# Children's response to humor in translated poetry

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# CHAPTER 6

# Methodology

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter opens with a section on the interviews conducted with children's publishers in the Philippines. It is followed by an overview of the design of the group discussions that formed the basis for the discussion in Chapter 7 as well as the relevant pre-discussion (e.g., participant recruitment and ethical considerations) and post-discussion (e.g., transcription of video files) activities undertaken for the poetry reading sessions. Some comments on using group interviews in general and online group discussions in particular for data collection have been included to guide other researchers planning on doing similar work. A significant portion of this chapter has been devoted to the process involved in the translation of the poems used in the poetry reading sessions with the children. This is because the researcher would like to introduce the reader to Filipino and Philippine literary heritage, with emphasis on the demands of traditional Filipino poetry that impacted on the translation decisions. The rules for creating rhyme, for one, are different for traditional Filipino poems and the researcher, who was also the translator for the materials used in the poetry reading sessions, was determined to follow them as much as possible. Balancing conformity to the poetic tradition of the target language with faithfulness to the effect of the original text posed its own set of challenges and it was up to the translator to decide on the "best fit" considering other factors such as aesthetics.

## 6.2 Interviews with local publishers

Face-to-face interviews with local publishers were conducted in January 2020, ahead of the poetry reading sessions with children. The responses to the interviews do not form part of the results. Instead, they were used to illustrate the points raised and explored in the literature review (especially section 2.4 in Chapter 2 and sections 3.4 to 3.6 in Chapter 3). Five leading children's publishers in the Philippines that have the most significant number of translated children's books were invited for the interview. However, only two responded to the request: Adarna House, the pioneer in children's literature publication in the Philippines, and Tahanan Books, also a leading children's publisher. Kata Garcia, senior writer and researcher, represented Adarna House while Frances Ong, managing editor, represented Tahanan Books. Both publishing houses are located in Metro Manila, although Tahanan Books also has an office in Seattle, Washington. In addition, the chairperson of the Philippine Board on Books for Young People accepted the invitation for an interview but withdrew at the last minute. The interviews with the publishers aimed to investigate the status of and developments in children's literature production in the Philippines. A copy of the guide questions is attached as Appendix A.

## 6.3 Participants

### 6.3.1 Participant recruitment

After the interviews with the publishers had been conducted, the poetry reading sessions with children were arranged. The research participants were Grade 3 pupils (ages 8 and 9) at the University of the Philippines Integrated School (UPIS). UPIS was selected as the source of the participants for pragmatic reasons, namely the researcher's contacts with the school. UPIS serves as the laboratory school of the UP College of Education as well as the venue of research conducted by different institutions at UP to which the researcher is connected. The pupils were invited to participate with the permission of school officials and with the help of the Grade 3 advisers. The advisers disseminated the invitation letter and information sheet (attached as Appendix B) to the pupils and their parents by email. A total of 103 Grade 3 pupils for the first round and 99 pupils for the second round were invited. While UPIS was involved in participant recruitment, it was not in any way involved in data collection, the analysis or the publication of results. For the first round of reading sessions, the first invitation was sent in March 2021 and the sessions were held two months later. For the second round, pupils were invited in September 2021 and the sessions were conducted in October. The information document and informed consent forms were written in English, one of the two official languages in the Philippines, and in a manner well understandable for the parents or guardians. English is widely used in formal communication, for instance, in politics and scientific research.

It is also the language of education in the Philippines and is taught in schools as early as kindergarten or by age 4. In addition, the parents of most students at UPIS are professionals who are exceptionally proficient in English.

### 6.3.2 Ethical approval

The research received ethical approval from the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee at Leiden University. To participate in the research, the pupils needed the consent of their parents or guardians. The consent form was sent with the information document; the latter provides a background of the study and its objectives. In addition, it contains how the information will be kept confidential and safeguarded, for instance, by assigning a code name to each child in the transcription. The form also asserts that there are no potential risks to the participants. Similarly, it states some of the benefits of participating in the study, among which is gaining a deeper appreciation for children's literature, particularly poetry (indeed this seemed to be the case, as will be shown in section 7.1.1). Finally, the information document provides some information about the researcher to introduce the researcher to the parents or guardians and children. The information document ends with the inspirational children's poem "Mr. Olifant", written by the researcher, to generate enthusiasm and encourage pupils to sign up for the study. Enclosed to the information document are two informed consent forms: a form stating voluntary consent for the child to participate in the study and a separate form to seek consent for the child to be video-recorded during the online group discussion. The first explicitly states, for one, that the parent has the right to withdraw the consent without giving a reason and that the child may stop participating in the study at any time. The latter states that ownership of the video recording resides in the research team (the PhD candidate, supervisor and co-supervisor) and that no one outside this research team can access or view the recording. The participants and their parents were given sufficient time to consider whether or not to take part in the study. (For a copy of the information document and informed consent forms, please see Appendices B and C.)

### 6.3.3 Problems with participant recruitment

While reaching target participants was relatively easy with the support of the UPIS officials and section advisers, getting students to participate in the study was not without difficulty. As mentioned, for the first round of sessions, the invitation was sent out in March 2021. But as the weeks passed, it became clear that the recruitment projection of 40 participants was impossible to achieve. This was the case despite having sent out the invitation thrice: one at the beginning of March, one in the last week of March before the Holy Week break and, as requested by the researcher, a final one in April. In the end, only 14 participants signed up for the first round (with 13 actually attending). Before the third invitation was sent out, the advisers discussed among themselves the

factors affecting low recruitment to "hopefully assist [the researcher and her supervisors] and give... a context of the current remote learning setup [at UPIS]." The coordinator gave the following reasons:

1. There are other research invites from other groups like the [UP] College of Education. Some students may have already indicated their participation in another study.

2. Many students have parents who work full-time with some of them front-line workers. Assisting their children with remote learning is already challenging for the parents since they are also adjusting to the online mode, while at the same time working from home or on-site. Some parents also have younger ones to care for in their homes aside from their Grade 3 children. This means some parents may have a hard time assisting their child for another online activity like participating in a research. Another factor would be budget constraints for internet/mobile data.

3. Covid-19 cases are still high in [the National Capital Region]. Some of the students may have families or relatives that have been affected by the virus or other sicknesses or are experiencing loss. Some parents may have opted not to allow their children to participate given that the family had to attend to other priorities at that time.

These points helped the author to understand the limited response to the call to participate in the study. For one, it was not anticipated that other researchers were inviting the same group of students. The initial projection also did not consider the difficulties parents faced, which impacted on children's participation in out-of-class activities. That parents were still adapting to the new normal and its demands, and were possibly coping with sickness or loss in the family, indeed has implications on what they deemed most important during a pandemic. Conducting research during the time of Covid was a big challenge, not only because of the many restrictions in place (the original plan was to have face-to-face reading sessions with the children) but also because, as pointed out, the crisis changed the priorities of many of the target participants. This input from the advisers resulted in a more realistic estimation of the recruitment rate for the second round of sessions. Thus, while getting 13 participants for the second round might seem unsuccessful against the initial target of 40, it was already considered adequate given said barriers to recruitment.

### 6.3.4 Profile of the participants

A total of 26 pupils participated in the poetry reading sessions. The group was composed of 13 males and 13 females. They were 8 and 9 years old and came from three sections[24] of Grade 3 at UPIS.

