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How can I Write *Other?* The Pains and Possibilities of Autoethnographic's Research Writing Experienced by a non-Western Female Student

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I am going to explore an *other* kind of research writing by sharing my research journey as a PhD female student from a non-Western background experiencing research differently. Starting my study within a standard conventional methodology, I shifted my research to a non-traditional mode of doctoral research writing called autoethnography. I employ writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005) where I can center my voice, write creatively and move beyond normative, positivist and post-positivist paradigms. Following this autoethnographic path, I experienced struggles and opportunities to endeavor to push my writing beyond the limit in the field of play in a language which is not my first language.

Keywords: autoethnography, alternative research writing, English as a second language student, writing as an inquiry, international student

While sitting down in front of this computer preparing this manuscript, my mind goes back to the time when I realized that I positioned myself as a student researcher who would represent the research subjects—Indonesian female students—to explore their social, personal, and academic journeys. I was completely detached from the research. I saw clearly how I had positioned myself as the one sitting outside the group of the Indonesian women I claimed to be researching, observing them and not part of them.

"But I am one of them," I said to myself. I was just like the group of Indonesian female students I interviewed and mentioned in my research.

I then decided to discontinue that old rigid way, using the conventional qualitative research framework that did not sit well with my project. I then chose the *other* way. Instead of triangulating as a basis of positivism, I follow the path of Richardson (1997), Richardson and St Pierre (2005) and Ellingson (2009) to crystallize to provide a deepened understanding of experience because researchers are free to move outside the limitations of traditional research.

The door behind me was closed, and I needed to find a way of re-departing, to do something new, in a different direction. I am ready "to start again with different departures, different pauses, different arrivals" (Minh-ha, 1991, p. 14).

BACKGROUND

Thinking about departures and arrivals reminds me of students who leave their own countries to study. UNESCO's statistical data in 2017 (Migration data portal, 2020) notes that over 5.3 million tertiary level students were studying outside their home countries to engage in any opportunities to enter the global flow and take part in the international education arena. Australia is one of the countries that host international students in its higher education institutions, with the number of international students growing exponentially, from 249,504 in 2010 to 418,168 in 2020 (Ferguson & Sherrell, 2021). Indonesia is in the rank of the top ten nationalities of students enrolled in Australian higher education with the enrolment of approximately 10,331 in 2020.

I have become part of the Indonesian student flow as a mature age female student and as an individual who has physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective to participate in educational activities in the destination country. However, I cannot be counted in the UNESCO's statistical data. My academic journey to finally getting access to Australian higher education might not have been the same as other international students. Can I claim myself as part of this complex web of international education, just like the students from overseas whom these questions speak to? UNESCO further states that such overseas students typically hold non-resident visa status, sometimes called a student visa, to pursue a tertiary degree in the host country. Even though I do not hold a student visa, I feel that I am part of the international students. I found that my experience as a non-Western female student from Indonesia intersects with international students. What makes us different is just our status: as either domestic students who can legally and permanently live in Australia, or international students who need a student visa to study. The data shown by UNESCO simply acknowledges students who hold non-resident visas, while excluding students who cross an international border but legally live permanently in the host country. My presence does not fit comfortably into the category defined by UNESCO. I feel that my identities are simply considered in a clear-cut category on either side (Anzaldúa, 1999; Koegeler-Abdi, 2013) of domestic or international students disregarding our experiences and backgrounds. Where do transnational female students, who are categorized as domestic students due to

their permanent residency status, exist in research and in international education? This study is to fill this gap. My academic journeys as a part of global flows of female students who are categorized as domestic students from minority ethnic groups are ignored and therefore invisible for global social justice. The provision of equitable and empowering learning experiences for international students becomes increasingly problematic and so does that for minority domestic students like me.

Le, Lacost and Wismer (2016) found that international female graduate students perceived their experiences as positive, life-changing, and transformative. I can say that my academic journey in finding an *other* way of writing is in entanglement with all positive, life-changing and transformative experiences along with all the struggles and complexities. It is not smooth and neat, but full of predicaments with good and bad come into one blurriness. I believe that what I experienced was overlooked.

