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Bachelor's thesis writing as an emotional process

ABSTRACT

This study explores the bachelor's thesis writing process from the perspective of emotions by using a holistic, narrative approach to individual development. Emotions are analysed in interconnection with implicit conceptions about academic writing and about oneself as a writer. The process of academic writing is described as a movement where balancing positive and negative emotions is one part of academic multiliteracy. The data of the study include visual, textual and interview data from different phases of the bachelor's thesis process. In the analysis, four types of narratives of thesis writing are created: growth, survival, project and conflict narratives. The study offers a holistic perspective to academic writing and provides writing instructors and students with ways to identify emotions and implicit beliefs related to writing processes.

INTRODUCTION

It is well-known that academic writing is challenging and tense in many ways (e.g., Ivanič, 1998), especially for novice writers just starting their academic career, since many important aspects of writing are ignored, or assumed, and learned by trial and error (Cameron et al., 2009; French, 2017 and 2018). As a result, novice writers often criticize themselves and feel a sense of failure (Cameron et al., 2009). Emotions are thus an integral part of the academic writing process. Emotions related to academic writing have been rarely studied, however, although the centrality of emotional support is widely recognized (e.g., French, 2018; Komppa et al., 2019; Carlino, 2012, Chapter 12). In the last decades writing-to-learn research has focused mostly on the epistemic function of writing rather than on the reflective aspects (Klein & Boscolo, 2016). In recent years the perspectives of conceptions, self-efficiency, self-regulation and self-management have become popular in academic writing research (e.g., Katajamäki, 2020; Huerta et al., 2017; Sala-Bubaré & Castelló, 2017; van Blanckestein et al., 2018; Limpo & Alves, 2017). These studies have shown the importance of the individual in academic writing and the heterogeneity of the novice writer's starting points and resources. To understand these processes more thoroughly, more information about the interplay between implicit conceptions and emotions in academic writing is needed (see e.g., Baaijen et al., 2014). This understanding can help to support novice writers in recognizing and dealing with the emotions linked with starting to write academic texts, since conceptions about academic writing and the emotions linked to them colour interactions at the university and affect student well-being (see e.g. Lonka et al., 2014).

This study focuses on experienced and narrated emotions of bachelor thesis writers and their interplay with conceptions concerning academic writing and oneself as a writer. Emotions are here understood as an aggregate term for emotions, affects and feelings that are involved with conceptions about self and control (see also Nummenmaa et al., 2018). The study is linked to the broader research context of academic literacies and multiliteracies aiming at offering perspectives that can help to develop literacy practices. Multiliteracies and academic literacies are here considered as related terms in which the first term is a traditional frame for studying academic writing as a social practice (e.g., Lea, 2004) and the second is a broader contemporary approach to learning that includes, for example, multimodality, cultural diversity and communication technology (e.g., Cazden et al., 1996; Anstey & Bull, 2018).

Multiliteracy approaches take into account individuals' possibilities for managing access to the evolving language of a community and to engage critically in designing their social futures (Cazden et al., 1996). From this perspective emotionality is a key dimension to include in the analysis. However, the multiliterate aspect in academic writing has not been given attention until now. We suggest that seeing academic writing as a multiliterate socially situated practice including emotional aspects opens new perspective for supporting students as writers and as participants in academic communities.

This study aims to answer the following research questions: What are the most important emotions writers experience during their writing processes and how are they related to the conceptions about writing and oneself as a writer? How do the writers try to affect their emotions by modifying their conceptions about writing and themselves as writers? The objective of this study is to give a holistic and multifaceted picture of the academic writing process and on that basis to provide suggestions for the teaching of writing especially in higher education contexts.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Conceptions and emotions in academic writing

Although direct studies of the relationship between emotions and conceptions in academic writing are rare, the personal aspects of the process have been addressed in many studies focusing on conceptions, perceptions and self-beliefs linked with academic writing. These terms are commonly used to describe the ideas and personal opinions that individuals hold about writing and themselves (Horwitz, 1987, pp. 119–120) and have their origins in the personal experiences of learners and the opinions of others around them, including parents, teachers, and friends (Wenden, 1986, p. 5). This research has mostly focused on conceptions about writing or learning from a cognitive perspective (Mateos & Sole, 2012; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2016) and has left the social perspective outside its scope even though social practices and shared conceptions in a community are recognized as also shaping students' conceptions about writing and themselves as writers (Lonka et al., 2014; Mateos & Sole, 2012).

