



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Children's response to humor in translated poetry

Morta, A.R.

Citation

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

Version: Publisher's Version

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

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

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

CHAPTER 7

Results and analysis

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the series of poetry reading sessions conducted with the participants. It begins with a profile of the participants' general attitudes toward poetry and language preferences for reading. Subsequently, the participants' reading patterns will be discussed, shedding light on comprehension abilities, and favored modality and setting. Then, the outcome of the inquiry on the duality of audience in children's poems will be presented. Responses on content relatability to children and Filipino readers, as a condition for humor appreciation, are reported in the sections after that. Finally, the answers to the central questions of whether funny poems for children are still funny when translated from one language into another and whether form or content is more decisive in determining the experience of humor will be given. Given the relevance of the transcriptions of the interviews for analyzing the questions and substantiating the claims, extracts from the transcripts are included in this chapter.

7.2 General attitudes toward and experiences of poetry

Nineteen of the 26 participants showed a positive perception of poetry. This group can be divided into two subgroups: those with a strong association with poetry (i.e., reporting a wide range of experience with poetry) and those with

a weak association with poetry (i.e., reporting little, some or “not [that] much” exposure to poetry). In the first subgroup, participants responded with a definite “yes” when asked if they read poetry, suggesting a higher frequency of poetry reading and not merely a one-time contact. In the second subgroup, participants not only demonstrated a lower frequency of poetry reading but also demonstrated lower awareness of poetry (“I don’t know much [about it]” C3). Although there is some indication that those who read more are likely to be more open to reading poems, this is not the case all the time. As one participant put it: “I like reading but I don’t like reading [poems]. I don’t really find much [in it]” (C26). By contrast, one participant expressed that she loves to read so “it’s nice to read both [poems and stories]” (C10). One preferred poems over stories because they are “shorter and easier to read” (C12).

7.2.1 Effect of poems on reader

According to the children who participated in this study, poems have a positive emotional effect on them. For instance, one mentioned that “sometimes poems make [her] happy” (C10) and another said that she is entertained when she reads poems. Funny poems are particularly attractive to the participants as they provide a brief respite from reality “so [that] it’s not always serious [and one] can take a break” (C21). The participants showed interest, for example, in limericks and poems accompanied by cartoons. One shared with the group that he prefers funny poems even if he has not read them [“But I’m sure it will be funny” (C15)]. Although they expressed enthusiasm over poems that are “fun” (C21, C23) with “a lot of jokes” (C22), they are also receptive to reading “informative” (C22) poems that are not necessarily humorous (cf. Styles 1998: children’s poetry is traditionally created to make children laugh). Among the informative poems they enjoy reading are those about fables and legends as well as those about prayers, animals and life. At least three participants were open to reading poems on any topic [“nothing specific” (C12) and “anything” (C11)]. There is evidence of awareness of and positive attitudes towards rhyme – at least two participants mentioned the word “rhyme” – which supports the notion that children’s poetry must possess rhyme to make them effective (see for example Sloan 2001: “most poetry is written for children, for they respond well to rhymes and obvious rhythms”). They took delight in rhyme found in poems – “I like rhyme” (C15) – particularly in “making or listening to rhyming words” (C10). According to Zafra (2023, personal communication), this could be due in part to the inclusion of poetry in the minimum learning competencies required by the Department of Education and the curriculum of UPIS from kindergarten to Grade 3. Nevertheless, it was not mentioned if rhyme can make a poem funnier or more exciting or, conversely, if the absence of it can make a poem less funny or exciting.

Similar to reading stories, reading poems can be pleasurable for some participants as it stirs one’s imagination: “It’s fun. Sometimes you can imagine” (C21). In addition, for the participants, poems contain “beautiful words” that

“have meanings” (C16) and the meaning construction process demands creativity from the reader. There seems to be no consensus on this aspect, however. While some of the participants consider the language of poetry as its most attractive feature, for others, it is the refined language used in poetry that hinders the understanding of and appreciation for poetry itself: “Sometimes it is about an object. Sometimes I don’t understand what [it’s about]” (C20).

7.2.2 Preference for stories over poems

Participants still gravitate towards stories even as they read poetry, looking for stories and morals in poems. This finding substantiates the claim that children positively respond to narrative rhymes (Huck, Hepler and Hickman 1987 in Mallan 1993). When asked if they liked reading poetry, it was instinctive for the participants to refer to non-poetic works such as novels and comic books, suggesting a general bias for prose stories over poems. Furthermore, when made to choose between stories and poems, over half of all 26 participants viewed stories with greater favor as reflected in the following statements:

- “They have happy details.” (C2)
- “They have pictures.” (C5)
- “They are longer.” (C13, C21, C25)/“They last longer.” (C19)
- “Stories usually have adventure.” (C20)
- “They require imagination.” (C25)
- “There are characters.” (C17)
- “They are more realistic while poems are not that realistic.” (C23)
- “They have fantasy which is exciting.” (C16)
- “Finishing them is more fulfilling.” (C24)
- “They are fun and have something very interesting.” (C22)

Two participants (C1 and C14) articulated their preference for stories but were unsure why they felt that way.

7.2.3 Conduits for poetry experience

Exposure to poetry is mainly through the participants’ parents and teachers. Parents familiarize children with poetry when they make certain poetry books or online poetry resources available at home for children to discover and read. These have great recall with some participants citing the poems introduced to them by their parents as examples of poems that they read. The school is an equally important player in developing interest in and connection with poetry

among children. Some participants shared instances of poetry reading in school or admitted reading poetry “only when needed for school” (C15).

The experience of poetry being limited to school tasks is clearly seen among the seven participants who confessed that they are not poetry readers. Some revealed that they have “never tried reading poems” (for instance, C5), perhaps to mean not having experienced reading poems outside of school, that is, there is no initiative to seek out and read poems on their own. One participant noted that most poems known to him “are dark and brooding” (C1), discouraging him from reading poetry. Others remarked that they like reading in general but not necessarily reading poems. One confessed that poetry is difficult to understand. Two participants pointed out the impracticality of reading poetry and said that they do not read poems because “[they have] other things to do” (C14, C23). Finally, one participant demonstrated indifference to poetry: “I don’t read poems. It’s not that I don’t like it. I just don’t read it” (C4). Thus, it seems that a mismatch in needs and tastes mainly dissuades poetry reading among this group of participants. This observation means that given a suitable material, one that is neither “dark” nor “difficult” or one that is built around a storyline since many of them are partial to stories, it is still likely to convert this group into poetry readers.

7.2.4 Reading more poems

One of the accomplishments of the poetry reading sessions was changing the participants’ negative views or misconceptions about poetry. Five of the seven participants who never had any interest in poetry responded in the affirmative when asked at the end of the session whether they were inspired to read more poems after knowing that poems could be funny. It helped that all the children were free to talk about the poems in an environment that was non-judgmental. This is in contrast to the pressure exerted, for example, by a required reading for class that is often “serious” and “highbrow” (as is often the measure of “academic”) and on which pupils are graded for their reflections. Thus, although classroom discussions allow pupils to study or even write poetry intensely, the reading task itself can be both daunting and tedious for children, as reasoned out by some participants in this study. As such, poems are peripheral to stories for many children. One participant mentioned that he prefers stories over poems because he does not “understand [those] types” of poems “that [are] old English” (C21), perhaps having encountered these in the classroom.

The results of the poetry reading sessions indicate that interest in reading for pleasure can easily change among children in the elementary years once they are shown the breadth of literary materials available to them. They are not hardwired to reject reading on their own initiative or to accept only one genre to read. More importantly, funny poems have the advantage of engaging children and encouraging independent reading, regardless of the child’s reading preferences. This is an important finding as most of the time, funny poems are not deemed “literary” enough to be included in classroom teaching, thus

marginalizing children who are comfortable with amusing texts and discouraging them from getting excited about the idea of reading poems. In fact, none of the participants in this study hinted at their experience with funny poems in school. Therefore, educators could be encouraged to consider the value of humorous poems in teaching literature in general and motivating children to read poetry in particular.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, humor comprehension is a high-level mental activity and a problem-solving task, making it especially suitable for use in the classroom. Children like puzzles and humorous poems are similar to puzzles in that there are logical gaps that they must connect on their own. In the study, not all children were able to locate and work out the gaps in the funny poems read to them. Some admitted outright that they struggled with the poems for reasons such as unfamiliarity with Filipino words. Yet some said that the poems were easy to comprehend when in fact they misconstrued their meaning. This tendency was particularly evident when Shel Silverstein's poem "Sick" was discussed. Only eight of the 26 participants enjoyed the incongruity in the poem at first reading. Four participants grasped what was funny in the poem after they viewed the video of the poem a second time. The poem did not make sense to one participant even after it was explained to her. What was surprising was that half of the participants did not recognize the absurdity in the poem at all. The poem is centered around a child faking illness to avoid school, only to discover it is a Saturday. But the 13 participants empathized with the child being sick and, convinced that she was truly ill, described the poem as "sad", "painful" or "not funny." Thus, humor in poetry can be complex and cannot be dismissed simply as superficial. With their surprise effect, they can elicit interesting conversations and promote creative thinking and reasoning in the classroom.

The results further show that when humor is added, poetry moves from being impractical and peripheral to something that can be as interesting and enticing as stories. Only two pupils who were biased against poetry expressed ambivalence over whether they had been persuaded to read more poems after the session. However, such a change in interest should be closely associated with a supportive home as well. One participant who initially felt reluctant about poetry was convinced to read more poems "but I don't think we have poems [at home]" (C14). Thus, parents could be encouraged to have some type of involvement including sharing and reading poetry to their children at home to develop poetry readers.

