Children's response to humor in translated poetry

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CHAPTER 9

Conclusions

9.1 Research questions and findings

Going back to the research questions, the study found the following:

1. Exposure to humorous poems encourages children to read more poems. More than half of the pupils who reported disliking poetry said they were motivated to read more poems after the reading sessions. The sessions also showed that children would more likely read texts apart from prose stories if they were shown what materials were available to them.

2. Children who read more in Filipino than in English did not perceive the humor in the translated poems in Filipino more positively. The relationship between preferred language for reading and funniness rating is weak. In fact, there were more English speakers who found Silverstein's poem in Filipino funny.

3. The self-reported good comprehenders did not find the poems funnier. Conversely, the poor comprehenders did not find the poems less funny. Thus, poor comprehension does not hinder humor appreciation. This is in contrast to the general notion that comprehensibility plays a major role in humor perception.

4. There was no strong relationship between mode of input and the poem's funniness. Instead of mode of input, it appears that the text itself determines the funniness of the poem. This suggests that with the right

material, both listening and reading can be equally effective in making poems enjoyable for children.

5. Children find humorous poems funnier when they read them with other people. Many of the participants responded that reading funny poems and stories with family or other children brings more laughter than when they read them individually. This supports the assertion of scholars such as Addyman et al. (2018) that laughter is a "social signal."

6. The situations in the poems were identified as the poem's funniest element. For the good comprehenders, language came in second and character in third. For the poor comprehenders, character placed second and language last. However, the difference between the choices of the good comprehenders and poor comprehenders was minimal.

7. There were gender differences observed in how children appreciated the poems' humor. For example, more boys than girls were disappointed at the lack of action (such as violence) in Dahl's poem. In suggesting other endings to the poems, more girls than boys used incongruity and surprise while more boys than girls resorted to superiority.

8. A large majority of the children acknowledged the possible dual readership of children's poems. They described children's poems as something everyone could enjoy. For them, adults can appreciate what is entertaining and funny for children since they were once children. Only three of the 26 participants said that the poems were written only with children in mind.

9. Children can better relate to a poem when it is translated into their own language. But this could also be explained by the universality of the poems' themes, as the children pointed out. The manner of translating the poems had consequences as well: the use of "deep Filipino words" gave the impression of foreignness to the children who were not fluent in Filipino.[42]

10. Content is more influential in producing humor in children's poems. Between the translation focused on form and one focused on content, more children found the former not funny. Thus, contrary to general belief, humorous poems for children can still be funny even without the presence of rhyme. This is further explained in section 9.2.6.

[42]When asked, most of them could not remember what words they found difficult to understand. However, it is possible that the English words for the body parts and sicknesses mentioned in Silverstein's poem could have been problematic for them; the author herself was not familiar with these Filipino terms.

9.2 Other findings

The study also found the following:

9.2.1 Children's literature according to children

This thesis started with a discussion of the problem of defining children's literature. It was shown that there is no agreement between scholars and practitioners in terms of what the characteristics, target readership and content of children's literature are and should be. It also discussed how the concept of childhood changed over time and how this influenced what was understood and accepted as children's literature. Two opposing views on children's books were presented. According to one view, children's books are supposed to give children pleasure and not instruct them. According to the other view, children's literature is supposed to be both entertaining and informative. Based on the results of the poetry reading sessions carried out in the current study, the second view appears to be more pervasive among Filipino children, regardless of the authors' intentions. The children responded to the poems as if they were teaching them specific values even if the author of this study did not raise the poems' didactic qualities.

For the participants, the poems were not only enjoyable but there was also a moral lesson to learn from reading them. Thus, although referring mainly to fiction, Rose's assertion that children's literature reflects not children's ideals but traits that adults want children to imitate seems to bear some truth. This tendency comes to light when children's views and perspectives are explored: they are conditioned by the values and virtues of the adults raising them, who as Evasco (2011) pointed out, interpret childhood as a stage where children need to be disciplined. However, one limitation of the existing concepts is that they fail to explain how children feel towards such a tendency and how it affects their enjoyment of a text; such interplay was not explored in this study. Similarly, Rose's argument that there is not only one child to be addressed in children's literature and that children react differently to a text appears to hold when the responses of the children during the discussions are taken into account. When asked if they could relate to the poems, the children gave opposing responses, suggesting that the poems did not speak to them as a homogenous group and supporting Rose's point that there are divisions among children. Gender, for instance, may create divisions and, as Chapter 7 showed, the poems in the current study were received differently by boys and girls.