These studies of academic writing differ in their focus, though all of them are concerned with individual belief systems and their effect on the writing process. Some of them have focused on students' beliefs about writing in general. In these studies, it has been shown that university students conceive of writing mostly as the transcription and reproduction of knowledge and less as the transformation or generation of knowledge, and epistemic conceptions of knowledge - such as the development of one's own thought - are rare (Mateos & Sole, 2012). Some other studies have explored the relationship between student conceptions and the process of writing itself or the outcomes of the process. Baaijen et al. (2014) focused on the ways in which writing beliefs moderate the effectiveness of different writing strategies. Their results indicated that writers who believe "that writing is an emotional experience which involves the development of understanding as the text is built" seemed to develop their understanding through writing. These writing beliefs were further related to the quality of the text and to writers' understanding of their topics. (Baaijen et al., 2014.) The study of Lonka et al. (2014) further indicated the importance of conceptions and emotions on writing productivity. According to them, viewing writing as a process of

knowledge transformation was positively related to self-reported productivity, and negatively related to viewing writing as an innate ability. The amount of productivity reflected the students' beliefs in their self-efficacy. The study also showed that exhaustion, stress, anxiety and lack of interest correlated positively with blocks, procrastination, and perfectionism, and negatively with productivity (Lonka et al., 2014). Other studies also agree that the more students believe in their writing skills the better they perform. (Martinez et al., 2011.) On the other hand, learning to write in a university context always involves experiences of emotional threats and possibilities (see Carlino, 2012, Chapter 12). Problems in academic writing may connect with negative emotions and a lack of confidence (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008; Ivanič, 1998, p. 184; Carlino, 2012, Chapter 12; Baaijen et al., 2014). This study builds on this foundation but also includes a perspective on ways in which students' conceptions relate to their emotions.

Together these studies on the personal side of the academic writing process have provided important perspectives on the complexity of the process of academic writing and demonstrated the need for support in addressing the personal challenge of learning to write. However, they have mostly provided a freeze-frame understanding of the writing process and ignored the dynamic and changing nature of beliefs and emotions during the writing process. To address this gap in research, this study focuses on the students' writing process, the emotions involved in it, and the ways in which students interpret their emotions via their own conceptions. Our study draws on an understanding that emotions and beliefs are mutually dependent (Aragão, 2011). For example by examining beliefs of oneself as a language learner and changing them, it is possible to affect emotions. Also when a student becomes aware of her/his own emotions, she/he can see the connection with the beliefs which can possibly be changed. (Aragão, 2011.) Belief and conception are used variously in the literature, but we juxtapose them as related terms, because they are both related to cognition and emotion.

Holistic approach to academic writing

All human action such as writing is filled with emotions and cognition (e.g. Nummenmaa, 2006, Chapter 6.1.; Isen, 2004; Schwarz-Friesel, 2015). Generally theorists and researchers affirm that emotion influence thinking, decision-making, actions, social relationships, and well-being (Izard, 2010). Emotions and conceptions have been conceptualized in many ways historically, and today there is still no clear consensus on definitions of the concepts. Here we take a broad holistic view of human development that has, until now, been rare in academic writing research (see however Lonka et al., 2014), but draws on more general applied linguistic understanding of language development.

According to this holistic perspective, we comprehend emotion as an aggregate term for emotions, feelings and other affective mental states that are related to conceptions about self and control and thus also to language (see also Nummenmaa et al., 2018; Klann-Delius, 2015; Solomon, 2004; Maturana, 1988). Emotions are interactive, contextual, social, embodied (Benesch, 2012), embedded in discursive and ideological practices (Zembylas 2006) and they express the quality of the person's relationship to a particular event. In other words emotions express an active stance or movement towards something or away from it. In line with this definition of emotions, conceptions are here defined as dynamic, emergent and multifaceted. They express the multifaceted nature of human experience and change in different contexts, and are thus socio-culturally mediated forms of "thought, constructions of reality, ways of

seeing and perceiving the world and its phenomena” (Barcelos & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2018, p. 113; Barcelos, 2015).

To illustrate the relationship between these two key terms in this study, we draw on the original meanings of the words cognition and emotions. The word emotion denotes movement (Lat. *emovere* "move out") and cognition denotes knowing (Lat. *com* + *gnoscere* "to know together") (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021). So, the process of academic writing could be described as movements to know together. This description involves both the emotional-cognitive and social aspects of the action and comes close to the multiliteracy perspective on human development, where learning is gaining access to the linguistic resources of a particular community and includes the aspect of control of one's own future (Cazden et al., 1996). This perspective draws strongly from the Vygotskian perspective on learning and the interplay of emotion, cognition, language and action, in which every idea contains an affective relationship to referred reality (see Vygotsky, 2000, pp. 10–11) and every thought requires movements into language (Vygotsky, 2000, pp. 210–256). For example, frustration in academic writing can be seen as a natural or avoidable emotional response to the difficulty of action and may lead to different decisions and consequences. Further, emotional experiences can be affected by language (Nummenmaa, 2012, pp. 41–42). In a sense, the choice of emotions is a question of choosing which goes along with an ethical perspective on the consequences of an emotion (e.g., Solomon, 2004; Maturana, 1988).

