Children's response to humor in translated poetry

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

On the photo-sharing platform Instagram, close to 252,000 posts are tagged with #middlegradebooks, 108,000 posts with #middlegradefiction and 57,500 posts with #middlegradereads. We can safely assume that many of these posts were created by adults, given that Instagram requires a person to be at least 13 years old (even older in some jurisdictions) to be able to open an account. Middle-grade books are written for an audience of 8 to 12 years old, but the great number of reviews of middle-grade books posted by adults on their accounts and the considerable number of "likes" and comments they amass demonstrate that despite the age-based categorization, adults enjoy reading these books as well. Although some of the reviewers, or "bookstagrammers" as they are called, are librarians, teachers or parents who are reading the books together with children, many of them are adults who are simply discovering children's titles, new and old, and recommending them to other adult readers for them or their children to read. The reading challenge Middle Grade March, a play on the title of George Eliot's Victorian novel *Middlemarch* (1871), is also hosted on social media to set apart the month of March for reading middle grade books. Organizers provide prompts readers can follow (e.g., a book with a silhouette on the cover) and adults can participate in the challenge to read books for or with children (for example, their children or younger siblings) or for themselves. These show that children's literature appeals to members of two literary systems often at opposing ends – the adult's and the children's (O'Sullivan 1993: 111).

Such a duality of readership is exclusive to children's literature. What makes children's literature unique is that it is written for two audiences: the adults who select them and the children who read them. Even its production depends on

adults who serve as authors, editors, publishers and translators, creating texts for children based on their memory of their early years and their understanding of childhood. Lists of notable children's books are also determined mainly by adults such as critics, teachers, librarians and booksellers who appraise their quality and literary merit according to what they believe children should read which in turn is based on their own adult conceptions of a book's worth. This very nature of children's literature then raises the question to what degree the interests, needs and preferences of children in terms of what they want to read are taken into consideration in children's literature production and recognition. For instance, in 2022, the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) created a new set of awards, the shadowers' choice awards, judged by 2,000 children around the country. The children used the same criteria as the adult judges but did not know the choices made by the adults. The result was two completely different sets of winners, demonstrating that the books adults select for children to read are not always what children themselves want to read. Only the winning and honors authors, illustrators and publishers chosen by the adult judges are featured on CBCA's website.

Because it has become the norm for adults to speak for children in a genre that is primarily meant for children, this study has intended, from the beginning, to examine children's literature from the standpoint of children themselves. Children's views and perspectives are not considered enough in many aspects of children's literature production. However, children's perspective is not to be confused with a child perspective. Children's perspective refers to "children's own experiences and utterances" (Sommer, Samuelsson and Hundeide 2010: ix). On the other hand, a child perspective refers to the "adult's realistic effort and success in understanding a child's world" (Sommer, Samuelsson and Hundeide 2010: ix). Children's literature is often created and appraised from a child perspective in which adults are considered experts who give insights into children's lives. But as Hughes (1988) noted (Gollop 2000: 18 quoted in Peters and Kelly 2011: 14), it is only by talking to a child that one gains an authentic view of his or her life: "The most obvious advantage of interviewing a child is that the child is the expert (the only expert) on his [*sic*] feelings, perceptions and thoughts.... If an adult wants to know what or how the child is feeling or thinks, the adult must ask the child." This practice is a pragmatic approach to understanding and exploring children's perspectives but one that seems difficult to implement at a symbolic level and a practical level. At the symbolic level, adults feel that they know enough about children and childhood to write about young readers' needs and wants – the child perspective. In Chapter 2, role dualism is introduced to gain a better understanding of what drives adults to draw this conclusion. At the practical level, the added layer of involving children in production toward an inclusive and participatory practice demands time and resources. However, the symbolic reasoning makes for a stronger case between the two, as the experience and skill that go into creating a book, coupled with "wisdom" gained with age, legitimize the adults' authoritative role in children's publishing.

