expressed their fear better than the Thai versions; and Ton felt it was easier to express fear in his English story than his Thai one. The fact that the majority of students did not feel they expressed emotion more effectively in their L1 is contrary to common perceptions of emotive writing (Pavlenko, 2008a; Rintell, 1990).

In looking at the content of the stories, there is clearly a cultural issue at play in relation to emotional expression. Some of the stories themselves are steeped in a cultural context. For example, Ton's narrative draws directly on Thai mythology. It is interesting to note that for Ton, personal experience appeared in the English narrative of fear while a more cultural narrative was used in Thai. Three of the participants used the strategy of translation or rewriting the same narrative in two languages and yet there were still differences in their self-perception of the emotional valence of the narrative. Although this was not a design feature of the study itself, since the content was kept constant between the narratives for these three participants, any differences in emotional perception and expression specified by the

participants likely relate to the language issue itself. For two of them, they felt that the English version was more successful in expressing fear.

It is possible that the cultural and linguistic abilities for a Thai narrative are different than those for an L2 English narrative and as such the participants had lower or different criteria for evaluation. But still, the perception that a L2 expression of fear was successful suggests a role for this form of interaction. Perhaps, as sometimes shown in the L2 usage of pragmatics (Pavlenko, 2005), when there is a cultural barrier to the expression of an emotion and when the emotive value of a language is lower, it becomes easier to express certain emotions in certain languages. This position is very different from the predominant one that suggests that L2 writing is an emotionless activity (Clachar, 1999). This outcome suggests a multilingual choice model in which multi-literate writers choose in which language to express which emotions and experiences.

PEDAGOGICAL RAMIFICATIONS

The article started with the question – Where is emotion in the pedagogies of second language writing? One answer to this question is that emotion can be in the prompts and tasks that L2 writers are asked to perform and in the actual performance of the tasks themselves. One of the more interesting findings in this study from a literacy educator's perspective is the ease with which these students performed the tasks that they were asked to do. In other words, what has interfered with the usage of emotive writing in the second language classroom may be the core set of assumptions that inform writing instruction. Because most ESL/EFL classrooms focus on academic writing, many feel that writing instruction in these classes should avoid much emotional expression. But as 2,000 years of Western rhetoric have shown, passion is always a part of persuasive writing and by definition an act of expressing emotion. From my own perspective, learning to write with emotion is important in that it provides access to a wide range of meaningful and engaging personal acts of expression. After all, would we really want to train L2 writers to avoid emotion?

Also, as exemplified in this study, a range of emotions should be present, and the literacy instructor should not be scared to address the negative as well as the positive emotions of life. As autoethnographic writing has shown, writing about negative experiences can be therapeutic. In writing this article, my aim has been to widen the conceptual basis upon which we think about teaching L2 literacy. I would like the whole world of the student, including positive and negative emotions, to be part of the student's personal expression, and for L1 and L2 literacy to be considered resources for constructing this expression.

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