[24]The Grade 3 student population is divided into three groups called sections. Each section is supervised by a class adviser.

## 6.4 Materials

As discussed in the introduction chapter, one of the research goals is to determine whether it is form or content that is more crucial in preserving humor in a poem. Form pertains to formal elements such as rhyme, rhythm (e.g., alliteration and consonance) and meter while content concerns the meaning and message of the poem. The difficulty in retaining both form and content is a common issue in poetry translation. Regarding poems written for children, form (especially rhyme and rhythm) is often considered non-negotiable as it is believed to be instrumental in creating a humorous effect as discussed in section 4.3.1 (cf. Shultz and Robillard in McGhee and Chapman 1980, and Styles 1998). To examine this problem, two poems were translated prioritizing either form or content and used as materials in the reading session and discussion: "The Dentist and the Crocodile" by Roald Dahl and "Sick" by Shel Silverstein.

These two poems were selected for four reasons. First, both poems are widely recognized as funny. "The Dentist and the Crocodile" is from the book *Rhyme Stew* (1989) which is described as filled with Dahl's "hilarious verse" (Book Depository) while "Sick" is included in *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1974), "a poetry collection that is outrageously funny" (Amazon). Second, both poems are appropriate for the study participants' 8-9 age group. According to the drama resources website Scripts and Sketches, "The Dentist and the Crocodile" is suitable for ages 5 to 10. Book Depository likewise lists *Rhyme Stew*, in which the poem appears, as appropriate for children ages 6 to 10. The poems in *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, including "Sick", are targeted for the 4-8 age range (inkbottlepress.com). Third, while these poems were mainly written for children (but not for the very young in the case of *Rhyme Stew* which comes with the warning: "Unsuitable for Small People"), they may appeal to all age groups, including adults. Dahl's *Rhyme Stew* is marketed as an "inventive and irreverent collection for older children and adults alike" (roalddahl.com) while *Where the Sidewalk Ends* is said to be "cherished by readers of all ages" as a "collection that belongs on everyone's bookshelf" (shelsilverstein.com). It is important to choose poems that the poets have written with both children and adults in mind as one of the objectives of the study is to gather children's perspectives on texts that seem to fall between children's literature and adult literature, on why a text mainly meant for young people may easily be enjoyed by older ones as well. Fourth, the poems center on subjects familiar to Filipino children – visiting the dentist and not wanting to go to school – so it is more likely that the participants would find their Filipino versions funny. By reducing the element of "strangeness", the children in the study will have more to say about the translations in terms of their humorous appeal.

### 6.4.1 Translating for form

In translating for form, the two main elements considered were line length/syllable count and rhyme. Dahl's "The Dentist and the Crocodile" has 14 syllables in

each line and Silverstein's "Sick" has eight syllables each. In the Filipino translations, the former was assigned 18 syllables per line and the latter has 12 syllables, in keeping with the most common syllable counts per line in Filipino poetry (See Appendix E). As regards rhythm, the caesura for the translation of the first poem occurs after every six syllables while for the second, it is after every four syllables. This follows the conventions of caesura placement in traditional Filipino poetry.

#### 6.4.1.1 Rules of traditional Filipino poetry

In traditional Filipino poetry, rhyme pertains only to the end rhyme. This means that the endings of two or more lines have the same sound. There are two types of end rhyme in Filipino poetry: vowel rhyme (tugmang patinig) and consonant rhyme (tugmang katinig).

Although there are five vowels in the Filipino alphabet, only three are used for rhyme: *a*, *i* and *o*. Words that end in *e* are paired with those ending in *i* while words that end with *u* are paired with those ending in *o*. However, the accent of a word which refers to different degrees of stress is a major consideration in rhyme in Filipino poetry. There are four accents in Filipino: gentle or no diacritic (malumay), fast or acute accent (mabilis), grave accent (malumi) and circumflex accent (maragsa). Only words with no diacritic and acute accents can rhyme with each other while only those with grave and circumflex accents can rhyme with each other. For example, while káma (bed) and dilâ (tongue) both end in -*a*, they are not considered rhyming words since káma has a gentle accent while dilâ has a grave accent.

When it comes to consonant rhyme, there are two groups of rhyme: strong rhyme and weak rhyme. The consonants *b*, *k*, *d*, *g*, *p*, *s* and *t* at the end of the word fall under the first group while *l*, *m*, *n*, *ng*, *r*, *w* and *y* fall under the second. For example, limos (alms), surot (bug) and bukod (separate) possess a strong rhyme while tingin (look), lihim (secret) and kitil (nip) have a weak rhyme.

Traditionally, there are only two levels of rhyme in Filipino poetry: common rhyme (tugmang karaniwan) and marked rhyme (tugmang tudlikan). In the 20th century, another level was proposed by Filipino poet and novelist Iñigo Ed Regalado: the pure rhyme (tugmang dalisay). It is the highest level of rhyme in Filipino poetry. Another level has been recognized to sit between pure rhyme and marked rhyme and that is syllabary rhyme (tugmang pantigan).

Common rhyme is the lowest level and formed by pairing words that share the same sound, whether gentle, fast, grave or circumflex. This means that if the first line ends with -*a*, then the rest of the stanza should also end with -*a*. With marked rhyme, the accent is considered as well: gentle will only rhyme with gentle, fast with fast, grave with grave, and circumflex with circumflex. Only one type can be adopted throughout the poem, that is, if the writer decides to use gentle rhyme, each of the lines has to end with a gentle rhyme. With syllabary rhyme, the paired words should have the same end vowel-consonant or

consonant-vowel besides having the same accent. The highest level, pure rhyme, requires not only the same accent and end vowel-consonant or consonant-vowel but also the same vowel before the last syllable of the paired words. For the most part, traditional Filipino poetry observes a single rhyme or monorhyme scheme (tugmang isahan), one end sound for each stanza, represented by AAAA in a quatrain, or throughout the poem.

#### 6.4.1.2 Retaining the rhyme scheme

To preserve the couplets in Dahl's and Silverstein's poems (after all, the couplet is one of the most widely used rhyme schemes in children's poetry in English), the translations for the study were created outside the constraints of these levels of rhyme. Instead of adopting a traditional rhyme scheme, an effort was made to ensure that the translations abided by the rules imposed on end rhyme in traditional Filipino poetry: matching gentle with fast, and grave with circumflex for vowel rhyme, and following the dictates of strong and weak rhyme for consonant rhyme. Matthews (1959: 67) believes that "to translate a poem whole is to compose another poem. A whole translation will be faithful to the *matter* [italics in the original] and it will *approximate* [own emphasis] the form of the original and it will have a life of its own which is the voice of the translator." By approximating the form, the translator has to "invent formal effects in his own language that give a sense of those produced by the original on its own" (67).[25]

There are two reasons behind the decision to keep the original rhyme scheme of continuing couplets in the translations used in the study. First, if it is assumed that a poem's given rhyme and rhythm of a poem contribute to its humorous appeal, then work must be put into not altering the sound of the original too much to retain the humor in the translation. This is particularly important if the goal is to isolate these formal elements as factors in humor in verse. Second, this exercise uses a form in the target language that tests the potential of adhering to traditional formal rules in the target language while favoring fidelity to a form in the source language that is unusual to tradition in the target language to bring across the humorous effects of the original.

