CAN CHILDREN EMANCIPATE THEMSELVES FROM ADULTS?: CHILDREN'S WORLDS IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN AND THAI CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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Abstract

This paper aims to make a comparative analysis of contemporary German and Thai children's literature in terms of children's worlds. The result of the study shows that a number of German children's literary works[2] present children as the "partners of adults." This results from a perspective towards German children that they are people who have the same rights as an adult. In other words, they respect the children. Adults allow children to express their opinions freely or to make decisions on their own. By contrast, Thai children are normally socialized to differ from adults. The reason lies in the belief that a child is someone who is a "subordinate." Children are expected to pay respect to adults and obey to their orders, responds to the expectations for children in the context of Thai society and culture.

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[2] "German children's literary works" here mean children's literary texts written originally in German.

Introduction

This paper aims to make a comparative, cross-cultural analysis of German and Thai children's literature written in the same period, i.e., the 1980s and 1990s in order to reveal and contrast "the children's worlds" in the two different cultural contexts: in German children's literature the children's world is basically the same as the adults' whereas in Thai children's literature the children's world is presented as separate from that of adults. It will explore this disparity in the two cultures' concepts of childhood by analysing the ideological content and socio-cultural context of the two groups of literary texts. At the same time, it is hoped that the analysis will yield a more accurate and more profound understanding of the concept of childhood in each culture. Since the cultural context in the Thai texts is different from the German texts, it may be wondered if the comparison attempted here is valid. I submit that the comparison is valid because the texts chosen here are representative of the issues that I wish to analyse.

Children as members of the same world: a study of German children's literature

At the beginning of the 1970s, there were a number of children literary texts written in the German language that came to be known as "the modern children's novel" (moderner Kinderroman). These literary works present the children's lifestyles, thoughts, or feelings derived from changes in their lives (Gansel 1999: 54) and as a result, nowadays authors of the modern children's novels usually do not like to simply present a novel content of a safe,

beautiful and trouble-free world or a "perfect world[3]." Also, now there are no prohibitions on the themes[4] of the children's novels anymore and consequently, novels' themes are presented in a wider variety. According to Gansel (1999: 54), there is also a variety of narrative techniques[5]. These techniques clearly show a shift from external description to characters' internal life. This contributes to the overall complexity of contemporary German children's novels, which tend to become more like adult-novels. At the same time, due to major changes in the cultural context and changing concepts of childhood, these changes are an effect of the students' movement of 1968 for freedom and democracy or equality of people of all social status, gender and age. The results of this movement led to a revolution in organizations and systems including a revolution in family institutions and education and also brought about the feminist movement and a search for

alternative lifestyles. This, in turn, led to changes in the structure of the traditional family order. No longer was there any chance of maintaining a view of gender roles rooted purely and simply in a patriarchally determined tradition (Freund 1987: 32). Moreover, the change encouraged a manner of bringing up children to do things independently and not to be pressured by the power of adults and society (anti-authority raising). Children now have the right to learn not to accept adult authority unquestioningly. Unconditional obedience is not instilled into children's minds and so children's roles as well as the relationship between children and adults have been changed.

Thanks to the anti-authority raising method through which children are encouraged to be independent (Preissing, Preuss-Lausitz and Zeiher 1990: 10) or to have freedom of thought, children now learn how to criticize or to express their own opinion. They are trained to speak their minds and stand up for their rights. They are confident but not separated from the adult world that contains sad and harsh situations of life as well as happy and humorous ones. They are now supposed to learn about problems or conflicts such as divorce, alcoholism, drugs, poverty and racism. When the adult attitude towards children changed, the authoritarian nature of the relationship between children and adults changed too. That is, children came to be viewed as people who have the same right as adults and they now respect children. This way of thinking has encouraged the authors of modern children's novels to present the child characters in novels as small-sized adults or as the partners of adults.

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[3] I use "perfect world" to refer children's literary texts depicting only happy and funny times in children's lives. Texts that try to avoid portraying a life-threatening situation (Gansel 1999: 53).

[4] A new era in realistic fiction for children reflects explicitly truthful portrayals of life and the inclusion of many topics such as divorce, death, drugs, alcoholism, child abuse and violence, handicaps, pacifism and racism. These topics were previously considered taboo but have become permissible topics in the modern German children's novel (Gansel 1999: 55, Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown 1996: 146).

[5] A variety of narrative techniques is classified as a first-person narrative, stream of consciousness, interior monologue and dual-voice narration. These techniques can express the complex inner world of child characters.

