

CHAPTER 4

RHETORICAL DEVICES

4.1 Introduction

Though Mae Laa is not a professional storyteller, many people in Huaj San village have commented that she is a person that *?ûu mïan*, meaning she is a fun talker. She is often the center of attention at the market, making people laugh with her stories and comments. Though all of her communication is impromptu everyday talk, it is consistently entertaining.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine some of the the rhetorical devices used by Mae Laa to entertain the audience. I would hope to answer the question, “What makes Mae Laa a ‘fun talker?’” As she tells the story of her life, what unrehearsed, naturally occurring devices make the audience sit up and take notice? Devices examined include pitch changes, reduplication, reported speech, audience-involvement devices, author intrusion, cultural phrases, and expressives.

4.2 Pitch Changes

Although seldom explored in depth, pitch changes are generally acknowledged as important discourse features. Brazil (1989:58) states:

Discourse phonology is concerned with features over which the speaker does have independent control, features that are the consequence of separate--and therefore separately meaningful--choices.

At both word level and phrase/sentence level, Mae Laa uses changes in voice quality, especially change in pitch, to highlight certain aspects of her story.

4.2.1 Emphasis by means of pitch

As for pitch on the word level, Mae Laa uses extra high tone, an increase in duration, and an increase in loudness to emphasize an idea and make the story more interesting. These changes in voice quality bring the idea expressed into prominence. As David Brazil (1989: 60) states:

Experimentation has shown that what hearers perceive as prominence is a complex acoustic variable in which loudness, pitch, and duration can play parts of differing significance. In the present enterprise of seeking to capture and characterize a set of meaningful oppositions, there is no alternative to speaking of the physical correlates of this and other categories in a rather loose way.

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore intonation patterns of this story in depth, a few generalizations should suffice to demonstrate this phenomenon.

Because Kammuang is a tonal language, it is most important in this text to distinguish between high tone and word prominence. In the “My Life” narrative, 29 examples of prominent words were found, in which 15, or 50% were the word *mót* meaning ‘all’ or ‘completely.’ The other prominent words consisted of adjectives and verbs such as *ñàaj* ‘big,’ *tá?lók* ‘funny,’ *dii* ‘good,’ *háaj* ‘cry,’ and *k^hǒ* ‘request.’

The examples in Table 3, *mót* and *ñàaj*, represent two different tones. The word *mót* is already a high tone in Kammuang, and gets higher when emphasized. The word *ñàaj* has a low tone in Kammuang, but becomes a very high tone when emphasized. Scherer and Wallbott (1989:205) state that “changes in voice quality play an important role both in terms of social marking and in the expression of emotions and attitudes.”

In order to fully understand the reason for emphasizing these words, it is first necessary to compare them in the cultural context of the story. The following

examples portray the reasoning behind the emphasis of these words. Though all the words are grammatically descriptive, the ones that are emphasized are particularly colorful.

(1) “My Life” Line 21

pən kəʔ duulææ mùu kʰon ñàaj ñàaj
3rd person conn. care for group people big big

‘They (her parents) took care of the older siblings.’

versus

“My Life” Lines 191-192

tša pʰéʔ ñàaj ñàaj
body this, here big! big

‘Its body was this big. (It was) very very big!’

(2) “My Life” Line 259

liəŋ hũu pən taw tãaj taw kʰãw din mót
care for give 3rd pers. until die until enter earth completely

‘So that I would care for them “until they die; until they become dust” completely.’

versus

“My Life” Line 17

nãatãa ʔðk móot
appearance break out completely

‘I broke out everywhere!’ (in reference to smallpox)

Both examples compare the regular version of the word with the emphasized version (denoted by an exclamation mark in the English free translation). The words that have emerged as unusually prominent are those which combine not only higher pitch, but longer duration and increase in loudness as well. The following table compares the two words in these three areas of voice quality.

	<i>ñàaj ñàaj</i> 'big'	<i>ñáaj ñàaj</i> 'big!'	<i>mót</i> 'completely'	<i>móot</i> 'completely!'
Pitch	161-191 Hz	201-433 Hz	217-310 Hz	355-482 Hz
Loudness ¹⁵	-22.9- -13.7 dB	-12.2- -11.0 dB	-17.5- -13.1dB	-17- -3 dB
Duration	.440 seconds	.803 seconds	.186 seconds	.310 seconds

Table 3. Voice quality measurements: *ñàaj* and *mót*

4.2.2 Pitch in Quotations

The most interesting feature of phrase level pitch changes in this text is the consistent raising of the pitch of quotations. When Mae Laa is reporting the speech of others, her voice consistently becomes higher. This occurs when she is quoting men, women, or children. This raising of her voice functions to set the person quoted apart from herself, and increases vividness for the audience. Her “imitation” of others can be serious or quite humorous, but is almost always higher in pitch than the rest of the story.

The following graphs show the quotations’ higher pitch in comparison with their surrounding context, the narration. The quotations are labeled within the graph, showing the increase in pitch compared to the rest of the narration. The first example

¹⁵ These measurements show the range between the loudest and softest points of an utterance. We thus see an increase in loudness of 2.7 to 10.7 dB for emphatic ‘big’ and an increase in loudness of .5 to 10 dB for emphatic ‘all’.

is from the “My Life” narrative, in which Ai Muak is negotiating the brideprice and the day of the wedding (lines 182-184). It follows the pattern as shown on the pitch variation graph (Figure 12) which follows.

(3) “My Life” lines 182-184 (English free translation)

Narration: Ai Muak, Tom’s father then said

Quotation: “OK, 150 baht,”

Narration: like that, you know.

Narration: And so then (he said)

Quotation: “When will we have the wedding?”

Narration: And my father sought the (auspicious) day, right?

