



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Children's response to humor in translated poetry

Morta, A.R.

Citation

Morta, A. R. (2023, December 12). *Children's response to humor in translated poetry*. LOT dissertation series. LOT, Amsterdam. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3666270>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3666270>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Children's Response to Humor in
Translated Poetry

Published by

LOT
Binnengasthuisstraat 9
1012 ZA Amsterdam
The Netherlands

phone: +31 20 525 2461
e-mail: lot@uva.nl
<http://www.lotschool.nl>

Cover illustration: Danielle V. Florendo

ISBN: 978-94-6093-441-4
DOI: <https://dx.medra.org/10.48273/LOT0657>
NUR: 616

Copyright © 2023 Alice Ross T. Morta. All rights reserved.

Children's Response to Humor in Translated Poetry

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op dinsdag 12 december 2023
klokke 12.30 uur

door

Alice Ross T. Morta

geboren te Cainta, Rizal, Filipijnen
in 1979

Promotor: Prof. dr. Janet Grijzenhout
Co-promotor: Dr. Aletta G. Dorst
Promotiecommissie: Prof. dr. Peter Liebregts
Prof. dr. Carole Tiberius
Prof. dr. Galileo S. Zafra (University of the Philippines)
Dr. Susana Valdez

The research reported here was supported by the Faculty, REPS and Administrative Staff Development Program of the University of the Philippines.

Contents

Acknowledgments	xi
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Scope and focus	3
1.1.1 Focus on children's poems	3
1.1.2 Focus on Filipino	5
1.1.3 Focus on translation	6
1.2 Research/literature gaps	8
1.3 Research questions	10
1.4 Limitations	12
1.4.1 Language	12
1.4.2 Age	12
1.5 Overall structure	13
2 Children's literature	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 The problem of defining children's literature	15
2.2.1 Definition according to characteristics	16
2.2.2 Definition according to audience	17
2.2.3 Definition according to content	19
2.2.4 Definition according to industry actors	20
2.2.5 Summary	21
2.3 Evolution of the concept of childhood and its influence on children's literature	22
2.3.1 The medieval period in Europe	22
2.3.2 The seventeenth century	22
2.3.3 The eighteenth century	23
2.3.4 The nineteenth century	24
2.3.5 Modern concepts of childhood	25

2.3.6	Cultural differences in the evolution of the concept of childhood	25
2.4	The status of children's books	27
2.4.1	General views	27
2.4.2	Views of Philippine publishers	28
2.5	Proposing a new concept: role dualism	29
2.6	Conclusions	31
3	Translation of children's literature in the Philippines	33
3.1	Introduction	33
3.2	Translated literature according to Even-Zohar's polysystem theory	33
3.2.1	Translated literature in the central position	34
3.2.2	Translated literature in the peripheral position	36
3.3	The beginnings of translated children's literature in the Philippines	36
3.4	Modern trends in translated children's literature in the Philippines	39
3.4.1	English-language books as more dominant	39
3.4.2	English-language books translated into Filipino	39
3.4.3	Priority given to translating local texts	41
3.4.4	More local bilingual books	42
3.5	The role of publishers	44
3.5.1	Translation as a promotor of native culture	44
3.5.2	Positioning in the publishing industry	44
3.6	Shavit's two principles in the translation of children's literature	46
3.6.1	Translator's decisions	47
3.6.2	Publisher's decisions	48
3.7	Conclusions	49
4	Translating poems: Form versus content	53
4.1	Introduction	53
4.2	Uniqueness of translating poetry	53
4.3	Translating for form	55
4.3.1	The role of rhyme in children's poetry	55
4.3.2	Holmes and the four forms of poetry translation	56
4.3.3	Kochol and the three ways of translating poetic rhythm	57
4.3.4	Tsur and cognitive poetics	58
4.4	Translating for content	59
4.4.1	Translation as interpretation	60
4.4.2	Nonsense poems	62
4.4.3	Narrative poems	62
4.5	Translating proper names	64
4.5.1	Problems with translating proper names	64
4.5.2	Meanings of proper names	65
4.5.3	Translating names from Philippine folklore: An example	66