Children as partners

The relationship between parents and children can become a relationship of friends if the family members are in an atmosphere of tolerance and freedom, which contributes to idea exchanging between them. This can happen if children are valued as individuals who are equal to parents and are able to learn about family matters. Sometimes children can participate in family decisions or family conflicts. That is, children can become the discussing or consulting partners to their parents and can thus learn about the world more quickly and can rapidly develop a maturity of thought (Daubert 1997: 49). That can be found in *Einen Vater hab ich auch (I Have My Own Dad Too)* by Christine Nöstlinger and *Zwei Väter sind besser als keiner (Two Dads Better Than None)* by Nortrud Boge-Erli. Because the children have the right to learn their role as the partners of the adults, the texts chosen here have scope to portray complex family relationships.

The relationship between children and parents as friends usually appears in the form of discussion partners and in the form of family words. The family words most commonly used by children when talking to parents are dad or mom. Father and mother can also be used but they are more formal. Nowadays, the name is used instead and this kind of relationship can be established when parents value children as individuals, asking their point of view instead of forcing them to obey and follow the orders. This can be seen obviously in the relationship between Feli and her mother in Nöstlinger's *Einen Vater hab ich auch (I Have My Own Dad Too)*. Feli

lives with her mom who is a single mother after her divorce. When Feli's mother wants to leave Vienna for Munich to work, she does not force Feli to move there with her; she just lets Feli make her own decision.

> Feli hates being forced but at the same time she hates forcing other people too. Feli knows well that she does not want to move to Munich and she does not want to force her mother not to move to Munich either.
>
> [Ich bin ein Kind, das es hasst, zu etwas gezwungen zu werden. Weil ich so bin, hasse ich es auch, jemand anderen zu etwas zu zwingen. Klar war mir nur, dass ich echt nicht nach München will! Und dass ich die Mama nicht zwingen will, wegen mir in Wien zu bleiben!]
> (Nöstlinger 1994: 11)

Feli respects her mother's desire since mother just wants to move to Munich for a job that is better than the one she has in Vienna. Feli is a child who understands and respects the female's desire for career advancement; therefore, she does not think of her mother as a self-centered person. So Feli realizes her mother's rights. She is not a daughter who expects that mothers must devote themselves to family and children. However, the respect for her mother's self-reliance disappears when Feli finds out the truth behind her mother's migration to Munich, which is that she just wants to meet her boyfriend more often. Living in Vienna, her mother will be able to see him only once a month. Learning of this

reason, Feli feels angry and disappointed in her mother. Feli feels that her mother has betrayed her as she did not give her the real reason. Since her mother has been dishonest with Feli, there is a crack in their relationship. Previously, their mother-daughter relationship was strong but now Feli develops strange and uncomfortable feelings against her mother as a result of the close relationship between her mother and her mother's boyfriend. As Feli lives with her mother who is a single mother, Feli considers her mother's boyfriend as an "intruder" in her family. She does not want him to be a member of her family and does not want to share her mother with anyone. She wants her mother to take care of her alone. In other words, a mother's love for her child is her wish.

Owing to these strange feelings, Feli asks for help from her father who has been just like a stranger because he has not taken care of her though they have visited each other from time to time. Although he is a stranger, she has no better choice. Feli herself believes that one can really know someone only when he/she spends one's life with that person, even if that person is one's own father. Her father allows Feli to stay with him but he treats her as a guest. He just lets Feli sleep in a cot. He keeps telling other people that Feli has just come to stay with him for two weeks and this seems like a warning to her not to stay with him longer than that and this makes her depressed.

> That made her depressed.
>
> [Das kränkte mich natürlich.]
> (Nöstlinger 1994: 73)

The father does not actually take care of Feli. He just gives her temporary shelter during the hard time of her conflict with her mother. However, after two weeks, he makes the decision to allow Feli to stay with him longer, which implies that he is starting to take his role as a father, one who has to protect his child from harm seriously. He tries to learn the parental role and especially when he moves out of his apartment to stay with Feli in his ex-wife's place, it can be seen that he has accepted his paternal role of looking after his child (Wild 1995: 63). This is because the place where Feli and her mother had lived together was a happy home to Feli and she is still more comfortable with the environment and the atmosphere here than in her father's room where she had not been given any particular place to live. His place makes her feel uncomfortable. When Feli is sick, her father discards his gregarious lifestyle and takes the mother's role in cooking food, playing games and telling tales to Feli. These are the stereotypical roles (Wild 1995: 63) that mother would adopt for her sick child. Therefore, once her father takes on these roles, it leads to a change in the relationship between father and daughter, from one that had been quite weak to one that is stronger.