1.1 Scope and focus

Children's literature is a rich and broad genre that encompasses different topics and a wide range of works. The decision to focus on children's humor in the study is informed by the fact that humor is a constant feature in much of children's literature. Children's author Victoria Mackinlay, who served as the child judges' facilitator for the CBCA awards, noted that while children's preferences in literature can be quite varied and unexpected, their liking for humor remains the same: "What [children] liked and didn't like was sometimes surprising, but humour in the stories was a big winner" (Blake 2022: n.p.). Because humor impacts on children, in keeping them engaged in reading and in encouraging them to read more and regularly, learning more about humor and how children perceive it will benefit several young readers. By understanding how children are as readers, creators of children's literature, which include writers, editors, translators and publishers, can better bring into the text children's tastes and interests and make it more relatable to a wide range of children. Knowing children's preferences has implications not only for improving children's reading habits but also for enhancing literacy: the present study explores, among other things, whether humorous texts can facilitate language learning and strengthen the motivation to read in a less dominant (or less used) language.

1.1.1 Focus on children's poems

This study, in particular, focuses on humor in children's poems. Although poetry and prose share some similarities (for instance, poems like prose can have characters), poems were chosen over prose as materials for this study for three reasons. The first reason is purely pragmatic: poems were selected for their brevity. The study employed poetry reading sessions with Grade 3 pupils to understand how they perceive humorous children's poems. The materials for discussion must be short because the poetry reading sessions were designed to be short (suitable for 45 minutes) to take into account children's short attention span. During the poetry reading sessions, videos of the poems being read aloud were presented to the participants. The videos used were all under two minutes, giving more time for children to respond to questions and interact.

The second reason has to do with how content and form work together in poetry. The content (what the poet says) is supported by the physical structure (how the poet says it), and vice versa. The best example of this is the shape poem, also called a concrete poem, in which the words are arranged in such a way that they form an image. The visual presentation enhances the effect of the poem and adds another layer of interpretation of its meaning. Rhyme, rhythm and alliteration – all elements of form – are likewise closely connected to the meaning of the poem especially children's poems. For example, Rio Alma's Filipino poem for children, Zigzag, cleverly employs anagrams and consonance (the repetition of "s" sounds) to create a sort of tongue-twister and the screeching sound of tires and uses typography to visualize movement:

Zig, zag. Zag, zig.
Giyagis
Ang sigasig
Ng sagisag
Ng gasgas na ugat ng palad
At de-kahong
Mga senyas
O ng parikala sa landas
Ng ginigisa
Sa sariling gasolina.
Zig, zig.
Zag, zag.

The children's poems used in the study were translated from English into Filipino to determine whether Filipino children would perceive the humor in the poems differently when presented in Filipino, their national language. The translation of humorous poems is an exciting area to study given the interconnection between form and content and how there will always be some conflict between the two in poetry translation. In most cases, the content will have priority over style. However, a great majority of children's poems, especially those with a humorous narrative, rely on style, that is, the use of rhyme and repeated sounds. As will be shown in Chapter 4, the translator has to choose which to prioritize between the two in the event of a conflict, that is, when it becomes impossible to be faithful to both form and content, as is often the case. This shows that translation is a balancing act, requiring a delicate equilibrium between what could be lost and what could be gained in the process and product of translation. In *Notes on Translation Technique*, Procházka, for example, explains why he retained the stylistic structures of the original German work in his Czech translation: "... this complexity, baroqueness, almost lack of clarity, belongs to the basic structure and therefore must be preserved (...) the Czech reader gathers a similar impression from the translation to that of the German reader from the original." The aim of the study is to examine whether a poem, when relieved of the symbiotic nature of the relationship between form and content in the translation, still has a "similar impression" to the target reader. This is in support of Foster's assertion (in Nida 1964) that a good translation is "one that fulfills the same purpose in the new language as the original did in the language in which it was written." Children's poems are particularly interesting to examine in this regard. Shultz and Robillard (in McGhee and Chapman 1980) contend that if either the "tendentious content" or the "poetic form" is removed from a children's poem, the resulting version is less funny than the original. Thus, the translations produced for the study focused on form and content separately to determine which of the two carries more significant humorous impact.

The third reason for selecting poetry has an outreach component to it. Most of the time, children struggle with poetry, finding it confusing or incomprehensi-