Research students who have English as their Second Language have had multifaceted experiences throughout their academic journey in relation to thesis writing. Significant research with the focus on research writing, experienced by "English as a Second Language" students, has been conducted in relation to strategies for their research writing (Wang &Yang, 2012; Odena & Burgess, 2017), writing pedagogy (Cotterall, 2011), emotions and identity (Cotterall, 2013, 2015), and students and supervisor's relationship (Bendix Peterson, 2007). In addition, Gao (2012) narrates three stories from participants to explore their academic English writing in American universities, but it is not the researcher's experience. All the research conducted does not consider researchers as a participant. My autoethnographic study is different because I have positioned myself as a researcher and at the same time as a subject of my research. This kind of study also challenges norms of research practices and representation because I do not detach myself with my research and I consider myself as the instrument of my research (Andriani, 2021). According to Adams, Holman Jones and Carolyn Ellis (2021), this research foregrounds subjective experiences and explores how the personal is intertwined with the social and culture in creative ways.

There are many narratives waiting to be heard, and in this paper, I am going to lead you on my stories, specifically the research journeys in the form of autoethnography, to explore the struggles and possibilities of writing I experienced as a non-Western female student studying in Australia. In particular, I examine the way in which I daringly, as Honan and Bright (2016) state, stretch the boundaries of the academic writing and disrupt the method of research and writing that are constructed within normative accounts of doctoral writing from my positionality as an Indonesian female student. I also analyze how autoethnography plays a role in negotiating the feelings and being an outsider in the academy because of my otherness being turned into an *other* kind of possibility and opportunity in research and writing. As Killick (2018) states, universities have the responsibility to strive to achieve equitable outcomes for all their students, so they should support inclusivity to promote social justice. I hope my voice will add to a growing number of critical voices to internationalization (Stein & McCartney, 2021) as well as creating an understanding of differences

through the way in which the socio-cultural-political and gendered world of Higher Education is faced and experienced by a female student in a Higher Education.

AN/A (ALTERNATIVE) METHOD

In the conventional quantitative and qualitative research, researchers are supposed to conduct research using the pre-established rules and procedures along with validity, reliability, rigid sampling procedures, codification of procedures, data triangulation and the like. Instead of following the formula of the standardized research procedures, I challenge the pre-existing method and do it in an alternative way, by blending writing and research as suggested by St Pierre (2018, 2019, 2021) with post qualitative inquiry and Richardson and St Pierre (2005) with writing as a method of inquiry. Following the goal of this research as "experimentation and the creation of the new" (St Pierre, 2021 p. 6) I focus "on things in the making" instead of on things already made (St Pierre, 2018, p.604).

I write my autoethnographic research with the data taken from my experiences and the social interactions around me through my research notes, reflections, and memories. I creatively sort out the data through a writing process in order to find the result in an unexpectedly creative way, and I hope you all enjoy it. As there is no exact rule, it may turn out to produce something that you (un)expect. Such kind of research is being warned by St Pierre:

> "The experimentation required in post qualitative inquiry cannot be accomplished within the methodological enclosure. This experimental work is risky, creative, surprising, and remarkable. It cannot be measured, predicted, controlled, systematized, formalized, described in a textbook, or called forth by pre-existing, approved methodological processes, methods, and practices." (St Pierre, 2018, p.604)

In autoethnography, writing is the finding; writing is the process, and writing is the method. Instead of using triangulation as a basis of positivism and post-positivism, I am using crystallization (Richardson, 1997, Richardson & St Pierre, 2005; Ellingson, 2009) to provide a deepened understanding of experience because researchers are free to move outside the limitation of conventional research. Richardson (1997, p. 136) describes how "crystals reflect, refract, change and grow" but "are not amorphous" (Richardson, 1997, p. 92), and so is my writing. My writing does not come neatly straight away. However, with a lot of writing and rewriting, I shape ideas by questioning myself about the writing that I write and discussing my writing with the writing group called DRAW (Departing Radically in Academic Writing). As a group, we write regularly almost every day to shape our ideas and concepts informed by theories. In other words, we blend data, which is our writing, with theories. You will find in my "finding" how I write data with theories.