In contrast to the relationship between father and daughter, her mother becomes an unimportant person to Feli. When her mother comes back from Munich and wants to live with her, and her father wants to move back to his apartment but Feli does not let her father go. Feli wants her mother to stay in her father's place as

she is accustomed to staying with her father. So she does not want any changes.

> Now she is familiar with living with her father and she does not want any changes now.
>
> [Dass ich mich jetzt an den Papa gewöhnt habe! Dass ich nicht will, dass jetzt wieder alles ganz anders wird!]
>
> (Nöstlinger 1994: 182)

Feli considers change to be a life-threatening situation. As a child, she wanted the stability in her life. The absence of her mother threatened the stability in her life. Thus, Feli feels trustful for her father more than her mother. This leads to her refusing to recover ties between her and her mother, asking her mother to stay in the father's apartment instead. Father's place can be seen as the sign of a lifestyle with no responsibilities for his child. This means that Feli now places her mother in the position that has previously belonged to her father, and she gives the previous position of her mother to her father instead. As a result, the father becomes the person whom she chooses to form a strong connection with.

Feli, as a child who was raised in a broken family, has to choose whom she will live with; and she can make her decision freely. At the same time, Feli's parents respect her decision since they appreciate her individuality. For this reason, Feli can arrange her relationship with her mother or her father through the interaction between her parents and her. This means that Feli has the ability to communicate with whom she wants to live.

Not only does Feli speak her mind and do what is good for herself but Isabel also

does so in the novel *Zwei Väter sind besser als keiner (Two Dads Better than None)*. Isabel learns or hears about the fragile relationship between father and mother which is reflected in the relationship between Isabel and her mother and between Isabel and her father. Although her parents both work at the offices, her mother still has time for Isabel. Consequently, daughter and mother have very close ties. On the other hand, her father devotes his time to work so much that he has no time for the family. Therefore, the daughter and father have a weak relationship but the father tries to improve himself to gain his daughter's acceptance.

The relationship of this mother and daughter pair is fairly close. They often enjoy doing activities together. Moreover, they never keep any secrets from each other. Isabel often tells her mother about her friends. At the same time, the mother herself reveals what is in her mind to her daughter and when she develops a triangular love relationship between her and Isabel's father and the ex-boyfriend, she does not hide or cover up her feelings of being confused. Instead, she tells Isabel that she loves both Isabel's father and Rüdiger.

> I love both of them, Rüdiger and your dad.
>
> [Ich habe doch beide lieb, Rüdiger und Vati.]
>
> (Boge-Erli 1993: 132)

In telling Isabel of her feelings her mother sees Isabel as a friend not as a daughter who needs to pay respect to and obey the mother. It can be seen that the relationship between Isabel and her mother is based on the equality or in the form of the

relationship between friends. Nevertheless, Isabel's mother is not an ideal mother who devotes herself for her family but she still thinks of her own needs.

When Isabel's mother starts to be worried and confused after she has seen her ex-boyfriend the best way for her and for everyone is that she makes a decision to choose one of them. She asks for help from her daughter but Isabel refuses to join in this decision making. For this complicated love, Isabel knows well that only her mother that can make the decision of choosing between her father and the ex-boyfriend.

>You have to make this decision…
>
>[Du mußt dich entscheiden…]
>(Boge-Erli 1993: 141)

Although, she is very close to her mother, she does not want to interfere with her mother's personal affairs. At the same time, she realizes her own personal rights and she makes a decision for herself.

>I can make a decision for myself.
>
>[Ich kann für mich selbst entscheiden!]
>(Boge-Erli 1993: 143)

Isabel limits herself to only listening to her mother's triangular love situation. She understands well that the love affair and their married life are her parents' concern, and she respects her mother's personal rights. Although her mother does not choose the ex-boyfriend, Rüdiger; Isabel can stop by him. Isabel has already made a decision about this. She can continue her relationship with her mother's ex-boyfriend if she wants and this decision obviously represents her self-reliance.

The relationship between Isabel and her father is just the opposite of that between her and her mother. Isabel does not feel close to her father. All the time, she hardly sees him.

