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Children's response to humor in translated poetry

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CHAPTER 3

Translation of children's literature in the Philippines

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the beginnings of children's literature translation in the Philippines vis-à-vis the changing roles of translation in the country's history. These changes relate to the location of translation in the literary polysystem; translation can occupy either a central or peripheral position. The chapter then situates Even-Zohar's polysystem theory within an exploration of current directions and trends in children's book publishing in the Philippines. Specifically, the chapter illustrates how translated foreign children's books are positioned in a multilingual country. The gaps and opportunities identified in the chapter are further validated by the responses given in the poetry reading sessions which are presented in Chapter 7 on results.

3.2 Translated literature according to Even-Zohar's polysystem theory

According to Even-Zohar (2012: 162), it is imperative to study translated literature for two reasons. First, we are unaware of the "function of translated literature for a literature as a whole or of its position within that literature." He mentions, for instance, how translated literature being imported to a country can influence the writings produced there. Second, we are unaware of the "possible existence of translated literature as a particular literary system" (162). Translated literature, he posits, "may possess a repertoire of its own", which

could even be exclusive to it (163).

To explain translated literature's function and influence, Even-Zohar turns to the idea of a polysystem. The concept of a system was first defined by Tynyanov (1929 in Saldanha and Baker 2009: 197) as a "multi-layered structure of elements which relate to and interact with each other." A polysystem then is "a multiple system, a system of various systems which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent" (Even-Zohar 2005: 3). Even-Zohar considers translated literature as part of the polysystem of a given literature. Under the lens of the polysystem theory, the literary system is studied as part of a more extensive system that includes social, cultural and historical systems, all with definite boundaries yet interrelated and interdependent of each other such that changes in one system may impact on one or more systems. This contradicts the prevailing idea during Even-Zohar's time that translation is not a system but merely a collection of individual works, "an arbitrary group of translated texts" that can be studied in isolation and not part of a system.

Translated literature exists as part of the polysystem of a given national literature, because translation is not only a phenomenon with boundaries but an activity that relates to cultural system (Even-Zohar 1990 in Shuttleworth 2000: 178). What is revolutionary in Even-Zohar's theory is its assertion that the literary polysystem is characterized by tension between the center and periphery as different genres struggle to be in the center. In other words, even translated texts affect or depend on each other. They correlate in the way by which the target literature chooses works for translation which is connected with the "home co-systems" of the target literature and prestige and dominance are important elements in this process (Even-Zohar in Aveling 2005: 11). For Even-Zohar then, translated literature is not only a system but an integral and active system within any literary polysystem.

3.2.1 Translated literature in the central position

According to the polysystem theory, translated literature can occupy either a central or a peripheral position. It occupies a central or primary position when it is very influential in shaping the center of the polysystem, which includes literary and non-literary systems. That is, translated works are largely part of the innovatory forces and likely to be identified with major events in literary history (Even-Zohar 2012: 163). There is no clear-cut distinction between original and translated writings (163) and the leading writers often produce the most popular translations. In this case, foreign works may also lead to new models of reality, new poetic language or compositional patterns and techniques in the home literature (163). For instance, translated crime fiction was used to draw Catalans away from the dominant Spanish (Castilian) literary polysystem (King 2017). King observes: "In making foreign crime fiction "theirs," Catalan translators were able to forge a literary language, which initially seemed artifi-

cial, but which was later used by the writers to write their own fictions. Then the translations became models for new writers whose original work began to fill this “literary vacuum” in Catalan literature.”

What translated genres are normally part of the core can vary depending on a particular time period. For example, according to Galileo S. Zafra (2023, personal communication), the polysystem theory can be applied to how long narrative poems called *awit* and *korido*¹⁰ arrived in the Philippines and proliferated in the 19th century. These can be considered translations in the form of adaptations. Zafra explains that the *awit* and *korido* became prevalent when the middle class in the Philippines sought a new literary experience and the number of private printing presses in the country grew. Before the 19th century and the spread of the *awit* and *korido*, only religious literature existed with the printing presses controlled by the church. For Zafra, this information can be viewed using the polysystem theory particularly in how the literary system is affected by the political, economic and cultural systems. Zafra states that the high status of the *awit* and *korido* influenced the succeeding literary production, such as in the way the nation was portrayed. This is evident, for example, in *Florante at Laura* (1838) and *Orosman at Zafira* (1857-1860). Before the *awit* and *korido* became dominant written texts, only events with a spiritual dimension were depicted in literature. Zafra adds that the predominance of the *awit* and *korido* strengthened the tradition of narrative poetry in the Philippines, although this is also seen in the *pasyon* as well as in the epics which are transmitted through oral tradition and not through writing.

Some scholars have looked at “canonical” Philippine literature which forms the core texts. For example, during the American colonial regime in the 1900s which followed the Spanish occupation that lasted over three centuries, the English literature and humanities was largely Anglo-American, even with the Filipinos’ low proficiency in English during the early years (Reyes 2014: 20). This changed by the third decade of the American occupation when Filipinos started to attend the university in the Philippines and abroad, thus developing their competence in English. As a result, “writers and critics who had been trained formally in the Anglo-American literary and critical modes” were produced. According to Reyes (2014: 20), this generation of “modernist” writers would later constitute the canon of Philippine Literature. Reyes (2014: 31) adds that in terms of craftsmanship, there was the “shift from medieval metrical romances in drama and the novel that had dominated under the Spanish colonial era to the “realism” and experimentation of the modern genres, or the shift from the conventions of rhyme and meter of *Balagtasismo* to the free verse of Alejandro G. Abadilla.” Meanwhile, Ortuño Casanova (2014) offers an insight into “canonical” Philippine Literature in Spanish. She identifies two generations of Filipino writers in Spanish, forming the canon: one born during the Spanish period and the other born during the American occupation, which is why

¹⁰The *awit* and *korido* are Philippine metrical romances. The *awit* is set in dodecasyllabic quatrains while the *korido* is in octosyllabic quatrains (eight syllables called *hakira*). These secular poetries started during the Spanish period.