In relation to ethics, Adams et al (2021) state that autoethnography cares deeply about doing ethical research, especially complicated issues when writing

personal narratives since the stories involve researchers and others. Thus, meeting procedural ethics requirements of institutional review boards is only the first step in doing ethical research, which I followed as requirement to conduct research. Mackinlay (2016) encourages me to write from the heartline or similarly what Adam et al call it as ethical relationships, which are paramount, including mindful self-reflection about the researcher's role, motives, and feelings during the research process, and caring for self and others. As an autoethnographer, I think of how other people will respond to my writing, how I present my struggles and uncertainty and invite readers to enter my perspectives as we grapple continually with living and writing ethically.

FINDING *OTHER* AND PUSHING BEYOND THE LIMITS: THE STRUGGLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

I remember over ten years ago when I arrived in the Australian academic space for the first time, I took academic English classes and methodology classes. The classes explicitly and implicitly taught me that, no matter which research approach I used, quantitative or qualitative, the writing style I was expected to use was to follow pre-determined research structures and procedures. The standard thesis writing structure should start with the introduction, the review of the related literature, methodology, data analysis and discussion, and will end up with the conclusion (Oliver, 2011). This style tells me I must write in a rigid academic voice and use plain sentence structures.

After completing my Master's degree by coursework, I missed the moments when I sat in front of the computer typing up academic writing and searching academic books and journals. I then started my research journey a year after, using the pre-established rules of academic writing. I believed this was the only writing style and research structure I should touch on and devote my words to in the academic space.

I passed the door of the confirmation milestone by adopting the standard qualitative methodology and conventional academic writing. I felt ecstatic when I was given the green light to conduct the research after my application for ethical clearance for research involving human participants was approved by the Research Board of Ethics. I prepared the survey and interview questions like how homogenized qualitative research was conducted by most researchers. After all, what else counts as data in the research approach?

The struggles

The first struggle: Encountering the other

Right after the confirmation milestone, I joined a feminist reading group called The Laughing Medusa (Cixous, 1976), a name taken after Cixous's famous work. This reading group, which was organized by Liz, one of the research panel members, introduced many amazingly unique lenses such as feminism, postcolonialism, poststructuralism, and post qualitative paradigm with a different

writing style. All the new perspectives were alien, especially to a research student like me who has English as a Second Language. The works using those lenses were too challenging to understand, and I grappled with how such perspectives could fit into research.

I tried to make sense of the lenses through my background knowledge with my perseverance. Along with the reading group members who walked hand in hand with me, I bravely presented papers in conferences, playing around with these new lenses, using a different writing style. Yet, when I returned to my study and research, I still used and wrote what a standard conventional qualitative methodology chapter looked like for my next mid-candidature milestone, with the same old style of writing. Even though little by little the feminist and "post" lenses have influenced the direction of my research and the way I see the world, I was not brave enough to challenge and show it. I cited some of the feminist scholars I read from the reading group. However, the document did not reflect the style of the writing inspired by feminist writers that I suggested and the way I conducted the research.

My viewpoint was not strong enough, and got lost in this academic journey, which had gone to blurriness. What I wrote and the way I presented my methodological chapter did not click. It was like explaining one type of research but doing another. On the one hand, I wrote standard qualitative research based on the knowledge I obtained from the courses I attended, including "Introduction to Research Methodology" and "Academic English writing". I felt like I was a postcolonial subject who tried to mimic "the language of science" (Dutta & Basu, 2013) but failed.

On the other hand, I indicated that I was doing something different, following a feminist research perspective, influenced by a feminist reading group that I regularly attended. I felt that I was being pulled in two different directions. It took me many months to write the text, which turned out to be 'bumpy' and incoherent. It was not clear of where I posit the epistemological stance. I got lost and did not know where to go.

The Second struggle: Confused and in trouble

I remember there were five of us in that cold and quiet room for my Mid-candidature research milestone. I was sitting on the opposite side of a table, facing the panel and my advisors. I felt as though I was a plaintiff who would be found guilty of messing all this up, and I did not have anything to defend my wrongdoing. It was too late and there was no way of turning back. I had to present something for this milestone. I shivered from the coldness of the room and from discomfort. The panel members looked at me sharply, shook their heads and said, "*This way is not working*".

"*I knew it*", I whispered to myself. In that moment, I knew I was in trouble.