>Dad is always absent.
>
>[Vati ist meistens unsichtbar.]
>(Boge-Erli 1993: 48)

Ever since she was a little girl just starting to remember things, her father has usually spent most time at work. If he is at home, he usually stays only in his working room. After dinner, he leaves to continue his work. During family vacations, her father has to leave the others for work because the office calls. Isabel has always thought that her father only thinks of his work. All he thinks about is computers.

Since her father never has time for her, Isabel feels bad and this makes her think that there is no relationship between them.

>I have weak relationship with my Dad.
>
>[Ich hab doch überhaupt keine Beziehung zu Vati.]
>(Boge-Erli 1993: 61)

In Isabel, readers can see the increasingly weak relationship between her father and her. This is because they hardly see each other, so she feels disappointed and finally their relationship is cut off. In fact, Isabel cannot end the relationship between her birth father and her simply because he has no time for her because the relationship between children and their parents is stronger or more important than other relationships or as the idiom has it "blood is thicker than water."

Isabel has an image of a father as one who has a close relationship with his child so that they can join each other in activities. Although Isabel's father tries to ask about how well she is; questions such as "How are you?", "What have you been doing at school?" are not the ones that she wants him to ask. These questions do not impress her as she thinks that a father should be someone with whom the children can do the silly things or with whom they can discuss serious subjects. The communication between the father and his child will be accomplished if they understand what is in their minds. Isabel's father does not understand his daughter; therefore, they can not have a satisfactory conversation as they distance themselves from each other. Because of this, Isabel concludes that her father does not behave as appropriately as the ideal father should do.

> Dad does not behave as appropriately as she has imagined an ideal father should.
>
> [Vati benimmt sich nicht, wie ich mir einen richtigen Vater vorstelle.]
>
> (Boge-Erli 1993: 61)

Because her father's behaviour does not please Isabel and he is not responsive to her needs he becomes an ineffectual father to her. Isabel's father is a workaholic, so most of his time is spent on work only. Thanks to his hard work, he can afford things and can take good care of his wife and daughter. But his expression of love and care became trivial because a father who succeeds in work but has no time for family, like Isabel's father, is a typical image that was accepted during the period of the early of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century.

During this period, the man who could give his family to have a good life was seen as a family man (Bernard 2004: 245). However, these days, the father who succeeds in earning a living but has no time for his family will not be admired by his children anymore. The ideal father is a father who is able to allocate his time to work and the family appropriately.

While her birth and nurturing father is not her ideal father another man takes the place of the ideal. This man is Rüdiger, the ex-boyfriend of her mother. Isabel thinks Rüdiger is the father of her dreams. All Rüdiger does is just the same as she imagines about the father. Isabel and Rüdiger have a chance to spend their spare time and do things together. Both of them get along with, talk with and understand each other well, so Isabel believes that her ideal father is Rüdiger. Though a stranger, whom Isabel considers Rüdiger to be her ideal father even though he is not her birth or nurturing father. This means that a daughter like Isabel bases the value of a good father on the relationship between the father and child. In other words, only inter-communication will lead to feelings of love and close ties.

Although Isabel expects to have a close relationship with her father, she knows well that she cannot change him.

> But I cannot change him.
>
> [Aber ich kann ihn nicht ändern.]
> (Boge-Erli 1993: 49)

The one who can change her father is the father himself and later, he tries to do so. Her father is afraid of losing his family

and losing his daughter's love. Consequently, he tries to spend time with his daughter and join with her in activities. As a programmer, he teaches his daughter how to use a computer. Both of them play computer games together and her father, also asks Isabel to go to the cinema and do other things. His intention of changing himself impresses her and, then, she loves him very much.

> I love him very much.
>
> [Ich hab ihn richtig lieb.]
> (Boge-Erli 1993: 85)

Apart from doing things together, her father shows his love for his daughter through his touch. While strolling together, he puts his arm around her. At bed time, he gives her a goodnight kiss. His touching reduces the distance between them as well as the past feelings of being strangers to each other. Her father also takes a step across the line separating home from the outside world by taking her to his office. It can be seen that he intends to reduce the distance between him and his daughter. He wants to get everything better.

> I would do everything better.
>
> [Ich wollte alles besser machen.]
> (Boge-Erli 1993: 137)

To sustain his family ties, her father needs both her and her mother. They are his family and he has only them. If her father wants her and her mother, he has to have time for them. Her father has to adjust his role for a double amount of responsibility since he has to maintain a balance between his time at home and his time at work.