ble. Furthermore, as will be shown in Chapter 9, more children like prose better than poetry for reasons such as a preference for exciting plots and developing a relationship with the characters in the stories. This prejudice against poetry exists even though many children are exposed to nursery rhymes in the early stages of developing language and creative expression. However, as they get older, they learn to associate poetry with serious reading: schools frequently include in their curricula only poems from the so-called canon of children's verse which Styles (1996: 190) describes as "never intended for the young at all, but was verse which adults thought *suitable for children. The gatekeepers of the canon are the anthologists* [italics in the original]." Styles adds: "Poems by Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Tennyson, who never wrote for children, have been collected more frequently in prestigious anthologies of the last hundred years than work by Stevenson, Lear or Rossetti." The present study is a chance for children to experience poetry written specifically for children and become aware that poems, similar to stories, can also be engaging and pleasurable. If the results of the poetry sessions are any indication of how children, in general, can get engaged in poetry using humor, then poetry reading sessions can be effective in transforming children's mindset toward greater poetry understanding and appreciation. When children learn to read poetry for pleasure, humor is reconciled with the serious intent of poetry: to encourage readers to think about the wider world and how they are connected to it. As Styles (2011: n.p.) puts it: "The best children's poetry is profound though the voice in the poem may be superficially light-hearted – and fun and laughter have always been and will, I trust, always be an important part of any healthy diet of poetry."

1.1.2 Focus on Filipino

It is not only poetry that is competing with other forms of children's literature. The national language of the Philippines, Filipino, has been competing with English in the area of teaching and learning. For instance, Filipino subjects are no longer required in college[1]. Daisy Jane Cunanan-Calado, a Filipino language advocate, expresses her frustration over this "lack of... love for [the] language" (Pabalate 2022: n.p.). She says that although there is "nothing wrong with prioritizing English over Filipino, which modern parents are doing", [Filipino parents] "must not give less value to Filipino" (Pabalate 2022: n.p.). Calado is concerned about "how to give equal footing to the national language" and "promote Filipino and emphasize its value beyond a mere school requirement" in elementary and high school (Pabalate 2022: n.p.). She adds that teaching Filipino should be "experiential, functional, conversational, and not too academic or grammar-based": "[Parents] should develop a fond experience in learning and using our language, so [children] would find it interesting" (Pabalate 2022: n.p.).

[1]Meanwhile, some universities in the United States, including major ones, are offering Filipino language classes (Parba 2018) which affirms the "desire for Filipino to be taught [to] and learned [by] to encourage readers to think about the wider world and how they are connected to it" (Axel 2014: 305 in Parba 2018: 4).

A good measure of this is when children also choose to read leisurely on their own in Filipino and not just in English.

Studies have shown that humor is effective in stimulating interest in reading among children. For example, a study of elementary children from Spain, the UK, Iceland and Turkey shows that most children (between 57% and 69%) like to read books that make them laugh (Adalsteindottir 2011 in Orekoya, Chik and Chan 2014: 62). What is lacking in the literature, however, is evidence that humor also stimulates a child's enthusiasm in reading in a less dominant language. This study aims to address this gap. In this study, the less dominant (or less used) language appears to be Filipino, which seems consistent with general trends. According to Pabalate (2022: n.p.), "since most subjects in school are taught in English and the Philippines have become increasingly globally competitive, more and more parents are choosing English as their child's first language." Parba (2018: 15) also observed that some Filipinos identified English as their first language. This is particularly true among families belonging to the middle and upper classes. With the lower socio-economic classes especially in Metro Manila who do not use English at home, there is some evidence that children are enthusiastic about learning in Filipino. A school official in a public school believes that using the native language as the medium of instruction "erases the notion that being good at English makes you brilliant": if the child speaks English well, then he or she must do better in his or her own language[2] (Granali 2013). Thus, while this study only involves children from middle-class families and whether humor can motivate them to read more in Filipino outside the classroom, the results can also be applied to children from lower-income groups who may be more proficient in Filipino but who may need the motivation to read in Filipino outside of school. But as Chapter 3 will show, this begs the question of whether there are enough materials for children wanting to read more in Filipino. As Calado notes, the biggest problem with reading literature in Filipino is that sometimes, it is not accessible and most of the time, it is only meant for lower levels (Pabalate 2022: n.p.).