“parts of their works tackle different topics.” With the first, writing in Spanish had a “revolutionary intention” while with the latter, it was “characterized by a patriotic conservatism and nostalgia for the past” (70). She adds that the current literary canon is determined more by “political and patriotic prestige” than literary prestige (58). Furthermore, she says that no peripheral groups put pressure on the central system, resulting in a “fossilized” Philippine literary system. She attributes the absence of peripheral groups to the gradual replacement of Spanish by the native languages and English which “heavily impeded the cultural progress in Spanish” (74).

3.2.2 Translated literature in the peripheral position

Translated literature occupies a peripheral position when it does not influence major processes and “is modelled according to norms already conventionally established by an already dominant type in the target literature” (Even-Zohar 2012: 165). Translated literature then becomes “a major factor of conservatism” which does not maintain “positive correlations with original writing” (165). According to Even-Zohar, this is the normal position assumed by translated literature although he stresses that it is not static. For example, in the Philippines, the novel was peripheral to the short story in the first decade of the 20th century (Zafra 2023, personal communication). Zafra attributes this to the fact that with the short story, one writes with brevity in mind and hence it can be written quickly. Furthermore, it gave Filipinos a quick and easy read that they liked. However, what is in the periphery at a particular time can change along with changes in social, economic and literary activities. For example, although the first decade of the 20th century was dominated by the short story, the novel became more popular in the succeeding decades in the Philippines, particularly in serial form. According to Zafra (2023, personal communication), this is connected to the spread of commercial printing presses and the popularity of commercial magazines. Readers were also excited to follow the story that was delivered in installments. Novels became even more influential in the following decades as they were adapted into films.

3.3 The beginnings of translated children's literature in the Philippines ¹¹

In the precolonial Philippines, translation mainly served an economic purpose: translation happened in trade sites via the interaction between the natives and foreign merchants and was used to carry out trade between or among different speech communities. At this time, children already enjoyed listening to folk tales, myths and legends. Epics that are sung as well as folk songs, one of the

¹¹Main source: Almario 2010. The historical background of translation was also based on a lecture by Dr. Corazon Villareal of the University of the Philippines given in June 2017.

earliest forms of Philippine literature, entertained both adults and children. There was no distinction then between the story for the child and the story for the adult (Paterno 1984: 10).

During the first part of the Spanish colonial period in the Philippines which began in 1521, literature was mainly in translation and came in the form of novels, manuals of conduct and hymns that were used to convert the natives of the archipelago to the Catholic Christian faith. The Spanish brought these religious texts to the Philippines from Mexico through the galleon trade. In 1603, the king of Spain issued a decree requiring every missionary in the Philippines to have the "necessary competency, and know the language of the indios whom he should instruct" (Rafael 1992: 19). By learning the vernacular languages (Rodríguez 2013) and translating religious instructional materials from Spanish (i.e., Castilian) into Tagalog, the most widely studied language in the Philippines (Rafael 1992: 26), the missionaries ensured that the natives could be kept under Spanish control. Thus, translated literature was in the periphery.

During the second part of Spanish colonial rule in the 18th century, translators became agents of new systems and innovations toward emerging nationalist aspirations. Translated literature entered a new phase and became innovative, releasing Filipinos from mere imitation to artistic creativity. This period also saw the rise in original writing by Filipinos who wrote mainly in Spanish about the colonial Philippines – its social, cultural and economic conditions – and Tagalog. The translation of nationalistic works grew in the 1800s together with increasing discontent with the Spanish rule (Cultural Center of the Philippines 1994). Hence, translated literature moved toward a more central position.

It was during this period that children's literature in the Philippines was formalized, that is to say, its existence was recognized. José Rizal, who would later become the national hero of the Philippines, wrote a retelling of "The Monkey and the Turtle" and illustrated it while in Paris sometime in 1885. He titled it "Carole Tagalog: Le singe et la tortue." "The Monkey and the Turtle" is considered the first Filipino folktale for children although its original author is unknown. In 1889, Rizal published "Two Eastern Fables", an article written in English, in *Trubner's Oriental Record* (a journal devoted to the literature of the East) in London. In the article, Rizal compared the "The Monkey and the Turtle" with "The Battle of the Monkey and the Crab" (Limos 2020), a fable from Japan. He argued that both tales were likely to have originated from Sumatra (Indonesia) or Mindanao (Philippines). This was the first time that a children's story from the Philippines had been published.