Providing them with the things that they want is not enough. He has to give them his love and care so he will have them standing by his side. Simply his feelings of missing them cannot compensate for the weak relationship between father and daughter or between husband and wife. Both Isabel and her mother need some tangible expression. Isabel knows well that her father needs her and his wife but anyone who needs someone has to give his love to that person before being loved. Isabel believes that she needs love from her father so that she can love him. Her father must express his love and care and build the relationship with his family so that he can be accepted and then there will be no distance between them. Isabel seems to be the one who understands the family's serious situation and its results more obviously than her father can (Scheiner 1999: 102). A good or an ideal father is not just a man who can support his family well, he must also be a man who can warmly take care of and pay attention to them.

Learning about her relationship with her father and her mother Isabel realises that her parents are individuals. She has never thought about this before. Parenting is just one of a person's several roles. Parents, in particular, are generally expected to take the role of devoting themselves to their children. Consequently, the individuality of the father and mother is overlooked though both of them have lives, minds and needs of their own. Isabel can accept and respect her parents' selves. She does not think of violating her parents' rights. Although they may possibly get divorced, Isabel does not interfere in their decisions. As a result of being trained to speak her mind and stand up for her rights, Isabel will grow up to become an emotionally stable person who has mental toughness,

self-confidence and the ability to navigate life's crises.

Children as members of another world: a study of Thai children's literature

In contrast to German children's literature, most of Thai children's literary texts are still traditional presenting the safe world or the perfect world[6] to children. This is due to the attitude adults have towards children. Most Thai adults still perceive children as "kids" relating to their qualities of innocence and immaturity. This, in turn, leads to a belief in providing children with appropriate[7] things and at the same time, it also prevents children from learning about inappropriate[8] things, which are claimed to be the adults' matters. Moreover, the contents of children's literature appropriate for children at different ages are strongly influenced by the theory of child development in psychology. The theory categorizes the attention, needs, aptitudes of children at different ages, and particularly the reading attention of children (Baikasuyi 1991: 27) in order to be aware of the proper contents for children at any particular age, which is an important principle for children's literature production (Baikasuyi 1991: 37). Most

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[6] See the third footnote.
[7] I use "appropriate things" to refer the subject matter of realistic fiction including the lacking of a life-threatening situation in children's lives. Also the characters of children are not portrayed as they truly are but as one believes they should be.
[8] I use "inappropriate things" to refer to the taboo topics such as child abuse, sexual abuse, violence and racism. These topics rarely prevail in Thai contemporary children's literature.

child characters in Thai children's literature represent ideal children or traditionally perfect children whose characteristics are: being nice, responsible, disciplined, diligent and good at school. They also include helping parents do some household chores, and being honest and humble.

The characteristics mentioned above are the ideal image of Thai children that has been handed down to now. This ideal image has become institutionalised and cannot be easily changed. At the same time, a new ideal image has not yet been created to replace the old one. In other words, these ideal children don't really exist since they don't have their own idea or don't think for themselves. Their existence is just the result of the imaginative creation of adults, and their lives are actually presented only in children's literary texts.

Children as subordinates

Thai children, then, are commonly brought up and developed in an authoritarian way. The way that the authors present child characters, paying respect to adults and obeying their orders, responds to the expectations for children in the context of Thai society and culture in which implanting moral principles in a child's mind is still considered to be important. Since Thai families consider order of seniority to be important, children are taught both directly and indirectly that they have to pay respect to their elders and they are expected to be docile (Chuprapawan 1998: 10). In other words, most adults treat children in an authoritarian because a large number of adults still perceive children as children, not as individuals. Children just have to be taught the roles of adults and what they

expect of them. We can see that this way of adult thought has children tied only to the role of follower.

Such perceptions lead to the belief that childhood is a time for learning and gradually achieving those moral principles and ethics which adults consider to be appropriate for children to acquire. Normally such expectations for children can be seen in every country but adults in Germany, for example, have a different method of raising by which children are encouraged to be independent and to have freedom of thought. However, in Thai families, adults normally expect children to have responsibility for the country, especially with regard to unity and peace, can only be achieved if all the citizens have a sense of unity. Such an ideal opinion is the result of a belief in nationalism. This sense of unity is presented in the form of stories about the relationships between children of different religions and social status such those stories found in *Phueanban Phuean Rak (My Neighbours, My Best Friends)* by Manop Kaewsanit and *Lomhaichai Wai Yao (Breaths in Childhood)* by Yun Kamolsereerat.