After travelling this far, the research panel members raised the issue that I had to choose which direction I would go ahead. I had to make my epistemological stance clear. I panicked and felt shattered. I felt that I was standing in an intersection with two distinct ways in the vicinity to guide me to prepare to

produce knowledge. With uncertain feelings, I saw the pathway on the left as predictable, straight to the point where pattern and guidance controlled my way. Walking straight ahead carefully, I could follow the well-established research route created by traditional Western ways of thinking. Such pre-established research norm is one way of doing research, which following Kelly (2016), is influenced by neoliberal discourse that contributes to the global knowledge economy and the market that drives the curriculum, and research in higher education towards economy and business corporation in order to compete in the global knowledge economy. Research has given way to the entrepreneurial and corporate university for improving efficiencies and outputs and thus as Brew (2001) indicates, can be seen as commodity, and to ensure the continuity of business as usual (Stein & McCartney, 2021). Such kind of research intersects with government policies that have effects on national economies and national research capacity through the contributions of innovative research.

Turning my head to the right, I could see research paths mysteriously and excitingly blurring with promising colors. I knew such kind of research is located outside the frame of the normative mainstream kind of research because it gives an alternative form of knowledge production. This path offers me feminism and the 'post' lenses that seem to go hand in hand. Those lenses engage with the issue of marginalization in globalization and hierarchies of knowledge (Lather & St Pierre, 2013; St Pierre, 2008; St Pierre & Pillow, 2002). This kind of research challenges and disrupts the neoliberal discourse and binary logic supported by the modernist, imperialist, representationalist, objectivist, rationalist epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions of Western Enlightenment thought and practice (St Pierre, 2011) created by the white-male-is-norm ideology which is used as a vehicle to circulate established power relations (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 6). This new frame of research has promised to give me the freedom to control my own research, to be able to think an unthinkable (Cixous, 1993) and to challenge a single monolithic positivist orientation of doing research. It lets me use playful experimentation and creative analytical practices (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005) and Ellingson (2009) calls it as hybrids the voices of art (aesthetics) and science (analysis).

While exposing myself to these different lenses to view research as a set of practice and as contribution to knowledge, I keep questioning," What is knowledge anyway? How do we produce knowledge? Can I produce it differently?"

The Opportunities

Finding something new: Ethnography or autoethnography?

I was given the green light to proceed my research in the opposite direction of the conventional qualitative methodology and the established rules of academic writing in the form of experimental writing after the mid-candidature milestone. I try to play with words this time, just like the feminist scholars who write differently in academic spaces. I went by the paradigm shift of not being

constrained by the mainstream norms, as outlined by "the typical markers of goodness, adequacy, validity, objectivity, and replicability used to judge conventional social science research which are not appropriate because those judgements impede the experimentation and creativity required for this paradigm" (St Pierre, 2019, p. 10). This leaves me to decide how I interpret the clues and signs they have given.

I then found my way to autoethnography, through the reading group and the conferences I attended. Still, this autoethnography was a new word that was too foreign when I first hear it. I typed the word and even my computer did not recognize it. The word had a squiggly red line underneath it. I separated the word into auto and ethnography, and finally, the computer accepted those words. I then found find my way to find the differences between ethnography and autoethnography.

With two different words between ethnography and autoethnography, I searched to make sense of the differences between the two concepts. I found Reeves et al. (2013) summarizing ethnography as a study of social interaction and cultural groups; a type of qualitative research that collects data from observations, interviews, and documents to produce thorough and comprehensive interpretations of different social phenomena. However, I am not going to do ethnography. My understanding of the concept of ethnography is that an ethnographer investigates the cultural experience of particular people. The role of a researcher is an observer who interacts with people in a cultural group and sometimes stays with the group for a period of time before leaving them behind and writing about those people. In ethnography, researchers go to the fieldwork, but my fieldwork is the one I have been living with for my whole life and thus it has been embedded within me. The critique of ethnography is that we need to read and write culture differently. In research, we need to question where and who the self is, how the self writes, sees and why. The story will be different if it is being told by a different 'self' because identity of the 'self' is fluid and changing. Can somebody from a different culture represent the people in a particular culture? These questions speak to a crisis of representation that needs to be taken into account (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Neumann, 1996).