1.1.3 Focus on translation

Children's response to humor in literature has received little attention (Zbaracki 2003: 30), and even far less when it comes to humor in poetry for children. To begin with, the critical study of translating poems for children remains "rare across popular and academic literatures", unlike translating poems for adults which is "common worldwide" (Withrow 2015: 51). Most studies done in the area of humorous children's literature involved jokes, riddles or cartoons (Shannon 1999: 122) as well as fiction, may they be entire books or excerpts such as a chapter. But as Mallan (1993: 37) points out, "poetry has the potential to capture comic effects in memorable form." It is a known fact that, for some children, the initial encounter with literature was through poetry in the form of

[2]Own language can also refer to other Philippine languages.

nursery rhymes and nonsense verses, which "serve as a spring board for diving into real poetry" (Huck 1979: 308). Exposure to nursery rhymes is perhaps the reason that though much has changed in terms of poetry's subject matter as well as language and format (Mallan 1993: 37), children still prefer narrative rhyme and humorous verse (Huck et al. 1987: 414 in Mallan 1993: 37). Huck (1979: 325) adds that "all children enjoy humorous poetry, whether it is gay nonsense or an amusing story." Translated texts compose a significant amount of literature created for children, so much so that their role is seen as more important in children's literature than adults (Bamberger 1979 in Lathey 2016: 9). It is not surprising then that in the last three decades, there has been a marked increase in scholarly writing dealing with the translation of texts for children, with studies covering aspects such as translation approaches and the function of translated children's text in the literary polysystem. More recent research has also been decisively motivated by certain traits of children's literature. It has looked into ideological manipulation, dual readership, features of orality and the relationship between text and image (Alvastad 2010: 24).

Although children read translations, there is little evidence, however, of their responses to the content and context of translated texts (Lathey 2016: 10). Children's response to translation composes a neglected area even if the few studies conducted on the effects of translation on young readers reveal important findings. For instance, Henriques (2013) found that although foreignizing strategies could raise the readers' awareness of the foreignness of short fiction (55), they did not make the text more challenging to read or less pleasant for children (53). The understanding of the characters and reactions to the plot events was virtually the same between the foreignized and naturalized version of the children's story (53). Another example is the work of Sung et al. (2015) which examined the impact of name translation on Korean children's understanding of picture book stories. Two picture books were read to the children, one with character names in Korean and the other with transliteration of Japanese names. The results indicated that children did not find the picture book with Japanese names harder to understand than the one with Korean names (226). There was no difference in their judgment of the stories or characters, which suggests that Japanese names did not hinder the participants' identification with the story characters (227). These findings have implications, for instance, in cultural context adaptation, which is widely studied in the translation of children's literature.

That it is culturally bound and dependent on personal factors then makes humor a major challenge for translators. For Raphaelson-West (1989: 128), humor can only be translated with the goal of cultural education, "using explanation and/or awkward language that sacrifices the dramatic effect." Raphaelson-West divides jokes into three groups: (1) linguistic such as puns, (2) cultural such as ethnic jokes, and (3) universal such as the unexpected (130), with the jokes progressively becoming easier to translate as one moves from (1) to (3). She adds that it is possible to translate humor if one bears in mind that "the translation will not always be as humorous as the original" (140). This is sup-

ported by Zabalbeascoa (2005: 187) who stresses that assuming that "humor will necessarily be equally important in both the translated version and its source text" or that "the nature of the humor must be the same in both source text and its translation" is a "dangerous simplification." Furthermore, he emphasizes that the translator must know "where humor stands as a priority and what restrictions stand in the way of fulfilling the intended goals" (Zabalbeascoa 1996 in Zabalbeascoa 2005: 201). Scholars and critics should be aware that there are times when translators do not aim for sameness in aspects they have no intention of preserving since they work based on a different set of criteria (Zabalbeascoa 2005: 203). The lack of "serious work" on humor translation in translation studies suggests, according to Vandaele (2002: 150), that "humour translation is qualitatively different from 'other types' of translation and, consequently, one cannot write about humour translation in the same way one writes about other types of translation."

1.2 Research/literature gaps

This study examines children's humor and the translation of humorous children's poems. Although children's humor has been widely studied by scholars such as McGhee who wrote in-depth about the stages of development of children's humor and even by Freud (1905) who was interested in the three stages of humor among children, not much attention has been given to other factors that could affect children's humor such as gender, language preferences and culture. With the first, gendered responses to humor in literature are not well discussed; by and large, humor in children is generalized only by age group. For instance, Mckenzie (2005) asserts that picture books with scatological humor are popular with younger children without making a distinction in how they are received by boys and girls. However, there are differences not only in the type of humor that appeal to girls and boys but also in how they express themselves creatively, often with the use of humor. In her study of primary pupils, O'kane Boal (2021) found that boys are more likely than girls to dive in and start to tell a story when asked. Similarly, when formulating stories, girls were more likely to refer to girls in their stories while boys only referred to boys. Language can likewise be a factor in children's appreciation of humor. It makes sense to assume that difficulty in understanding words leads to less cognitive involvement by readers. It also impinges on the reception of humor. Finally, with culture, what is "tendentious content", to borrow the term of Shultz and Robillard, or controversial or challenging is first and foremost culturally situated, as shown in Chapter 5. Differences in how humor is produced and received culturally have been studied with adult subjects, frequently focused on the Western and Eastern contrast, but minimal comparison, if any, has been made with children from different cultures. This study contributes to the literature by providing an account of how culture can influence children's response to humor in literary texts.