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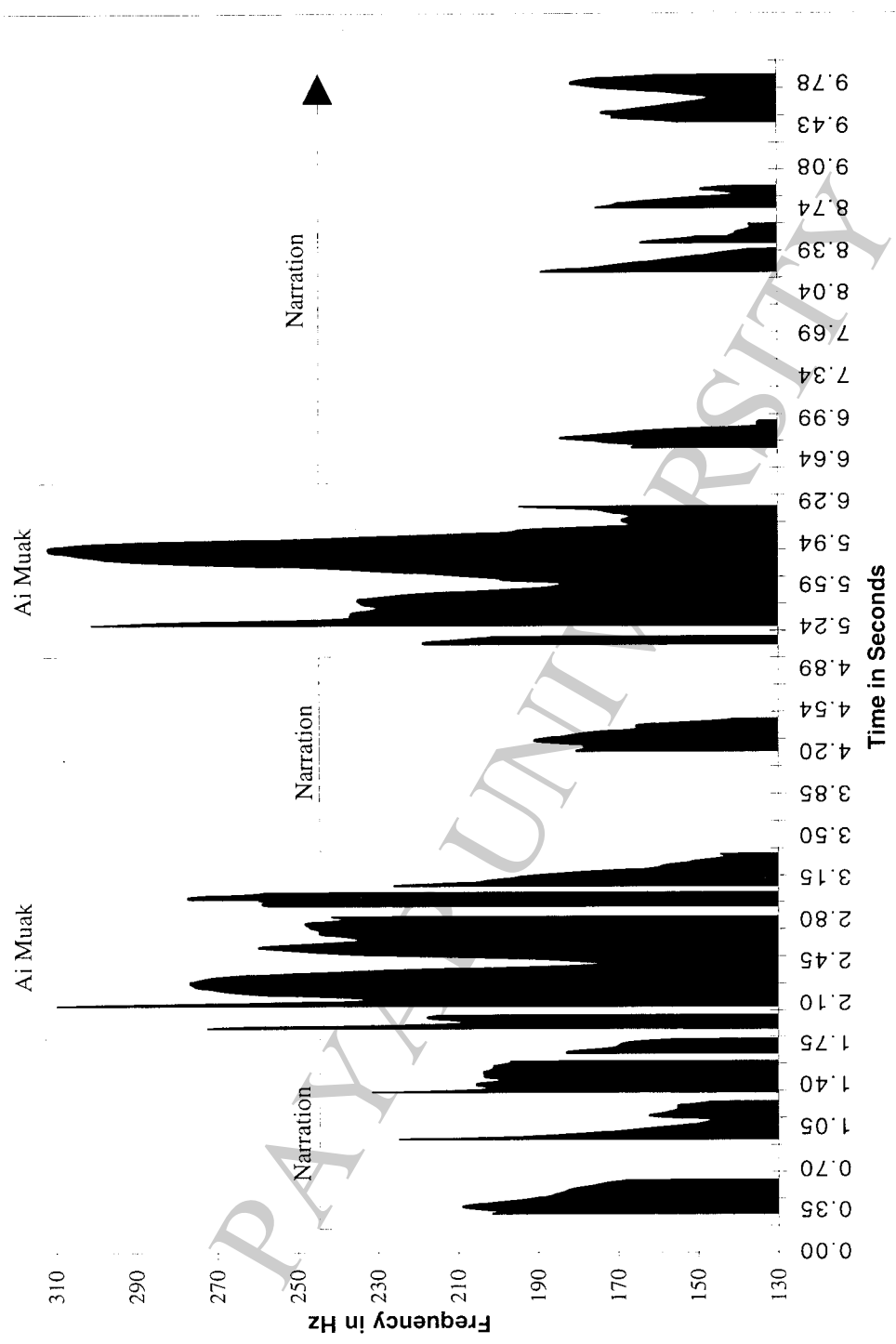


Figure 12. Pitch variation in quoted material--wedding negotiations

The second example comes from the “Games We Played” text, in which Mae Laa is quoting another boy and her own response to him (lines 176-178). As portrayed in Figure 13, the boy’s pitch is slightly lower than the girl’s--yet another example of Mae Laa’s skill as a vivid storyteller.

(4) “Games We Played” lines 176-177 (English free translation)

Narration: If my group was playing he liked to say,

Quotation (boy): “Can I come play too?”

Narration: like that.

Quotation (girl): “Well, cheaters can’t play with us,”

Narration: (I said) like that, right?