Rizal played a vital role in the history of translated children's literature in the Philippines. Three years before he published "Two Eastern Fables", he translated five fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen from German into Tagalog while he was in Germany in 1886. He sent these as a Christmas present to his niece and nephews in the Philippines that year. Until this time, and despite the massive translations undertaken during the Spanish period, no translation of children's literature into Tagalog had been recorded (Almario 2010: 211). The short compilation of fairy tales was called *Limang Salita na Ysinalin sa*

Tagalog (Five Words Translated into Tagalog). It included five stories accompanied by illustrations: "The Fir Tree" (Ang Punu ng Pino), "Thumbelina" (Si Gahinlalaki), "The Ugly Duckling" (Ang Pangit na Sisiu ng Pato), "The Angel" (Ang Sugu) and "The Little Matchgirl" (Ang Batang Babaing Mai Dalang Sakafuego). Rizal hoped that the stories in "our sweet language" could aid in the "enrichment" ("ang ikagagaling ninio") of his niece and nephews whom he considers "in need of suitable readings" (Alamario 2010: 78). Rizal also hoped that the children could memorize these so that they "have something to narrate to [their] fellow children" ("mai maisasalita kayo sa iniong mga kaibigang kapua bata"). This had implications on what was considered "suitable reading material" for children at that time. According to Almario, Rizal lamented on other occasions how Filipino children's reading practices were limited to what was available, namely metrical romance and prayerbooks, which led to "public addiction" to religiosity and old tradition. It is also important to note that three of the five tales "have sad endings, one even alluding to death and the promise of an afterlife" (Ocampo 2018: 61). According to Ocampo (2018: 63), "Rizal's views on children are not well known, and has not been studied fully." But the Andersen stories he chose to translate make it clear that he viewed children not as delicate beings who cannot understand difficult situations such as death but as individuals who are ready for a discussion of complex themes.

Rizal's translation of the five children's tales opened up a new direction: translating a foreign text into Filipino that was not used for Christian indoctrination (Almario 2010: 211). His aim was the exact opposite of the goals of translation during the Spanish period. He wanted his nephews and niece to be able to read what children in Europe knew ("upan ding mabasa ang mga natatalos ng ibang manga bata sa Europa"). Almario observes that Rizal's translation was exceptionally faithful to the original, finding strict equivalence, even with culture-specific terms, between the source and target languages (39). Rizal's translation of Andersen also reveals his vision for Filipino childhood. According to Gutierrez (2018: 38), "...through translation, Rizal expresses a desire to "write" the Filipino child; that is, for textual representations of childhood mirror children's minds and spirits in one of the languages of the motherland." But Rizal's aim for the translation of children's stories into Filipino toward the end of the 19th century went beyond his deep concern about the accessibility of good reading materials for Filipino children. It was also "an exercise toward the improvement of Tagalog orthography, or the standard spelling system of the language" (27). He desired to simplify Tagalog to make reading easier for children to read and understand. Rizal made sure that even sound effects and animal noises could be understood by Filipino children by using, for example, "kuirrebirrebit" for "tweet tweet" and "aapp rapp" for "quack quack" (39). Gutierrez (2018) writes: "Rizal's choice to remain close to the personal style of Andersen (albeit as it was presented in the German version) involves his own experimentation with Tagalog..." Rizal may be known for his writings that awakened Philippine nationalism but one of his more important legacies is his contribution to the way Filipinos write and read Filipino words.

3.4 Modern trends in translated children's literature in the Philippines

3.4.1 English-language books as more dominant

The aims of translating children's literature in the Philippines have changed tremendously since Rizal first translated Andersen's stories for children in the 19th century. In a multilingual nation such as the Philippines, where many children are at least bilingual (knowing Filipino as well as English, with the Philippines having been colonized by the United States for nearly 50 years), imported books in English occupy a dominant position in the system of children's literature. Many parents, especially the educated ones, are victims of "miseducation" as Renato Constantino describes it, and part of the Americans' colonial legacy is the intense love for English (Almario 2010: 42) which influences what books parents choose for their children or what they encourage them to read. In a 2017 survey, roughly 72% of the children identified their parents as influential to their reading, with teachers as most influential to only 24% (National Book Development Board 2018: 52). In fact, in the October 2021 bestsellers list for children's literature of local bookseller National Book Store, all of the ranked books were in English, among them: *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* (2009), *The Little Prince* (originally published in French in 1943), *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), *A Girl Named Helen* (2018), *Charlotte's Web* (1952), *Frindle* (1996), and *Number the Stars* (1989). Unlike adult literature, for which the bookstore had a separate list of bestselling adult fiction in English and another list of bestselling "Philippine publications" (referring to Filipino-authored books in either English or Filipino), the sales of Filipino-language books for children had not been enough to merit their own list.

3.4.2 English-language books translated into Filipino

Of course, it could be the case that Filipino translations of popular children's titles are rare in bookstores. It is also likely that they are no longer in circulation. A good illustration here is the Filipino edition of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (originally published in English in 1997), which bears the same English title and was released by Lampara Books in 2013 at the Manila International Book Fair. From the initial printing of 3,000 copies, 500 copies were immediately sold during the two days it was available at the fair (De Vera 2013). However, three years ago, copies of the Filipino edition could no longer be found at National Book Store as they had been phased out, according to the sales staff. Neither could it be searched for and purchased on the website of its publisher, Lampara Books, nor from other online sites such as Amazon. That the Filipino edition was not reprinted could point to a lack of interest in

the translated version¹². The original Harry Potter books in English, however, remain accessible in print format from local bookstores. The same is true for *Charlotte's Web* which has a Filipino edition published by Lampara Books in 2014. This version is also not available anymore in bookstores unlike the English edition. Interestingly, the Filipino edition has the title "Charlotte's Web" in large, boldface letters on the cover with the Filipino translation "Sapot ni Charlotte" underneath it in tiny, thin letters that can easily be missed. *Ang Higitang Maramot* (The Selfish Giant), Anvil Publishing's Filipino edition of *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (published in 1888) by Oscar Wilde, is still in stock on the publisher's website but not in the online stores of local bookstores.