7.3 Language: Preference for Filipino or English

At the beginning of each poetry reading session, the children were asked if they read more in English or in Filipino.²⁸ Eighteen of them responded that English

²⁸One was not able to respond due to technical problems.

was their preferred language for reading. The reasons they gave include the following:

- “It is easier for me. That’s how it sounds in my head... I struggle a bit in Filipino.” (C1)
- “With Filipino, there are some words that I don’t understand.” (C5)
- “With English, I learn new words.” (C3)
- “That’s what my parents buy and they cannot find [books in] Filipino.” (C20)
- “I’m used to reading English stories.” (C18)
- “I’m not really fluent in Filipino.” (C21)
- “I understand English better.” (C19)
- “I’m more comfortable [with English].” (C14)
- “English because I have a lot of English books so it’s easier for me to read in English.” (C26)

Two participants said that they use Filipino more often because “it is [their] language” (C2, C23). On the other hand, five children reported that they use English and Filipino with equal frequency when reading. One of them said that she owns English and Filipino books and while she likes Filipino books more, she is reading more in English now. Another explained that his workbooks, except those used for music and English classes, are in Filipino but the books that his parents buy for him are in English. By contrast, the parents of one participant purchase books for him in English and Filipino. Thus, it can be seen that parents are very influential in shaping children’s reading habits and preferences.

7.3.1 Use of Taglish

Since the poems utilized for discussion were in Filipino, the questions asked by the researcher were phrased either entirely in this language or a combination of Filipino and English. It was clear to the participants from the start that they were free to respond in either English or Filipino or a combination of both languages. At least three children spoke primarily in English and at least two switched between English and Filipino throughout the discussion. For example, one tried to respond in Filipino but eventually switched back to English as he was “too lazy to translate it into Filipino” (C1). Many, however, responded in “Taglish” or a mix of Tagalog (Filipino) and English within a single utterance. Taglish is the code-switching variety evident among bilingual (at least Filipino and English) speakers in Metro Manila and is mostly used by educated, middle-

and upper-class urban dwellers.²⁹ As the questions posed by the author were constructed mainly in Filipino, Taglish was the result of the attempt of the participants who were generally more proficient in English to respond in Filipino. There are two cases identified from the responses of the children.

1. Insertion of English lexical items (Lesada 2017) – Participants opted to use the English terms even if the Tagalog/Filipino counterparts are easily accessible perhaps because the borrowed words have made their way into everyday Filipino utterances.

“Kasi may pictures siya” (C5).

(Because it has pictures.)

Filipino counterpart: Kasi may mga larawan siya.

“Hindi ako sure” (C24).

(I’m not sure.)

Filipino counterpart: Hindi ako sigurado.

“Gusto ko ‘yung about animals or about life” (C16).

(I like those about animals or about life.)

Filipino counterpart: Gusto ko ‘yung tungkol sa mga hayop o tungkol sa buhay

2. Mixed verb formation – Participants constructed bilingual verb structures (Lesada 2017), which mimic the Filipino conjugation, for instance, employing reduplication to mark the progressive aspect.

“... pero minsan sinesendan ako ng mommy ko ng mga tula” (C3).

(...but sometimes my mommy sends me poems.)

Filipino counterpart: ... pero minsan pinapadalan ako ng nanay ko ng mga tula.

“Nagre-read lang ako ng tula ‘pag kailangan” (C15).

(I read poems only when needed.)

Filipino counterpart: Nagbabasa lang ako ng tula ‘pag kailangan

“... hindi ako maka-relate kasi hindi naman ako nagfe-fake na may sakit ako” (C20).

(I cannot relate [to it] because I don’t fake sickness.)

Filipino counterpart: ... hindi ako makaugnay kasi hindi naman ako nagkukunwari na may sakit ako.

Verbs were also formed from nouns, as in the sentence below.

²⁹Lesada (2017) also observed the presence of Taglish among bilinguals who were not mainly Tagalog (Filipino) speakers such as those in the Visayas, a great distance from the Tagalog-speaking region of Metro Manila.

“Sa Tuesday and Friday, nagfa-flag [ceremony]... nagna-national anthem kami” (C24).

(Every Tuesday and Friday, we have a flag [ceremony]... we have the national anthem.)

Filipino counterpart: Sa Martes at Biyernes, nagkakaroon kami ng [pagtaas ng] bandila... kumakanta kami ng pambansang awit.

7.3.2 Preferred language and humor perception

It makes sense to assume that those who have a greater preference for and fluency in English would find the Filipino translations of the poems difficult to understand. However, it appears that the relationship between preferred language for reading and funniness rating is weak. The number of English speakers who found Dahl’s poem very funny or somewhat funny and those who found it not funny were almost the same. When it came to Silverstein’s poem, the difference between those who found it funny and those who did not was more noticeable but the results did not support the earlier assumption, with more English speakers finding the poem “very funny” and “somewhat funny.” It could be presumed that reading the text, apart from listening to it, could have provided some aid to those who were not proficient in the language, thus increasing the poem’s funniness.

Table 2: Preferred language and humor perception

Preferred Language	Dahl ($N = 26$)			Silverstein ($N = 26$)		
	Very Funny	Somewhat funny	Not funny	Very funny	Somewhat funny	Not funny
English	1	8	10	3	9	7
Filipino	0	1	1	1	0	1
English and Filipino	1	1	2	0	4	0
No reply	0	0	1	0	1	0

7.3.3 Reading more in Filipino

Of the 14 participants who were asked, a striking majority articulated that the session has inspired them to read more in Filipino. Of the 10 participants who were more comfortable with reading in English, eight said that they would read more in Filipino, one said that he was “not sure” if he would do so (C24) and one responded that he was motivated “a little” (C21) to find more Filipino texts to read. Of the three participants who read in English and Filipino with similar regularity, two were inspired to read more in Filipino (C11, C12) while

one said “it is possible” (C22). One participant who read more in Filipino than in English told the group that he would continue doing so.

Table 3: Preferred language and likelihood to read more in Filipino

Preferred language for reading ($N = 14$)	Would read more in Filipino	Not sure	A little	It is possible
English	8	1	1	0
Filipino	1	0	0	0
English and Filipino	2	0	0	1

7.3.3.1 Reasons for wanting to read more in Filipino

Some of the participants’ main reason for attempting to read more Filipino texts was the need to learn Filipino, which their parents encouraged and supported. However, the participants also know the benefits of a strong mother tongue foundation. According to the participants, they want to “learn to understand Filipino” (C25, C26) possibly to communicate with others, understand the world around them or perform better in school. It could also be that they feel frustrated and alienated from their own culture when they fail to understand certain Filipino words. That “Filipino is [their] language” (C2, C20) was enough stimulus for some participants to read more in Filipino: they are aware that their native language is a fundamental aspect of their cultural identity. In addition, learning their mother tongue is another positive challenge for those pupils who “like learning” (e.g., C21 and C26) and humor helps them have a more positive mindset toward the task. Thus, humor is a good motivator for infrequent, even reluctant, young readers of Filipino who view reading in their native language as a task that needs completion.

7.3.3.2 Humor as an aid for reading Filipino

During the poetry reading sessions, the participants appeared engaged in reading and sharing their ideas even if some of them were not proficient in the language of discussion. Many were able to comprehend the poems in Filipino (although the humor in Silverstein’s poem was particularly challenging for a number of them) and give answers that reflected their own creativity and imagination. Humor helped increase the retention of information which was evident in the way the participants connected the funny events in the poems with particular emphasis on Dahl’s poem. That they performed well in the discussion despite the lack of immersion in the language possibly made them realize how humorous poems can facilitate learning Filipino and how texts in Filipino can

be as enjoyable as those in English. An interesting point was made by one participant who reported higher fluency in English than in Filipino. He said that he would read more in Filipino “but [he] also [knew the poems] were translated from English” (C1). While he could simply be stating a fact and nothing more, it could also be taken to mean that to him, the appeal of the poems lies in knowing that they were translations. Of Dahl’s poem translated into Filipino, he commented that it had a recognizable style and subject even if he had not read the original poem in English: “it sounds like something Roald Dahl would write” (C1). It would be interesting to find out whether he would have made the same connection and comparison if he had not known that the poems he read were translations in the first place.

7.3.3.3 Accessibility of Filipino reading materials

Another significant point raised by a participant is access to Filipino reading materials. Although inspired to read more in Filipino, she remarked that she “(didn’t) know if there was any [Filipino book] that could be purchased” (C19). While this points yet again to the dominance of English books in circulation for children in this age group as discussed in Chapter 3, this also brings to the fore the actual demand for more texts particularly poems that can be translated into Filipino and made available to Filipino children. Even if the market for translated poetry remains incomparable to that of stories, an awareness that such materials have an economic value should promote increased production and help ease poetry’s peripheral positioning in the literary system.

7.4 Self-assessment of comprehensibility

It goes without saying that for humor to occur, the recipient must first understand what is funny in a given context. As stated in Chapter 5, humor reception is a high-intensity mental activity that requires cognitive abilities and, most of the time, an awareness of incongruities. In order to enjoy a humorous text, the reader must first understand the text. In other words, they must demonstrate reading comprehension, a complex skill needed for “simultaneously constructing and extracting meaning through interaction and engagement with print” (Research and Development Reading Study Group 2002 in Snow 2010: 413). To do so, the reader must possess the ability not only to read the words but also to understand the meaning of words. For the “comprehension event” to be successful, there should be “a good match of reader skills, text difficulty, and task definition” (Snow 2010, abstract). The next sections will discuss the responses of the poor comprehenders (i.e., those who reported difficulty in comprehending the poems) followed by the responses of the good comprehenders (i.e., those who reported ease in understanding the poems). By discussing the responses of these two groups separately, the results can be better compared and contrasted.