As mentioned earlier, humor plays a huge part in determining content for children's books. Besides suspense and adventure, humor motivates children to actively read books (Orekoya, Chik and Chan 2014: 62). In a study by Zbaracki (2003: iii), it was found that children were highly engaged in reading when the material was a humorous children's book. Humorous stories quickly become favorites among children (Shannon 1999: 119) although examples of such humorous stories have not been given. Humor is also a constant in children's verbal lore (Factor 1989: 162) such as chants, jingles and rhymes. Previous studies have pointed out what kind of humor appeals to children the most. For example, the study by Shannon (1999: 119) showed that children appreciated humor related to (1) superiority or sense of accomplishment, (2) physical events and appearances, (3) the scatological and gross, and (4) language and wordplay. As for humor in children's poetry, Huck (1979: 336-338) considers animal poems as humorous poems and says that humor in this subgenre focuses on the description of funny, eccentric characters with delightful-sounding names as well as ludicrous situations and funny stories. Furthermore, she says that "much of what children consider funny is really sadistic and even ghoulish" and that "much of what adults would call pure nonsense delights children."

But humor preferences are culturally dependent. They vary not only from one culture to another (Niedzielski 2008: 140) but also from one individual to another (Shannon 1999: 121). They change as society changes and as individuals get older (Mallan 1993: 8). What is lacking in the literature is the study of primary school children's response to humor from a cultural lens. The present study hopes to offer some insights into this. Other factors that influence appreciation of humor are sex, personality and intelligence (Kappas 1967: 70; for sex differences in children, see also McGhee 1979: 209-210). As regards the last factor, Vandaele (2002: 157) says that the ability to understand humor is "commonly accepted as an important index of intelligence" although for Chik (2001: xii), children's intellectual ability is unrelated to humor appreciation. Children's appreciation of the humor in the books also related to their sensitivity to style and tone (Shannon 1999: 142). With regard to gender, Honig (1988: 65-66) reviewed some earlier studies pointing to gender differences in humor. Among the results cited are the following:

- Boys 6 to 11 years old scored higher than girls in frequency of laughter, behavioral and verbal initiations of humor and amount of hostile humor (McGhee 1976).
- Boys were more likely than girls to choose aggressive cartoons rather than nonsensical cartoons by age 4 and 5 (King and King 1973).
- Seven-year-old girls smiled more and 7-year-old boys laughed more when with friends. Girls were more likely to laugh when with a boy than with another girl (Chapman 1983).

Other studies on gender in humor show that boys are more inclined to initiate humor more than girls and girls laugh more but initiate less (Canzler

1980 and Franzini 2002 in Dowling 2014: 123) and girls laugh more frequently about "the esthetical form, expression of humor and playing practical jokes" while boys laugh more frequently about "the mishaps of others" (Neu 2006 in Dowling 2014: 123). While previous studies looked at how children make and perceive jokes and how they appreciate humor in prose stories and visual materials, the present study aims to contribute to the discussion by uncovering whether there are differences in gender when children read humorous poems, an area that has not been explored.

1.3 Research questions

This thesis examines children's response to humor in translated texts which Verster (2019) considers an underexamined area. In particular, it explores the unexplored area of children's response to translations of humorous children's poems. The research question which hopes to address the knowledge gap in children's literature and translation studies is: How do children respond to humor in translated poems? The study hopes to identify children's experiences with translated poems, whether they respond similarly to different humorous poems and whether they identify with the characters and situations in the poems. The descriptions of their experiences are valuable for gaining insight into children's humor appreciation especially as it relates to factors such as comprehension, which is only part of the psychological response to humor (Purser, Herwegen and Thomas 2020)[3] as well as language dominance and preferred mode of input and reading environment. In particular, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Does exposure to humorous poems motivate children to read more poems?
2. Do children who read more in Filipino than in English (the two official languages in the Philippines) perceive the humor in the translated poems in Filipino more positively?
3. What is the relationship between text comprehension and humor appreciation? Are good comprehenders likely to find the poems funny, and conversely, are poor comprehenders likely to find the poems less funny?
4. Do children find a humorous poem funnier when it is read to them or when they read it individually?
5. Do children find a humorous poem funnier when they read it alone or when they read it with other people?