Although traditional Filipino poets employ the rigid repetition of sounds in the traditional levels of rhyme, there are also examples in literature that reveal experimentation with other rhyme scheme patterns such as a dual rhyming

[25]Nevertheless, some translators may not even go in that direction, ignoring conventions in the target language and ensuring only the presence of lines and stanzas to signal that the text is a poem. This is true among some contemporary Filipino poets who translate into their own language. For instance, Poem 2 in the children's poetry collection *The Parlement of Giraffes* (1999) by renowned Filipino poet and National Artist for Literature José Garcia Villa was translated by Hilario "Larry" Francia as a free verse from its original rhyming couplets. Francia, however, kept the typography (i.e., how the lines form and break and how the words are situated) of all of the poems in Villa's book in his translation of the collection and did not need to resort to any sort of invention in form. In an article on Philippine Headline News Online, Villa was quoted to have said: "If I wrote in Tagalog, my poems would have appeared just as Larry has written them!"

scheme, which was influenced by the Spanish and English ways of poetry writing (Rivera 2004: 30). Among contemporary works, this is seen for instance in the children's poems of Philippine National Artist for Literature Virgilio Almario "Isang Linggo sa Sirko" (A Week at the Circus) and "Sa Kalendaryo Ko" (In My Calendar) both made up of rhyming couplets. It is likewise evident in his poem about youth "Kapag Panahon ng Kidlat at Kulog" (When in the Time of Lightning and Thunder) which uses alternate rhyme. It should be noted that rhyming couplets are also present in native Philippine poetry as bugtong (riddles) and salawikain (proverbs).

#### 6.4.1.3 Retaining other sound elements

Specific acoustic techniques were taken into account in the translation of the Dahl and Silverstein poems. Consider these two examples of alliteration:

1. a.) ST: The dentist's face was turning white. He quivered, quaked and shook.
   b.) TT: Dentista'y namutla. Katawa'y nangatog, nanginig, nangatal.
   c.) Dentist is paled. Body is quivered, quaked, shook.
2. a.) ST: I'm sure that my left leg is broke—
   b.) TT: Binti'y bali sa kaliwa pihado 'to
   c.) Leg is broke in left sure this

Or of consonance:

3. a.) ST: I've counted sixteen chicken pox
   b.) TT: Ang bulutong binilang ko labing-anim
   c.) The chickenpox counted I sixteen

Where present, repetition was retained, as the following example shows:

4. a.) ST: "He's after me! He's after you! He's going to eat us all!"
   b.) TT: "Gusto niya ako! Gusto ka rin niya! Tayo'y sasak-malin!"
   c.) Wants it me! Wants you too it! We will be devoured!

#### 6.4.1.4 Creative replacement

Despite the commitment to translate the content as faithfully as possible, form inevitably poses limitations in the end. Filipino words, whether nouns or verbs

particularly conjugated ones, tend to be long and multisyllabic, at times reduplicated. Blake (1917: 425) maintains that nowhere is this "linguistic principle more productive of results than in the Philippine languages, and here it probably finds its highest development in Tagalog." To preserve the sound, content has to be sacrificed in some instances. These include cases of word omission for economy, as seen in the first example below (Example 5), and replacement of one idea with another idea so that the words fit the meter. The latter procedure, which can be called "creative replacement", occurs when the translation solution deviates from the original text but remains comparable to the original and does not distort the message. The change does not arise, for instance, from cultural considerations or norms and conventions in a linguistic system but rather from factors related to form, i.e., its external structure. It does not entail only a reformulation or in Jakobson's term intralinguistic translation using paraphrasing, rephrasing or explanation but offers another idea that gives semantically analogous information to the original. Thus, in the second example below (Example 6), although the source text is easily translatable into the target language and the resulting utterance is, for instance, grammatically correct, the translator has no choice but to give in to the restrictions of the form to maintain the creative features in the translation. In Koller's five types of equivalence relations, this is a kind of formal or expressive equivalence that applies to form and aesthetics of the text, including style (Munday 2012: 74).

Creative replacement is situated between servitude and option, to borrow the terminology of Vinay and Darlbelnet (Munday 2012: 91). On one hand, the modulation of the message (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995) becomes obligatory due to form-related constraints. On the other hand, it is non-obligatory in that there is more than one way of expressing the original line in the target language in a manner that will conform to the external structure. This shows that although there is a difference between servitude and option, in the actual practice of translation, approaches are not always clear-cut and solutions are not definitive. As Mackenzie (1998: 201) brings to light, "many of the problems that face translators are of the open-ended kind, i.e. there is no pre-determined solution, they cannot be solved consciously under controlled conditions, and the solutions cannot be subjected to absolute verification." Moreover, in literary translation, option is more important as this will bring out the "beauty" of the text, a view that Vinay and Darbelnet themselves hold.

Below are two lines from the poems which employed creative replacement.

5. a.) ST: He said, "Right here and everywhere my teeth require repair."
   b.) TT: Bukang-bibig niya, "Ang mga ngipin ko'y dapat nang ipasta."
   c.) Back translation: He uttered, "My teeth need filling."

6. a.) ST: My hip hurts when I move my chin
   b.) TT: Pag ngumuya, kumikirot ang balakang
   c.) Back translation: When I chew, my hip hurts

#### 6.4.1.5 Expected results

It can be said that, first, Matthews was right when he claimed that translating a form can only approximate the form of the original. In the translated poems of Dahl and Silverstein, it was possible to recreate the original rhyme scheme of continuing couplets since rhyme is also present in the traditional poetry of the target language. However, the rules for creating rhyme in the target language are different than in the source language. Furthermore, certain rules in the target language had to be sacrificed to keep the original rhyme scheme. Second, the two Filipino translations produced show that other sound elements such as alliteration can be preserved but at the expense of content. This is done, for example, for economy. The concept of "creative replacement" was introduced as a solution for changing the original text with a comparable idea that does not depart from the original message. In accordance with standard practices and widely-held beliefs, the expectation was that form would be more decisive than content in preserving humor in the translated forms and that the children would respond more favorably to the translations that prioritized form.

### 6.4.2 Translating for content

While the Filipino translation for form used in this study adhered mainly to strategies that recreate the original poems' acoustic properties, lexical correspondence was the dominant consideration in translating for content – the "meaning" of the text. The goal of translating for content in this study is to "remain true to the original words and their relations" (Paterson 2006 in Robinson 2010). For Paterson, this means glossing the original but not trying to replace it, the result of which is a translation and not a version. Paterson (2006 in Robinson 2010) describes the latter as follows: it uses the original as a "detailed ground-plan" but builds "a robust home in a new country, in its vernacular architecture, with local words for its brick and local music for its mortar." In other words, unlike a translation, a version's aim is to stand on its own as a poem that should not be compared to the original (Robinson 2010).

#### 6.4.2.1 Free verse

Although the poems translated for content focus on meaning rather than form, the production is still intra-genre, meaning that poetry was translated as poetry, as signaled by the poetic line breaks and enjambment. In this aspect, the translation bears a structural resemblance to the source text. Be that as it may, the translation aimed at finding, in the words of Nida (2012), the "closest possible equivalent" in the target language, without paying attention to the poem's other formal characteristics such as similarity of sounds, pauses between words or the number of syllables per line. The result is a free verse, free from limitations of regular meter, rhythm and rhyme.