7.4.1 Poor comprehenders

In this study, although the poems were read to the participants, the texts were also shown in the video for them to read. The participants were asked after each video whether the poems were easy to understand. Almost all of the children agreed that they understood the poems without difficulty with only a small group expressing that they had some problems understanding the poems as is evident in the following statements:

- “I partly understand it. Not entirely but I get the plot.” (C21)
- “There were parts where I got confused.” (C22)
- “I don’t understand much of the words.” (C26)
- “I don’t understand what happened.” (C7)
- “There were a lot of name stuff. Parts of the body. I didn’t get the last part.” (C8)
- “I don’t understand some of the sickness.” (C19)

Table 4: Self-reported comprehensibility of poems

	Easy to un- derstand	Difficult to understand	A little/slightly easy to under- stand	No re- sponse
Dahl (<i>N</i> = 26)	17	3	4	2
Silverstein (<i>N</i> = 26)	17	2	3	4

Taking Snow’s explanation, there seems to be an issue mainly with the reader’s skills and text difficulty for this small minority of children. Because the children were in school, it can be assumed that they had high literacy skills and a broad experience with books. However, their vocabulary in Filipino was limited as they themselves reported. They could not adequately recognize some words and figure out their meaning. There were also indications that the selected materials were complex for this small group of children to process. They admitted that they failed to connect some ideas and understand the text as a whole in one reading. But what was surprising was that, despite the self-reported reading difficulty, the reading experience was not entirely unrewarding for these children in terms of humor perception. Most of those who found Dahl’s poem hard to understand said the poem was still somewhat funny while there were more children who considered Silverstein’s poem “somewhat funny” than “not funny.” This finding is particularly striking as it contradicts the general

notion that comprehensibility plays a significant role in the reception of humor. For instance, it was reported that good comprehenders generally scored higher on the funniness ratings of jokes (Li-Chuan Ku et al. 2016: 59). One participant who liked Dahl’s books and said in the study that Dahl’s poem was “very funny” could have been influenced by his bias for the author. However, this was a singular case.

7.4.1.1 Using contextual cues

For the good majority, poor comprehension did not hinder humor appreciation. It can be assumed then that the children who reported reading difficulty relied on contextual clues to process the incongruity in the poems although according to Shardakova (2016: 469), “there is no agreement among researchers as to the number of type of cues needed...to be able to identify humor.” For example, even if the poor comprehenders in this study understood only some of the physical complaints that the narrator enumerated in Silverstein’s poem, the cataloging device used in the poem might have provided hints to the reader that the rest were as extreme and exaggerated as the ones they recognized. Thus, what they understood was sufficient for them to see a humorous pattern and anticipate that there was more to come, making the twist in the ending both surprising and satisfactory. Furthermore, although this small minority lacked the appropriate vocabulary to handle the text competently, the humor in both poems was universal (compared to linguistic and cultural humor; cf. Schmitz 2002) and appropriate for learners who are not proficient in a language. It could also be that the illustrations provided contextual clues. How some of the participants responded to the illustrations is discussed in section 7.9.1.3.

Table 5: Funniness rating of poems according to the poor comprehenders (poems were “difficult to understand” or “a little/slightly easy to understand”)

	Very funny	Somewhat funny	Not funny
Dahl ($N = 7$)	1	5	1
Silverstein ($N = 5$)	0	3	2

7.4.1.2 Assessing individual elements of narrative poems

Another possible explanation has to do with how narrative poems are structured. A narrative poem contains the elements of a story such as characters, plot, conflict and resolution. It could be interpreted that the children who reported low reading comprehension gauged humor as having independent features of the poem rather than being a complete whole. Even for the poor comprehenders, there were elements in the sequence of events that they understood and found funny which influenced their overall judgment of the poem’s humor. For example, one of the children said that he found the beginning of

Dahl’s poem “somewhat amusing” and the ending of Silverstein’s poem “funny” but not the other parts which for him were “not funny at all” (C22). Another participant found humor mainly in the characters depicted in the cartoons that accompanied Dahl’s poem, saying that the characters “looked funny” [“it’s not super realistic”(C19)]. Making such a comment on the visual element requires little to some understanding of the text as the cartoons themselves can stimulate humor appreciation independently of the text.

Table 6: Funniest element in the poem for the poor comprehenders who thought the poem was “very funny” or “somewhat funny”

	Situation	Characters	Language
Dahl ($N = 6$)	5	1	0
Silverstein ($N = 3$)	2	0	1

7.4.2 Good comprehenders

For the good comprehenders, a funny situation also largely contributes to the humor in the poem. This is followed by humorous language such as puns and “funny words” (for example, words they do not understand but which sound funny for them).

Table 7: Funniest element in the poem for the good comprehenders who thought the poem was “very funny” or “somewhat funny”

	Situation	Characters	Language
Dahl ($N = 6$)	4	2	0
Silverstein ($N = 12$)	7	1	4

According to Ayakan and Nalçacı 2018 (citing Suls 1972, Wyer and Collins 1992 and Vrticka et al. 2013), humor comes in two stages: the first stage is comprehension and the second is appreciation. However, the study’s results indicate that comprehension of humorous content does not automatically lead to humor appreciation. Surprisingly, 13 out of the 16 participants who said that Dahl’s poem was easy to understand remarked it was “not funny.”

7.4.2.1 Judging the text as a whole

In contrast to the poor comprehenders, the good comprehenders possibly gauged the funniness of the content in its entirety rather than by parts. This assumption is evident in the good comprehenders’ reasons for not appreciating the intended humor in Dahl’s poem. First, the poem was said to be uneventful

[“There’s not much to it” (C1); “It really wasn’t much” (C8); “Nothing happened” (C6)]. Second, it was “serious” [“They weren’t joking” (C9)]. Third, it was “scary” [“If it happened to me, I’d be frightened” (C14)].

7.4.2.2 More realistic poem as funnier

Moreover, there seems to be a difference in humor perception in terms of genre. Dahl’s poem is fantastical (falling into the category of “animal fantasy”) while Silverstein’s poem, which more children found “very funny” or “somewhat funny” than “not funny at all”, is a realistic one (that is, humans act as themselves). With Dahl’s poem, it was necessary for the children to “fantasy-assimilate”³⁰ the depicted events, a process “necessary for perceiving those events as humorous” (McGhee 1975: 20). In the case of Silverstein’s poem, the children only need to turn to established knowledge as the events belong to the real world. This indicates that in the case of the participants in the study, children aged 8 and 9 can appreciate the humor more when the context is closer to reality and their own experiences. Interestingly, it should be noted that the children who viewed Silverstein’s poem as easy to understand but not funny failed to comprehend the text fully. All of them interpreted the child’s sickness as real rather than recognizing that the child was only faking it to avoid school. Thus, for this small group, there was a discrepancy between self-assessment of comprehensibility and actual comprehension which could again point to issues of reading abilities.

Table 8: Funniness rating of poems according to the good comprehenders

	Very funny	Somewhat funny	Not funny
Dahl ($N = 17$)	1	5	11
Silverstein ($N = 17$)	3	9	5

7.5 Mode of input: Reading versus listening

7.5.1 Preference for reading

Nearly half of the 19 participants³¹ who were asked preferred reading poems independently. For nine participants in this study, there is evidence that children aged 8 to 9 are more likely to choose visual input, that is, to read than to

³⁰McGhee (1972: 64-65), for example, says that when a child sees a drawing of an elephant climbing a tree to sit on a nest of eggs, the child will find this inconsistent with reality but will not change relevant conceptual categories to incorporate this new information about elephants. Instead, the child will “fantasy-assimilate” this new information, that is, interpret the depicted event in a “fantasy or pretend fashion.”

³¹Only 19 of the 26 participants were asked the question on mode of input as the natural flow of the discussion necessitated moving on to the next questions.

listen to poems. One of the nine participants explained that this prevents other people from giving information that reduces surprise or suspense [(or “spoilers” C17)]. Another child talked about the perfect environment for reading: “reading silently without other people because [he is] better at silent reading than reading out loud” (C24). For one participant, reading by herself “activates [her] imagination” (C26) which is why she would choose reading over listening. That she can go back to her mistakes and correct them inclines one participant toward reading on her own. She also likes “quiet reading” more (C25).

7.5.2 Preference for listening

On the other hand, slightly fewer participants enjoy the auditory sensory experience when engaging with poems. Six of the 17 participants who were asked responded that they prefer listening to their parents or teachers read the poems to them. One pointed out his lack of confidence and skill in reading, saying that he “sometimes stutter[s]” when he reads (C22) which makes listening an ideal alternative for him. When parents or teachers read poems to children, they then give struggling or less able readers greater access to the genre. Speaking about one of the translated poems in the study, a participant said that it was “easier to understand” because “someone else is reading it [to them]” (C3). The option to read literature to children helps build their listening skills which are essential components of learning and literacy. Children can develop their vocabulary, language and comprehension skills by listening to others speak (see, for instance, Isbell et al. 2004 for a review of related literature on the effects of storytelling and story reading on young children and Robbins and Ehri 1994 on how storybook reading can build vocabulary).

7.5.3 Equal appeal of reading and listening to poems

The remaining four participants view reading poems alone and listening to them with equal desirability. A participant remarked that she gets to “rest” (C14), whether reading on her own or listening to others read. For one other participant, her parents read poems to her on some occasions yet other times she reads them on her own to “familiarize [herself] with reading poems as [she is] not used to it” (C18). Although both children enjoy reading and listening, their reasons for doing so are complete opposites: one sees them as a break from school routine while the other takes advantage of the activity to improve her skills for school.