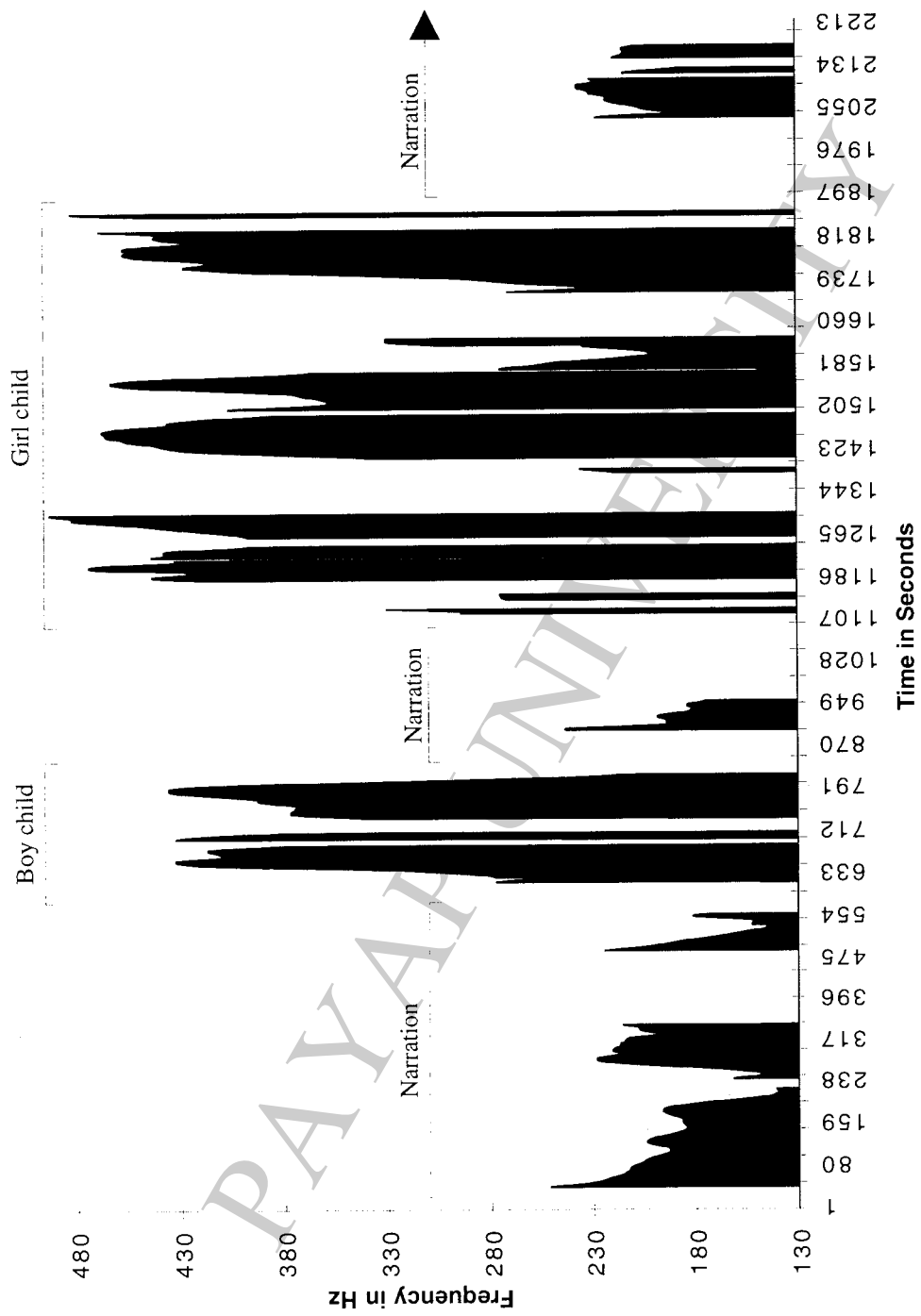


Figure 13. Pitch variation in quoted material--children playing

4.3 Reduplication

Another device used by Mae Laa to make her story more entertaining to the audience is reduplication, a common feature of many Tai languages. According to Crystal (1991: 293), reduplication is “a term used in morphology for a process of repetition whereby the form of a prefix or suffix reflects certain phonological characteristics of the root.” In contrast to this definition, reduplication in Mae Laa’s stories occurs at broader levels--at word level and phrase level. Individual words may be repeated to express a variety of meanings, or certain words in a phrase may be repeated with the same word or with a semantically related word. People remark that a story “sounds better” if the phrases are repeated in this often rhythmic way. This feature of the Kammuang language results in a story that is *müan* ‘fun,’ or pleasing to the ear. In Mae Laa’s stories, two prominent types are simple reduplication and intensifying reduplication.

4.3.1 Simple Reduplication

Simple reduplications are derived from a base word and a duplicator which is exactly the same as the base word. This results in a simple repetition of the word. According to Sudaporn (1985:128), this type of reduplication in Thai can alter the meaning of the base word “to communicate plurality, repetitiveness, generality, imperativity, or distributivity.”

Of the Kammuang reduplicatives in these texts, the meanings portrayed are plurality, repetition, and distribution. The following examples illustrate these functions.

(5) Plurality: “My Life” Line 52

ʔææw paj káp püan püan dāj
 pleasure visit go with friends friends able

‘I could go play with my friends.’

(6) Repetition: “Games We Played” Line 79

mææ k^hǎw nii cá k^hǔn jùu bon táafəŋ lææw
 mother(I) 3 pers here will go up to be located on top of river bank then

wīt loŋ wīt loŋ nāam nǎa
 jump descend jump descend water [pt: ‘you know’]

‘I would go up on top of the river bank and then jump off again and again into the water, you know.’

(7) Distribution: “My Life” Line 119

mææ k^hǎn tæəŋ sət paj lææw kò? loŋ paj jùu pæəŋ bāan
 mother Khan marry finish go already conn. descend go live make house

sāəŋ bāan kǎn k^hon tii k^hon tii ʔii nææ
 build house together other place other place this [pt: sign.]

‘After Mother (older sister) Khan married, they went to build a house and lived in a separate place, like that.’

4.3.2 Intensifying Reduplication

Intensifying reduplication is made up of a base word and a reduplicative that has the same consonants and vowels as the base word, but differs in tone. The emphasized word occurs first and is a much higher tone (see Section 4.2.1). These reduplicatives serve to emphasize the description, in the case of an adjective, or intensify the feeling expressed, in the case of a verb, as illustrated below.

(8) “Games We Played” Line 90

sōon māj kǎn múan müan
 hide stick together really fun! fun

‘It was so fun to hide the wooden ball together!’

(9) “Games We Played” Line 126

tãŋ wan nân maa mææ k^hăw cáŋ caŋ k^hon tii maa pãn
 ever since day that come mother (I) 3 pers. hate hate people who come mold

kàbũaŋ nân nãa
 roofing tiles that [pt: ‘you know’]

‘Ever since that day I have really hated that guy, that guy who came to make roofing tiles here, you know.’

4.4 Reported Speech

In the investigation of reported speech, or quotations in a first person narrative, it is important to understand the function of dialogue. Dialogue in the real world is often associated with a conversation between two people. Conversations often ramble from point to point, and the participants are not always in control of “where the conversation is going.”

On the other hand, reported speech in narratives is organized in that the narrator who reports the speech chooses what he or she will include. As Larson (1978:23) states:

...the narrator who uses dialogue in his story carefully controls both the content and the format in which that dialogue is presented. He selects only that material which advances his story; he keeps the listener aware of who the participants are, what settings and props they are responding to, what roles they are playing, and how their arguments are resolved.