While children's publishers in other countries such as the UK also complain that translations do not sell well (Lathey 2020: 46), the position of translated Filipino children's literature in the Philippines presents a fascinating case following the polysystem framework. Although Filipino is the national language, it competes with the more prominent and prestigious language English in the system when it comes to children's books. The competition is a product of the positioning of English as the language of education (i.e., taught at a very young age in schools), political discourse and scientific research in the country, which gives it a tremendous amount of prestige. In the 2017 Readership Survey commissioned by the National Book Development Board, it was found that 79.2% of Filipino children and young readers read books authored by Filipinos and by foreigners. Only 16.2% reported reading only Filipino-authored books while 4.6% said they read only foreign-authored books. Although this appears promising insofar as strengthening the position of Filipino as the national language, it is unclear from the data whether the Filipino-authored books referred to by the respondents are in Filipino, as many Filipino writers also publish in English. What is clear, however, is that foreign children's literature translated into Filipino occupies a secondary position, not because English-language books are better but perhaps mainly because there is little need to translate into Filipino what children could already understand in a foreign language, namely English.¹³ As Van Coillie (2020: 143) writes: "Rita Ghesquiere discovered that school libraries in the Philippines are brimming with American and British books, including authors like Dixon and Blyton, and the *Nancy Drew*

¹²Future studies can also explore whether the cost of translation rights is likewise a factor for the non-reprinting of Filipino translations of foreign titles (Zafra 2023, personal communication).

¹³Despite the minority of Filipino-translated children's books in the Philippines, a healthy community of publishers producing children's literature in Filipino exists. In 2020 alone, the international organization Room to Read which promotes reading among young children partnered with four major Philippine publishing houses – Adarna House, Anvil Publishing, Lampara Books and OMF-Hiyas Publishing – to release 20 Filipino books by Filipino children's writers and illustrators. According to Room to Read's CEO Geetha Murali, "Children's love of books develops faster when they can read in their local language and see characters they can relate to. That's why it's critical that we forge and strengthen local children's book publishing industries and demonstrate their sustainability. Without them we cannot spread the joy of reading and learning." (Villano 2020: n.p.)

series. Teachers had difficulty naming Filipino young adult authors.”

3.4.3 Priority given to translating local texts

The translation of children's literature in the Philippines also appears to have gone in a different direction. It seems that the translation of foreign works into Filipino has been overtaken by more local texts being translated. Filipino writers are producing original writings in Filipino or English which are then translated into English or Filipino, respectively. Of course, some children's publishing houses still release bilingual books from stories written by foreign authors. For instance, Tahanan Books recently acquired the Filipino rights to what was titled in Filipino as *Keyk Paakyat ng Langit* (A Cake Reaching to the Sky, 2017), a delightful yet bittersweet book by a Japanese illustrator about a boy who follows his grandmother into heaven. Tahanan Books is also known for its Greek mythology series retold in English and translated into Filipino. Adarna House's *Aklat ng Salin* (Book of Translation) features books chosen from international book fairs such as the Bologna Book Fair and Frankfurt Book Fair which have been translated into Filipino. Adarna House buys the rights to stories that have not been read by Filipino children but that it feels are important for Filipino children to read because they speak of their own experiences. An example of a book published under *Aklat ng Salin* is *Si Agni at ang Ulan* (2019, originally published in Spanish as *Agni Y La Lluvia* in 2017) about a child in Mumbai who works as a laundry girl but who has a deep desire to go to school amid extreme poverty. This story hits some Filipino children close to home since the cost of education prevents some children from going to school¹⁴. But most of Adarna House's books are stories translated from Filipino into English. It gives preference to submissions in Filipino that promote Filipino culture¹⁵. The same is true for Tahanan Books whose bilingual titles are by and large original stories by Filipino authors and illustrators and whose Filipino-authored bilingual books are mostly translations from English into Filipino. Although it is open to acquiring more foreign titles, it focuses more on developing local writers and artists. This will always be their main drive, to work with local talent and create world-class publications that “shine a lantern on Philippine culture and heritage”¹⁶. CANVAS (Center for Art, New Ventures and Sustainable Development), an organization that promotes children's literacy, also publishes bilingual picture books written by Filipino authors and these

¹⁴According to 2017 Philippine Statistics Authority data, 83.1% of Filipinos were out of school of which 5.7% were 6 to 11 years old. The most common reasons for not attending school were marriage or family matters, lack of personal interest and high cost of education or financial concerns.

¹⁵While the greater majority of its books are translated from Filipino into English as it looks “by default” for Filipino submissions, it is also open to English submissions.

¹⁶To address cultural inclusivity, Tahanan Books produced a series of picture books on folktales from underrepresented cultural groups in the Philippines. The result was a set of books with what they describe as “well-researched culturally sensitive drawings and storylines that celebrate a particular culture in a respectful, thoughtful way.”

are free to download from its website. In the case of CANVAS, there seems to be an equal push to publish translations in English and Filipino: of the 17 bilingual titles currently available from its website, nine have been translated from Filipino into English while eight have been translated from English into Filipino.

3.4.4 More local bilingual books

Bilingual picture books then have become the most conspicuous pieces of translated children's literature in the Philippines. This trend started in 1995 when Adarna House, the first Philippine children's book publisher, pioneered the production of bilingual (Filipino-English) books for Filipino children. They saw the need for high-income families who are English speakers to appreciate children's literature written by Filipinos for Filipinos. Thus, three of the first six bilingual books they published were based on Philippine myths. For Adarna House, by default, if there is enough space in a picture book, then the story will be translated. Although Adarna House sells its bilingual books mainly within the Philippines (they have no overseas distribution networks), its experience trying to enter the international market for Filipino-Americans a few years ago indicates that parents see the value of their children reading books in Filipino.