Phueanban Phuean Rak (My Neighbours, My Best Friends) has been chosen for analysis because of the sense of unity among children of different religions. The leading characters are children: Juk, Piek, Abdulla, and Rawfen. All of them live in the same village and study in the same school and they are also the same age and are classmates. The difference between them is their religion: Juk and Piek are Buddhists; Abdulla and Rawfen are Muslims. Although, they believe in different religions, the four children always get together to do things in their leisure time, except for when they quarrel.

For example, in the quarrel on shooting birds, they change the way they call each other from specific names to general names referring to their religions.

> I don't want to go with these cheating Thais any more. Rawfen said angrily.
>
> Hey, mind your words…the Khak. Piek raising his voice aggressively
> (Kaewsanit 2004: 20–21)

The word "Thai boys" is used to refer to the group of children who believe in Buddhism. At the same time, the word "Khak" is used to refer to the group of people who believe in Islam. The religions are used to separate "us" from "them" though the quarrels do not arise from religious belief. Consequently, differences in religious belief can turn children's quarrels, which are not so complicated, into more serious disputes.

The angry arguments between the children destroys their sense of unity, and this is undesirable. So there has to be a way to end the quarrel between the two groups. The author uses the formula of these Thai stories with their melodramatic events to end the conflicts between the two groups of children. The friendship between children, without group separation and nasty behaviour, can be established after both groups have the chance to save each other's lives. Juk has the chance to save Abdulla from drowning and Abdulla begs his father to donate his blood to Juk after Juk has been hit by a car. And as a result, it brings about feelings of love and friendship between them so there will be no cracks in the relationships between children of different religions.

> The existing friendship results in no group separation and competition…
>
> (Kaewsanit 2004: 140)

The use of potentially deadly situations to end the conflicts in minds of children of different religions can plausibly stop the quarrels between the two groups of children. Helping each other in a seriously difficult situation or in a critical or dangerous situation can be considered to be a way of expressing their sincerity to each other. This means that helping each other in difficulty is a factor that encourages the children of two different religions to love each other and have a sense of unity.

In addition to love and a sense of unity among children of different religions, love and a sense of unity among children of different social and economic groups, or from different ways of life can be found in *Breaths in Childhood.* Yok grows up in a wealthy family living in a city while Petch grows up in a poor family living in a rural area. The characters are created to have a different social and economic status and this includes living in totally different environments. However, even with such differences, both of them eventually become best friends. The author contrives a situation where Petch makes himself the target for a wild boar attack so that Yok can escape and not be attacked by the wild boar. That situation makes Yok feel deeply grateful and impressed by Petch's bravery.

> Thank you so much Petch, Yok said gratefully, and was impressed by his (Petch's) bravery.
>
> (Kamonsereerat 1996: 49)

While Yok is impressed by Petch's help, Petch only thinks that friends have to help each other.

> Don't mention it. We're friends. We must help each other…
>
> (Kamonsereerat 1996: 49)

After that Yok and Petch are close and love each other very much. During every school vacation, Yok comes to visit Petch. The social differences do not impede the friendship between Yok and Petch. Again Thai children's literature resorts to sentimentality. This is a way of bypassing the direct treatment of class disparities. That can be considered as the presentation of ideal friendship of children.

In Thai children's literary texts, only strong friendship between children is commonly presented. Urging children to have a sense of unity as well as to stop competing with each other is a way of diminishing the sense of the individual in each person. This is because the feelings and needs of each person can destroy any sense of unity. Therefore, children's literature has been used as a tool to implant a sense of unity in children's minds. Learning about the unity, the children will grow up to be adults who avoid quarrels and be docile. Being docile they will be easily responsive to government policy. Put another way, they will be good citizen of the state and will be able to support the country's economic and social development. Because Thailand is a developing country, government policy is focused on human development that can make Thailand able to compete internationally. So the target of human development is less important than the target of economic and social development.

Conclusion

The children's worlds in contemporary German and Thai children's literature are different. Children and adults in the selected German written texts clearly belong to the same world: children are presented as people in their own right within a family, who can thus have a role as their parents' partners because of the anti-authority system of rearing. By contrast, in the Thai texts studied, children are excluded from adult society and are referred to solely as a subordinates since Thai families consider the order of seniority to be important. In other words most adults treat children in an authoritarian way. They are expected to be docile.

Although the representations of children in the two cultures' children's literature reflect a cultural difference in the concepts of childhood, they share a common position, which is that childhood, in each culture, is, at bottom, a social conception or construction, or more precisely, a product of the way adults think, which can vary in the degree of agency, power, or self-determination it gives to children.

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