Mae Laa chooses which dialogues of her story to include so that the audience will be most entertained. Larson (1978: 24) stresses this tendency by saying:

Even in reporting actual events, the narrator is selective and has the participants say what he wants them to say. Seldom is an account of a speech reported with the exact words of the original speaker.

The primary functions of quotations are not only to advance the storyline, but also to heighten vividness or highlight an event or character of the story. This stylistic aspect

of quotations ensures the “entertainment value” of the narrative by “painting a picture” in the audience’s mind.

The most frequent type of reported speech in Mae Laa’s stories is embedded dialogue. In addition to embedded dialogue, Mae Laa uses pseudo-dialogue--quotations which do not reenact a conversation, but function in other ways. The whole area of dialogue and pseudo-dialogue in Kammuang narrative warrants further investigation.

4.4.1 Embedded Dialogue

The most frequent occurrence of reported speech in Mae Laa’s life story is embedded dialogue. The entire discourse is narrative, in that it tells a story, but embedded within the narrative are dialogues in which two or more people are interacting. In the following examples of embedded dialogue from “My Life” and “Lang San,” Mae Laa converses with her suitors. These conversations, often expressed with higher pitch (see 4.2.2) make the story “come to life.”

(10) “My Life” Lines 142-149 (English free translation)

And then at that time Ai Muak was a young man; he was a soldier. So he came to try to meet me. He then came to flirt with me. In those days they had traditional opera, right? *“Do you want to watch the opera? Do you want to watch the opera?”* (he said it) like that, right? *“I will buy a ticket for you right now, you know. I will buy a ticket for you, you know”* he said (like this). And then I said, *“I guess I will go watch it,”* like that, right?

(11) “Lang San” Lines 26-31

And so then he said, *“In the next few days may I come visit you at your house?”* like this. He said this, you know. So I said, *“Sure, that would be fine,”* like that, right? *“I don’t know where your house is yet. If I go I will go to Duang’s place first,”* (he said) like this. Duang was the one that I went to the funeral with, you know.

Quotations in first person narrative often mark the peak of the narrative. It is common for the peak of a story to be marked by a “change of pace” of quotations-- either an abundance of quotations or a complete absence of them. Larson (1978:71) states, “Highlighting is basically a matter of contrast. In a narrative, contrast comes by introducing dialogue and quotations. However, in a dialogue discourse, contrast comes by a sudden switch from dialogue to narrative.”

In both the “My Life” and “Lang San” narratives, almost the entire inventory of embedded dialogue is located in the surface structure peaks. In the narrative “My Life,” the dialogues are all located in the section about Mae Laa’s life with her first husband, Ai Muak. The first quotation is Ai Muak’s invitation to go watch a Thai traditional opera. The last quotation is Mae Laa’s father’s declaration of the auspicious day for their wedding.

In the shorter narrative, “Lang San,” about Mae Laa’s second husband, the same is true. The peak of the story begins when the dialogue begins. The first quotation is Lang San’s question, “Did your husband not come with you?” The last quotation is Mae Laa’s mother saying that she would not ask for a specific brideprice because both Laa and Lang San were older adults already.

In conclusion, the narratives “My Life” and “Lang San,” though different in length, use embedded dialogue in the same way. Embedded dialogue both entertains the audience and serves as a signal, or as Longacre calls it, a “change of pace,” to mark the peak of the story.

‘I had smallpox, you know. That’s what they called it, you know. Kammuang speaking people called it “tum suk tum suk,”(ripe boils) like this, right?... They called it “tum suk tum suk,” (ripe boils) like this, right?’

The words *fidaat* and *tum suk* are examples of language teaching quotations.

Teaching quotations thus add not only vividness to the story, but are used in Mae Laa’s narratives to involve the audience even more directly as learners of her language.¹⁶ The audience is immediately “drawn in,” not only as interested listeners, but also as language students (see 4.6.4).

4.4.2.2 Reason Quotations

Another type of pseudo-dialogue are reason quotations, which let the audience know why the narrator performed a certain action. Both of the examples of this type are located in the stage section of “My Life,” quoting Mae Laa’s siblings when they told her to do something. These are not examples of true dialogue because they only involve one speaker and their primary function is not to add vividness or to mark peak, but instead to serve as a basis for Mae Laa’s everyday actions. The examples below portray this unique function.

(13) “My Life” Line 47

pǎn bòok wâj pěn nǎŋ pěn nǎŋ hũu mǎæ jùu bǎan t^hũu
3rd pers.tell keep to be what to be what allow mother(I) stay house to mop

bǎan
house

‘They told me, “Whatever happens, you stay at home and clean the house.”’

¹⁶It is interesting to note that older Kammuang speakers often clarify ‘real’ Kammuang words with Kammuang young people, whose Kammuang vocabulary contains many loan words from Standard Thai.

(14) “My Life” Line 61

pǎn sǎon wāa t^hāa bàaj sǎam moon kò? pīk bāan
 3rd pers. teach that if afternoon three hour conn. return house

nôə

[pt: polite.com]

‘They taught me, “About three o’clock, come back home, you hear?”’

Both quotes have an imperative tone about them--commanding Mae Laa to stay at home and take care of the house. They communicate the reasons for her daily actions. With these quotations, Mae Laa is highlighting both her daily duties and the fact that she was obedient to her elder’s orders.

4.5 Audience Involvement Devices

One reason that Mae Laa is such a “fun talker” is because she gets the audience involved in the story she is telling. Appeals for audience agreement and participation are quite frequent and vary in form. The four types of audience involvement devices used in Mae Laa’s stories are kin terms specific to the audience, establishing common ground with the audience, comparing the past with the present, and teaching the audience Kammuang.

4.5.1 Kin Terms Specific to the Audience

Another way that Mae Laa involves the audience is by using the kin terms which would be appropriate for the audience to use in addressing or referring to different characters in the stories. This device is definitely linked with the kinship system of Kammuang, in that any person older than the speaker is addressed and referred to by his or her position in their family. Any older woman who has children will be

addressed as *mǎæ* ‘mother’ or *pǎa* ‘aunt’ and any older man is referred to as *luŋ* ‘uncle.’