Encouraging students to scrutinize emotions in the academic writing process helps them to deepen their understanding of it as a multiliterate socially situated practice concerned with their ability to participate and perform effectively in a community such as a university (see e.g., academic literacy: Lea, 2004; multiliteracy: Anstey & Bull, 2018). Writers have their own writing history that influences how they write. Learning, critical thinking and knowledge produced through writing are essential social practices. ‘Writing process’ stands here for all phases of a small-scale research process, including organizing, revising, thinking (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) and the balancing of emotions. Academic writing is not only a tool for producing knowledge but also a social practice connected with the meaning of learning (Klein & Boscolo, 2016; Castelló & Iniesta, 2012, Chapter 10).

METHOD AND MATERIAL

Narrative method

We apply a reflective and narrative approach to study emotional and conceptual aspects of academic writing and base our study on narrative data produced in collaboration with the eight research participants. In our data, the participants narrate the bachelor's writing process in several modalities for understanding the world - visually, verbally, linearly and personally - that are typical of human beings (Polkinghorne, 1988). Thus, narrative research is a fundamental epistemological stance - both a research strategy and a method. Narrative research is a powerful way to understand experience and action such as learning, because narration includes introspection and reflection. (Bamberg, 2012; Barkhuizen, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 18–19; Johnson & Golombek, 2013, p. 86.)

When experiences are studied narratively in various forms during the process of bachelor's thesis writing, participants' personal visual and verbal expressions and their interpretations of

emotions are present. Language is a tool for halting the stream of time, scrutinizing experience, gaining meaning and creating chances for action (Brockmeier, 2009). That is why words for emotions vary depending on persons and situations and furthermore emotion can be experienced by remembering or imagining (see e.g., Niedenthal, 2008; Nyman & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2009). In our view, subjective emotional experiences are strongly affected by individuals' history of experiences and their interpretations of them (Nummenmaa, 2012, p. 207).

Educational context, participants and data

The bachelor's studies in social sciences in a Finnish university include as an obligatory part of the studies a bachelor's thesis of approximately 25 pages that is a report on a small research project conducted by the student. The project is conducted in a research seminar where students receive supervision and peer support. In addition to the 10 credit seminar the student's academic writing process is also supported in a research communication course (3 credits). Ideally the students join in the seminar and the course at the same time and write their theses during an academic semester. The theses are evaluated on a scale from 1 (Fair) to 5 (Excellent). Participants in this study were eight students studying social sciences and philosophy who took the research communication course in fall 2019 in which Author 1 was one of the teachers. These students had given their consent to take part in this study. The names used here – Touko, Pyry, Kuisma (males) and Aamu, Suvi, Helmi, Iris, Minttu (females) – are pseudonyms to protect anonymity. The study was approved by the institution as well.

To collect a rich narrative data of the emotions and conceptualizations related to their academic writing processes, the participants were asked to reflect on their processes in different modalities. First, at the beginning of the course the students were asked as a course assignment to choose at least three pictures from a wide range of clippings that to them potentially described their future writing processes and attach them to a piece of paper and write an explanation about their visions (attachment 1). Second, outside the course context students were interviewed. In these narrative interviews they drew an experience line illustrating their emotions at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the academic writing process (attachment 2).

The experience-line was an application of a life-line technique that has been used traditionally in therapy. An experience-line is a line or curve drawn by a student expressing positive and negative past or future emotions related to a thesis writing process. Positively experienced moments were marked above the horizontal line and negative ones below it. At first, the students were asked to draw experience-lines that indicate how the research and writing process has been progressed by remembering past phases and emotions connected to them. They were instructed to start the first line from the very first moment when the thesis process started - such as browsing for a topic - and draw the line from that point till the present moment. After that, a student was asked to draw a line that anticipates what the next phases and possible emotions and possible emotions might be.

The experience lines and the collages served a double purpose in the data collection: they provided the participants the possibility to reflect on their conceptualizations and emotions in different modalities and also gave the researchers a wider perspective on the intensity and importance of particular emotions in the process in addition to the students' verbal accounts.

The main phase of the data collection, the narrative interviews, were also conducted by Author 1 at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the writing process for each participant (one participant did not finish the thesis and her data only includes two interviews). The interviews started by asking the students to describe their experience by drawing an experience-line of the past. After the participants had described their thoughts, they were asked to elaborate on their current emotions and conceptualizations of their writing and in the two first interviews also to anticipate the next steps in the process – in other words, drawing a line towards future. Also the collages were discussed. In the last interview the participants also evaluated the whole process from the perspective of the outcome. Generally the interviews followed the basic principles of a narrative interview (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The students were asked to recount their experiences, ideas and feelings in relation to academic writing. Some additional questions were asked, for example about what kind of academic writers they see themselves as, what the thesis means to them, what they find important in academic writing, what can be learned, and what kind of support they have had. The interviews with the lines were carried out outside the course context during the academic year, except for one (because it took longer for a student to finish the thesis). These interviews were recorded and transcribed and serve as the main data for this study.