It should be noted that the well-defined distinctions in the development of the concept of childhood only apply to some cultures. For example, while the concept of the child as a "miniature adult" was in fashion in the medieval West, it was only a contemporary development in the Philippines (Evasco 2011: 117). Furthermore, in the Philippines, the child was not represented by one image alone during the Spanish colonial period from 1521 to 1898 but by a combination of two images, that of an evangelical child and a Europeanized/urbanized

indio, representations which still apply to this day (Evasco 2011: 117). The two merging concepts resulted in Filipino children being treated as "unfinished adults" and possessing colonial mentality and taste (Evasco 2011: 117). The latter could explain why the children in the study reported greater proficiency in and preference for English over Filipino as the language for reading. In the Philippines, there is more prestige attached to English than to Filipino, though both are recognized as official languages, as evidenced by the dominant use of English for teaching and instruction.

Moreover, children tend to hold the same views as adults regarding the concept of child and childhood, suggesting that such perceptions are effectively passed on to children by adults through parenting and education. This is reflected in how children believe children's literature should be, emphasizing the distinction between fantasy and realism. The participants in the study think that the "fictional", "unrealistic" and "cartoonish" are for children. Conversely, "realistic" and "believable" texts are for adults. The "serious" is a realm meant solely for adults because adults, unlike children, have "serious" work to do. Thus, although these traditional ideas were prevalent in the West in the 18th and 19th centuries, there are signs that they persist in the Philippines despite progress in the kind of local children's books available. Seeing that the historical roots of the childhood construct can vary from culture to culture opens up a considerable space for inquiry and discourse from local perspectives. The Western origins and notions of the meaning of childhood are not universal in their temporal influence, and as Evasco demonstrates, the representations of the child are not based on Western models alone. This then calls for a study of the development of the concept of childhood and its effects on children's literature that recognizes the unique experiences of a society and reflects the local sociocultural and historical contexts in non-Western cultures.

9.2.2 Bilingual proficiency and availability of Filipino books for older children

This thesis then discussed children's literature production and translation in the Philippines from its historical context until its current state. Even-Zohar's polysystem theory provided a valuable tool for exploring the status of children's literature in translation. It allowed for a comparison between the position of translated children's books in Filipino and that of foreign English books in circulation. The analysis focused on Filipino translations of foreign children's books, mainly those in English, to determine the position of Filipino books in a country where the educational system is predominantly English-speaking, a legacy of American colonialization. Similarly, it aimed to determine whether children had adequate access to international books translated into Filipino as they did in the original English. This is an interesting point to examine as both English and Filipino are official languages in the Philippines. This being the case, reading resources should be equally accessible in English and Filipino and children should exhibit more or less the same level of literacy and interest

in both languages. The poetry reading sessions revealed, however, that one language was more dominant for the participants: they read more in English and found it challenging to understand Filipino, the national language.

Using the polysystem theory as the framework, it was shown how foreign children's literature translated into Filipino was, and still is, mainly situated in the periphery of the literary system. There are two explanatory factors for this. First, there is a low demand for Filipino reading materials as Filipino children can – and in some cases, can better – read in the original English. Second, the children's publishing industry is producing more local books by local authors in bilingual (English and Filipino) format, which is strategic insofar as capturing the market for both Filipino- and English-language books. However, these are mostly picture books that target the 4-8 age range and reading materials in Filipino for children beyond this age remain few. As a result, even if older children would like to broaden their recreational reading to include Filipino books, they can only get hold of readily accessible English titles. Some of the children brought up such limitation during the poetry reading sessions: although they want to read more in Filipino, they or their parents do not know where to purchase Filipino books.