In this case, even though Mae Laa is the same age as these characters, she addresses them in the way the audience would. If she were telling these stories to someone her own age or older, she would never call herself *mǎæ* ‘mother’ or refer to others with kinship terms of respect like this. Yet by using these terms, Mae Laa ensures that the audience is involved as closely as possible in the story. And by the consistent use of *mǎæ* instead of *cāo* or *cân* ‘I’ to refer to herself, she is emphasizing continuously her role as the audience’s adoptive mother and respected teacher.

The following examples illustrate Mae Laa’s use of *mǎæ* to refer to herself (Example 15) and to other characters of the story (Example 16).

(15) “My Life” Line 159

tǎæ mǎæ bðo hũucák nǎŋsũu nǎ?
but mother(I) not know book [pt: ‘isn’t that right?']

‘But Mother (I) cannot read, right?’

(16) “My Life” Line 88

lǎ? kð? jàaŋ mǎæ cũm mǎæ cǎj mǎæ kʰǎn kʰǎw nii paa
then conn.such as mother Cum mother Caj mother Khan 3 pers.this go together
kǎn paj sðn ʔaw pǎa maa nǎ
together go fish with scoop take fish come [pt: ‘you know’]

‘And as for Mother (Older Sister) Cum, Mother (Older Sister) Caj, and Mother (Older Sister) Khan--they would go together to fish with a scoop, you know.’

In the above examples, it is clear that Mae Laa is not referring to her own mother, but to herself in reference to reading, and that her three older sisters are not in a motherly

role in her life. In both cases, the terms used are those that are appropriate for the audience to use.

The only time that Mae Laa deviates from this trend is in the case of reported speech. When she quotes conversations she had with older friends or relatives when she was a young girl, she uses the terms that she would have used at that time. She often clarifies this change in the use of terms as well, as portrayed in the following examples.

(17) “Paa Daa and Lung Too” Lines 18, 21

sàməj kòon hōŋ p̄i daa p̄i daa ʔi nō?
 time before call older sib. Daa older sib. Daa like this [pt: ‘isn’t that right?’]
p̄i daa ʔaw ləj ʔi? nǎ
 older siblings Daa take goahead like that [pt: ‘you know’]

‘In those times (I) called (her) “Older Sister Daa,” like that, right?... “Older Sister Daa, take him up on his request,” I said like that, you know.’

(18) “Games We Played” Lines 36-37

p̄ā k^ham nân k^hwaam ciŋ təw kǎn læəw pən
 aunt Kham that nom. true equal to each other then 3rdpers.
ʔaw luŋ taa nân haw kò? ləj hōŋ pən p̄ā k^ham ʔi
 take uncle Taa that we conn.thus call 3rdpers.aunt Kham like this
nǎ
 [pt: ‘you know’]

‘Aunt Kham really was the same age as me but then she married Uncle Taa and now we call her Aunt Kham, like that, you know.’

As shown in the Example 17, Mae Laa uses the terms that she would have used as a child, *p̄i* ‘older sibling/kin/friend’ and then explains why she changed the term--making it explicit for the audience. In Example 18, she uses the term *p̄ā* that she

uses today, and explains that even though she and Kham are the same age, she calls Kham “Aunt” now because she married “Uncle” Taa, a man older than Mae Laa.

4.5.2 Common Ground

Another device for involving the audience in the story is the use of “common ground,” or recently shared experiences to link the audience with the events and people in the story. Mae Laa frequently digresses from the story and directly addresses the audience by referring to an experience, event, person, or place that she has introduced them to in the recent past. This device makes the audience feel a sense of common ground with the narrator and with the context of the story. If the audience recognizes a character or event, an increase in vividness and entertainment value results.

In examining these “common ground” asides, a few patterns emerge. In the majority of statements, Mae Laa explicitly says, “the one I told you about” or uses words that mean “us” or “you” to include the audience. Another method is the use of the particle *kãa* (see Section 3.3.2.3.2) which assumes the audience’s agreement or acknowledgment that they know the person or situation referred to. The word *tii* ‘that’ is used to introduce the “common ground” by referring to the person or situation which is shared knowledge. The following examples show the use of these different methods. The specific words marking “common ground” are underlined.

In Example 19, Mae Laa refers to her nephew Basom who had come to the house a few days earlier to build up the roof of her kitchen. The audience was present at the time he came, thus Mae Laa refers to him with this description to establish “common ground” with the audience.

(19) Referring to a person: “My Life” Line 220

kamñi p^hɔɔdii bàsǒm tii lǎan tii maa pǎæŋ ʔǎn nii hũu
and then and so Basom who offspring/kin who come make thing this give

kãa

[pt: obv]

‘And then, and so Basom, the younger relative who came to build this for us, obviously.’

Example 20 describes some of Mae Laa’s rice fields which she had shown the audience previously and described as very valuable. Because she has many fields, she clarified which fields she was referring to by referring to a former conversation she had had with the audience about the value of these specific fields.

(20) Referring to a place: “My Life” Line 256

paj jùu pǎn kòʔ mǔɔp huan mǔɔp naa tii waa cá k^hǎaj dǎj
go live 3rd pers. conn. give house give rice field which that will sell can

lǎan kwàa bàat nii nǎa

million more than baht this [pt: ‘you know’]

‘When I went to live there they then gave me an inheritance of the house and fields; those fields that I told you I could sell for more than one million baht, those ones, you know.’

In Example 21, Mae Laa establishes “common ground” by referring to a situation which she had described to the audience previously. Because she did not want to record in detail the reasons for her divorce, she instead referred back to a conversation she had with the audience a few days earlier.

(21) Referring to a situation: “My Life” Lines 234-235

tii mii k^hon nân maa jǎæŋ nân kãa
which have people that come fight over that [pt: obv]

tii waa mǎæ ʔũu hũu faŋ wan nân nǎeʔ
who that mother talk allow listen day that [pt: sign.]