Free verse does not conform to a fixed pattern. Instead, it is designed around "sentence logic": each poetic line is based on the various ways by which con-

stituent units (phrases, clauses) are put together to make the sentence (Abad 2004: 161). Recall the assertion of Sloan (2001: 53) that, for children, free verse is an "acquired taste." Nevertheless, referring to children's writer Spike Milligan whom he considers lacking in "ear for rhythm", he also mentions how children do not see such "subtleties" and enjoy only the "inventiveness of [Milligan's] imagination and absurd language." As part of the methodology, a translation in free verse is produced to test its humorous appeal to children.

However, being "free" does not mean that there are no limits to the translator's moves. First, the translator still has to work within the linguistic rules of the target language, ensuring that the translation sounds natural, neither forced nor unsuitable, in the new language. Also, as there is no perfect correspondence between languages (Nida 2012), the translator will face decision points that may result in altering, omitting or adding to the content of the source text. In the example below, the word "poor" was omitted in the translation as the addition of its equivalent in Filipino ("kaawa-awa") would make the rendering sound awkward (i.e., line will be too long) and would make the line complex with the presence of two adjectives. Translation involves not only linguistic competence – the ability to create accurate sentences or how sentence is organized in terms of grammar – but also communicative competence – how sentence is used in communication, what utterances in the language are communicatively correct or appropriate for the context.

7. a.) ST: The poor old dentist wrung his hands and, weeping in despair,
   b.) TT: Pinilipit ng matandang dentista ang mga kamay at nangingiyak sa pangamba
   c.) Back translation: The old dentist wrung his hands and weeping in fear

Third, the translation is not a recreation of the source text in which the translator has taken too many liberties such that the target text is barely recognizable from the original. It is quite the opposite: sufficient respect has been given to the source text in the translation. This is guided by Newmark's (1988: 73) position on literal translation: "... the re-creative part of translation is often exaggerated, and the literal part underestimated, particularly in literary translation, but also in other types of texts which have nothing linguistically wrong with them, which are competently written."

Similarly, it can be noted above that "weeping in despair" became "crying in fear" in the Filipino translation. Had "despair" been retained in the translation, the Filipino equivalent would have been "kawalan ng pag-asa" which sounds more prosaic than lyrical. It also sounds too formal and the mental image that it gives is hugely lacking in humor. This is a possible risk that translators must be aware of when translating a poem for content without regard to form. On the one hand, the absence of form brings with it a degree of freedom by allowing the translator to broaden the range of word options that can fit the target text, which tests the translator's literary ability in both the source language and the

target language – a "craftsman-like effort" as Robinson (2010: 5) puts it. But on the other hand, the lack of a strict guide that limits solutions can make it very easy to make word choices that are more appropriate for prose than poetry, especially if the goal is to preserve only the meaning of the source text.

#### 6.4.2.2 Expected results

The expectation was that the children in the reading sessions would find the translations prioritizing content either not as funny as the translations for form or not funny at all. Translating only for content does not mean completely disregarding the features that make poetry what it is. By maintaining the characteristics that signal the text as a verse, the translator still yields to the constraints of poetry even if the resulting product is a "free" verse. The translations of the poems of Dahl and Silverstein are not "recreations" that are hardly similar to the original because, borrowing Newmark's words, the original is already "competently written." However, for the current study, it was predicted that translating only for content would be secondary to translating for form when it comes to preserving humor in verse. This is because children are used to hearing rhyme and rhythm in children's poetry which, as other scholars have concluded (cf. Sloan 2001 and Fisher and Natarella 1982), are enjoyable for them.

### 6.4.3 Translating proper names

#### 6.4.3.1 Stylistic and structural considerations

In translating proper names centered on form, certain stylistic and structural features must be considered. Although a proper name can have an overt or covert meaning, it may also have been picked out from many alternatives simply for its aesthetic value. This seems to be the case with the name "Peggy Ann McKay" in Silverstein's "Sick." Of course, even if the name is neither descriptive nor meaningful, it does not mean that it is not non-informative (Nord 2003: 183). We know from the name that the character in the poem is a girl and the fact that it is a typical American name gives away her geographical origin and cultural background. However, it appears that for the most part, it has been chosen for being a "nice name", a pleasing and satisfying option that meets the poem's stylistic and structural needs. It is a good rhyme for the couplet, fits the iambic requirements of the composition and falls within the syllable count for each line. More rules and restrictions than prose govern poetry as a literary expression– prose and poetry are two "different specimens of art," writes Scott (1904) – and these formal regularities determine the choices that the poet makes.

These rules also influenced the translation of the proper name in the poem "Sick" which places weight on form. Because there is no long /ā/ sound in Filipino, which can be heard in the American English pronunciation of "McKay",

retaining the American name in the target text will upset the end-rhyme *-aw* in the opening couplet of the translation. The name was substituted with "Ana Kalaw" to correspond to the four syllables needed after the last caesura: "Ana" as the Filipino variant of "Ann" (which also turns "Ann" into two syllables) and "Kalaw" to imitate the striking *k* in "McKay." Substitution replaces a name by another name from the target language (Van Coillie 2006: 123). Due to the syllable count, a choice had to be made between "Peggy" and "Ann"; the latter, having a Filipino equivalent, was deemed more desirable. The only way that "Peggy Ann" could be retained in the translation is by replacing "McKay" with a monosyllabic Chinese surname such as Lao, Cao or Hao, which are found in the Philippines, to maintain the *-aw* end rhyme as well as the four syllables dictated by form. But the rhyme will fail if the child misconstrues and misreads these surnames as disyllabic. In the end, "Ana Kalaw" was selected for its better acoustic properties derived from assonance (i.e., the repetition of the short /a/).

#### 6.4.3.2 Equivalent effect

The name has been changed for the content-oriented target text as well to be consistent with the translation for form. For the content-focused translation, priority is given to equivalence in effect. Newmark (1988: 83) notes: "Normally a translator can treat cultural terms more freely than institutional terms" and as shown earlier, the American name carries some cultural information. The process of decision-making for this purpose is more complicated. It entails finding a Filipino name that has an equivalent effect, in the sense mentioned in Chapter 4. But what is the effect of the original American name in the first place? As it is, the name could give any number of impressions. However, by evaluating it against what the composition itself conveys, the reader will find that the name has a playful sound to it, perhaps somewhat mischievous and certainly not serious. The resulting translation is "Pilar Ana Macalalag" which approximates the effect of the original at the sonic and sensory levels. At the level of sound, the name in the target text begins with the letters *p*, *a* and *m* – extra effort was given to arrive at a Filipino surname that imitates the *Mc-* sound in the original – so that the names in the source text and target text have similar orthography and phonology (Fernandes 2006). Thus, the translation resorted to phonological replacement, a procedure in which "the target text name attempts to mimic phonological features of a source text name by replacing the latter with an existing name in the target language which somehow invokes the sound image of the source language being replaced" (Fernandes 2006: 54). Phonological replacement is particularly useful in poetry where sound profoundly affects the reader's response.