4.6	Conclusions	67
5	Humor	69
5.1	Introduction	69
5.2	Defining humor	70
5.2.1	Problems with defining humor	70
5.2.1.1	Defining humor according to a physical response	71
5.2.1.2	Defining humor according to intent	71
5.2.1.3	Defining humor according to cognitive processes	72
5.2.2	Defining humor for the study	73
5.3	Theories of humor	73
5.3.1	Incongruity theory	74
5.3.2	Relief theory	75
5.3.3	Superiority theory	76
5.4	The influence of culture on humor	77
5.4.1	Culture and appropriate humor	77
5.4.2	Western versus Eastern views on humor	77
5.4.3	National humor	79
5.5	Children's humor	80
5.5.1	Development of children's humor	80
5.5.1.1	Humor in young children	80
5.5.1.2	Humor in primary school children	80
5.5.2	Humor in children's literature	82
5.5.2.1	Categories of humor in children's fiction	83
5.5.2.2	Application of humor theories and developmen- tal theories to humor in children's literature .	85
5.5.2.3	Humor in children's poetry	85
5.6	Conclusions	88
6	Methodology	91
6.1	Introduction	91
6.2	Interviews with local publishers	92
6.3	Participants	92
6.3.1	Participant recruitment	92
6.3.2	Ethical approval	93
6.3.3	Problems with participant recruitment	93
6.3.4	Profile of the participants	94
6.4	Materials	95
6.4.1	Translating for form	95
6.4.1.1	Rules of traditional Filipino poetry	96
6.4.1.2	Retaining the rhyme scheme	97
6.4.1.3	Retaining other sound elements	98
6.4.1.4	Creative replacement	98
6.4.1.5	Expected results	100
6.4.2	Translating for content	100

6.4.2.1	Free verse	100
6.4.2.2	Expected results	102
6.4.3	Translating proper names	102
6.4.3.1	Stylistic and structural considerations	102
6.4.3.2	Equivalent effect	103
6.4.3.3	Equivalent terms	104
6.5	Design of the poetry reading sessions	104
6.5.1	Semi-structured interviews	105
6.5.2	Benefits of group interviews	106
6.5.3	Drawbacks of group interviews	107
6.5.4	General evaluation of the sessions	107
6.6	Effect of the pandemic on the research design	109
6.7	Transcribing the group discussions	110
6.8	Data analysis	113
6.8.1	Coding responses	113
6.8.2	Cross-tabulation analysis	114
6.8.3	Responses to the form-centered and content-centered translations	115
6.8.4	Strengths of the data	116
6.8.5	Limitations of the data	116
6.9	Conclusions	116
7	Results and analysis	119
7.1	Introduction	119
7.2	General attitudes toward and experiences of poetry	119
7.2.1	Effect of poems on reader	120
7.2.2	Preference for stories over poems	121
7.2.3	Conduits for poetry experience	121
7.2.4	Reading more poems	122
7.3	Language: Preference for Filipino or English	123
7.3.1	Use of Taglish	124
7.3.2	Preferred language and humor perception	126
7.3.3	Reading more in Filipino	126
7.3.3.1	Reasons for wanting to read more in Filipino	127
7.3.3.2	Humor as an aid for reading Filipino	127
7.3.3.3	Accessibility of Filipino reading materials	128
7.4	Self-assessment of comprehensibility	128
7.4.1	Poor comprehenders	129
7.4.1.1	Using contextual cues	130
7.4.1.2	Assessing individual elements of narrative poems	130
7.4.2	Good comprehenders	131
7.4.2.1	Judging the text as a whole	131
7.4.2.2	More realistic poem as funnier	132
7.5	Mode of input: Reading versus listening	132
7.5.1	Preference for reading	132