‘(The situation) in which there was that person that fought over (my husband); that one, obviously. The one that I told you about that day, of course.’

4.5.3 Past vs. Present

Another abundant device used by Mae Laa is involvement of the audience by acknowledging their ignorance of daily life in the past. By emphasizing that life was a certain way in the past, she compares her daily life as a young person with the audience’s experience of Northern Thai daily life in the present.

This is obviously affected by the fact that the audience are foreigners and in a learner role. If she were telling her life story to another Northern Thai person her same age, she would not use this device. Nevertheless, having heard Mae Laa tell these stories to Northern Thai young people, the teaching tone is the same. She involves her audience as learners of daily life “in those days,” and through comparison makes the story come alive in concrete, tangible ways.

The most common indicator of these devices is the use of the phrases *sàmmǎj kòon* and *tàa kòon*, which can be roughly translated as “in those days.” These are always used in conjunction with the particles *nǎa* and *nǎ?* as well, which have been discussed in 3.3.1.1 and 3.3.1.2. Mae Laa uses both direct and indirect comparisons to interest the audience, which can be seen in Examples 22, 23, and 24. She compares household items of today with their equivalents in “the olden days.”

(22) “My Life” Lines 58-59

tàa kòon m mij nalikǎa nǎ?

time before not have clock [pt: ‘isn’t that right?’]

p^hǎw ?aw tàwan

watch to be mindful of sun

'In those days we did not have clocks, right? We would watch the sun's position.'

(23) "My Life" Lines 74-75

mɔ̌w kǎæŋ din nân hǎæm sâm sàmǎj kòw
pot cook clay that additional intensifier age, time before

nǎa bòw câj mɔ̌w kǎæŋ jàŋ bàadǎaw nǎa
[pt: 'you know'] not use pot cook like, as nowadays [pt: 'you know']

'A clay pot at that, in the olden days, you know. It was not like the cooking pots we use today, you know.'

(24) "Lang San" Lines 68-69

sàmǎj kòw nân mōo m̄u jàŋ bān pàatǎw nǎ? kǎa
time before that grind hand like, as house Patong [pt: 'you know'] [pt: obv]

k^hùut bàpâw kò? k^hùut ?aw
scrape coconut conn. scrape take

'In those days we ground the coconut by hand, like at Patong's house, you know. We had to scrape the coconut meat out.'

4.5.4 Teaching Kammuang

As mentioned in Section 4.4.2.1, Mae Laa uses teaching quotes to explain new Kammuang words to the audience. This can also be seen as an audience involvement device as Mae Laa is acknowledging the audience's role as learners. She changes roles as she takes off her "storytelling hat" and puts on her "language teacher hat." The audience also shifts roles from listeners to language learners, as is illustrated in Examples 25 and 26.

(25) "My Life" Lines 184-185

lǎæw kò? pòw k^hǎw mǎæ nii pǎn hǎa wan nò?
then conn. father of mother here 3rd pers. seek day [pt: 'isn't that right?']

hǎa wan dǎj wǎa duan hók t^hǎa pǎn duan muan wǎa duan hók ?ia
seek day able say month six if to be month Muang say month six like this

nǎa

[pt: ‘you know’]

‘And then my father sought the (auspicious) day, right? (He) was able to find an (auspicious) day and said “The sixth month;” the Northern Thai call it “the sixth month,” like that, you know.’

(26) “My Life” Lines 210- 212

k^haj loŋ ʔii nǎ?

want descend like this [pt: sign.]

kammuaŋ nīi pǎn wǎa loŋ

Kammuang this 3rd person say descend

loŋ jùu sǎaŋ bǎan hǎæm lǎŋ nīi wǎa loŋ

descend to be located build house additional classifier here say descend

ʔii nǎ?

like this [pt: ‘isn’t that right?’]

‘(He) “wanted to descend” (NT idiom), like this surely. In Kammuang this one (that I speak) they call it “descend.” (He wanted to) “descend” to build another house here, called “descend,” like this, right?’

4.6 Author Intrusion

Another device used to entertain and create vividness for the audience is author intrusion. Author intrusion occurs when the author temporarily stops functioning as the narrator of a story and shifts to express his or her opinions, emotions, or evaluations of the events. Mae Laa often switches to this role in expressing her opinion about the described events. The most prominent intrusions to her narratives are evaluatory statements, exclamations, and summary statements.

4.6.1 Evaluatory Statements

According to Somsonge (1991:81) evaluatory statements may consist of the speaker’s own evaluation of a person, the events outlined, or the culture in general. In Standard

Thai, these evaluations can be marked by first person pronouns, the use of descriptive words such as “good” and “bad,” stative verbs, and comparison words such as “better than.”

In Mae Laa’s stories, the main evaluations are about other people and about events in her life. She praises people as being good, such as Lang San; and criticizes others as being bad, like the man who stole her clothes when she was a little girl. Descriptive words are used, as well as exclamations and high intonation, as illustrated below.

(27) “Lang San” Line 74

cǎj dii tuaj nǎ?

heart good also [pt: sign.]

‘He was so good hearted!’

(28) “Games We Played” Line 106

hǒo ba dii ba dii nǎ?

exclamation neg. good neg. good [pt: ‘isn’t that right?’]

‘Oh! He was just awful, right?’

As for events, Mae Laa expresses that the first brideprice was humorously low, and that when men flirt with her nowadays, she feels embarrassed. Examples 29 and 30 use descriptive words like “funny” and “embarrassing,” and Example 29 combines with the rest of the phrase into a common hyperbole meaning “It was so funny I thought I would die!”

(29) “My Life” Lines 179-180

sàmj kòon taj lǒj hǎa síp tá?ǎn nǎ?

age, days before money hundred five ten only [pt: ‘isn’t that right?’]

tá?lók cá táaj

hilarious will die

‘In the olden days the price was only 150 baht, right? It is so hilarious (“to the point of death”)!’