Narrative analysis

The idea of narrative analysis is to produce type stories based on the data and to make a synthesis of story-pieces (Heikkinen, 2018; Frey, 2018; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1995). In this study attention was paid to those experiences that were significant for students and their descriptions of experiences (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and emotions linked to them. The analysis followed the steps suggested by Polkinghorne (1995) for the analysis of narrative data. The first phase, categorical analysis of the data, focused on coding the important emotions, conceptualizations, and reflections in different phases of the participants' writing processes. The second phase, narrative analysis, served to form explanatory stories that helped to understand the linear succession of coded elements. We will now explain in more detail, in which ways the different data were used in the analysis.

The interviews formed the main data for the analysis, but the verbal descriptions of the student collages and the experience-lines were continually used to confirm the observations made. First, the transcriptions of the interviews describing the experience lines were put in charts and matched with the experience-lines, so that it was easier to follow the line and verbal expressions of curves and other notes in the drawing. Then words or phrases that expressed emotions were coded in the transcriptions by following Golombek's and Doran's (2014) method for identifying emotional content, for example affectively charged lexis indicating stance, juxtapositions, expressions of idealized beliefs, calls for validation and metaphors. Then the explicit emotion words were identified as positive, negative or unclassified, with the help of Olive's and Piolat's (2018) emotion classification and the participants' experience lines that identified positive and negative moments in their writing processes. The top highs and deep lows in the lines were important and helped to confirm the coding that was done on the basis of the verbal data and interpreting the intensity of the emotions. Also, the explanatory text related to the visual collages were coded by applying the aforementioned method to obtain additional information about the students' emotions at the beginning of the process. After identifying the emotions in the data, the conceptualizations

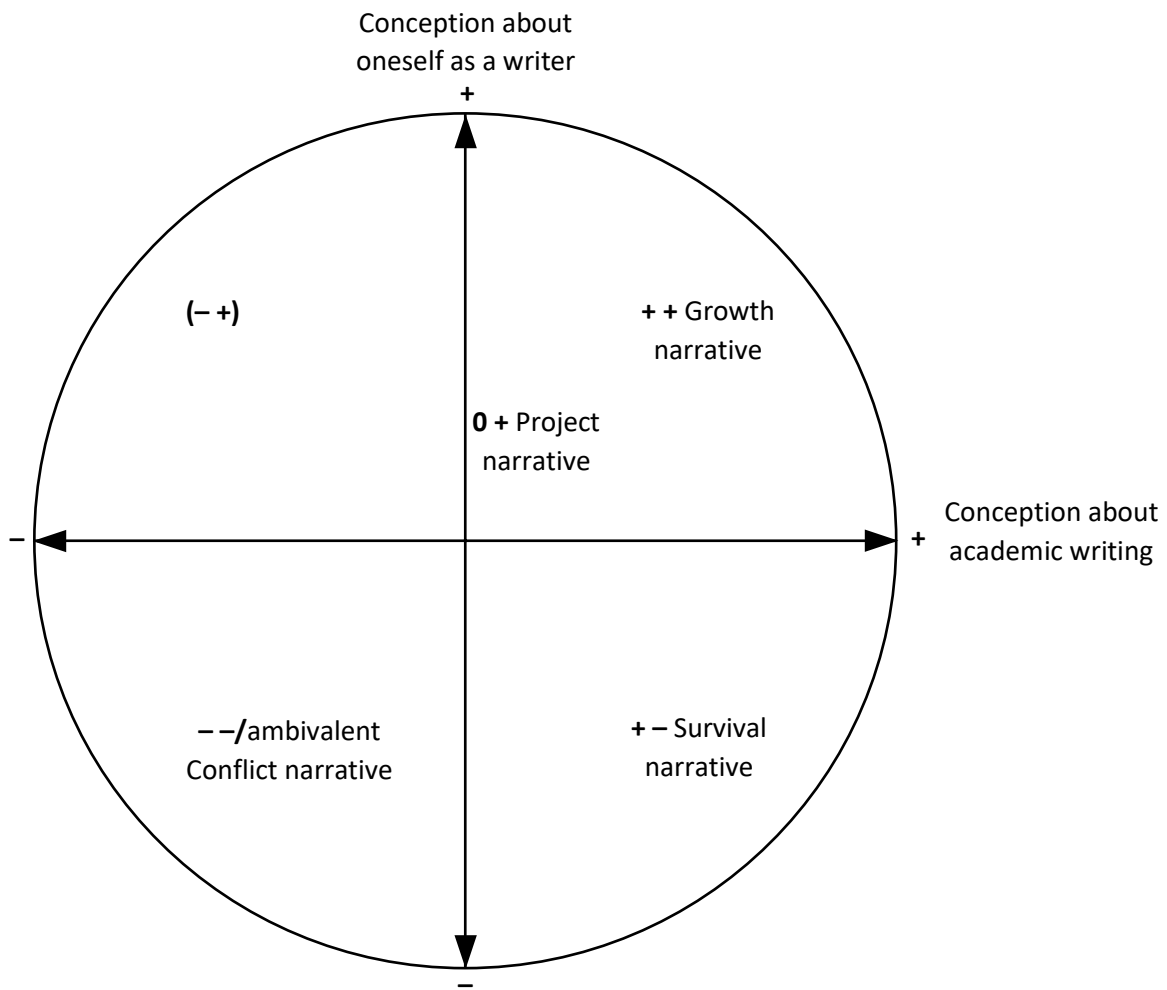
expressed in connection to these emotions and students' reflections on the significance of these emotions were also coded.