Tahanan Books, also a major player in the production of books in bilingual format, considers it a commitment to publish bilingual books that celebrate Filipino culture. Similar to Adarna House, every book they take on automatically goes through what they call the bilingual litmus test. When accepting a manuscript, they first ask themselves how the story can work well bilingually. But it does not have to be only Filipino and English; Tahanan Books likewise published children's books on Cebuano, Ifugao and Maguindanaon folk songs with English and other Philippine languages appearing side by side. *Bahay Kubo* (Nipa Hut, 1993) is one of their most successful books and has been translated into several regional languages. But unlike Adarna House, its products are marketed in the United States to an affluent niche of Filipino-American and Filipino-Canadian parents who grew up not knowing Filipino but who now want to teach their young children the language they "lost" and the heritage they realize is worth keeping.

The contributions of Lampara Books to this thriving community are also worth mentioning. Although known for some 50 books of Filipino-English retellings of classic and modern Philippine legends and the tales of the Philippine folklore character Juan Tamad, it is also the publisher of original writings for children, among which are the Lampara Prize for Children's Literature stories (18 books in all), the six-book *Carancal: Ang Bayaning Isang Dangkal* (2002) series about the adventures of a Filipino hero who is "as tall as the span of a hand" and the didactic-oriented *Mga Kwento ni Lolo Uban* (Grandfather Uban's Stories, 2019) series, all published in two languages – Filipino and English – to "reach a greater number of readers in the Philippines and other parts of the world." It appears that Lampara Books created Lolo Uban

("uban" means "silver hair") to stand as the male counterpart of Lola Basyang, the Philippines' version of Mother Goose and the eponymous character of the widely-known anthology of short stories *Mga Kuwento ni Lola Basyang* (Grandmother Basyang's Stories, originally published in 1925 and published by Tahanan Books in 2013). Each night after supper, Lola Basyang tells stories to her grandchildren, "the archetypal grandmother storyteller who weaves threads of ethnic and Western narratives into a tapestry that reveals the Filipino human experience"¹⁷ (Gutierrez 2009: 165). Tahanan Books published the best stories from the collection of over 400 stories as picture books in original English in 1998. Much later, in 2017, Anvil Publishing released 12 of these containing parallel Filipino and English texts for young readers. Another publisher of bilingual picture books in the Philippines is HIYAS, OMFI Literature's imprint for children's books. Its products include the 22-book series *Mga Kuwento ni Tito Dok* (Uncle Doc's Stories, 2001-2018) in English with parallel Filipino text and the 14-book *Oh Mateo!* series (2016) with English text and Filipino translation. The accessibility of bilingual books for children is one way of promoting literacy in the Philippines as a multilingual nation. In India, another multilingual country, publishers of bilingual books remain few (Kulkarni 2021). However, English book publishing is a booming trade in India because English is the largest of more than a dozen publishing languages there.

Nevertheless, one major limitation in the system is that by the age of 9, Filipino children do not have the same degree of exposure to local children's literature in bilingual format since most local books in circulation are picture books that target children in the 3-8 age range. That is not to say that there are no books for older children; local publishers have released various longer works of fiction and story compilations for more fluent readers. For example, Lampara Books' Moymoy Lulumboy series (from 2014) and Adarna House's National Book Award and National Children's Book Award winner Janus Silang series (from 2014) are said to be the Philippines' answer to Harry Potter; Anvil Publishing has novellas for children with English and Filipino editions; and Tahanan Books' award-winning Great Lives Series (2020) on the life histories of Philippine heroes are for readers aged 8 and up. Tahanan Books also says that it is open to the possibility of developing young adult novels and chapter books but "it is just a matter of finding the right manuscript" (Ong 2020, personal communication). Still, there are more bilingual picture books in circulation than books for older children in two languages perhaps because longer works require more time to create, from conceptualization to writing and from translating and editing to actual publication.¹⁸

¹⁷Severino Reyes, the father of Philippine fairy tales and creator of Lola Basyang, "appropriated Western fairy tale story motifs and things and recreated them by grounding them on Philippine names, places and traditions" (Gutierrez 2009: 161).

¹⁸Based on the results of the poetry reading sessions, there is a market for bilingual books for children older than 8 years as some of the participants brought up the difficulty of finding Filipino books for their age. Bilingual books in English and Filipino are excellent materials for children who would want to read in Filipino but are more fluent in English.

3.5 The role of publishers

3.5.1 Translation as a promotor of native culture

It can be seen then that in the Philippines, local children's publishers play a principal mediating role in producing of translated children's literature. That is to say, they primarily decide what stories will be translated and which stories will not be translated.¹⁹ As "cultural producers", borrowing Bourdieu's term, their chief drive is a strong Filipino spirit: bilingual books are published with Filipino children in mind, what would help them form their identity and deal with extraordinary and everyday situations in childhood. The production of bilingual editions in the Philippines, therefore, balances out the high circulation of English-language books written by foreign authors about foreign cultures (even fantasy-rich worlds are based on some elements of past and present cultures). Moreover, as producers of original and translated texts in English that highlight local culture, the "very young but robust" (Gutierrez 2017) children's publishing industry in the Philippines can reach non-Filipino readers toward a more multicultural and inclusive children's book landscape where Filipino children and their culture are visible. These bilingual books reflect cultural values thus providing readers, whether children or adults, with a deeper cultural understanding. According to Daly, dual language books, which include bilingual picture books, help readers learn a language and about a language (Short and Daly 2020) without losing their cultural and language identities (in Ramos 2020). In their study, they found that the order of the reading languages is significant (Short and Daly 2020). Some participants in their study wondered "how speakers with English not as their first language would feel when reading bilingual books that seem to prioritize English" while others noted that if one is reading an English text first and English is his or her first language, then the tendency is for the reader to "gravitate towards that and may not read all of the [non-English] text." Bilingual books from the Philippines are translated from English into Filipino and from Filipino into English and these language presentations provide choices for readers and reduce the likelihood of one language being set aside.