Recent national data likewise support the finding that Filipino children do want to read in Filipino. According to a survey (National Book Development Board 2018: 55), children are inclined to read in English and Filipino in equal measure if they have more choices in terms of book language. The children in the poetry reading sessions also expressed interest in reading more materials in Filipino after reading Dahl's and Silverstein's poems translated into Filipino. Thus, the low demand for Filipino books could be more of an adult-driven phenomenon than a child-driven one because parents largely shape the reading interests of children by making certain books available at home. Even though the parents of some of the children in the study are supportive of reading in Filipino, this does not seem to be the case with the larger community. Because English is still perceived by many in the Philippines as the only measure of education and intelligence and "the language of power and upward social and economic mobility" (Castillo 1999 in Young 2002: 222), many Filipino parents show greater preference for using English at home which reflects on their book selections for their children. In fact, Penguin Random House noted the large and growing market for English-language children's books in Asia with the Philippines (although wrongly described as having "a 100-percent English-speaking population"[43]) along with China and South Korea "at the front of the pack."

While a bilingual education policy has been in place since 1974 to achieve bilingual competence, English has become the primary medium of instruction in many elementary schools except for Filipino language and history subjects. This provides another input and reinforces children's fluency in English over

[43]In the March 30-April 2, 2008 survey conducted by the Social Weather Station, it was found that 76% of Filipinos could understand spoken English, 75% nationwide were able to read English, 61% nationwide said they could write in English and 46% could speak English (Mangahas, 2016: n.p.).

Filipino; in 2021, the Philippines ranked 18th in the English Proficiency Index, thus belonging to the "high proficiency" band. Classroom education must be supplemented by out-of-class resources that encourage and promote equal interest in Filipino and English among children aged 8 and up to achieve actual bilingual competence. This is one gap that translations can help fill: providing literature in Filipino, whether from English or other Philippine languages, considering that the Philippines is a multilingual society.

It can be gleaned from the interviews with local children's publishers that there are significantly more English-language foreign books for children in circulation than foreign children's books translated into Filipino. From the publishing end, local publishers express that books for middle-grade readers (those 8 to 12 years old) and translations of books written in foreign languages take more time to produce which is why in part Filipino books for older children, such as novels, could not keep up with the number of English books in the local market. Publishers are also prioritizing the translation of original works by Filipino authors (from English into Filipino and from Filipino into English) over works by foreign authors. This is also true for emergent authors. While this is indicative of a healthy publishing industry, there is still work to be done in promoting the Filipino language in the form of books for older children, which is part of the intellectualization of Filipino[44]. Publishers play a key role in language development and dissemination of knowledge. It is not "a neutral middleman" but an agency that "influences both the production and consumption of intellectual works" (Neavill 1975: 23). Such is the case with local children's publishers in the Philippines: judgment on what books should make it to the market, including translations, depends mainly on the publishers and their assessment of the needs of consumers as well as gaps and opportunities in the market. But publishers also decide in response to consumer purchase behavior. Thus, to increase the production and translation of books in Filipino for older children requires adults, acting as "gatekeepers", who recognize and appreciate that competence in the language has both symbolic (e.g., stronger social and cultural identity) and practical (e.g., effective public communication as mentioned by Mangahas 2016) purposes.

9.2.3 Poetry appreciation in children

Similar to how Filipino translations of foreign works are peripheral to native literature, whether in English or Filipino, children's poems occupy a peripheral position with respect to prose stories. This is the case despite the known benefits

[44]According to Sibayan, literature is the only form in which Filipino is intellectualized as there are many literary works in Filipino. The irony is that the intellectualization of Filipino is not separate from knowledge of English. According to Sibayan: "Because Filipino will depend for its intellectualization mainly upon scholarly works in English and those educated in English, the quantity and quality of knowledge to be made available in Filipino will depend upon the state of knowledge in English possessed by Filipino scholars and writers. The intellectualization of Filipino will depend upon bilingual scholars" (Sibayan 1991).