Narrative analysis started with focusing on students' descriptions of their whole writing process in the last interview and proceeded to matching these participant evaluations with the emotions, conceptualizations and reflections that were coded in the earlier interviews. The focus was on the ways in which events and expressions were interpreted by the individual participant in the different parts of the bachelor's thesis writing. On the basis of these different ways of experiencing and interpreting the bachelor's thesis, a story describing each individual participant separately was created (i.a. Polkinghorne, 1995; Barkhuizen, 2013). After comparing the pathways of the individual students, we were able to identify four distinctive paths of thesis writing that differed in their emotional undertone and in the ways in which emotions were interpreted by the participants.

FINDINGS

The four different narratives types that were used to describe the emotional-cognitive process of bachelor's thesis writing processes were *growth narrative*, *survival narrative*, *project narrative* and *conflict narrative*. These ways of narrating the process were also qualified by particular conceptions about writing and oneself as a writer that further affected the emotional experience of thesis writing and the ways in which these emotions were interpreted as part of the process (see Figure 1). The narratives also describe the ways in which the students identified themselves as part of the academic writing community and the social practices of academic writing.

Figure 1 Narratives Featured with Positive and Negative Emotions and Conceptions about Academic Writing and Oneself as a Writer



Growth narrative

In the growth narrative the process of academic writing was described with the help of a storyline in which the protagonist lives his/her life and academic writing is part of the process of developing as a member of the academic community and offers a lesson of something bigger than just a finished thesis. An orientation to academic writing as a learning process was present, and that had the potential to teach the students about writing and life.

The growth narrative includes a positive conception about the writing process and oneself as a writer from the beginning to the end. Writing a bachelor's thesis was seen as an important part of studies, enabling the learning of skills and the information that was needed in a field. These beliefs about the process were present at the beginning of the writing process, and already in the descriptions of their collages. The difficulty and "questionable character" of academic writing was accepted already at the beginning as a necessary part of the process as seen in Extract 1:

Extract 1 (Iiris, in the explanatory text of the collage): It is very difficult to perceive an actual research-question. Questions are thus certainly present along the whole writing process.

Extract 2 encapsulates the orientation to growth and the meaning of emotions in learning.

Extract 2 (Touko, Interview 2): The routines, control of life and the sensitivity related to it, so that somehow one tolerates those moments too, when something doesn't succeed. It is also important to survive the pits. Somehow for me this is growing and increasing control over my own life.

Growth narrative involves an optimistic view of the future with more positive than negative emotions based on the experience-lines. This optimism seems to match with the orientation towards development and positive expectations of the outcomes of the process.

Retrospectively, however, more negative emotional experiences were reported as part of the process than was originally anticipated. For example, though disappointment and frustration did not overpower an overall positive impression of the academic writing, the function of negative emotions was considered as essential to the progress of the writing process and development, as in Extract 3.

Extract 3 (Touko, Interview 1): It is not nice to get frustrated, but usually in any case that frustration leads to something like: now I must change or do better.

Sometimes a reminder of the progress already made was needed when experiencing negative emotions. See Extract 4 below.

Extract 4 (Iiris, Interview 2): A sort of disappointment: Hey, come on, you haven't got anywhere yet. - - That is maybe that kind of situation in your own mind where one should just be saying: Hey, you don't always have to getting things done. Even just trying is enough.

The participants expressed the view that it was not easy to control the writing process, but that was why a friendly reaction to their own feelings and putting them into perspective were productive ways to handle them and gain a sort of control and calm. Overall, the relation to emotional fluctuations was one of acceptance and emotions were seen as purposeful. The participants realised that emotions are forces that push the writing process forward.

The participants were proactive and solved emerging problems by themselves or as shown Extract 5 they asked for help without just waiting for it.

Extract 5 (Iiris, Interview 2): Which elements does a thesis consists of? If you want a grade 4, what's required? All that kind of information we missed in the seminar. So, we asked another teacher and got the answers. Now we have the information, which is good.

The participants moved freely and actively in the academic community and experienced satisfying involvement in it.