3.5.2 Positioning in the publishing industry

Furthermore, what gets translated and what does not is an indication of positionality. According to Bourdieu, cultural production is a question of position-taking and dispositions – "one is inevitably disposed... towards some cultural forms and practices and not others" (Gelder 2004: 19). Such position-taking is influenced by what cultural producers can accumulate in the cultural field.

¹⁹This practice is also evident in other countries. In Poland, for example, small independent publishing houses collectively referred to as "Lilliputians" choose the most exciting titles for Polish readers from the artistic point of view than the literary one. This determines the East Asian translations of children's books in Poland (Paprocka and Biernacka-Licznar 2020).

Bourdieu enumerates three kinds of capital that they could gain: economic capital (money), symbolic capital (peer recognition and prestige) and cultural capital ("the accumulation of cultural knowledge, the amount of knowledge one has about an aspect of the cultural field") (Gelder 2004: 91). Tahanan Books expresses that "most of the time, the rewards you get from writing and publishing children's books are more spiritual or psychological, the feeling that you've given back." Nevertheless, although symbolic capital and cultural capital are great motivators, children's publishers sustain their production with economic capital first and foremost. For instance, when asked why it was not translating poetry, Adarna House said that "it was a marketing decision." It has done so for *Paano Kumain ng Kulay* (How to Eat Colors, 2018), a verse picture book that teaches children to eat vegetables, but all in all the output has been "thin" because "the market has no appreciation yet for poetry." Despite this, it released the novel verse picture book *May Darating na Trak Bukas* (A Truck Will Come Tomorrow) in Filipino in 2013 which became a finalist in the 2014 Philippine National Children's Book Awards (Kids' Choice) – an example of symbolic capital gained. It could translate its children's poetry collection *Buwan, Buwang Bulawan* (Moon, Mad, Gold, 2009), it says, but there are page limitations and "the reality is that it is not sellable." This is an important consideration these days when print books compete with non-reading sources of information and entertainment offered by increasing technology solutions (Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines 2020: n.p.). As a result, sales of print books and return on investment are relatively slow (Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines 2020, n.p.). In terms of positioning strategy, Adarna House targets readers from middle-income families since "foreign titles are marketed to readers from high-income families." Even-Zohar (1978: 19) posits that the price of literature is "a symptom of status", that is to say, the more expensive it is, the more central its position in the polysystem. This seems to be valid for foreign children's books which are generally more durable in format and priced higher, in other words, more "valued" than local children's books. But pricing could also be linked to marketing decisions – what paper and cover to use, for example – as in the case of Adarna House which offers "one of the cheapest picture books at 99 pesos" (roughly 1.75 euros) to be competitive. Tahanan Books' publishing decisions are primarily market-driven, too, stating that "now the market is for bilingual books because there is an equal stress on learning English but not letting go of Filipino." It adds: "But translating our books into other Philippine languages is rare. It's only when there's a special order that we can do that." Tahanan Books describes the financial risk in children's book production:

Producing the books is not difficult because we have many talented authors, translators, artists and book designers in the Philippines. But publishing is a gamble and we can't tell which books will sell well and which would end up languishing in our warehouse. Good books are costly and time-consuming to produce. These books took almost a year to develop, just getting the illustrations and doing

the research right, going back and forth with cultural consultants. Because we spend so much time developing each book, we have to be very selective about what we pick. That's a particular challenge here. It's a matter of resources.

Segundo Matias Jr., the founder of Lampara Books, admits that the decision to translate is "a thoroughly commercial concern." He adds: "For me to consider translating a book, it must have sold well and made money. Otherwise, why do it?" (De Vera 2014: n.p.). Lampara Books published the Filipino translation of *Charlotte's Web*, which made it to the final round in the translation category of the 2015 Philippine National Book Awards. This exhibits that economic capital and symbolic capital are not mutually exclusive.

Positioning is likewise evident in how publishers negotiate the translation of works with foreign publishers – who is in charge of it and how far the translation can go. Adarna House, for example, says that "it is in the rules of the [foreign] publisher whether you can contextualize [the story] in Filipino" but its approach is always to retain the foreignness because "Filipino children can grasp foreign concepts" such as snow. Illustrations can also change in the process of buying rights and translation. There was one occasion when Adarna House had to request the publisher to redraw the pictures in the book for aesthetic or artistic value (from only black and white to colored ones that make for "a more cheerful artwork") as well as for cultural value. In the original illustrations, the child protagonist was shown as having European features and although Adarna House did not intend to depict the child in the story as Filipino, they wanted the child to look more or less Asian in the translated edition. Tahanan Books experienced being on the other side in the international sale of rights. It explains: "We try not to be restrictive to what the publisher can and cannot do. When they buy the rights, they have the right to adapt the book to suit their market. If they change the names, that's okay. If there are certain cultural differences that their readership will not understand, they can also change that. If we are informed of the changes, that would be nice." But it also understands that publishers produce for their own readership and they know what is best for the children for whom they publish.