7.5.4 Relationship between comprehension and mode of input

The results show little relationship between self-reported comprehension and mode of input. Some who preferred listening over reading still found the poems

difficult to understand. Conversely, many of the children who were more independent readers understood the poems with ease. There seems to be some indication though that, in general, children who are exposed to poems as both listeners and readers have higher self-reported comprehension compared to those who prefer a specific mode of input. This finding suggests that listening and reading skills are equally important in building language comprehension in children in general and in poetry appreciation in particular.

Table 9: Preferred mode of input and self-assessed comprehensibility of poems

Mode of input	Were the poems easy to understand?									
	Dahl ($N = 26$)					Silverstein ($N = 26$)				
	Yes	No	A	lit- tle/slightly	No re- sponse	Yes	No	A	lit- tle/slightly	No re- sponse
Listening	3	1	2		0	3	2	0		1
Reading	4	2	1		2	5	0	1		3
Both	3	0	1		0	3	0	1		0
No response	7	0	0		0	6	0	1		0

7.5.5 Relationship between funniness and mode of input

There appears to be no clear relationship between funniness and mode of input. With Dahl's poem, the number of children who found the poem "not funny" was the same as the number of those who found it "somewhat funny." This is true for the children who preferred to listen only and to read only. With Silverstein's poem, the children who preferred listening only and reading only were more inclined to find the poems as "somewhat funny." This suggests that it is not the mode of input but the material that determines how enjoyable the poem is for children. Although, there was some indication that children who liked to listen to poems read to them and read them on their own were more likely to find the poems funny (either very funny or somewhat funny), the numbers were too small to make a conclusive statement.

7.6 Reading for pleasure: Reading alone versus reading with others

In Chapter 5, it was discussed how laughter is primarily a social act: it is the presence of another person and not the joke that provokes laughter (Provine 1999: 2000). Laughter occurs as a direct response to a social group. It is an expression of emotion that can create a connection among individuals by sig-

Table 10: Preferred mode of input and funniness rating of poems

Mode of input	How funny were the poems?					
	Dahl ($N = 26$)			Silverstein ($N = 26$)		
	Very funny	Somewhat funny	Not funny	Very funny	Somewhat funny	Not funny
Listening	0	3	3	0	5	1
Reading	1	4	4	0	6	3
Both	1	2	1	1	2	1
No response	0	1	6	2	3	2

ning to each other that they share certain similarities. Even a statement or situation that is not funny by itself induces laughter from the rest of the group when one member laughs at it.

In this study, the children were asked whether they would still find the poems funny if they read them alone or whether they were funny because they read them in groups. Many children responded that reading with other people, in general, brings more laughter than when they read individually. For this reason, they prefer to read funny poems and stories with family or other children. There is evidence then that laughter is indeed “a social signal” rather than a “reflexive response to humor” (Addyman et al. 2018). That is, that the presence of other people influences an individual’s response to humorous material. At least five participants touched on laughter’s contagious property which some researchers describe as a form of mirroring. Consider the following statements made by the participants:

- “I like reading funny poems and stories with other children especially when they are younger than me because it makes me laugh when I hear them laugh. So it’s more fun.” (C3)
- “When there are more people who laugh, the other person can laugh because when other people laugh, sometimes it forces the person who is not laughing to also laugh.” (C7)
- “When I’m with other children. Because it makes you laugh when you hear them laugh.” (C13)
- “It’s funnier when you’re with other people because they say that if you see or hear someone laugh then you also laugh. I just heard it on Brainchild on Netflix. [But] I don’t really remember [if I’ve experienced it].” (C19)
- “When I read with other children because for me it’s fun to laugh with other children and friends. Sometimes I laugh louder when another person laughs.” (C20)

Others valued the relationship between laughter and social bonding, as seen in these statements:

- “It’s just nice if there are other people who are laughing.” (C11)
- “I don’t know. When they laugh. I feel lonely [when I read alone]. [I like it when I read with] mommy.” (C14)
- “For me when I’m with other children because sometimes when I’m the only one reading a poem I don’t find it that funny so it’s better for me to be with other people so I have company when I read or so I can laugh. I experienced what (C19) said, [laughing when other people are laughing].” (C18)

It is also interesting how, humorous material can stimulate creative thinking and discussion for some children, which results in greater understanding and elicits more humor. It appears that for children, the more they talk about humorous material, the funnier it becomes.

- “In a group. It’s lonely when I don’t have [company]. . . You’re sharing information.” (C2)
- “When I’m with others. It is more fun when you have company. We can add. We can change.” (C6)
- “[It’s funny with other people because] we have different opinions.” (C8)
- “It’s funnier when I’m with other people so I can share my feelings about the poem then we can talk if it is funny.” (C10)
- “It’s funnier if I’m with others so we can talk about the poem and why it is funny.” (C12)
- “It’s funnier when you read with other people because they have ideas on what jokes to make out of the story.” (C15)
- “[With others.] Because I’ve never. . . had a conversation for fun and reading in a long time.” (C21)
- “When I’m reading with other children because I will understand it more.” (C26)
- “It’s funnier when you have others with you. Because they can explain what is funny and what it means and I will laugh more.” (C25)

For three participants, it is best to share the pleasure of humor, whether reading funny texts together or telling others about them. This response again points to the social function of humor – bringing people closer.

- “When with other children. To share the funny story.” (C9)

- “When I read on my own then I share it. Because when I’m alone I can put my attention on it. I share it so they will laugh.” (C16)
- “When I read with other people. So other people can be entertained.” (C17)

These observations support the findings of Shannon (1999) discussed in Chapter 5 that reading books in a social setting significantly affects humor reception among children. This is because children can talk about what is humorous in the material with one another. Shannon (1999) also observed that children can detect “more subtle forms of humor” when the materials are read aloud to them. The results of this study are likewise congruent with the conclusions made by Chapman and Chapman (1974) and mentioned in Chapter 5. They noted that children smile and laugh more when with others and are more responsive to humor when their companions laugh.

However, four children would rather read humorous material alone for reasons such as force of habit and low confidence in speaking. Some of the reasons cited are the following:

- “[It’s funnier] when I read it alone.” (C4)
- “For me, I like reading on my own. I’m more used to it.” (C5)
- “I also don’t like it I also don’t want to speak. . . [I like] to read by myself because I sometimes stutter when I speak Filipino. When I read Filipino all by myself, Filipino poems and stories. . . I just read it by myself.” (C22)
- “Not so much. Because I really don’t know the difference with reading alone. I’m not sure what the difference is when reading alone and reading with the other people.” (C24)

7.7 Perceived target audience

In Chapter 2, it was discussed how children’s literature appeals to a dual audience (or double implied readers) of children and adults. Adults especially parents, teachers and librarians become part of the intended audience when they act as “gatekeepers” who choose the materials that children read. The younger the children, the greater the control adults exert on the reading materials for and reading interests of children. However, children’s literature can also speak to adults as readers themselves, although they may respond differently to the material. This tendency can be seen in the case of “crossover” literature which is written for children but may also be read and appreciated by adults. The first chapter of this dissertation discusses the characteristics of children’s literature. For example, fantasy – the opposite of realism – has become a trademark of children’s literature. It was also explained that even if they are the target audience, children have little influence on the production of children’s literature.

The power lies mainly in the adults who create, market and purchase children's books and make the selection for awards. Thus, it would be interesting to know how children themselves categorize texts written for children. that is, if they target only children like themselves or if they likewise address adults. In the study, the children were asked whether the children's poems presented to them were meant for children only, for adults only or both. Because the materials were funny poems, the responses largely examined the poems' humorous content, bringing to light the participants' own notions of children's and adult humor.

7.7.1 Literature written for children

Only three of the 26 participants responded that both poems were written solely for children. According to one participant (C2), grown-ups cannot appreciate the humor in the poems. He said: "When adults read those poems, I think they will not laugh. But when kids read those, they will laugh. Because they're adults, they have work to do." Referring to Dahl's poem, another participant (C14) said that it was only for children "so they can learn that crocodiles are also nice, that crocodiles can be pets and not to be scared of dentists." Children may still find it hard to differentiate fantasy from reality at this age and their engagement in fantasy worlds can lead them to believe that these worlds are true. For the other participants, however, such distinction is clear. Two participants (C3, C4) explained that Dahl's poem was written for children because "the story is more fictional" and "not real" while Silverstein's poem is "more realistic" and "more believable" which makes it appropriate "for everyone." Interestingly, that the children noticed this was one of the reasons the two poems were selected. namely the contrast in genre. As discussed in Chapter 2, the belief that fantasy caters mainly to children and realism to "serious" readers including adults has its roots in the 18th and 19th centuries when children's books were excluded from "serious literature" and became associated primarily with fantasy and supernatural events (then considered the "inferior" genre). Although much of children's writing is still characterized by fantasy or by elements where fantasy and reality intertwine, children these days have greater access to more realism in what they can read. The children's responses indicate that tradition, however, retains a strong hold on children's judgment regarding what is suitable material for them.

7.7.2 Literature written for adults

Some children pointed out a distinction between what is suitable humor for children and adults. One participant (C22) considered "dark" themes as appropriate only for adults: "[The first poem is] for children because it has animals and the [second poem is] for adults because it's somewhat dark." The poems also have jokes that are for adults (C17) but the participant did not elaborate on what these are. Moreover, the children reasoned out based on day-to-day

experience particularly their own exposure to mass media, saying for instance that poems are for everyone “except those 18+, 16+” which are “not for children because they may have bad words or blood” or “dark thing[s]” and therefore only for adults (C19). Readability also sets children’s literature apart from literature intended for adults. According to one participant (C20), poems for adults “cannot be understood.” Some children were also aware that there is literature meant for adults and were under the impression that literature written for children could not be appreciated by adults: they are not funny for grown-ups (C20).