(30) “Lang San” Lines 91-92

mii k^hon maa cĭip mǎæ nǎa
have people come flirt mother(I) [pt: ‘you know’]

haw kǎæ lǎ? ʔaaj pǎn nǎ?
we old already shy 3rd person [pt: ‘isn’t that right?’]

‘There are some men that come to flirt with me, you know. I am old already--
that is so embarrassing, right?’

4.6.2 Exclamations

The second type of author intrusion device used in these narratives is exclamations. All the exclamations found in these texts are Mae Laa’s own emotional expressions, and predominately express strong feelings of surprise--either good or bad. These exclamations add spice to the stories and highlight cultural values as well. Most of these exclamations are variants of *p^hutt^hó*, a common exclamation used in both Thai and Kammuang.¹⁷ This word can be shortened to *t^hó*, *dó?*, or *hó*.

Example 31 is Mae Laa’s strong reaction to the unusually small brideprice that her father requested from Ai Muak. In this context, the exclamation *dó?* expresses a range of emotions from embarrassment to surprise to humor.

¹⁷According to Herb Purnell (1963: 82), *p^hutt^ho* is an “exclamation of great surprise; very greatly, a lot; ...This word is actually a shortened form of *p^hutt^ho t^hammoo sǎŋkhoo*, the ‘triple gems’ of Buddhism. In itself it is not profanity and in most areas has lost all religious significance. Sometimes the first and second parts are used together, but rarely all three.”

(31) “My Life” Line 178

dó?

exclamation

‘Shoot!’ (in reference to the small brideprice)

In Example 32, the exclamation *t^hôo* expresses Mae Laa’s emotions about the intensity and frequency with which she and her friends played in the stream during April (the hottest time of the year).

(32) “Games We Played” Line 97

t^hôo t^hāa sūaŋ duan meesāa nii cá lēn kǎn k^hanàat ?á?

exclamation if time month April this will play together very conn.

‘Oh! If it was during April, like it is now, we would play together all the time!’

In addition to expressing surprise, Mae Laa sometimes uses an exclamation to highlight the beginning of a summary statement (see Section 4.6.3), which is usually an opinion about her life in general. These types of exclamations are more rare, but add prominence to the statement that follows by alerting the listener to “take notice,” as illustrated in Example 33.

(33) “Mae Cum” Lines 225-226

óoh siwīt k^hǒŋ k^hon haw nii man ba cāj nǎæ ba cāj nɔɔn

Oh life of people we here it neg. right sure1 neg. right sure2

nǒ?

[pt: ‘isn’t that right?’]

‘Oh! Our lives are just not certain, right?’

4.6.3 Summary Statements

As described in Section 2.3.1.3, one type of boundary marker for Mae Laa’s stories are summary statements, in which she “wraps up” the narration, cementing the tone

of the whole narrative. These statements usually convey her opinion of the story she told or her life in general.

Example 34 is Mae Laa's conclusion to her overall life story, in which she expresses her views about the uncertainty of life. Right after she uses this statement to summarize, she asks the audience to pray that she will have good health and happiness.

(34) "My Life" Line 320

lææw kò? siwīt k^hɔŋ haw paj taŋ nãa nii kò? cá dāj kò? bɔɔ
 then conn.life of we go direction ahead this conn.will can conn. not

hûu nɔ?

know [pt: 'isn't that right?']

'And well, how do we know how long our lives will last, right?'

The "winding down" of the story "Lang San" in Example 35 portrays Mae Laa's opinion about her life in general. She believes that it has been tragic because she has lost both husbands after only ten years of marriage each and because she has only one child who lives far away.

(35) "Lang San" Lines 85-87

siwīt hɔŋ mææ pěn cá ʔii ʔaap^háp nɔ?
 life of mother(I) to be like this sad; tragic [pt: 'isn't that right?']

siwīt hɔŋ mææ ni? ʔaap^háp. ʔaap^háp
 life of mother(I) this sad; tragic sad; tragic

'My life has been this way; it has been tragic, right? My life has been tragic. It has been tragic.'

On a lighter note, the summary in Example 36 from Mae Laa's description of her childhood expresses her joy at talking about fun times in the past. She says that talking about her childhood is good because it makes her laugh.

(36) “Games We Played” Lines 183-184

hũũ kũt t^hũŋ k^hĩi kàw k^hĩi lǎŋ nĩi pěn dii. k^hǎjhũa
 cause think about dung old dung behind this to be good laugh

‘Causing me to think about the olden days is good! It makes me laugh.’

4.7 Cultural Phrases

Northern Thai people are very proud of the colorful nature of their language. They recognize what has been expressed by Purnell (1962: 11):

All languages adequately express the world around them. But some seem to express themselves with more color, more spice, more zest than others. Northern Thai is one of these languages. Its expressiveness almost seems to whet one’s appetite to learn more in order to enter into the joy that the Northern Thai have in speaking their own language. Whether one is riding on a bus or sitting around a smoky little kerosene lamp after a day’s labor in the rice fields, he is sure to notice that here indeed is a colorful colloquial.

One way that Kammuang is so expressive is in its use of cultural phrases. These phrases refer to world view concepts which are unique to Northern Thai culture. I am inclined to call these phrases “frozen” in a sense, because even though the individual words can be used in other ways, these specific combinations are a hallmark of *kammuaŋ tǎæ tǎæ*, ‘true Kammuang.’ These phrases evoke a sense of cultural pride also in that they are examples of some of the cultural themes of Northern Thailand (see Chapter 5).

Mae Laa makes use of these cultural phrases very often in her stories. Some of these phrases are just the “tip of the iceberg” in the sense that they are labels for very involved or deep rooted events or concepts. When another Northern Thai person hears these phrases, he or she immediately knows the worldview beliefs behind them, and that the narrator is a fellow Northern Thai. Though there are many more in these narratives that could describe both Thai and Northern Thai cultural themes, the following are just a few of the most uniquely Northern Thai phrases.