of poetry for children, including contributions to reading and language development, creative thinking and emotional growth. One of the reasons for such "ambivalence concerning the image of poetry among children" is the impression that poetry is "elitist or exclusive" (Maynard et al. 2005: 36). For example, a student in Calkins' research said that "poetry is for rich people; it's for snobs" (1986: 298 in Jacko 2004: 2) while another said that poets "are talking above us and about us. They don't want us to understand" (Calkins 1986: 298 in Jacko 2004: 2). Phinn (1992: 55 in Maynard 2005: 36) expresses children's general lack of interest in and engagement with poetry: "Sadly, research studies and [Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools] reports confirm that for some children, poetry is the poor relation of fiction . . . They reveal that many children dislike poetry, considering it difficult and demanding and largely irrelevant to their lives and interests." Children find poetry as "lacking meaning" for them and "failing to inspire excitement in them" (Maynard et al. 2005: 36). Phinn adds: "It is clear that choosing and presenting poetry is not as easy as presenting fiction" (in Maynard et al. 2005: 36). However, even if poems are "generally shorter, more memorable and easier to use in speaking and listening exercises than stories" (Maynard et al. 2005: 36) and hence can serve as an excellent entry to literature appreciation, this study shows that the succinctness and brevity of poetry do not affect children.

Preference studies in fact found haikus to be unpopular among children because they "were too short, lacked rhyme and were difficult to understand" (Marston 1975: 107). Such dislike for short forms of literature was also evident among the participants in this study who preferred the longer prose stories because they offer a more extended experience of the text and deliver a story with characters and a plot. Children who appreciate literary texts this way are best introduced to contemporary prose in verse (or novel-in-verse) books which are gaining popularity among and well received by young readers. Some of the titles aimed at middle grade readers have been recognized with the John Newberry Medal [such as *Crossover* (2014)] which deals with the subjects of basketball and music], the Newberry Honor [for instance, *Inside Out & Back Again* (2011) about the Vietnamese author's childhood experience as a refugee] or the National Book Award [for example, *Brown Girl Dreaming* (2014) about the author's experience growing up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s]. Although there is a wide array of options for children who want to read this type of book in English, there are no similar books in Filipino. Poetry books for children in the Philippines, whether in English or Filipino, are few because they do not sell well. According to local children's publisher Adarna House, they have only a small number of poetry books as a "marketing decision" because "the market has not yet appreciated poetry." Knowing that children are more interested in reading longer texts and those that tell stories, publishers could look into the production of novels-in-verse not only in English but also in Filipino or translated into Filipino. Such a format could entice children to read more poetry.

This study also confirms that humorous poems appeal to children. While

findings from interest studies suggest that it is difficult "to get children to like poems better, and to like better poems" (Marston 1975: 109), the poetry reading sessions were able to change the participants' feelings about poetry. At the beginning of the sessions, some participants only knew poems to be "dark" and serious which they found unappealing. But when introduced to funny poems, they reported being encouraged to read more poems. This was consistent with the findings of James (1998) that there were significant improvements in students' attitudes toward poetry when introduced to poetry through humorous materials. In his study, those who found poetry to be "fascinating and fun" formed 17.1% of the students in the pretest, 21.7% in the control treatment and 42.3% in the treatment posttest. Furthermore, when asked whether they have "a feeling of dislike" when they hear the word "poetry", 29.8% agreed in the pretest, 21.7% in the control posttest and only 7.6% in the treatment posttest.