7.7.3 Literature written for children and adults

According to some children, although there are jokes and poems explicitly tailored for adults, the poems presented to them are appropriate for both audiences. One participant (C17) said: “[The poems are] for everyone. It is easy to understand and there are jokes for adults. It is easy for children to understand [the poem].” One participant (C19) specified what was unacceptable content for children and concluded that anyone could enjoy poems in general: “[The poems are] for children and adults. Poems can be for children. But sometimes they have dark things. They can be for everyone. So that whoever hears them can laugh hard and be happy.” Another participant (C20) saw a difference between poems for children and those for adults and added that these are unlike poems that were written with both children and adults in mind: “[They are] for children and adults because I read poems with my parents, grandfather, grandmother, aunts and uncles. If it is for children, they do not find it funny. But if it is for adults, it is not easy to understand. But if it is for children and adults, that’s good. They both understand it. It’s funny for both of them.”

The participants likewise acknowledged that adults were once children which makes it possible for them to enjoy what is entertaining and funny for children. One participant (C7) said the poems were “for children because of the cartoonish style like it was taken from an animated something for kids.” But they are also for adults “because sometimes they want the nostalgia for what they [got] as children.” Another participant (C11) explained that both poems are for adults as well: “Maybe the adults will also like it... maybe they will [be reminded of the past].” This is evident in the experience of another participant (C21) who also said that the poems were for everyone: “I mean, yes, kids can handle the second [poem] but it’s also because sometimes my grandmother really likes to read this stuff. It’s really funny for her. She misses the old times.” Chapter 2 discusses how reliving the experience of childhood helps adults assume the role of children and gives them an “authentic” voice when writing for children.

Some children made no differentiation between children’s and adult humor tendencies and believed that the poems were funny for both young and adult readers. They likely have not developed a deeper understanding of adult humor preferences at this stage, viewing what is amusing for them as amusing for

Table 11: Target audience of the poems according to the participants

	Children	Adults	Children and adults
Dahl ($N = 26$)	7	0	19
Silverstein ($N = 26$)	3	2	21

everyone. The following statements reflect this possibility.

- "I think it's for everyone because I think they were made to make us all laugh." (C5)
- "Maybe children and adults will enjoy it... because it has comedy." (C12)
- "It's for all ages." (C13)
- "For both of them to enjoy because both [poems] are funny." (C16)
- "Because most of the time it's funny for all ages." (C24)
- "Because my mommy is here and she laughed." (C26)
- "Because they can be read by adults too. It's possible that they will like them. Because it has funny jokes... and rhymes." (C6)

Two participants also commented on the universality of poems, that all ages can enjoy them. One participant (C18) expressed: "Children are not the only ones who can read them. Even adults can read them so they can laugh and be happy." For another participant (C23): "Poems are not just for children or adults. Poems are for everyone."

Some participants emphasized the function that poems perform, that is, what children can gain from reading them and the role of adults in children's reading. One participant (C8) said: [The poems are for everyone] "because people might have different interests and you might like the poem because interests are varied. [They are for kids] because it has a lot of jokes and... it has a cartoonish style. Kids like that. [They are for adults because] maybe they want to read it to their children or maybe it's actually interesting for them. Maybe they want to add stuff to it, they can figure stuff out of it." Still, according to one participant (C25), funny poems make excellent reading materials for children: "[They are for children and adults] because children will laugh and so that adults can have something nice to read to children." Moreover, children and adults can learn and talk about the poems when they read together. As one participant (C9) explained: "Children can learn other words and ask the adults what these words are. [They are for adults] to help the children with the meaning of the words... They can ask other jokes. The children may be impressed so they can make something similar on their own." A participant (C10) also said: "For example, the child is reading with either

adult or another child, it's more fun and the child can ask the adult about the poem.”

7.8 Relatability of content

7.8.1 Relatability to children

Another question that was asked of the participants sought to understand whether the poems, when translated into a different language, were humorous for them since they could relate to them as children. Stand-up comedy, for example, is very effective when it capitalizes on the ordinary aspects of the viewers' everyday life. The question aimed to find out whether the poems were funny since they captured the children's universal experiences and emotions.

7.8.1.1 Defining relatability

The difference between the two poems in terms of the relatability of content was negligible. The number of children who could relate to Dahl's poem was the same as that of Silverstein's poem. Similarly, the number of children who could not connect to either poem was the same. It was evident then that both poems were equally effective in evoking particular responses from the children such as agreement or disagreement, sympathy or indifference. It is important to note that the children interpreted relatability as having been in the same situation or engaged in the same act. Thus, not being able to relate to the poem does not equate to the poem being outside the bounds of the participant's reality. For instance, feigning illness which was at the core of Silverstein's poem was not “relatable” (i.e., have not been experienced themselves) for many of the participants but they had thought about it or were aware that other children might have done so. One child (C5) explained that she could relate to Silverstein's poem because “[she could] imagine [her]self seeing it in real life.” In general, the participants found Silverstein's poem funnier than Dahl's (more on this in the following sections) even if both poems had relatable content. Therefore, in cases where two materials possess relatable content, the more relatable humor appears to be that which is more realistic for the children, which supports the assumption made in section 7.4.2.2 on self-assessment of comprehensibility.

7.8.1.2 Content as relatable

From the children who said they could relate to both poems, there are two subgroups: those who considered the general characteristics of the poems and those who linked relatability to a more personal feeling. One participant (C2) belonging to the first subgroup said that he could relate to both poems because “[they tell] a story to children.” Another participant (C4) said that “the first [poem] is imaginary like the minds of . . . children [and] the second one is kind of like that also.” One other participant (C9) found it easy for children to connect

to the poems because they were “all nice and easy to understand.” In the second subgroup, one participant (C10) referred to how the poems evoked particular emotions which could be the same for other children: “With the first one the crocodile is frightening. Then with the second one I can somewhat relate to it because I want to fake sickness but I don’t want to fake it because it’s bad but other children can relate to it.” For another participant (C21) in this subgroup, the poems elicited memories, allowing readers to relate to them: “Sometimes like you already have memories. But sometimes it’s just a bit more creative than those and you can relate to them because you’ve already been through it.”

The participants’ responses indicate that children at this age range generally approach themes and ideas literally. The humor in Dahl’s poem, which talks about a dentist and the unexpected visit from a crocodile that frightens him, can be explained by the superiority theory, particularly a role-reversal (the dentist being scared instead of the patient) where the adult is ridiculed. However, none of the participants arrived at this connection. Instead, when asked about the poem’s relatability, most of them only associated the poem with visiting the dentist and their actual experiences or (mainly negative) expectations of such a visit. For instance, one pupil (C17) said: “But I go to the dentist. I don’t get scared because I know they’re experts” while another (C15) mentioned the complete opposite: “. . . sometimes I’m afraid that if I have my tooth removed, a bad accident might happen. [The instrument] might break and the tool might go too deep.” Another participant (C12) also resorted to a direct connection, stating that she could relate to the poem “because [she is] scared of crocodiles.” Similarly, one participant (C8) who could not relate to the poem answered that “[he’s] never experienced a dentist being afraid of [him].” Only one child (C14) was able to discern a possible representation in the poem, saying “I’m like the crocodile because it is brave.”

7.8.1.3 Content as not relatable

On the other hand, those who regarded neither poem as relatable said that they had not been in the situations described in the poems (C6, C11, C18, C19, C22) and found nothing that they could relate to them (C25, C26). It was seen that there were slightly more children who said that they could not connect to the poems than those who said that they could. It appears as well that there is no correlation between relatability of content (i.e., whether they can relate to the poems as children) and the funniness of the poems. Although the number of participants who said they could relate to the poems was the same for both Dahl’s and Silverstein’s poems, the children did not find the poems equally funny and there were still more children who found Silverstein’s poem funnier (see Table 11). Conversely, although both poems were equally not relatable for the children, this did not reduce the funniness of the poems in the same degree: more children still perceived Dahl’s poem as lacking in humor.

Table 12: Relatability to children

	Relatable	Not relatable
Dahl ($N = 26$)	12	14
Silverstein ($N = 26$)	12	14

7.8.2 Relatability to Filipino readers

The participants were likewise asked whether they could relate to the poems as Filipinos, even though these were translations and the original texts were written by foreign writers. Translation entails not only expressing words from one language into another but also a passage of concepts from one culture into another. Furthermore, considering what was mentioned in Chapter 5, culture plays a vital role in humor production and reception as different cultures hold different views toward humor. For reasons such as social restrictions, what may be funny in one culture may not be funny in another. A translator then must know how to make a particular society's sociocultural norms and practices understandable to the target reader. As Wang (2014: 2424) puts it, translation is not only a "process of cultural transplantation" but also an act of "intercultural communication" where two or more cultures are brought together. In this study, the researcher aimed to determine whether such contact or interaction was evident for the readers in the translation product and whether this could have influenced the funniness of the translations. If the participants found it hard to relate to the poems as Filipinos, this could explain in part why the humor of one or both poems failed.