The most abundant cultural phrase in all the texts was *jäad tii pii nōŋ* which describes relatives in general yet can also mean “everyone that we know well,” including very distant relatives and friends. This phrase is shown in context in the following example.

(37) “My Life” Line 188

k^hɔ̌ jāad tii pii nōŋ maa ləj
request cousins that elder sibling younger sibling come go ahead

‘I requested (invited) cousins and siblings to go ahead and come.’

This phrase is an example of the strong value placed on the family in Northern Thai life. In these stories, this phrase is used in describing social events, specifically when talking about inviting guests. Everyone would invite *jäad tii pii nōŋ* to social events such as weddings, merit-making ceremonies, and funerals.

Another phrase that has to do with relations between family members is *k^häj loŋ*. This phrase refers to a child’s desire to leave his/her parent’s home and build a home of his/her own. This is especially significant in this story as Mae Laa is the youngest child, and thus expected to stay with her parents until they die. The following example shows this phrase in context.

(38) “My Life” Line 210

k^häj loŋ ʔii nã?
want descend like this [pt: sign.]

‘(He) “wanted to descend” (build a home of his own), like that.’

One other family related phrase is *täw täaj täw k^hãw din mót* which literally means ‘until one enters the earth completely.’ This phrase is used by Mae Laa’s parents to describe their desire for her to care for them until they died. When she moved back into their house after her divorce from Ai Muak, they gave her the inheritance of their

house and land, then implored her to stay with them “until we die, until we enter the earth completely.” Her acceptance of this responsibility enabled her to fulfill her duty as the youngest child, even though she had left them with her first husband five years before.

(39) “My Life” Line 259

liân hũu pən tǎw tǎaj tǎw k^hǎw dīn mót
 care for give 3rd pers. until die until enter earth completely

‘So that I would care for them “until they die; until they become dust” completely.’

Other cultural phrases have to do with special ceremonies or events. These are phrases such as *pók huan* ‘set up the houseposts,’ *k^hōp sǎam duan pǎaj síp wan* *k^hōp lōj wan* ‘up to three months plus ten days--one hundred days,’ and *k^hǎwmāamnāamnom* ‘brideprice.’ The phrase in Example 40 refers to the ceremony performed when a new house is starting to be built and the main pillar is set in the ground.

(40) “My Life” Line 288

kamñii kə? pók _____ huan mokalǎa
 and then conn. set up posts for house house January

‘And so then we set up the houseposts in January.’

The second phrase of this type refers to the different times merit-making is done for a deceased family member-- at the time of death and then after three months plus ten days, which equals one hundred days. One hundred days after the death of a loved one, some type of merit making is performed for that loved one, either at the village temple or at the house of the deceased.

(41) “My Life” Line 313

kamñi kə? sǎ sóp ñǎŋ məæ ʔúj lǎæw
and then conn.cremate corpse etc. mother grandparent finish

móot kə? k^hõp sǎam duan pǎaj síp wan k^hõp lǒj wan
completely conn. until three month more than ten day until hundred day

nõ?

[pt: ‘isn’t that right?’]

‘And so then Grandmother was finished being cremated, then we completed the three months plus ten days--the one hundred days of merit-making, right?’

The third ceremonial phrase refers to the brideprice, which is an important part of the engagement ceremony. This ceremony can occur a few months before or even the same day as the wedding ceremony.

(42) “Lang San” Line 59

t^hǎa k^hǎwmǎamñamnom ʔii nǎa
if brideprice this [pt: ‘you know’]

‘If it is a brideprice, you know.’

4.8 Expressives

Gregerson (1991:225) defines expressives, or ideophones as “a single word or phrase which expresses a response to some sense stimulus, as in the English words *splat*, *plink*, and *clunk*.” These devices operate apart from syntax in that they occur alone or repeated, not as a unit functioning within a sentence.

Mae Laa employs this method in her stories, increasing the amount of vividness in the speaker’s mind and painting a scene with a single word. Some uses of these expressives follow in Examples 43 and 44.

Example 43 is a description of the boils that Mae Laa had when she was suffering with smallpox as a child. She tells the audience that she was covered with boils and had to sleep on banana leaves to keep from sticking to the bed. Her family members told her that the boils would burst and sounded like *túptáp túptáp*.

(43) “My Life” Line 32

tææk túptáp túptáp wää
break onomaetopeia onomaetopeia [pt: ‘that’s what was said’]

‘The boils would burst and sounded like “tup tap tup tap.”--that’s what they told me.’

Example 44 describes the sound of twirling on a bar, one of Mae Laa’s favorite activities as a child. She would straddle the bar and then twirl around the bar over and over. The sound this made is described in Kammuang as *píkadík píkadík*.

(44) “Games We Played” Line 137

píkadík píkadík ?ii mææ k^haw ñĩ?
onomaetopeia onomaetopeia like that mother(I) 3pers.do

năa
[pt: ‘you know’]

‘“Twirl around, twirl around, (sound effect)” like that--I could do it, you know.’

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has examined several rhetorical devices used in Mae Laa’s stories. The first device was changes in pitch, which is used at word level and phrase level to highlight certain aspects of her story. The second was reduplication, which makes a story more entertaining and vivid through rhythmic repetition

The third device, reported speech, is often used to mark the peak of a story and to heighten vividness. The fourth grouping of devices are those which involve the

audience such as particles, kin terms specific to the audience, references to “common ground,” comparisons of the past and the present, and Kammuang lessons. The fifth device, author intrusion, serves to entertain and create vividness as the narrator expresses her opinion about certain events. These intrusions may take the form of evaluatory statements, exclamations, or summary statements.

Cultural phrases are the sixth device used by Mae Laa to refer to world view concepts which are unique to Northern Thai culture. The seventh device, expressives, are onomatopoeic phrases which appeal to the sense of hearing and add vividness to a story.

It has been demonstrated that all of these devices serve to increase vividness, entertainment quality, and audience involvement. Mae Laa’s masterful use of these rhetorical devices demonstrate her high competence as a storyteller.