Survival narrative

In the survival narrative the bachelor's thesis writing was described with the help of a storyline where the protagonist faces a challenge that is almost too difficult to overcome. This narrative has a clear dramatic arc where the beginning is characterized by a challenge causing anxiety, and in which the struggles of the protagonists are resolved in a "happy ending". Positivity remained all the way through the writing processes even though the writers may have felt the pressure of their own high expectations of their performances as writers.

The survival narrative includes a positive conception about the writing process and a negative conception about oneself as a writer. The bachelor's thesis was seen as an important challenge and a merit in a university career. "The big thing" can be seen in the interviews and collages' descriptions as well. However, differently from in the growth narrative, these participants felt increasingly anxious and fearful in front of this challenge and doubted their ability to overcome it. Extract 6 shows how a participant described the significance of the thesis and the reason for the background fear the writer feels:

Extract 6 (Pyr, Interview 1): That bachelor's thesis is that kind of merit. Maybe from the beginning of the studies it's been the first kind of big goal. - - The degree is the big thing and it has maybe affected this. - - One might somehow think it is too big somehow, such an overwhelming thing.

The fears connected to the process were also partly connected to the conceptions about oneself as a writer. High demands on the quality of their own texts tended to be a feature of perfectionism the students recognised. In Extract 7 a participant pondered her perfectionism and the difficulties it caused for the thesis writing process. This kind of reflection was typical of this narrative type.

Extract 7 (Aamu, Interview 2): Maybe I have learned that I kind of strive for perfection like I had earlier in school-work. So it's a bit disturbing that I can't relax but must be constantly thinking that it must become good. So I've maybe learned that it slows me down quite a lot. It's quite clear that if I just start to act without thinking too much, it will go much better.

High demands can easily cause feelings of failure, but in the survival narrative the students learn how to deal better with initial negative emotions during the writing process by allowing themselves lower standards over and over again. Comparing themselves with their peers from time to time was common among all narrative types but in the survival narrative it served the important function of reducing the fear of failure (see Extract 8).

Extract 8 (Pyr, Interview 2): I am, nevertheless, pretty worried about my own work as well of course, how it will advance. But based on yesterday, one can be pretty worried about the work of some other people because topics were changed so the work has to be started all over again but there doesn't seem to be much of a rush in the seminar.

In the survival narrative, the emotional experience of bachelor's thesis writing was qualified by a constant endeavour to find an emotional balance. The participants understood that negative emotions need to be scrutinized in order to make progress in the writing and the progress depends on their own efforts even though the seminar gave a helpful schedule with

tasks. The participants understood the thesis as a challenge that tested their eligibility as members of the academic community and they felt relief after completing the task.

Project narrative

The storyline of the project narrative was characterized by a description of the planned action. The distinctive feature is neutrality towards emotions and also the neutralization of emotions experienced at the end of the process. Emotionally demanding or rewarding experiences were not reported as having personal value for the writing of a bachelor's thesis awarded.

The project narrative includes a neutral conception about the writing process and a positive view of oneself. The writing process was characterized as an obligatory task that needed to be completed. The students expressed a positive idea of the likelihood of completing this task. The thesis was not seen as demanding, and actions concerning theses tended to be optimized and planned in relation to other projects or studies. See Extract 9.

Extract 9 (Helmi, Interview 1): When I got on the special course, I thought that I would still do that subject, but then I just didn't find any perspective that I would have liked or that would have been sound. But then came a kind of eureka moment: well, why don't I do this at the same time?

The written explanations accompanying the collages also focused on practical issues needed in accomplishing the task. Both the experience-lines and narrative interviews concerning future writing and research process express a realistic stance towards the process. Any emotions arising during the writing and research process were related realistically and goals were set with confidence already from the beginning. Previous experiences of other projects were used to anticipate the coming process as in Extract 10.

Extract 10 (Suvi, Interview 1): For me the most difficult part of the process is to start. It always feels laboured, a little bit uncomfortable or hard, but I'm also very confident about it, that I will accomplish it on time and probably earlier, because usually, if I have a project, I get it done very steadily and I believe that, for sure at some point, there will come moments of despair, but usually, however, they pass pretty quickly. I have a relatively confident feeling anyhow, because now I've known for roughly for a couple of years already what I'm like and how I act in these kinds of situations.

Irritation was the emotion that was typically expressed and it was connected with the time-consuming and laborious side of writing. See Extract 11.

Extract 11 (Helmi, Interview 2): I get a lot of feedback. Well, maybe I could revise this and that again, and then I know that it irritates me at first, because I wouldn't want to make changes, because I'm probably already so satisfied with it in this phase. So then it'll irritate me when I start to change it.

There were no differences in emotions at the beginning and at the end of the project. Relatively neutral emotions like boredom and the satisfaction of having done the thesis were mentioned in the end. Emotions were considered as momentary and passing and as such

accepted as a part of the project. The students tried to fit in with the academic community, but they did not count on support from it.