3.6 Shavit's two principles in the translation of children's literature

Zohar Shavit, who was among the first to apply the polysystem theory to children's literature (Van Coillie and McMartin 2020: 17), asserts that children's literature occupies a peripheral position in the polysystem (Shavit 1981: 171). This observation is particularly evident in the way children's literature is greatly manipulated and adapted when translated to fit the children's literary system, specifically with "texts which [have been] transformed from adult to children's literature or with texts which belong both to the adult and children's system

at the same time" (Shavit 1981: 171). According to Shavit, such liberties are dictated by two principles: the translator "(1) adjusts the text in order to make it appropriate and useful for the child, in accordance with what society thinks is 'good for the child' or (2) adjusts the plot, characterization and language to the child's level of comprehension and his reading abilities" (172). Shavit notes that although there is still a widespread tendency to translate based on the first principle (thereby producing didactic children's literature), the second principle has become more dominant. For instance, the need to simplify the text can be seen in the translations of *Alice in Wonderland*. While Carroll intended to blur the lines between reality and imagination in the original, the translations gravitate towards a clear distinction between "reality" and "fantasy" as "such a presentation of reality did not exist in children's literature (it only became fashionable in adult literature with the anti-naturalist schools at the end of the 19th century)" (176). Francisca Folch (2020) also notes how the homoeroticism in Wilde's *The Happy Prince* (1888) was lost in translation for the Latin American readers particularly children and questions whether the erasure of queerness is a conscious decision or "just plain ignorance."

3.6.1 Translator's decisions

In the case of Filipino translations of popular foreign English-language children's books, the second principle applies but has a different meaning. The language, which becomes the foremost consideration in the translation, is handled in a way that makes the text easily understandable for Filipino children. The process entails retaining the original foreign words, not because of the lack of equivalence but because the Filipino equivalents would not do the original story justice. The considerations and decisions of Becky Bravo, Adarna House and Eugene Evasco in translating children's books will be given as examples.

With the Harry Potter Filipino edition, the translator, Becky Bravo, opted to retain "the names of characters, names of spells and quite a number of English terms used in the original" (De Vera 2013: n.p.). Bravo (in De Vera 2013: n.p.) clarifies: "It would never do to refer to Harry and Ron as 'mangkukulam' [wizard] or to Hermione as a 'bruha' [witch] (brackets mine)." For this reason, "witch" and "wizard" were kept in the translation. Her decision was possible because the concepts and terms exist in the receiving literary system. Even the title of the book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, was left unchanged because Bravo "did not want either 'Si Harry Potter at ang Sorcerer's Stone' or 'Si Harry Potter at ang Bato ng Mangkukulam.'" However, Harry as "the boy who lived" was called "ang batang nabuhay" and "He-Who-Must-Not-Be Named" became "Alam-Mo-Na-Kung-Sino" (You-Know-Who) instead of the literal "Ang-Di-Dapat-Pangalanan." It is evident how much power lies in the hands of the translator who determines what works and what does not in the target text. But editors can be just as influential in deciding the output of the translation process. For Bravo (in De Vera 2013, n.p.), it was important not to change the tone of Rowling's original text. "If Rowling could write in

Filipino, how would she translate her own words in 'Sorcerer's Stone?'" she asks. Tone can be challenging, as Adarna House experienced in translating a Spanish children's book. Because it aims to get as close as possible to a literal translation, the result of translating from Spanish, which is formal in tone, into Filipino is a text that is too formal to be authentic, unused in ordinary settings and unrelatable for children. (For Adarna House, literal translation and faithfulness to the original text and form are of utmost importance.) It is a "conscious decision" then to "contextualize" the source language's formality in line with the target reader.

Eugene Evasco, a prolific and award-winning Filipino author and translator who translated *Charlotte's Web* from English into Filipino, goes by three principles in translating literary texts for children. He stresses:

First and foremost, I must produce a text that will not sound like a translation. I have to make the translation of an English text "originally written" in Filipino. Secondly, though I have to respect the original intent of the author, I must assert my own voice and style in the translation. My style in translation is trying to write the text like my own work. Thirdly, and most importantly, after translating the text, I have to make sure that the product is child-friendly or readable. (in Gagatiga 2017)

Evasco laments the invisibility of translators of children's books in the Philippines. They are "marginalized" as some are "not acknowledged properly in the book production" and "not even considered. . . co-creators of the book." Another challenge that he sees in children's literature translation in the country has to do with language. He maintains: "Translation is supposed to be a process to make the text accessible to Filipino readers. But in my experience, there are cases that some readers, young and old, are struggling to understand the Filipino language" (Gagatiga 2017).

Although all three translators made different decisions in translating, one common requirement among them appears to be the naturalness of expression in the target language. The case of Bravo and Evasco also shows that even though translators mainly aim to carry over the ideas and structural features of the original in the translator, they can also abide by their own set of criteria which reflects their own style.