7.8.2.1 Content as relatable

Twenty-one of the 26 children reported that they could relate to the poems and that the poems did not seem foreign to them. Therefore, any negative reception of the poems' humor by the participants had either nothing or very little to do with the cultural contexts of the poems. In fact, there were those who commented on the universality of the poems' themes. One participant (C8) remarked: "It seemed like a regular story that could come from anywhere. If I just read it, I wouldn't even have a clue where it came from." Another participant (C16) explained that "it's just normal because we really go to the dentist and we get sick sometimes" while another (C11) believed that what happened in Silverstein's poem was something "Filipino kids would do." Thus, "even if [the poems were] not written by a Filipino, [they are] still for everyone" (C23). That "mostly Filipino kids [also] joke" makes the poems relatable to Filipino readers (C26). One participant (C24) observed that "it look[ed] like both poems were for both foreign and Filipino kids. . . It's not that they differ, the Filipino children." One other participant (C21) had this to say: "I think Filipino kids can still enjoy it. We are enjoying it so others can enjoy it too."

Others highlighted the importance of translation in making foreign materials available for other cultures to read and appreciate. One of the children (C2) said that “the language was translated so that other children in another country can understand it.” For another participant (C18): “For me, it can be read by other Filipinos. Just because the book or poem is in English or another language [it doesn't mean it can't be read by Filipinos]. Filipinos can also read them when translated into Filipino or English.” This was supported by another participant (C19) who said: “Yes, [I can relate to it] because all books even if in a different language... you can learn [to read them]. It can be translated.” One participant (C12) mentioned how the quality of the translation and choice of words make the translation sound familiar and natural to target readers: “It's not [foreign] because the translation was done well and... the Filipino words were deep.” Since the poems have been translated into Filipino, it was likewise easy for the reader to forget that the text was originally in a different language. According to one participant (C14): “The original was in English [but] I don't see that when the words are in Filipino. It's for English and Filipino [readers].” One of the children (C9) articulated: “It seemed [to be a] Filipino [text] already.” A participant (C3) was also of the opinion that “it's not that foreign because [she] read something similar but it [was] in Filipino.”

7.8.2.2 Content as not relatable

Five participants reported that they could not relate to the poems or that the poems' foreignness was visible. For example, one participant (C7) “felt a bit [that the poems were foreign] because the situation and the words used felt like they were copied from European or American influence. It's not like Filipino legends.”

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that some children who were not fluent in Filipino felt that the poems sounded foreign precisely because they were written in Filipino and mainly because of how they were written. While one child considered the use of “deep words” in Filipino as a measure of the translations' naturalness, another child (C10) had the opposite take on it. According to her: “Both poems were like foreign because the... Filipino words were deep and most of the time foreigners learn to translate into Filipino using simple words.” Another participant (C20) responded that although she could relate to the poems as a Filipino, it was mainly “to learn to understand some words in Filipino.”

7.9 Humor in the poems

In Chapter 5, Shannon's (1999) categorization of children's humor in literature in four categories was introduced: (1) superiority or sense of accomplishment, (2) physical events and appearances, (3) the scatological and gross, and (4) language and wordplay. For Kappas (1967: 68), 10 categories of humor can be

utilized to analyze humorous juvenile literature. These are: (1) exaggeration, (2) incongruity, (3) surprise, (4) slapstick, (5) the absurd, (6) human predicaments, (7) ridicule, (8) defiance, (9) violence and (10) verbal humor. Zbaracki (2003: 21), summarized the different categories by Shannon, Kappas and other researchers into five common types of humor: (1) humorous characters, (2) poking fun at authority, (3) physical humor, (4) nonsense and (5) humorous discourse or language play. Many of these forms of humor mentioned in earlier studies are evident in the poems of Dahl and Silverstein used in the study.

Interestingly, the poems were “very funny” only to boys and not girls. The girls were more inclined to consider the poems as only “somewhat funny.”

Table 13: Funniness rating and gender

		Very funny	Somewhat funny	Not funny
Dahl ($N = 26$)	Male	2	4	7
	Female	0	6	7
Silverstein ($N = 26$)	Male	4	6	2
	Female	0	8	6

7.9.1 Dahl’s poem

Dahl’s poem makes use of incongruity (a crocodile visiting the dentist), slapstick (the dentist climbing the wall out of fear), physical appearances (funny illustrations), surprise (the crocodile being someone’s pet), human predicament (dentist frightened by the crocodile) and violence (crocodile wanting to eat the dentist) as humor strategies.

7.9.1.1 Poem as funny

The poem became “somewhat funny” for many of the children once they were assured at the end of the poem that there would be no actual demonstration of violence and harm. Such revelation is inconsistent with what other scholars have said that children in general find humor in violence. The children gave the following statements:

- “Some parts were somewhat serious but other parts I found a bit funny. When he was at the dentist and... the dentist was frightened. I only laughed when the woman appeared and said that the crocodile was harmless.” (C18)
- “The ending is funny.” (C22)
- “In the ending she said that it’s just a pet. The dentist thought that he would get eaten by the crocodile.” (C16)

This was also noticeable in the two participants who found the poem “very funny” with one of them (C21) saying: “There’s a crocodile which needs checking and also because in the end he was not harmful at all. It’s highly funny.”

The presence of humorous characters was also satisfying for the children and rendered the poem “somewhat funny” for them. Below are two comments made concerning character-driven humor:

- “It was scary for the dentist and the reaction of the dentist is also funny.” (C10)
- “Some parts I find funny but other parts serious. [The funny part was] when the crocodile needed filling. [The serious parts were] everything else.” (C23)

7.9.1.2 Poem as not funny

Even if the poem has many elements that make for humorous material and that many children like based on earlier studies, almost half of the children in this study still thought that it was not amusing at all. Some even felt that the tone of the poem was serious and that the events were neither surprising nor inspiring for them to think creatively, as the following statements convey:

- “There was nothing that could be made a joke out of it.” (C7)
- “They are more serious. They aren’t joking.” (C9)
- “I cannot find anything that’s funny in it.” (C13)

One participant (C24) was not receptive to the representations in the poem that contradicted reality, saying: “I didn’t get the poem. I understand [it] but it’s just that I don’t get that there is a crocodile at the dentist?” Thus, children at this age can possess a strong understanding of reality/fantasy distinction and blending fantasy with reality may not necessarily be easy for them to accept. Such disbelief in the intersection between reality and fantasy can be attributed to limitations in the child’s ability to imagine or to an “overreliance on their own knowledge and personal experience” (Woolley and Ghossainy 2013: 1504). Earlier, the case of one child who viewed fictional and real worlds as the same (“crocodiles are also nice. . . crocodiles can be pets”) was reported. But the case of C24 shows that the ability to distinguish between the two worlds is also present in children at this age.

7.9.1.3 Gender differences in humor appreciation

The reasons given by the children who did not find the poem funny show noticeable gender differences in humor appreciation. The danger and potential violence depicted in Dahl’s poem, although used to create suspense and enhance humor, had a negative impact on the girls’ perception of humor. Instead of being amusing, the poem was perceived by the young female readers to be

frightening. They sympathized with the dentist and his predicament and felt strongly about the human character being caught in a precarious situation. According to them:

- “It’s somewhat scary if you will be eaten.” (C3)
- “Not funny. Because the person is afraid.” (C5)
- “It’s kind of scary.” (C12)
- “It’s scary what could happen to the dentist.” (C11)
- “It’s like scary. Because if it were me, I [wouldn’t] like [it] because I’m scared.” (C14)

Although two boys said that the poem would be funnier “if the dentist wasn’t so scared” (C21) and “if you remove the fear felt by the dentist” (C23), neither of them called the poem “frightening” or “scary.” Moreover, they did not specify whether they could identify and commiserate with the human character in trouble, unlike the girls who were more openly empathetic.

McGhee and Johnson (1975: 19), citing Helmers (1965), take the view that “much aggressive humor is funny to children because the child knows that it is only a fantasy situation. Whether a child is laughing because he knocked daddy down or because a cartoon character has been run over by a steam roller, it is funny only because he knows that each will get up again. If this did not occur, the child would more likely be frightened or confused.” In Dahl’s poem, the human (dentist) escaped the attempts of the crocodile to eat him when the animal’s owner appeared in the end. However, this was not enough to elicit humor from the participants, with the exception of one female participant (C19) who said: “When the.. crocodile opened its mouth then the teeth were super sharp... I didn’t like it because it’s a bit serious or I thought he would bite the hand or head of the dentist. But when the woman came, I laughed.”

While the girls felt that the events in the poem were enough to trigger negative emotions, the boys experienced the poem differently. They felt that the events were lacking in action and were disappointed that nothing more happened in the poem, as expressed in the following statements:

- “There’s not much to it.” (C1)
- “It’s not funny. It’s just interesting.” (C2)
- “Not much happened. But he almost got eaten by the crocodile.” (C6)
- “It wasn’t really that much. It wasn’t really that funny. It’s about a dentist trying to clean a crocodile’s mouth.” (C8)

These observations do not mean that certain forms of humor appeal exclusively to a particular gender. They only signify that certain forms are more likely to be funny for one gender than the other. When asked how they could

make the poem funny or funnier, more girls preferred incongruity and surprise in making the characters and situations humorous.

- “When the crocodile walks to the dentist then the dentist thinks it will eat him but it will not. It will just approach him.” (C5)
- “Maybe you can add more comedy to make it funnier. Like when the dentist is scared then the crocodile will tell him not to be scared. Something like that.” (C10)
- “I will add color. And the crocodile is really human and just fooling around with the dentist.” (C26)
- “When the crocodile says that its teeth are not that sharp but they are really sharp and the dentist will get scared.” (C11)
- “When the dentist is scared, he will do funny things.” (C12)
- “The lady is an alien. Then the... crocodile is also like an alien. Both of them are in disguise. They will be the dentist.” (C20)
- “I will add three baby crocodiles and all three baby crocodiles will also visit the dentist.” (C25)

Nevertheless, a few of the boys also exhibited this tendency, saying:

- “So when the dentist was about to check the crocodile’s mouth then more crocodiles come in asking the dentist to check on their teeth.” (C8)
- “I will put clothes on the crocodile. And there is a baby crocodile next to the big crocodile.” (C24)
- “In the last line, there’s a twist. They can be in a movie and they will be cut.” (C9) [to which boy C6 added: “Then came a real crocodile... and ate the actor” which points to the general appeal of violence in humor to boys, as explained in the next paragraph].