#### 6.4.3.3 Equivalent terms

While the translations of the proper nouns in "Sick" entailed different considerations for the focus-centered and content-centered target texts, the translation of the proper names in "The Dentist and the Crocodile" relied on equivalent terms for both the focus-oriented and content-oriented translations because the names themselves have meaning. The translation of the proper names in "The Dentist and the Crocodile" is eased by the availability of a dictionary equivalent for "crocodile" in Filipino, "buwaya." Both common nouns have been used as proper names in the original poem and its Filipino translation. The proper name "Crocodile" is meaningful in that it represents the category of the creature and characteristics around which the narrative revolves so it must be carried over into the translation. The only challenge is finding a corresponding name for the contracted "Croc" and the diminutive "Crocky" because unlike in the source culture, the word "buwaya" is used only in this form in the target culture with no shortened variation. In the end, it was necessary to create a new name, "Buwi", in the translation that follows the hypocoristic form of the nicknames derived from the word "crocodile."

## 6.5 Design of the poetry reading sessions

A total of nine poetry reading sessions were conducted with the children. The target number of participants per session was three to four. However, the target number was not always reached: one pupil did not attend the first session in the first round while two pupils were absent from the first session of the second round. The children in the second round who did not make it on their assigned session date for various personal reasons were placed in other groups at the request of their parents. In the ideal set-up of the study, two sessions should have been devoted to discussing the poem translated into Filipino according to content and another two sessions to discussing the translation according to form. However, a fifth session was held to accommodate the children who missed their sessions in the second round. All sessions were conducted and recorded on Zoom, the video conferencing platform the children use for school. The children logged in with their school accounts but they did not change their screen names for pseudo-anonimization. The author of the thesis kept the name as identifying information during the reading sessions because experts (e.g., Russell 2014) advise calling someone by his/her name to build better connection and increase trust and positive communication. Nevertheless, instead of actual names, codes were used in the transcripts and this thesis.

During the reading sessions, videos of the translations in mp4 format were shown to the participants. The videos were made using MS PowerPoint. One video was made for Dahl's poem and another for Silverstein's poem. Each video had a voice recording of the poem being read by the author, accompanied by slides with the poem's text and original illustration/s taken from the books

The length of the videos was from 1:42 minutes to 1:58 minutes. The videos were played to the children using screenshare. While the aim was to finish each session in 45 minutes, the actual discussions ran from 36 minutes to 54 minutes. Studies show that group discussions with children under the age of 10 should not exceed 45 minutes (Vaughn et al. 1998 in Heary and Hennessy 2002) but they can run for up to 60-90 minutes with 8- to 12-year-old children (Heary and Hennessy 2002, Kennedy et al. 2001). The length of a typical class for Grade 3 pupils at UPIS is 50 minutes.

Table 1: Distribution of participants

| Group | Focus of translation | No. of participants (Round 1) | No. of participants (Round 2) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Content | 2 boys | 1 girl |
| 2 | Content | 3 girls | 2 boys, 1 girl |
| 3 | Form | 4 boys | 3 girls |
| 4 | Form | 4 girls | 3 boys |
| 5 | Content | | 2 girls, 1 boy |

### 6.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

The sessions were conducted as semi-structured group interviews. Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 37) clarify that "group interviews" or "group discussions" were the terms known in the field before the phrase "focus groups" became increasingly popular in social research. They used "focus groups" and "group discussions" interchangeably. They explain that while the former is now "the most widely recognized term", the latter "conveys better the idea of a group which may be more or less focused or structured depending on the requirements of the study, and in which data is generated and shaped through discussion" (37). For this reason, the preferred terms in this study are "group interviews" and "group discussions." In semi-structured interviews, the "interviewer asks key questions in the same way each time and does some probing for further information, but this probing is more limited than in unstructured, in-depth interviews" (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 111). The image below presents the predetermined questions asked during the sessions. It should be noted that the questions are a mix of open-ended, closed-ended and poll (multiple choice) questions. The variety was deliberate to minimize the participants' lack of enthusiasm and fatigue.

Although the questions were prepared in advance, the author allowed some degree of flexibility, for instance, in the order of the questions if it felt more natural in the conversation. Some questions were also rephrased, such as using "connect with" or "see yourself" in place of "relate" in the last two questions when the questions seemed to be daunting for the participants and did not obtain responses. Probing questions were aimed at inquiring into the reasons behind an answer specifically to a closed-ended question. Probing was also used

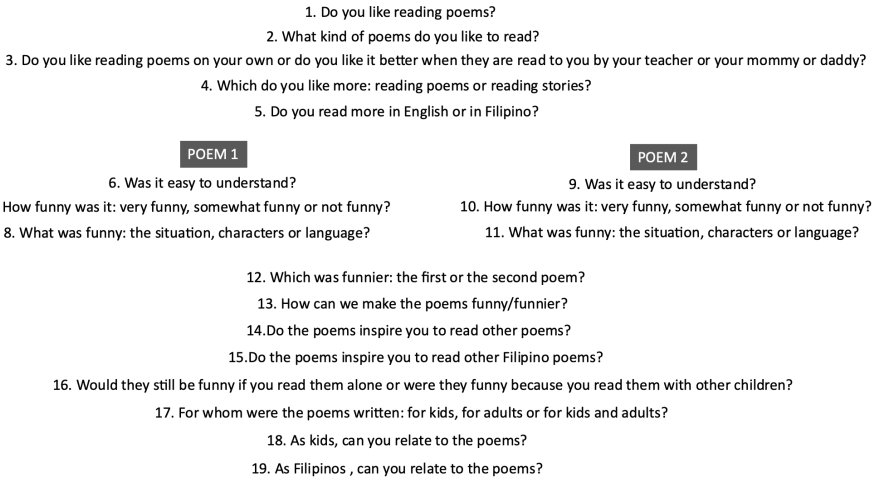


Figure 1: The interview questions translated into English. The questionnaire in Filipino is attached as Appendix F

for understanding responses that were vague or too general. For instance, if the participant found the poem difficult to understand, he or she was asked which of its aspects or parts were regarded as challenging.

### 6.5.2 Benefits of group interviews

Group interviews are ideal for eliciting children's views if the author creates a pleasant atmosphere in which children want to become involved in the discussion. Adler et al. (2019: 2) in particular note how focus groups "can be used to create a safe peer environment for children." Citing Shaw et al. (2011), they also report that focus groups can avoid some of the power imbalances that arise between an adult and a child in a one-on-one interview. But Adler et al. were right to emphasize that only some of such power imbalances can be avoided. In the reading sessions, the author would wait for an answer to be volunteered by the participants. Few participants responded without being called, particularly for closed-ended questions. For the most part, however, the children patiently waited to be called, possibly because this is how their typical class is set up. This can also be cultural: Filipino children are taught to respect adults and speaking only if directly addressed by an adult is a sign of respect. The children waited for their turn even if it was made clear that they could answer and react at any point in the discussion without raising their hands and being called. There were advantages to asking the pupils one by one though. The discussions were organized. There was equal participation among the children and the discussion was not limited to the more dominant or active individuals and their ideas. It encouraged the children to think and contribute to the discus-

sion and all of the participants answered each question. Asking the participants one at a time was particularly helpful in giving a chance to the shy or quieter members of the group to share their answers.

### 6.5.3 Drawbacks of group interviews

A downside of this method is that it makes the response less natural and spontaneous. Another disadvantage is the likely pressure put on children to respond, seeing that the other participants were able to answer. To counteract this possibility, the author was careful to avoid coercion. For instance, if the child did not know the answer to a question, saying either "I don't know" or nothing at all, the author tried to encourage the participant to respond by offering some answers from which he or she could choose or get ideas. If the participant still did not know the answer, the author accepted the response and moved forward with the discussion. The author also limited the probing questions to an initial response to one or two questions, even if the answer to the probing question could still be made clearer so that the children did not feel that they were being challenged.