Conflict narrative

In the conflict narrative the storyline is characterized by a struggle between the writer and institutional practices. The distinctive feature is negative emotionality and doubts about the meaning of the task. Conceptions about writing and oneself as a writer reflect negative emotions and strong ambivalence. The process of academic writing raised feelings of uncertainty and anxiety but also present were ambition and over-optimism.

The expectations of the writing process were distinctly negative from the beginning, as can be noticed both in the interviews and the descriptions of the collages and experience-lines. Extract 12 shows how negative emotion and ambivalence related to the writing process and oneself as a writer was expressed during the drawing of a future experience-line.

Extract 12 (Minttu, Interview 1): I guess that if the low point is a little lower here now, when I really have to decide on the subject it'll go a little lower still. But when I've decided it, then I hope motivation will increase, and then when I familiarise myself better with research literature that I find, it could, hopefully be steady at least for a while, so that writing will continue. I guess that at some point I'll be thinking oh no, this isn't going to work!

In the future experience-lines, the beginning or the end of the project was situated on the negative side of the emotional spectrum, and on the other hand the lines predicted shorter process than actually occurred later. In the interviews the process was described often as difficult, backbreaking, depressing and painful. The possibility of receiving suitable help from the institution to attain individual goals was not fully trusted. There were also difficulties identifying with bachelor thesis peers and that is why other people became more important, as in Extract 13.

Extract 13 (Minttu, Interview 2): Sometimes it feels right when I just discuss it with my sister, so that even though I may ponder on these things by myself, I do get some comments as backup. In addition, after two weeks I'll have the meeting with our seminar supervisor. Then, for sure I'll get some help, but it feels that I wouldn't necessarily want to have a discussion with him yet only when some real questions arise, after I have had some time to think by myself.

The students were not sure about institutional demands. Negative feelings were occasionally interpreted as signs of outsider status and differing perspectives on academic research and writing. However, the desire to remain true to oneself and follow one's own path eased negative feelings. This can be seen in Extract 14.

Extract 14 (Kuisma, Interview 3): The important thing was that I set goals for myself and changed those goals according to the situation, and then in the end I felt like I had fulfilled these goals. What was less important then, was being in a university where different things are appreciated compared to mine. I'm not necessarily in the right place then.

Typically there was a constant ambivalence between individual goals and institutional expectations and doubt about the necessity of institutional support. Both participants in this group found speaking with someone about their research invigorating, but finally one of the participants abandoned the research and writing process and started to consider another study path. The other participant continued thesis-writing and managed to finish in two years. He noticed cyclic order in emotions he experienced and their causes (see Extract 15).

Extract 15 (Kuisma, Interview 3): I've got cold feet or a kind of stage fright. On the other hand, I relate to what I am doing very seriously, as if I want to show what I can do. But on the other hand, when I'm finishing some version, I'm not satisfied and think I haven't at all shown what I can do. And then I set new goals still and leave them unfinished. This has happened in cycles many times.

At the end he was only partly satisfied with the outcome of the process although he did feel relief to have finished his work. Both participants tried to do more than was expected and in some sense change the academic community. In the background, there was doubt about being a proper member of it.

DISCUSSION

In this study we focused on emotions in the bachelor thesis writing process and their relationship with conceptions about academic writing and oneself as a writer. These results were interpreted in the framework of academic literacies, where writing is regarded not as a mere cognitive process, but a social process of being and becoming member of a community (Lea, 2004; Cazden et al., 1996). We found four narrative types - growth, survival, project and conflict narratives - that express the interrelatedness of emotions and conceptions which have roots in social activity in a community (e.g. Vygotsky, 2000).

Figure 1 concludes our findings and shows in which ways the different narrative types were related to conceptions about oneself as a writer and writing. In all cases, the process of academic writing included both positive and negative emotions. Depending on the participants' conceptions about the process and themselves, these emotions were differently interpreted as part of the process. The answer to the question of which emotions are the most prominent is as follows: composure in the growth narrative, fear in the survival narrative, neutrality in the project narrative and a sense of being ill in the conflict narrative. In the process negative emotions were either accepted as part of the writing process, and seen as passing and meaningless, or as something that the student should actively try to deal with. These different kinds of stances on emotions reflected the writers' relationship to the academic community. In this study we recognized also the position of outsider as also a potential threat to the writing process. The conflict narrative, in which students perceived themselves as outsiders in the academic community, involving a lack of trust in receiving help from their group and in seeing their own goals as being in conflict with the community goals, was particularly problematic from the point of view of the process as a whole.

The second research question concerning the writers' efforts to affect their emotions by modifying their conceptions about writing and themselves as writers can be answered this way: The participants tried to affect their emotions by reflecting on their own goals and on the goals of the academic community. They also recognized the importance of both realistic and idealistic views of writing to their processes. However, in this study only minor changes

in the participants' conceptions occurred during the thesis writing process. This does not mean that a story would be determined beforehand based on earlier similar situations and experiences. For example, Aamu had a fearful mindset in the beginning that was comparable to those students who adopt a conflict narrative, but she managed to tolerate the challenge of the situation and her story turned out to be one rather of survival.