With a thick *Handbook of Autoethnography* (Holman Jones et al., 2016) that Liz, the research panel member and eventually my thesis advisor, lent to me as a start, I explored the unknown zone of autoethnography to prepare for my presentation in a conference. How different is it from ethnography? I found that autoethnography uses personal experience framed by socio-political experience (*auto*) to describe and interpret (*graphy*) cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices (*ethno*) (Adams et al., 2015). It is an alternative form of qualitative writing (Ellis & Bochner, 1996) and an activity to form cultural analysis (Adams et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2011; Holman Jones et al., 2016). It also seeks to describe and analyze personal experience to gain an understanding of cultural experiences (Adams et al.). It is a process (of conducting research) and a product (in the form of writing) (Ellis et al., 2011). It is a game played with words. It would be difficult considering that I would be writing my PhD thesis while playing with words

which are not in my native language. I knew that I would be struggling a lot to write it and to defend it.

"Can I write my 'self'?" I asked myself. "How can I write my 'self' in an academic presentation?". After being influenced by the conventional traditional Western masculinist epistemological approach to research, I found it uncanny that I had to write 'the self' in academic discourses. In autoethnography, the 'self' in a culture knows what it is like to be the subject of the culture.

"The crisis of representation in ethnography can create an opening to explore new styles of research and writing," wrote Ellis and Bochner (1996). That is how autoethnography emerged. It distracts the traditional academic voice (Pathak, 2010) that I previously learned. "It is also a part of a corrective movement against colonizing ethnographic practices that erased the researcher's subjectivity while granting him or her absolute authority for representing 'the other' of the research" (Gannon, 2006, p. 475). I will use autoethnography to describe and analyze personal experience in order to understand the cultural context that shapes my experience. Things have become more complicated. Autoethnography is the study of culture through the lens of self (Adams et al., 2015). My voice is counted as a form of knowledge. Can I produce different knowledge? Can I produce knowledge differently? Is it legitimate? How do I produce the knowledge? How do I express my voice? Will the language I use make sense to the audience from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds? I feel different, daunted and worried. I want to tell my story, the whole story about my life experience, but I know that it is impossible. The story we construct is partial and crafted for an audience (Adams et al., 2015). Partiality and subjectivity, according to Richardson (1990), are not the disadvantages in research and writing that the positivist paradigm suggests. For Richardson, knowledge is always partial, limited and contextual, with subjectivities always following.

As I read more autoethnographic works, I became absorbed in the stories as I had not yet encountered this kind of research in this particular writing style which deliberately brought readers into the experiences and made them feel empathetic and thoughtful. These autoethnographic stories brought attention to human suffering, injustice, subjectivity, feelings, and loss, encouraged the development of reflexive and creative methodologies, and used adventurous forms of writing (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Holman Jones (2016) argues that autoethnographers intentionally highlight the relationship of their experiences and stories to culture and show the aspect of experience to illuminate more general cultural phenomena, and show how the experience works to diminish, silence, and deny certain people and stories. The focus of autoethnography is not only personal stories, but how autoethnographers draw the readers' attention through a story in order to guide them to look out at social and cultural phenomena and make the links between personal and cultural viewpoints. I am using my personal experience to connect to larger social and cultural contexts. For me, this would come to range from the Indonesian political context to gender roles which are subject to local discourses, ethnicities and particular locations, and socioeconomic status in relation to studying overseas. The social, political, and cultural contexts will bring complexities to my experiences in international education in Australia.

However, what distinguishes autoethnography from other academic fields that disrupt the traditional scientific approach is the evocativeness and the emotions. To judge whether autoethnographic writing is good, is to ask whether readers can be affected emotionally by the writing. From the works that I read, autoethnographers explicitly stir the emotions of readers, as Bochner and Ellis (2016) argue that autoethnography, through evocative writing, examines emotions emotionally. Meanwhile, Mackinlay (2019) provokes readers' emotions by exploring the embodiments. Indeed, the reason why autoethnographic writing is so disturbing is perhaps that it intentionally evokes emotional responses.