Although the interaction was mainly between the author and the participants, there were also traces of interaction between the participants. These centered on sharing similar responses ("Same as the answer of [participant]"), supplementing responses, for instance, adding to the suggested alternative endings of the poems given by the other children, and acknowledging the presence of other participants ("For [participant], it's obviously going to be language" or "I will just let [participant] speak").

### 6.5.4 General evaluation of the sessions

Ennis and Chen (2012) suggest that in conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher should briefly summarize the initial response of a participant to show that it has been understood. A probing question can follow this if more specific information is needed. Other researchers likewise recommend this technique such as Nyumba et al. (2018: 29) who, citing Morgan et al. (1998) and Litosseliti (2004), list "good and active listening skills to... paraphras[e] or summaris[e] responses" as among the desirable skills of the facilitator of a focus group. In this study, the author not only repeated or summarized the response but also asked for the correctness of the summary using questions such as "Is that right?" (Tama ba?), "Is that what you mean?" ('Yun ba ang ibig mong sabihin?) or "Did I hear it correctly?" (Tama ba ang dinig ko?). Seeking confirmation from the participants on the accuracy of the summary was particularly helpful in virtual discussions where poor voice clarity (arising from problems with microphones and headphones or their placement, connection issues or even from loud background noise in the participant's home) can easily make it impossible for the author to understand responses. In addition, confirmatory questions give the participants the feeling that their ideas are not

only valid but also valued that the author would want to ensure that they were well understood.

Also important to the success of the group discussions was a relaxed and comfortable environment which the author created as best as she could. The children were eager to discuss their favorite books, authors or poems without being asked. They felt at ease in correcting the author when there were inaccuracies as illustrated by the following dialogue:

> Researcher: C4, do you like reading poetry?
> *C4 shakes her head.*
> Researcher: Why don't you like it?
> *C4 does not reply.*
> Researcher: Is it hard? Is it boring?
> C4: I don't know.
> Researcher: What was that again, C4?
> C4: I don't read that much.
> Researcher: Oh, you don't read that much poetry. You just don't like it.
> C4: I just don't read poetry. It's not that I don't like it. I just don't read it.

Similarly, they were open to sharing information about themselves, even information that could have backfired, such as admitting having faked sickness to avoid going to school – this reflects trust in the researcher. Many children spontaneously elaborated their answers to closed-ended questions. Even the more reserved, soft-spoken participants were confident in their responses. While attending an online discussion from the comfort of their own homes could have helped some children to relax, it also had its disadvantages, mainly that it divided the attention of some of them. There were participants who left the session to grab a snack or walked to another room of the house. Those who lacked a private space in which to participate in the discussion talked to the other people who were present with them. The majority of the participants, however, were able to resist distractions around them which the author of this thesis found impressive. The author also found that it helped to reiterate questions as she moved from one participant to the next. This technique added to the conversational quality of the discussion and eased the burden on the children, who have much shorter attention spans than adults[26], to remember the questions. In fact, a few children would ask for the question to be repeated even as they were in the middle of answering it. Reiterating questions kept the children engaged and helped them stay focused. For the author, this also presented opportunities to improve the questions. For example, if a question in its original wording was confusing or unclear for one participant, it was rephrased using simpler language or accompanied by a short explanation for the other participants.

[26]For an 8-year-old child, the average attention span is 16 to 24 minutes.

There are drawbacks to conducting group discussions virtually. Technical glitches resulting from poor internet connection not only affected children's participation in the discussion but also altered the overall flow of the discussion. Aside from causing a lag between the video and audio or causing the video to freeze, low internet bandwidth or poor connectivity also forced a few participants to turn their cameras off or to log in and out of the web conferencing application in the middle of the discussion. Some questions then had to be repeated and the recording of the poems had to be replayed for those who missed them which consumed extra time.

The benefits of the virtual setting, however, outweigh the drawbacks. First, the experience of spontaneity that one gets in a face-to-face setting was not entirely lost; children could still respond and react immediately and quickly. Second, it was convenient for the children to participate in the sessions. One pupil could join the session even while traveling in the car. Another participant who had mouth problems and could not speak was able to answer the questions using the chat feature of the web meeting software. Furthermore, instead of verbally interrupting the researcher or another participant, some children opted to use the chat box to respond to the question or react to what has been said. This prevented the participants from talking simultaneously which made for a clearer audio recording. To ensure that the other participants did not miss what has been said in the chat, the author of this thesis read the written responses or comments aloud to the group. Finally, the online discussions were easier to record, video and audio alike, compared to physical meetings that would have required more equipment and logistical preparations. Extra care is needed for recording online sessions though as the settings of the video conferencing application can change at any time. In this study, the second-round sessions had not been recorded in the preferred gallery view where all the participants could be seen at the same time. Instead, they were recorded in speaker view (i.e., only the person speaking was shown on the screen) because the developer changed the default setting and the author did not know this beforehand. As a result, the physiological responses (e.g., laughter or smiles) of most participants to the poems as they were read had not been captured on video. This shows that a test run is required prior to each reading session.

## 6.6 Effect of the pandemic on the research design

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on the research methodology, especially since the children who were the target participants in the study were severely affected by restrictive measures to contain the spread of the virus. When Covid-19 arrived in the Philippines, the national government imposed variations of lockdowns, ordered schools to close and prohibited children from going outside their residences even for exercise or play. As a result, learning from home with the help of a web conferencing platform, which in the past was mostly used by adults, became the alternative to face-to-face instruction for

many school children particularly in Metro Manila. These emergency actions changed the course of the research, with data gathering relying on remote group discussions instead of the planned in-person reading sessions. By the time the online discussions were conducted, the children had been attending real-time virtual classes for more than a year, had adapted to the switch to the online environment and were familiar with the technology. Thus, it was already natural for them to interact and participate in a discussion remotely and this showed in their performance, not only how they navigated the technology-based platform but also in how they contributed to the discussion. Ultimately, the shift in research design proved to be very favorable in terms of data collection as mentioned in the preceding section. The biggest impact of the pandemic on the research design was thus on recruitment as discussed in section 6.3.3 above.

## 6.7 Transcribing the group discussions

Saldanha and O'Brien (2014: 128) articulate that before transcribing, one has to first decide on the amount of verbal and non-verbal detail to include in the transcript and which conventions to use. They mention two kinds of transcription in this regard: denaturalized transcription and naturalized transcription. The first "attempts to retain features of the oral language" (e.g., prosody, false starts, filler words and pauses) while the second "omits the oral discoursal features" and "reads more like written language." Because the verbal data in this study will not be analyzed linguistically, it was practical to choose naturalized transcription over denaturalized transcription. However, audible pauses such as "ums" and non-verbal nuances including smiles and laughter were still captured in the transcription since they also supplement verbal response to humor, which is what the study aims to examine.