Despite the small number of participants, the results of this study contribute to the previous studies on academic writing in at least three different ways. Whereas the first two contributions are related to theoretical and practical development of writing research, the third suggests pedagogical tools to engage with students and guide them in their academic writing processes.

Firstly, our study revealed some of the factors that make the academic writing process emotionally challenging. Perfectionism, particularly present in the survival narrative in this study as in some previous ones (see Lonka et al., 2014), was found to cause emotions of inadequacy and anxiety that can be obstacles to writing. Also neutrality of emotions typical of the project narrative, that leads to lesser emotional rewards for students, has also been identified in previous studies (Ylijoki, 2001). Additionally, these findings related to participation highlight the centrality of community and membership in the process of academic writing (see Cazden et al., 1996). In our study, it was important for students to find a balance between their own expectations and those of the community. Sometimes that meant modifying their objectives and asking for approval to continue with an idea.

Secondly, the study showed the centrality of the interplay between emotions and student conceptions. Similar emotions were given different meanings in the different narratives. For example, students looking at their writing from the perspective of a growth narrative considered their failures and difficulties as something that was a natural part of their writing process and reacted to these emotions with empathy towards themselves. The students looking at their writing from a conflict narrative perspective, on the other hand, could interpret their negative emotions as a sign of their outsider status and the differences between their goals and community requirements. These different interpretations also led to different kinds of reactions and choices made in the writing process. Previous studies on academic writing have already shown that avoiding difficult negative emotions is not a fruitful way to move on, and that facing the emotions can increase knowledge about their own writing process (e.g. Cameron et al., 2009; French, 2017, 2018). And further, by becoming more aware of their own writing process, anxiety can be reduced (Castelló et al., 2009). Our study also demonstrated the process through which decisions of avoidance or acceptance are made. This can further help to develop multiliterate pedagogies in higher education institutes.

Generally, a pedagogy of multiliteracies allows different forms of engagement in and recognition of learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 188). However, it is important that students are aware of the ways in which this participation can take place and are thus able to reflect on their own participatory practices and emotions connected to them and writing. We suggest that looking into emotions, rather than avoiding or underestimating them, the members of the community might understand better their implicit beliefs about participation and help them towards more conscious and effective participatory practices. Community members are ideally creative and responsible makers of meaning and designers of the social future (Cazden et al., 1996). Positivity in learning situations makes thinking and problem solving easier and enhances social interaction and responsibility (Isen, 2004.) Paying more attention to emotions in learning and identifying their significance makes it easier to notice

conflicts and therefore to make helpful interventions with them (Storrs, 2012). Furthermore, reflection on emotions and narrated experiences benefits both students and supervisors and writing teachers as well, because it can reveal tacit cultural norms and values of a disciplinary culture (Ylijoki, 2001).

Thirdly, our study provides some ways to address emotions in teaching writing and academic literacies which we want to highlight as practical implications of this study. We believe, as Cameron et al. (2009), and also French (2018), point out, that discussion about emotional challenges and understanding of how common they are can reduce anxiety and increase knowledge about the academic writing process. Focusing on emotions every now and then during highs and lows in the writing process helps to find new perspectives and balance in writing and in oneself as a writer (see also Janke et al., 2020). Identifying emotions might be, however, difficult. That is why we suggest that collages and experience-line technique can be used in academic writing teaching to better identify emotions, analyze conceptions, plan action and make reasonable decisions concerning writing. They can be seen as social and emotional learning (SEL) practices when including discussion with peers and teachers. Generally SEL has a positive impact especially on literacy, and it has been seen as crucial in learner's well-being as well (Fisher & Frey, 2019). From the point of view of the pedagogy of multiliteracies, students can be seen as learners who are in "a process of self-re-creation" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 184). When students have the possibility to discuss their self-doubt and other difficult emotions in a pedagogical social setting, they understand that their emotions are common among all writers and have the potential to be made use of productively when they are verbalized and examined (Cameron et al., 2009). For example those students, who see writing as "a very big" challenge, may find strength to survive in the writing process by analyzing their fears that are connected with their conceptions of writing and themselves as writers. Pondering those meanings together, and in connection with both personal and institutional objectives and with social practices, can give students new perspectives and possibilities to learn through the writing process and perform in the academic community.

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Attachment 1 A collage example (from Minttu) and a couple of translated extracts from the explanatory text: "Doing a thesis is climbing a ladder, sometimes uphill [covered text] with your fingers in your mouth, biting your nails. - - The fish seems to be a little lost, which can be my own state of being as well."



Attachment 2 An experience-line example. This line anticipating future is made by participant Minttu in the first interview. Time is moving towards the future horizontally, and positive and negative emotions are displayed vertically.