[3]They observed a "reliable relationship between humor comprehension and smiling/laughter" only with children 8 years or older, suggesting that laughter does not automatically result from explicit understanding. Furthermore, they found that vocabulary competence is linked to comprehension but only among older children which "demonstrates a separable role of language proficiency in humor comprehension."

6. Which elements make a humorous poem funny for children?

7. Are there gender differences in appreciating the humor in children's poems?

What sets the present study apart from other investigations is that it looks at self-reported comprehension rather than gauges the reader's comprehension through a task or question (as seen, for instance, in McGhee 1971). The relationship of the mode of input (participants reading the text individually versus listening to it read to them) and reading environment (participants reading alone or with other people) to humor appreciation have also not been investigated by other researchers which adds to the usefulness of the present study. Consistency in the participants' responses should make evident whether humorous poems elicit the same reaction regardless of differences in the type of poem (in this case, fantastical versus realistic).

In addition to these questions that directly address humor appreciation, the study also aims to answer these questions:

8. Do children themselves regard children's poems as having a dual readership (i.e., one that has both children and adults as the intended readers and not only as mediators in the case of adults)?

9. Can children better relate to a poem when it is translated into their national language?

The first question should bring light to what children perceive as suitable literature for children against one that is made for adults and whether children's ideas of what is "good" and "appropriate" for them are congruent with adult views. In particular, the question should uncover children's perspectives on children's humor versus adult humor. The participants' views on the relatability of characters and situations in the translated poems not only direct to a greater understanding of children's humor, specifically what kind of humor appeals to them the most, but also of the cross-cultural effectiveness of the translation, bearing in mind that translation is "the communication of stories between two cultures" (Barslund (2011: 139)[4]. In other words, this shows whether the translator has successfully negotiated the transfer of foreign cultures across the language gap.

Finally, the study aims to answer these questions:

10. Is form or content more influential in producing humor in children's poems? Does the presence of rhyme and rhythm make a poem funny or is the humorous content of the poem, without the support of structural elements, sufficient to make it funny?

[4]Although this applies to prose stories, this can also apply to narrative poems that tell a story.

To determine this, two Filipino translations – one focused on form and another on content – were written and presented to the children during the poetry reading sessions.

1.4 Limitations

1.4.1 Language

One limitation of the study is that it assumes that the participants' major languages are Filipino and English, disregarding the possibility that they could be more versed in other Philippine languages as the first language spoken at home. The Philippines is an archipelagic state with 186 recognized languages. It has two official languages, Filipino and English, with the former mainly based on Tagalog, a regional language spoken in the island of Luzon. Although some subjects at the elementary level, particularly in Grades 1 to 3, are taught using the students' mother tongue, English remains the primary medium of instruction from preschool to university. Kilates (2005: 13) expresses: "since [the] culture [in the Philippines] is made up of many regional and ethnic cultures with their own 'national' languages (not a unique situation in the world), English has provided... some sort of common medium of communication." Thus, it would be interesting to know how primary students, who are more exposed to English in school, respond to humor expressed in Filipino. Ezrina and Valian (2022: 2) believe that "lower proficiency in a language could either slow humor processing in that language, or cause failure to understand the joke, or both." Other scholars also found that humor processing is slower in the less dominant language (Aycicegi-Dinn et al. 2018; Ozdemir and Uysal 2016 in Ezrina and Valian 2022: 2). Ezrina and Valian (2022) add that even when there are two equally dominant languages, processing, albeit successful, is slowed by the mapping of semantic representations and access of meanings. The study did not ask for the language background or profile of the participants and only inquired about fluency in Filipino or English. However, the participants came from the University of the Philippines (UP) Integrated School which has a strong bilingual background (Filipino and English), especially since 1989 when UP adopted a language policy that emphasized the use of Filipino and then English.