Writing as my field of play with crystallization

I am standing inside the academic playground observing what is going on but too scared to step in. My legs are still timid and stiff. I am uncertain how to do it right. I am not trained to do this, to play with words which I pick up as a second language. If writing is adventure and experimentation according to St Pierre, writing should be my 'field of play' (Richardson, 1997). I am determined to give it a try, to play creatively, and imaginatively with words abandoning conventional qualitative research and doing *other* way which has been inspired by post qualitative researchers. From a distance, I hear St Pierre (2018) warn that it is an experimental work which is risky, surprising, creative, and remarkable. Renowned as a post qualitative scholar, she further said that a doctoral student must do independent scholarship if they want to follow this path. The empiricism of this inquiry cannot be taught and learned, but it looks for the conditions of how something new arises, which is yet unthought. For Richardson and St Pierre (2005, p. 967), writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery. Writing is thinking that is active, fluid, an expanding process (Rich, 1986, p. 284). Writing is thinking with theory.[1]

Thrillingly, I practice playing and writing with words, following Richardson's (1997) path in the field of play with crystallization. Instead of conforming to the homogenized voice of science, I learned to create stories based on my experiences which intertwined and interacted with social through the process of writing that transforms what and how I become.

This field of play gives me the freedom to simultaneously do "both seriousness and playfulness" (Richardson, 1997, p. 70). I refuse to triangulate the data but instead, I use crystallization that offers creative thinking to link with theory, and as Barbosa Neves et al. (2021) argue, it also offers a framework to help achieve various angles.

I keep coming back to Richardson who reminds me," Think about how "crystals reflect, refract, change and grow" (Richardson, 1997, p. 136).

Through Richardson's writing I can see crystals create different colors, patterns, arrays and cast light off in different directions. Without losing structures, crystallization deconstructs the traditional idea of validity: we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate themselves. Unexpectedly, I got scolded to do something different.

"*This is banal*," one intellectual disgustingly observed one of my pieces of plays behind her glasses.

"*How does this contribute to knowledge?"* She raised her eyebrows, sneering.

This intellectual refused to see how the creation that I made through my experiences could contribute to knowledge. I look at this alternative style of writing, which goes against the conventions of research writing, which opposed to the standard of research writing and which defied the dominant Eurocentric masculinist epistemology that controls institutions and the elements of knowledge. I do not intend that this writing will dismantle the dominant standard of writing but only that it should be viewed as the *other* way of academic writing in the hope that it will give a space for me, a non-Western female student in Western academies and those who do not follow the conventional way of research.

My lips quivered, and my body shook. My heart sank and I opened my mouth trying to speak back. No matter how hard I tried, this intellectual hated the way I wrote and was not satisfied nor appreciative. I collected my work, and I ran off in tears. Such discouragement knocked me down to the ground.

"Don't worry. You did a good job. Just keep writing. Yours is amazing," A nice, soft voice encouraged me, empowered me and showed me the way how to play more creatively which pushes me to move forward. I got up again and eventually, I reached to the end of my research journey, and I promise to keep playing this way in this field of play.

DISCUSSION

When I started my research journey, I positioned my work within a standard conventional methodology. However, I faced conflicts when I encountered a form of research that was different from a conventional mode of research and wrote it in English as a Second Language. With all the uncertainty ahead, I dare to follow the *other* way called autoethnography, where I have the opportunities to experiment with my writing creatively, using crystallization, to produce knowledge differently.

I understand that generating knowledge is one of the critical aspects for higher education institutions to establish internationalization[2], as stated by Stein and McCartney (2021). Contributing knowledge cannot only be seen from the path that follows the conventional rule of research. The path that I am following can contribute to knowledge as well. Stein and McCartney (2021, p. 2-3) argue that "there are many different ways of conceptualizing the same basic problem, and many different ways of addressing it" and I think in term of knowledge contribution, there can be many ways to produce it. Thus, encouraging and considering various possibilities of producing knowledge can be one of the processes of re-imagining internationalization beyond reform (Stein & McCartney, 2011), to seek changes. Doing research differently can also contribute to internationalization beyond reform.