The sessions were transcribed manually by the author from video recordings. The original transcripts were in a mix of Filipino and English, the languages used in the group discussions, and subsequently translated entirely into English so that they could be understood by the non-Filipino speaking members of the research team. In the qualitative data analysis, however, the transcripts in the original languages were used. Nikander (2008: 229) considers transcription and translation as a process of "double rendering" which "adds... another layer of complication." Alyzood et al. (2019) point out the inconsistencies in the use of translation for pre- or post-analysis. They note:

> A number of papers argued the importan[ce] of analysing data in the participant's native language to ensure the meaning and context was truly represented and not lost in translation (Brooke et al. 2019, Mariani et al. 2016, Chen and Boore 2010). However, other studies have translated all data into English to support analysis by the full research team (Selman et al. 2017, Mariani et al. 2016). There is a clear need for evidence-based guidance on the reporting

> of translation, transcription and analysis of focus group data from countries with linguistic difficulties.

Although there was the option to use the automated transcription feature of the video conferencing application in the second round of discussions[27], the author still decided on manual transcription because its advantages, especially decoding important information and describing the occurrence of non-verbal or inaudible language, outweigh automatically-transcribed content, which must still be checked for accuracy. The researcher is the best person to judge what is or is not meaningful in the collected responses and to determine which parts to transcribe in detail, for instance, where pauses and laughter matter. This is why transcription entails a translation (Slembrouck 2007 and ten Have 2007 in Davidson 2009: 38). Transcription is a "selective" process "whereby certain phenomena or features of talk and interaction are transcribed" (Davidson 2009: 38). In other words, it is "based on a 'selective rendering of the data'"(Heritage and Atkinson, 1984: 12 in Nikander 2008: 226). In the example below, the participant hesitates in his initial response and the researcher writes "yes" precisely as spoken using word lengthening and a question mark to denote reluctance. A transcription software or program cannot record such expression of uncertainty. It is important to represent this in the transcription because when the researcher took notice of the hesitation, the participant was quick to give a more decisive answer, which suggests an interviewer's effect on a participant.

> Researcher: Okay. So, was the poem easy to understand?
> C24: Pardon?
> Researcher: Was the poem easy to understand?
> C24: Um yeees?
> Researcher: Yes. C24 doesn't seem sure.
> C24: It's easy to understand the poem.

Another significant advantage of having the researcher transcribe the discussions is that the researcher "gets to know the data thoroughly and helps to inform decisions that have to be taken regarding the subsequent coding of the data" (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014: 128). Some categories emerge during the transcription process (Davidson 2009). For instance, a few participants in this study mentioned pictures but the responses were not numerically significant to merit a separate category. In the end, the related responses were clustered with other codes. This is why the importance of the transcription process should not be "underestimated", according to Saldanha and O'Brien (2014: 128, citing Bucholtz 2000) because it already "imposes a layer of interpretation on the language used by participants." They add that "the more complex and rich verbal data that is obtained from interviews or focus groups is likely to trigger an analysis process at a very early stage" and "this is particularly the case in small scale projects where the interviewer/moderator and the researcher are the same

[27]This feature was not available when the first round of discussions was held.

person" (189). How much to transcribe depends on why one is transcribing and how much data one has (Hepburn and Bolden 2017: 14). In a conversation analytic study, for example, it is not enough to make simple transcripts using standard orthography as many aspects of the interaction might be missed. Hepburn and Bolden (2017: 14) add that there are "different levels of how much to capture from the sound or video files that form [the] data" and recommend that "when setting out, a standard orthographic [or verbatim] transcript may be enough to familiarize [the researcher] with [the] data." In producing a verbatim transcript, the researcher should not be "tempted to 'tidy up' the grammar, e.g. change words around and introduce words that aren't there." The following example has some grammatical lapses left unedited in the transcription.

> Researcher: C16, have you thought of how to make number 2 funny?
> C16: The mother will say "I thought you were sick." I mean, she will be given a lot of medicines a lot of times a day then she cannot resist she will say "Please no." The mother will say "You need to take it because you are sick" then she will say that she's not sick.
> Researcher: Ah, so she has to take medicine and C17 said she would be given "100 vegetable" a day.
> C15: Then the medicine a thousand, a thousand medicine a day. In all.
> Researcher: One thousand medicine. That's a lot. How can she take that?
> *C17 laughs.*

Needless to say, a significant drawback of manual transcription, aside from being slower, is that the audio is not always easy to understand, for instance, when two participants speak at the same time or when they talk very fast and their pronunciation is not clear. In some of these instances, the author asked the participants to repeat their response to improve the quality of verbal data for transcription. For instance, in the transcription of the last discussion in the second round, there were 10 responses in which a few words or the whole sentences were hard to comprehend. Five of the 10 responses were repeated by the participants upon the request of the author, leaving only five responses partially or entirely unclear.

It is worth mentioning as well that during the discussions, the author was careful to verbalize inaudible verbal responses (i.e. noes, yeses and okays uttered while the microphone was muted and any comment written in the chat box) and non-verbal language (e.g., nodding or shaking of the head or laughing while the microphone was turned off) in anticipation of the transcription process. Otherwise, these utterances and gestures, which can be substantial, are lost from the data because they cannot be picked up during audio transcription (Ritchie and Lewis 2003: 182). This is particularly important in the second round of discussions when only the speaker is visible in the video recording.

## 6.8 Data analysis

The first step in the analysis process involved putting together all relevant responses for each participant in a session using MS Word. Each Word file representing one session was named "responses_Group [number]_[first/second] round." The second step was to import each MS Word file in Atlas.ti using the "Add document" feature. As a result, nine documents were created in the program representing the nine poetry reading sessions. Atlas.ti is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software that aids qualitative research. Based on the methods of grounded theory and content analysis, the software can be used to locate, code/tag, annotate and visualize data such as text. The third step entailed coding each quote in Atlas.ti. A total of 15 codes composed of 414 quotations were used for analysis. Atlas.ti was chosen as it was deemed suitable for the research goals. It is readily available (Leiden University has a multiple user license), user friendly, intuitive and easy to learn by a beginner to computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. Furthermore, the features of the software are sufficient to the degree of complexity of the research project, which only required organizing qualitative responses and assigning codes to them.

### 6.8.1 Coding responses

The codes were derived from the interview questions which in turn explored the research questions. For instance, the questions on what made the poem funny and how the poem could be made funnier aimed to examine the adequacy of existing theoretical and conceptual models in explaining what children find funny. These two questions were coded as "what is funny" and "ending", respectively. Deductive coding, also known as top-down coding or concept-driven coding, was chosen as method of analysis since the set of codes was already determined beforehand. Excerpts that fit the codes and are most representative of the findings were selected from the transcriptions. A predefined structure in the presentation of the findings, one that follows the natural, logical flow of the interview questions, was also a strong reason for using the deductive approach. For example, as seen in section 6.4.1, the questions moved chronologically from inquiring into the participants' understanding of the texts to their response to the poems' funniness. Thus, one clear advantage of the deductive method in this case is that it makes it easier to structure the data for analysis because it observes the sequence of the questions used in the reading sessions.