It can be gathered from the responses mentioned above that more girls (C25, C26) than boys looked at illustrations to be as important as the text when responding to humor, stating that adding to or modifying the accompanying drawings can make the poem funnier. That images have a powerful potential to contribute to humor was also visible in the responses of the other female participants. According to one girl (C14), sometimes it makes the poem funnier when it has more pictures. Imagining what she would do to the illustrations of Dahl’s poem to make the poem more humorous, she added: “You will draw faces like they have mustache and the boys have make-up. You can put lipstick... but not on the girl.” Another girl (C19) said that Dahl’s poem would be “less funny” if it didn’t have pictures because “you wouldn’t know the face or body of the characters.” One of the girls (C3) commented as well

on how illustrations support a poem, saying that Dahl's poem was funnier because it had more pictures than Silverstein's but if Silverstein's poem had more pictures, it would only be "a little bit funnier." However, not everyone believes that pictures benefit humorous verses all the time. As one of the boys (C7) pointed out, zooming in on the importance of content: "Pictures don't always matter. What matters is where the humor [comes] from."

However, regardless of gender, the participants who were conscious of the fact that the poem combined humor and fantasy elements, and were receptive to such blurring of reality and fantasy, were likely to find the poem enjoyable. Among the reasons cited as to why the poem was "somewhat funny" include the following:

- "The dentist was scared that he would get bitten and swallowed. And why is the crocodile talking? Shouldn't it attack? It's funny that the crocodile talks." (C15)
- "It doesn't seem normal but it's still somewhat funny. A crocodile that went to the dentist... and the crocodile was acting like a human being." (C20)
- "[It is somewhat funny] because there was a crocodile that went to the dentist." (C26)

7.9.1.4 Proposed endings: violence

The responses of the children also show that, consistent with the findings of other studies, boys enjoy comedic violence. There were slightly more boys than girls who thought that violence could be humorous, giving these proposed endings to the poem:

- "To make the situation more exagg[erated]. If the crocodile actually ate the dentist. Or something more dramatic would happen... but not in real life." (C1)
- "Or maybe the crocodile will just pee in the dentist's clothes. Or maybe the crocodile eats the dentist and suddenly poops it. And put it in the toilet." (C2)
- "[The dentist] is eaten." (C6)
- "When the dentist gets swallowed and instead of biting and killing him, he's just in the stomach thumping to get out. Thumping to get out of the crocodile. He shrunk. Then he's jumping on the food. To get out. What if the lady pushes them back then when the dentist comes out, she pushes him back in?" (C15)
- "In the end of the poem when they ask for help then all of them get swallowed. When the dentist asks for help then all of them get swallowed. That would be funnier." (C17)

However, whether the boys were aware that the proposed endings were somewhat violent could not be concluded from this study. This can be further explored as there is some indication from earlier studies that children cannot identify violence correctly. For example, in a study by Snow (1974 in Kirsch (2005), it was found that “violent elements in cartoons were consistently overlooked, with only 27% of 4- to 8-year-olds and a mere 16% of 9- to 12-year-olds correctly identifying that the cartoon (i.e., Roadrunner) they had just watched contained violence.” Similarly, in a study by Haynes (1978 in Kirsch 2005), 5th and 6th grade children found cartoons with comedic elements as more violent than cartoons without comedic elements even if both cartoons had “the same amount of violence.” This also raises a question on how children define violence.

On the other hand, only three girls suggested endings around similar themes of physical violence and pretend violence:

- “The lady thought that [the crocodile] was her pet but it was not and the crocodile. . . ate her.” (C18)
- “If [the dentist] really puts his head inside [the mouth] then it closes. [It will] pretend to close.” (C4)
- “The lady comes over then [the crocodile] swallows them both. Just swallow and they are just in the tummy.” (C16)

Two participants suggested adding more jokes to the poem to make it funnier. In this case, the boy was more specific about the jokes that he would want to read [“Add jokes. Alligator dating the woman.” (C22)] compared to the girl who failed to think of a specific joke [“I’m not sure. Maybe add some funny jokes.” (C13)]. Verbal play was also mentioned by one of the boys [“Make a plot that you don’t expect to come and. . . thrown in puns.” (C7)] but not by any of the girls.

7.9.2 Silverstein’s poem

7.9.2.1 Poem as funny

Silverstein’s poem capitalized on exaggeration (child being overdramatic to avoid school), the absurd (unbelievable physical complaints) and surprise (it was a Saturday instead of a school day) to produce humor. The humor used was relatively effective for the children, with a majority of them describing the poem as “somewhat funny.” As mentioned earlier, it could be that children find more humor when the context is closer to their actual everyday experiences. Both boys and girls were equally pleased with the unexpected twist in the end but only because the ending took the main character out of an “unpleasant and depressing situation”, which in truth the character only made up.

7.9.2.2 Poem as not funny

Although many of the children understood this to be the case [“The ending [was funny]. She thought it was Saturday so she pretended to be sick. Then she found out it was Saturday so she went out to play.” (C13); “She was faking it then it was a Saturday she immediately played because she forgot that it was a Saturday.” (C6)], some believed the depicted circumstances to be real and felt sorry for the child in the poem. This observation suggests that exaggeration does not always work as a humorous device for children when it leans toward the negative and especially when children like themselves are at the center of it. Some responses that captured this are given below:

- “The ending is also funny. Oh, it’s Saturday bye! But the other parts . . . because anything more than 40 degrees can kill you and that’s sad.” (C21)
- “The ending is funny. [The other parts were] not [funny] at all. Describing sickness and also, I was sick one time. It was a bit recently. It was really unfun.” (C22)
- “It’s funny because she said she will not go to school but in the end, it was Saturday. And what was not funny was she was sick.” (C4)
- “At first, she was sick. It’s not very funny because at first, she was sick.” (C3)

7.9.2.3 Gender differences in humor appreciation

For this poem, there are gender differences that emerged in that only the boys equated funniness with joke-telling, as seen in the statements below:

- “The twist is the funny part but it was not a real joke.” (C7)
- “There weren’t that many jokes. When he said he had everything so he can’t go to class then it’s a Saturday.” (C8)

There were more girls than boys who found the poem unfunny as well. They tended to give responses expressing “more negative internalizing emotions” (Sanchis-Sanchis et al. 2020) such as sadness.

- “Because if I got sick, I will not find it funny.” (C5)
- “It’s not funny. The child has a lot of sickness so she was not able to go to school. (C18)
- “She has so many sicknesses like mumps, measles . . . and she will go blind in one eye and she would lose her hearing. (C19)
- “Because the child is sick.” (C26)
- “Because the poem is painful.” (C23)

- “Because when she found out it’s Saturday she will play outside. And when I think about so many sicknesses, it’s sad.” (C20)

Although there were also boys who said that the poem was not funny, citing answers similar to those mentioned above, there were still more girls than boys who did so. This finding suggests that girls are more likely to give an empathic response to unpleasant situations, especially if these concern children like themselves. Such a finding is consistent with the typically accepted view that empathy is sensitive to gender, with boys self-reporting it less than girls (Halfpenny and James 2020: 161). The two boys who exhibited affective behaviors toward the child character explained in these statements why they reacted that way:

- “Because the poem is painful.” (C23)
- “It’s actually a sad poem for me. The child is very sick and has many wounds. He’s sick, that’s all. I didn’t understand the ending.” (C24)

7.9.2.4 Proposed endings: Poking fun at other children

Previous studies have shown that children enjoy humor that involves poking fun at adults and their authority (thus with reference to the superiority theory). However, the results of this study indicate that children also find it acceptable to poke fun at child characters but only, it seems, when (1) they are the ones making fun of them and (2) when the humor is good-natured. When asked how they could make Silverstein’s poem funnier, they gave variations of such tendency. The likelihood to do so was observable in both boys and girls. Similarly, instead of creating situations where they could deliberately laugh at the adult characters, the children respected their authority over the child character in their proposed endings to the poem. Instead of the child in the poem outwitting the adult characters, as is common in children’s literature, the roles had been reversed and it was the child who ended up in a non-desired situation. It is possible that the children viewed the child character to have behaved badly [“Pretending to be sick is bad” (C20); “If you’re just acting that you’re sick, you might not be able to play for life, one week or one month or maybe one year. Just because you don’t want to go to school. But that’s bad because that’s where you learn.” (C19)] and so for them, there has to be some way of making her understand the consequences of lying, as seen in the statements listed below. Thus, children at this age are capable of moral evaluation or value judgment even if the situations presented are silly and fictitious.