Fostering experimentation, as Stein and McCartney (2021) put it, is in line with the effort to implement internationalization beyond reform, in order to produce knowledge, which is "an unlearning dominant modes of knowing, being

and relating" (Stein &McCartney, p.5). I believe that how I am conducting and navigating my research falls within this reform scale, because it is based on the experimentation and the process.

What I hope from internationalization beyond reform is that all students in the higher education institutions including those who have English as their Second Language also have their active voice heard and exercise their agency to take part in institution reformation into internationalization. Instead of viewing students like me as a passive outsider who merely obtains western knowledge, I hope that institutions consider us as the one who could contribute knowledge through research in a different way.

However, doing this kind of research and writing it differently are a difficult job for me as a non-western female student who does not have English as my first language because I challenge the status quo of the dominant existing system and defend the new paradigm that I encountered in the middle of my research journey by using English as a Second Language. Many questions sometimes come to mind. Do I have enough power and privilege to do this challenge considering I am from the Margin; whose language is not the language of the Centre? Am I going to be heard or maybe ridiculed for following the 'not normal path' against the dominant practice? I am not even fluent enough to express it in the academic discourse like other feminist researchers, who have more privileges and dare to bring their feminist voices in neoliberal university settings (Lipton and Mackinlay (2017).

There were times when some questions went through my head; questions such as, "Is it legitimate? Is it counted as research? Is there a particular way of doing it? What if I mess up in analyzing the data? How am I going to do it properly? If I do not triangulate my data, will my research be considered not valid?"

I feel that this *other* way of doing and writing research resonates with me personally. Positioning our voice is one of the ways to contribute to research, to implement social justice, and to create an understanding of differences in Higher Education. I unapologetically take the lenses of feminism, poststructuralism and post qualitative paradigm on board to illuminate my research journey ahead. St Pierre and Jackson (2014) assured me that it is not wrong not to rely on positivist research techniques or method which is neat, tidy, and contained.

Concluding

As I am approaching the end of this article, I wonder if my experience as a non-western female student who writes and approaches research differently, "fails to qualify as a conventional standpoint" (Koegeler-Abdi, 2013, p. 76). Through this writing in the academic space, the door is open for me to explore my personal and academic experiences that let me use an evocative process involving emotions. This writing and research journey continues without end, through a process of writing, using my imagination to think creatively. I cannot say that what I write as *other* is something new and completely different because I was always influenced by scholars who do this type of research. My style of writing

is also influenced by my subjectivities, experiences and previous background knowledge. It has shifted towards something different. I acknowledge what Ang (2005) said that we no longer have the secure capacity to draw a line between us and them, between the different and the same, here and there, this and that, self and other. We live in a global world where we are influenced by each other. Even though I said that I write differently, hybridity is the basis. It caused difficulties and confusion and this writing is always becoming. Writing and ideas would never be the same, but they are always fluid.

Producing writing creatively in a language which is not my first language brings a few challenges. The first challenge is to express myself and explore my feelings deeply in a language that is not my first language. Through the process of writing, I try to develop my language and expressions. The second challenge is to disobey something that is already established and to unlearn things like the traditional conventional academic writing and qualitative research needs some courage and active determination. It is not easy to problematize the status quo from a novice researcher who is non-Western and who does not have English as the first language.

Following this *other* way of writing and research is rewarding. I feel that doing this writing is one of the processes of learning to express myself freely in a language which is not my first language. Expressing embodiment and emotions is not encouraged in mainstream research. I also feel that this way of writing offers social justice, equity, and inclusion of the experience of a student who does not fit simply into either definition of a domestic student or an international student, and who chooses a different way of doing and writing research. Such experiences have the potential to give a deep understanding to cater to all channels of research, and not focus on the only way of doing and writing research projects. This type of research gives permission and invites potential authors of autoethnography to be brave to share their stories through creativity and performances.

Note

[1] St Pierre and Jackson (2014) wonder why theorists' words are assigned to the literature review. Why do we not use theories and data at the same time? Writing can be both a theoretical and practical process.

[2] Stein and McCartney (2021) outline the approaches of internationalization of higher education, with regards to the purpose: 1) Internationalization for global knowledge economy (no reform), 2) internationalization for the global public good (minor reform), 3) internationalization for global equity (major reform), 4) internationalization otherwise (beyond reform).

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