7.5.2	Preference for listening	133
7.5.3	Equal appeal of reading and listening to poems	133
7.5.4	Relationship between comprehension and mode of input	133
7.5.5	Relationship between funniness and mode of input	134
7.6	Reading for pleasure: Reading alone versus reading with others	134
7.7	Perceived target audience	137
7.7.1	Literature written for children	138
7.7.2	Literature written for adults	138
7.7.3	Literature written for children and adults	139
7.8	Relatability of content	141
7.8.1	Relatability to children	141
7.8.1.1	Defining relatability	141
7.8.1.2	Content as relatable	141
7.8.1.3	Content as not relatable	142
7.8.2	Relatability to Filipino readers	143
7.8.2.1	Content as relatable	143
7.8.2.2	Content as not relatable	144
7.9	Humor in the poems	144
7.9.1	Dahl's poem	145
7.9.1.1	Poem as funny	145
7.9.1.2	Poem as not funny	146
7.9.1.3	Gender differences in humor appreciation	146
7.9.1.4	Proposed endings: violence	149
7.9.2	Silverstein's poem	150
7.9.2.1	Poem as funny	150
7.9.2.2	Poem as not funny	151
7.9.2.3	Gender differences in humor appreciation	151
7.9.2.4	Proposed endings: Poking fun at other children	152
7.10	Form versus content	153
7.11	Feedback from participants and parents	154
7.12	Conclusions	156
8	Discussion	159
8.1	Introduction	159
8.2	Influence of culture on humor	159
8.2.1	The Filipino virtue of pakikipagkapwa-tao	160
8.2.2	Filipino humor	161
8.2.3	Value preferences in humor appreciation	162
8.3	Effects of reading humorous materials	162
8.3.1	Reading widely for pleasure	162
8.3.2	Stronger social relationships	163
8.3.3	Creative responses to literature	163
8.4	Humor recognition and appreciation	164
8.4.1	Intervention in identifying humor	164
8.4.2	Two levels of humor competence	165

8.5	Impact of form on humor creation and the preference for content	166
8.5.1	Effects of deviations from “good” verse making	166
8.5.2	Effects of joint reading and listening	168
8.5.3	Preference for free verse	169
8.6	Conclusions	170
9	Conclusions	171
9.1	Research questions and findings	171
9.2	Other findings	173
9.2.1	Children’s literature according to children	173
9.2.2	Bilingual proficiency and availability of Filipino books for older children	174
9.2.3	Poetry appreciation in children	176
9.2.4	Impact of culture and gender on children’s humor	178
9.2.5	Greater importance of personal relatability over cultural relatability	180
9.2.6	Primacy of content over form when translating humorous poems	181
9.2.7	Use of group interviews to study children’s humor	182
9.3	Recommended topics for further study	182
	Appendix A. Questionnaire for interviews with publishers	185
	Appendix B: Information sheet	187
	Appendix C: Informed consent forms	191
	Appendix D. Content-centered Filipino translations	193
	Appendix E. Form-centered Filipino translations	195
	Appendix F. Questionnaire for the poetry reading session	197
	Bibliography	199
	Summary	221
	Samenvatting	227
	Buod	233
	Curriculum Vitae	239

Acknowledgments

I have always loved children's literature. That is why I feel immensely blessed to have been able to work on a thesis topic that was close to my heart. I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to my supervisors Prof. dr. Janet Grijsenhout and Dr. Aletta G. Dorst for giving me the freedom to design and carry out a research project that was as exciting as it was rewarding. I cannot thank them enough for their unwavering guidance, support, kindness and trust throughout my stay in the program. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the members of my reading committee for being generous with their time and expertise: Prof. dr. Peter Liebrechts (Leiden University Center for the Arts in Society), Prof. dr. Galileo S. Zafra (Department of Filipino and Philippine Literature, University of the Philippines Diliman), Prof. dr. Carole Tiberius (Leiden University Center for Linguistics) and Dr. Susana Valdez (Leiden University Center for Linguistics). I am deeply indebted to the University of the Philippines for funding my PhD studies at Leiden University through the Faculty, REPS and Administrative Staff Development Program (FRASDP) and to my former supervisor, former Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) Prof. dr. Maria Cynthia Rose Banzon Bautista, for allowing me to go on a four-year study leave to pursue a PhD. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to former VPAA Prof. dr. Gisela P. Concepcion under whose term the FRASDP was amended so that administrative personnel such as myself could also receive financial support for postgraduate studies. Our PhD coach Dr. Katja Lubina read early drafts of my proposal up to the final chapter of my thesis, provided moral support during the Covid-19 pandemic – the list goes on. Words cannot express my gratitude to her for constantly giving advice and encouragement. I am extremely grateful to children's book publishers Adarna House and Tahanan Books who agreed to be interviewed and whose responses formed the basis of Chapter 3. The University of the Philippines Integrated School (UPIS) made an invaluable contribution to my thesis. This research would not have been possible without the Grade 3 pupils of UPIS who participated in the poetry reading sessions, their parents who allowed them to join,

and the UPIS officials and Grade 3 advisers who invited their pupils to take part in the study. I thank my LUCL officemates for their friendship and help: Brenda, Hana, Shaoyu and Xinyi. My sincere appreciation goes to my family for their support. Finally, I thank my husband Nath for being with me on my PhD journey and making it wonderful and memorable.