- “It will be funnier if she was sick but she didn’t know that so she couldn’t play.” (C7)
- “If the kid starts playing and he [*sic*] actually gets sick.” (C8)

- “Maybe if the person who reminded her that it was a Saturday has a reaction when she said ‘Goodbye! I will play outside’ something like ‘Huh? I thought you were sick.’” (C10)
- “If the persons she is talking to, her mother and father, say ‘You can’t play. Do your homework.’” (C11)
- “She will be told that she needs to go to the hospital.” (C12)
- “Her guardian will say ‘Don’t go out. Lie down and I will treat you’... and she couldn’t do anything about it.” (C13)
- “When the mother says ‘I thought you were sick.’ [The child] will be given a lot of medicines a lot of times a day then she couldn’t resist it. She would say ‘Please no’ [and] the mother will say ‘You need to take them because you’re sick’ then she will say that she’s not really sick.” (C16)
- “When the mother believes her and she was forbidden [to play]... then she needs to eat healthy foods [*sic*]. She will be made to eat 100 vegetable [*sic*] a day.” (C17)
- “When the mother finds out in the end that the sickness was not real. She wasn’t allowed to play even on a Saturday... She would be asked to go to school for one day.” (C18)
- “She wouldn’t play forever. Then the mother would say that if she wanted to play, she has to go to school. And she would say that she wasn’t sick... then she went to school so she could play. But the mommy was just joking [and] she wouldn’t be allowed to play. She just made her go to school.” (C19)
- “When she didn’t know that she was already in the classroom. Her mother brought her bed there.” (C20)

7.10 Form versus content

As discussed in Chapter 5, previous studies have shown that children prefer narrative rhymes (Huck, Hepler and Hickman 1987 in Mallan 1993). Also relevant to the present discussion is the assertion of Shultz and Robillard (in McGhee and Chapman 1980: 72) that a humorous poem fuses “tendentious content” and “poetic form” such that when either one is removed, the altered version would be less funny for children.

Although the results of this study do not address Shultz and Robillard’s claim directly (that is, with a comparison between the original and manipulated texts), the collected data indicates that a humorous poem can still be funny if only its form or content is preserved in the translation. With Silverstein’s poem, more children considered the poem very funny and somewhat funny

than those who thought it was not funny in both form-centered and content-centered translations. However, when Dahl's poem is taken into account, humor appears to be less sensitive to form than content: more children (8 out of 14) found the poem not funny in the form-centered translation. Thus, when only form or content can be retained in the translation, the chances of keeping the humor appear higher when content is selected over form. This observation also suggests that, contrary to general belief, rhyme does not have to be an essential component of humorous poems for children.

None of the participants made mention of the features of form (e.g., rhyme, repeated sounds, patterns or songlike quality) as essential factors in making the poems funny, although some have reported that rhyme in poetry can be pleasurable (see section 7.2 on "general attitudes toward poetry"). While such form-related features are exploited for aesthetic ends and memory recall (i.e., they offer retrieval cues), they fail to benefit children's poems in terms of humor appeal. For most participants, the funniness of the poems depended chiefly on the humor of the topics or ideas presented in the poems. A majority of those who said that the poems were "very funny" or "somewhat funny" pointed out the humor of the situation. Four children referred to the characters as the primary source of humor [e.g., a talking crocodile; "their faces are funny" (C23); "the dentist was so scared but he didn't know that he wouldn't be eaten" (C15)] while for three children, it was the language that struck them as the funniest. The children associated the humor of language with the sound of unfamiliar Filipino words (e.g., "balakang" and "beke" which mean "hips" and "mumps", respectively), the way the character talked, and the cataloging or listing device employed ["I cannot think of that many language[s] to say when I am sick" (C17)].

It should be noted that all three children who made reference to language were boys, which could mean that boys are more disposed to find humor in words than girls. This is an interesting finding that should be substantiated with further research with a more significant number of participants. There were no noticeable gender distinctions in the form-centered Filipino translations. However, boys were more likely than girls to perceive the content-centered translations as "very funny" suggesting that the translations dealt with topics or ideas that were generally less appealing to girls. As noted in the previous section, more girls than boys exhibited empathy and a distaste for violence and danger after listening to the poems.

7.11 Feedback from participants and parents

The success of the sessions is not merely measured by the amount and quality of responses gathered from the participants (or how productive the sessions were) but also by the participants' overall experience. After all, the sessions have been designed to also help children develop an appreciation for poetry and, through humor, create a learning environment that is interactive and fun for them.

Table 14: Funniness rating and focus of translation

	Form ($N = 14$)			Content ($N = 14$)		
	Very funny	Somewhat funny	Not funny	Very funny	Somewhat funny	Not funny
Dahl	1	5	8	1	5	6
Silverstein	0	10	4	4	4	4

Table 15: Funniness rating, focus of translation, and gender

		Form ($N = 14$)			Content ($N = 14$)		
		Very funny	Somewhat funny	Not funny	Very funny	Somewhat funny	Not funny
Dahl	Male	1	3	4	1	1	3
	Female	0	2	4	0	4	3
Silverstein	Male	0	6	1	4	0	1
	Female	0	4	3	0	4	3

Half of the participating children liked poetry; the other half did not. Thirteen participants reported that they liked reading poetry while seven said outright that they did not find poetry enjoyable. The remaining six participants said that they liked poetry “a little”, “sometimes, or “not [that] much.” Among those who liked reading poems, one said that she was “looking forward to the activity” days before their scheduled session. Some also signed up for the study expecting to have more than one session. For example, a week after attending a session, one participant emailed the author of this study to apologize for missing the succeeding “meeting” and promised that “it [would] never happen again.” This was the same pupil who said that he did not like poetry that much. Another sent an email a week after joining a session requesting to be admitted into the “poetry class” that week. Thinking that the activity would take place weekly, one other participant asked at the end of the session when the group would meet again (she emailed a day later to thank the author “for a wonderful experience”). Two participants in one group even verbally expressed evident disappointment when told that the session was a one-off encounter. These are strong indications of the participants’ enthusiasm for and great interest in poetry and a discussion of it.

Although feedback was not solicited from the participants, some parents emailed about the positive experiences of their children. Among these are the following:

- “C16 enjoyed the session today! She said right away, ‘Poetry is so much fun!’ Thank you for the opportunity to participate.”

Table 16: Funniest element of the poems, and gender

		Situation	Character	Language
Dahl	Male	7	1	
	Female	5		
Silverstein	Male	6	1	3
	Female	4	2	

- “C22 enjoyed the session and was asking when the next session would be. He was surprised and a little sad when I reminded him that it was just for one session.”
- “My son is . . . very grateful for the opportunity to be part of the study.”
- “C21 had a great time during your session. He is really thankful that he was included in your study.”
- “C9 enjoyed the session earlier. He was able to participate well because of few participants. Thanks for the chance [to participate] in the study. He even asked when the next session would be. He enjoyed the short session they had. He likes social interaction.”

7.12 Conclusions

Even children believe in the notion of a dual audience for children's literature. A majority of the participants stated that the poems used in the study were written to be enjoyed not only by children but also by adults for reasons such as sentimentality for the past and the general appeal of poetry and humor. Children know that this is a unique trait of children's literature: although children's texts can also be appreciated by adults, this duality of audience is not applicable to adult literature.

Some findings of this study do not support the findings of previous studies. First, though Dahl's poem has many elements that other studies reported as humorous for children, almost half of the children in this study were not amused at all by the poem. There were striking gender differences in what could explain the failure to elicit humor. The girls felt that Dahl's poem was frightening and the human character pitiful while the boys felt that the events were lacking in action. Second, although violence has been mentioned in literature as a common source of humor for children, the results of this study show otherwise. For many of the participants, Dahl's poem was considered “somewhat funny” when they were assured at the end of the poem that it was free from violence. Third, with Silverstein's poem, the children did not respond positively to exaggeration, which conflicts with the conclusion of other researchers. Exaggeration is ineffective in creating humor when it is more negative than positive and when

children are at the center of it. Fourth, while earlier studies have shown that children enjoy humor that pokes fun at authority figures, the study found that it was also funny for children to poke fun at child characters but only when they are the ones making fun of them and when the humor is good-natured. However, some findings were similar to those of other studies. Regarding gender differences, more girls than boys responded to Silverstein's poem with empathy, which coincides with the generally held views about how girls and boys express themselves.

An earlier work takes the view that a humorous poem for children is a combination of "tendentious content" and "poetic form" and when either one is removed, the altered version would be less funny for children (Shultz and Robillard in McGhee and Chapman 1980: 72). Though this study made no comparison between the original and altered texts, it found that a humorous poem could still be funny if either form or content was prioritized in the translation. Furthermore, it was seen that the humor in the text was better preserved when content was prioritized over form. For many participants, the funniness of the poems depended chiefly on the humor of the topics or ideas found in the poems. Thus, contrary to general belief, rhyme appears to be dispensable in humorous poems for children.

There are also other findings of the study. Between poems and stories, children showed a preference for the latter. Even when reading poems, they prefer those that have stories. Parents and teachers greatly influence the children's reading interests and preferences. The (self-reported) poor comprehenders who found the poems funny possibly evaluated the poems' humor in parts, some of which were funny for them. By contrast, the (self-reported) good comprehenders who did not find the poems funny could have gauged the funniness of the content in its entirety rather than by parts. There is little relationship between self-reported comprehension and mode of input (i.e., reading or listening). Similar to other studies, the children in this study are more receptive to humor in a social setting. Many children admitted that reading with other people (e.g., with family and other children), as against reading alone, makes a text more humorous. In cases where two materials possess relatable content, the more effective humor appears to be that which is more realistic for the children, i.e., that which does not require them to engage with fictional worlds. Most participants said that they could relate to the poems as Filipinos, mainly citing the universality of the poems' themes and the role of translation in making foreign materials available to other readers. Gender differences also emerged regarding humor appreciation. First, more boys than girls expressed the need for jokes to make the poems funny or funnier and were surer of the jokes they wanted to see. Second, girls responded more positively to incongruity-based humor while boys were more open to humor described by the superiority theory.