3.6.2 Publisher's decisions

Tahanan Books depends significantly on the expertise of translators when translating the stories into one of the regional languages (i.e., non-Filipino languages). But remaining true to Shavit's observation that in translation, elements of a book are "adjusted" to the child's level of reading comprehension, Tahanan Books always instructs its translators to "try to keep [the translations] as light, as conversational as possible, not too formal" (Ong 2020, personal communication). After all, "it is still a book for children" so translators should use

language that children naturally use. Differences in vision or style between the translator and editor often arise from the translation not being “child-friendly enough”, which is easily resolved since the publishing house chooses explicitly children's writers as translators. Tahanan Books articulates its preference for children's writers to translate its books as follows: “Sometimes when you're used to writing for adults, there are ways of speaking that you take for granted, that don't sound natural yet to children. It's not appealing, it's too long, too complicated. A person who translates books for children must also have an ear for children's literature” (Ong 2020, personal communication). For Tahanan Books, that is “pretty much the guideline.” They add:

When we get it and lay it out, then we'll find out if the translation is too long. In our experience, the Filipino translation takes up twice as much space as the English text because our words are naturally longer. We go back to the translator to find a shorter, simpler, cleaner way of saying it. Funnily enough, when we asked them to do that, it has actually improved the manuscript because they're forced to really think about the clearest, most efficient way to say something. We came out with Filipino editions of our folktale books and we had the same problem. Filipino was twice as long. [We] gave it back. The translator seemed very pleased and said that it sounded better after going through it another time. (Ong 2020, personal communication)

Adarna House shares how it encounters issues with general translators who, though seasoned writers, are not children's writers and thus find it difficult to translate a text specifically for children. In these instances, editors work hand in hand with the translators until they arrive at a satisfying translation ready for publication.

3.7 Conclusions

Taking the polysystem theory as a framework, it can be said that foreign children's literature translated into Filipino occupies a peripheral position in the literary system. This can be attributed to a large number of English-language books for children and the ability of many Filipino children to understand these in the original language. It is also in a secondary position when original literature for children in Filipino is considered. While the historical background of children's literature in the Philippines has been extensively studied²⁰, the history of children's literature in translation remains an area that has not yet received sufficient research attention. The aim of this chapter is not to fulfill

²⁰See, for example, Maria Elena Paterno's “A History of Children's Literature in the Philippines” and Marcy Dans Lee's “A Brief Review of the Development of Children's Book Illustration in the Philippines.”

this need but to communicate the current orientation of translated children's literature in the Philippines.

First, there are significantly more English-language foreign books for children in circulation than foreign children's books translated into Filipino. While this could indicate a general preference for reading foreign books in the original language rather than in translation, interestingly, data also reveals that given more choices in book language, children have nearly the same propensity to read in English and in Filipino. In 2017, 46.2% of children who were surveyed said that they read English non-schoolbooks while 46.1% said that they read Tagalog or Filipino for recreational reading (National Book Development Board 2018: 55). Though not mentioned in the data, it is reasonable to assume that Filipino translations of foreign children's books form a significantly small percentage, if any at all, of the Filipino books pertained to in the survey because of the minimal selection of foreign children's books translated into Filipino.

Second, publishers for children are translating more original works by Filipino authors (from English into Filipino and from Filipino into English) than foreign-authored works – a strong indication of healthy children's book publishing. Tahanan Books alone publishes three to five new titles during a lean year and as many as seven or eight in a good year. However, the competition with foreign titles remains stiff, which Adarna House ascribes to retail issues. There is a lack of push from local bookstores to make local titles more visible, it asserts, as evidenced by window displays that feature mostly foreign titles. Tahanan Books, which operates its own US website and sells its books on Amazon, also moans the weak link in the entire chain from publishers to readers in the Philippines. It says: "Our distribution channels in the Philippines are not very strong yet compared to the US where there is a strong retail network and school network. Retail stores are stocking fewer local books and institutional markets like schools and NGOs can be very difficult to approach and penetrate" (Ong 2020, personal communication). Because the original texts in English (Filipino) and their translations in Filipino (English) are released as bilingual books, publishers can also position themselves for transnational circulation for non-Filipino audiences especially with the accessibility of the English language and the growing demand for more culturally diverse books for children in different parts of the world. However, the circulation of printed books depends not only on distribution networks but also on vision. For local publishers, the goal for now is to make high-quality children's books that celebrate Philippine culture available to Filipino children including those in the diaspora.

Third, local children's publishers mainly control the production of translated children's literature by determining which books get translated and which do not. In addition, they decide on the nature of translation by giving specific guidelines to translators. Primarily, these guidelines aim to make the translation "child-friendly" and so how publishers understand childhood becomes the basis of what are "suitable" for children to read.

Fourth, the publication of translated children's books in the Philippines de-

pendes not only on attaining prestige and recognition (as in the form of awards) but, quite understandably, also on market-based economic capital. Publishing, after all, is first and foremost a business.

Shavit's observation in the 1980s that the translator enjoys a high degree of freedom when translating children's literature, such as adjusting language to fit the child's reading ability, still applies to current translation practices in the Philippines. However, it must be stressed that these days, such liberties do not reside solely in the translator but are shared with the publishers and editors who, in case of differences with translators, can exert greater influence on what is ultimately printed.

On a practical note, this chapter aims to illustrate that there are significantly fewer Filipino translations of literature targeted to children aged 8 to 9 years old, the age group of the participants in the study, than those for much younger readers. While this is true for fiction, it is particularly evident with poetry which, to begin with, occupies a peripheral position in the literary system. As will be shown in Chapter 7, there are not enough Filipino books for children in this age range which makes it difficult for parents to train their children to read in Filipino. This noticeable gap in availability opens up opportunities for translators to translate more poetry and make it available to school-aged children. Although translators in the Philippines can enjoy sufficient freedom in translation, interviews with local children's publishers indicate that, for the most part, it is the publishers who play a pivotal role in the production of translated books. In other words, publishers are highly influential in developing children's reading interests and preferences. Children's publishers can expand their reach through a more diverse offering of titles in terms of genre (i.e., longer fiction and poetry) and age group. As demonstrated, however, this is primarily a marketing decision driven by consumer demand, which suggests marketing better to parents who mainly encourage reading in children and whose attitudes impact on book selection.