1.4.2 Age

The other limitation of the study is that it looked at only one particular age group of children. Thus, whether the present study's findings can apply to a wider age range or whether there are age-related differences cannot be concluded from this study alone. The decision to involve Grade 3 pupils is influenced by the researcher's enjoyment of middle-grade literature or those texts intended for 8- to 12-year-old children. The youngest children in this age group have been selected since their cognitive skills allow them to understand linguis-

tic incongruities. However, these are not sophisticated enough and they cannot fully explain humorous events: for instance, it has been found by Zimmermann (2014) that children from 6 to 9 years of age can understand riddles but cannot say why a riddle is funny (this is further discussed in section 5.5.1.2). Thus, it would be interesting to see how younger children respond to questions on the comprehensibility and relatability of the poem's subject matter. The other reason for selecting children in third grade is that by 8 years of age, children can "decenter, take the point of view of another, and is more likely to refrain from laughing while an unfortunate person is present" (Honig 1988: 64). The poems selected for the poetry reading sessions deal with unfortunate (but humorous) events which can test whether children at this age can empathize with fictional characters, giving further insight into children's appreciation of humor. Results show not only the influence of gender but also of culture and the growth of moral development (Honig 1988: 64). The third reason for choosing younger pupils is that it can provide a benchmark for future studies on humor reception across different age groups. One such example was the study of Fabrizi and Pollio (1987) who compared the frequency and nature of classroom events that evoked laughing or smiling in a 3rd, 7th and 11th grade classroom.[5] The fourth reason for studying children at this age is that third grade is the last stage before pupils move to the intermediate phase (Grades 4 to 6). By the time they reach Grade 4, they will read different formats and genres. Thus, Grade 3 is an excellent period to encourage poetry reading, especially of humorous poems, not only for pleasure but also to enhance learning. Hayati and Shoostari (2011 in Zabidin et al. 2020: 129) observe that using humor in the classroom had an impact on students' comprehension and retention skills while Zabidin (2015 in Zabidin et al. 2020: 129) notes that the results of vocabulary tests were better when students were given humorous texts. The final reason is that third graders are seldom studied in terms of appreciating humor in literature. For example, Shannon (1999: 125) and Zbaracki (2003: 43) who came up with categories of materials that children find funny in literature, conducted their field study (or part of it in the case of Zbaracki) in Grade 4/5 classrooms.

1.5 Overall structure

Chapters 2 to 5 provide the theoretical framework. Chapter 2 demonstrates that the definitions of children's literature vary but, in general, exclude children's perspectives as they are based solely on what adults think about children's literature. Thus, how children perceive texts primarily meant for them is examined in this study. Chapter 3 shows that it is not only children's literature that is peripherally situated but, quite often, so too is translated literature.

[5] They found that humorous events became less frequent as the grade level increased. Students in the seventh and 11th grades also tended to produce disruptive behaviors which was not observed with the third graders. Differences between boys and girls were "small and infrequent."

A historical take on the translation of children's literature in the Philippines provides insight into the evolving functions of translation in a former colony. To compare early and current functions, the chapter also discusses present directions in translated children's literature in the Philippines. In Chapter 4, it is shown that most of the time, the translator cannot be faithful to both form and content of the poem and must choose which to prioritize between the two. Thus, in this study, two translations of the poems have been used to understand how children respond to humor: one based on form and another based on content. Chapter 5 shows how humor, similar to children's literature, is difficult to define. Three theories of humor are studied. The chapter also looks at humor from developmental and cultural angles.

Chapter 6 zooms in on the methodology employed in the study, from data collection to data analysis. It discusses how the research adapted to the Covid-19 pandemic, which situates the study in an extraordinary time with a new set of norms. A considerable part of the chapter discusses how the materials for the poetry reading sessions have been prepared.

Chapters 7 to 9 present the results and discussion. Chapter 7 includes the results of the poetry reading sessions with children. Feedback from the participants and their parents are included to show how poetry reading sessions, despite the online setup as the "new normal", can inspire poetry appreciation among young readers. Chapter 8 presents an interpretation of the study's results. The participants' responses to the translated poems are explained from a cultural lens. The effect of reading funny poems on social relationships, reading widely and creativity is also discussed. It is shown how a text's complexity has implications for humor competence. Finally, the chapter makes a case for the preference for free verse. Chapter 9 contains the conclusions of the study. These include the role of culture and gender in poetry appreciation, which type of "relatability" is more influential when reading a translation, whether it is content or form that determines humor in poetry, and the use of group interviews to study children's humor. The chapter ends with some recommended topics for further study.