The codes with the number of responses for each code in parentheses are as follows:

- can relate as a child (26)
- can relate as a Filipino (25)
- easy to understand (44)

- ending (27)
- funnier poem (23)
- how funny (52)
- intended audience (26)
- language (26)
- poetry (38)
- reading alone versus read by others (17)
- reading alone versus reading with others (26)
- reading more in Filipino (15)
- reading more poems (23)
- story versus poem (15)
- what is funny (30)

### 6.8.2 Cross-tabulation analysis

Aside from analyzing the codes on their own, the responses were also interpreted using cross-tabulation analysis to identify data patterns and significant associations. Cross-tabulation was performed for each participant using MS Excel. The responses were tallied in MS Excel, with the results displayed in tables. Although Atlas.ti has a cross-tabulation analysis feature, the author did not have the know-how to perform it, hence, the decision to use MS Excel. The following were the cross-tabulated codes:

- language + read more in Filipino
- language + how funny
- easy to understand + what is funny
- easy to understand + how funny
- easy to understand + read alone versus read by others

In some cases, the analysis treated Dahl's and Silverstein's poems separately. This was done to make vivid what children find funny in the poems. Although sharing certain similarities (e.g., both humorous and relying on the element of surprise), the poems were also different from each other particularly in terms of genre (one realistic; the other fantastical). The following codes generated a separate analysis for either poem:

- language + how funny
- easy to understand
- easy to understand + what is funny
- easy to understand + how funny
- easy to understand + read alone versus read by others
- intended audience
- can relate as children
- how funny

Moreover, two codes were cross-tabulated with gender to determine whether there are gender differences in the way children perceive humor. These are the codes that probed "how funny" the poems were and "what [wa]s funny" in them. Children's humor is often investigated in connection with age (in other words, from a developmental perspective) but not gender so this study's findings may provide valuable insights in this aspect.

### 6.8.3 Responses to the form-centered and content-centered translations

As presented in section 4.2, two translations were produced for the poetry reading sessions: one focused on form and another on content. Two tables were created to display the data relevant to the translation focus. One table presents the results on the funniness of the poems ("how funny") versus the focus of translation (form or content). Another table expands the analysis by showing the funniness of the poems and focus of translation against the factor of gender. Dahl's and Silverstein's poems were analyzed separately in both tables. These results address one of the main questions of this research.

As mentioned, the responses to the humor in the poems of Dahl and Silverstein were analyzed separately. This allowed a closer examination of how previously identified humor categories could be applied to the two poems. The overall humor in the two poems were also different, but both with an ironic twist in the end. Looking at the poems separately made it possible to determine specifically what kind of humor appealed more to children than did not. For instance, an analysis of responses to Silverstein's poem point to the female participants' tendency to be more empathetic to characters in unpleasant situations which made the poem less humorous. One of the research objectives is to make the gender differences in humor appreciation more evident as this aspect is often disregarded in other studies.

### 6.8.4 Strengths of the data

One of the strengths of a semi-structure interview, which also reflects on the outcome and collected data, is it ensures that a broader range of topics relevant to the research questions is covered. Having a set of questions guided the discussion and kept participants on topic, making it possible to ask more questions in a limited amount of time. Because it covers more topics and offers numerical findings (some of the questions can be regarded as closed questions), a strength of the data is it allows the examination of relationships between different variables. This augments the qualitative analysis of the responses by deriving more insights such as patterns and trends.

The results chapter likewise includes feedback from the participants and parents on the poetry reading sessions. Although not analyzed, feedback provides additional qualitative data that supports the positive effect of the sessions on the participants and their reported shift of interest toward reading and enjoyment of poetry.

### 6.8.5 Limitations of the data

One clear limitation of the data is that because the groups are so small, the data cannot be analyzed statistically since the test would not have enough power. An obvious suggestion for future research is to recruit more participants to address the limited quantitative analysis. Another limitation of the data is that it does not present the responses from all of the participants. This is because in some of the poetry reading sessions, the researcher failed to ask certain questions in the predefined questionnaire in an attempt to make the discussion more conversational and natural. For example, if the participant's response touches on another question, the researcher proceeds to ask that question even if it was not necessarily next in the sequence of questions and despite missing one or more questions in the prepared questionnaire. In some cases, too, while asking a participant, the researcher was interrupted by other participants and thus unable to elicit an answer from the intended participant. But such is the nature of a semi-structured interview: it is open and flexible. As a result, some of the codes have fewer than 26 responses. These include the codes "story versus poem", "read more in Filipino" and "read alone versus read with others."

## 6.9 Conclusions

Although fewer pupils enrolled in the study for reasons such as competition with other research calls and experiences associated with Covid-19, the turnout was still ideal for creating groups of 2 to 4 participants. It is advisable to match the size of groups with age; in the case of children 10 years old and younger, it has been found that groups with four to six individuals are best for generating discussion and managing activities (Mareschal and Delaney, 2019).

Scholars have mentioned how group interviews can create a safe and pleasant environment for children to voice their thoughts as they minimize the power disparities in one-on-one interviews between adult researchers and child participants. However, even if power was distributed in such a setup where children were free to express their views and experiences, culture and the school setting still affected the adult-child relationship. Some of the children referred to the author as "Teacher" which indicates how they perceived the role of the author in the activity and her "legitimate authority" over them. Similarly, as mentioned in Chapter 3 on humor, one limitation of group interviews is that they tend to be "artificial" in that participants can be pressured to conform to others.

Notwithstanding this limitation, group interview was still selected for data collection as one of the study's goals was to determine whether humor is indeed a social act, that is, whether children find a text more humorous if read or discussed with other children. Putting participants together in a session can produce different findings than individual interviews as children may behave differently in a group. Similarly, being in a group allows participants to encounter firsthand what it means to collectively read and discuss a humorous text, resulting in responses that better capture the experience. The design of the procedure also addresses the central questions in the data collection instrument. For instance, the decision to present the translated poems to the participants both aurally and visually was based on one of the questions investigating whether they prefer to read poems themselves or listen to them.

The poems that were translated were chosen according to the theories of humor discussed in Chapter 3: Dahl's poem showed the superiority theory at work while the incongruity theory could explain the humor in Silverstein's poem. The selected materials had to cover different theories to gain greater insight into children's humor. But using more than one material in the reading session did not only make it possible to compare humorous texts and test the utility of existing concepts and theories in understanding humor. Moreover, it was beneficial to expose children to humorous poems and address the questions on whether knowledge of funny poems would encourage them to, first, read more poetry and, second, to read more in Filipino. As discussed in Chapter 3, humor encourages children to read books actively and makes reading more engaging. If the children in the study were motivated or inspired to read more poetry and Filipino texts, this proves that the research was also practical, with direct and immediate benefits to the participants. As a practical application, poetry reading sessions can be replicated in other groups to inspire primary-aged children to broaden their reading interests.

A semi-structured interview was selected to elicit participants' perceptions, thoughts and experiences without a rigid structure. The questionnaire, designed for variety using both closed-ended and open-ended questions, directly asked the participants about some of the problems identified in the literature review. For example, to address the dual readership of children's literature discussed in Chapter 2, the participants were asked whether they thought the poems were written solely for children, adults or both audiences. A question on whether the

participants preferred reading stories or poems was included in the questionnaire to investigate the issue of demand for particular genres in Chapter 4. The participants were asked what kind of poems they read to examine whether they were more partial to funny poems, which was found in other children's studies as shown in Chapter 3. Finally, questions on whether the participants could relate to the poems as children and as Filipinos closed the reading sessions to assess whether humor is indeed influenced by age and culture. Although there were occasions in which probing was necessary to elicit details, most responses to closed-ended questions were automatically given by the participants with an elaboration such as an example. This shows that the children were sufficiently engaged to provide more extended responses.