Although greater exposure to poetry can foster children's interest in the genre, studies such as this one are helpful in that they already give an idea of children's preferences in poems. This has implications for the study of poetry. Humorous works in general are often seen as frivolous and undeserving of a place in the classroom. But humorous texts can also be serious in that they promote creative and critical thinking. Reconciling incongruity, for instance, is in itself a problem-solving activity. In the poetry reading sessions, not everyone was able to comprehend or "get" the joke in Silverstein's poem, suggesting that humorous poems can also be challenging and demand their own discussion. Moreover, humor can promote reflective thinking which requires "the capacity to see things from another angle" and the ability to "change perspectives" (Stroobants 2009: 9). While humorous poems can be a good introduction for children to be interested in and enthusiastic about poetry, they should not be the end-all of poetry reading. Parents and teachers can eventually broaden children's appreciation for poetry by exposing them to more complicated poems with higher quality of language (e.g., award-winning poems). As Terry (1974: 41 in Jacko 2004: 3) says: "an appreciation for poems other than the humorous is developed through continuous experience with poetry." However, Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999: 46) advise teachers to "proceed with caution on less-liked aspects of poetry until [the] students become fans of poetry" and recommend "a good selection of rhyming, narrative poems with distinct rhythms about humorous events, well-liked familiar experiences, and animals [as] a good starting point for students who have little experience with poetry." But the larger aim should be variety and breadth to foster a lifelong appreciation for poetry.

9.2.4 Impact of culture and gender on children's humor

This thesis aimed to investigate whether humorous poems for children would still be funny if translated into a different language. The results show that the poems were either "not funny" or "somewhat funny" for most participants. It was expected that they would find them "very funny" considering that the poems by Dahl and Silverstein used in the study are both well-known among

English-speaking children and widely recognized by poetry organizations as representative of their humorous poetry. Furthermore, the poems fit into what has been found humorous for third graders: "slapstick humor, clowning, exaggeration" (Franzini 2002 in Dowling 2014: 122). One explanation offered was the role of culture in humor appreciation and response. How the children appraised the situations in the poems could have been influenced by the Filipino value of regarding the self with others, which is often taught as kindness and sensitivity or empathy. The children, especially the girls, felt sorry for the dentist who was scared, even if the situation was only make-believe, and empathized with the child who was sick, even if she was only pretending, because being sick is "not fun." Filipinos love humor and can find laughter in unfortunate circumstances, as seen in Philippine comedy and the many instances of a "joking culture" (Ancheta 2011: 55). But laughing at the misfortunes of others, which was the intended effect of the poems, could have been understood by children as inappropriate since they were expected to be polite and respectful, traits that are highly regarded in Filipino culture. This is especially true when an adult and authority figure (in this case, the author) can likely modify the children's response.

However, culture is only one of the explanatory factors for the relatively unsuccessful humor of the poems. Some gender differences also emerged in relation to how girls and boys responded to humor. The girls did not think Dahl's poem was that funny as the events suggested danger and potential violence. They perceived the poem as frightening instead of amusing and were more empathetic toward the characters in both poems. On the other hand, the boys felt that Dahl's poem could have benefited from more events and greater excitement. They were disappointed that "not much happened" and wished that something terrible had happened to the main character. The latter is consistent with previous studies that boys "laugh more frequently about the mishaps of others" (Neuss 2006 in Dowling 2014: 123). Moreover, these observations showed girls' and boys' preferred types of humor. In giving alternative endings to the poems, more girls than boys resorted to incongruity and surprise while more boys than girls gave answers that exhibited superiority. It can be seen then that existing humor theories can be applied to adult humor and children's humor. However, little attention has been given to gender in examining why children laugh. This is an area that offers many options for further investigation.

Between culture and gender, there is no clear indication based on this study alone which of the two exerts a more significant influence on humor perception. There is some sign that the girls showed higher regard for culturally prescribed behavior by having more empathy. But this response could also be attributed to gender as many previous studies show that girls are more likely to give an empathic response to unpleasant situations (see for example Benenson, Gauthier and Markovits 2021) even though in one study, empathy, as a "prosocial behavior", was observed among Filipino third graders regardless of gender (Rungduin and Reyes 2016: 7). Further research is needed to understand how culture affects or modifies humor response among children.

9.2.5 Greater importance of personal relatability over cultural relatability

The current thesis also investigated whether the poems, when translated into a different language, were humorous because they were relatable. "Relatability" was used to mean that the children can see themselves reflected in the characters or situations. Although the poems were found by most children to be only "somewhat funny" or "not funny at all", they still regarded both poems as equally "relatable." Two types of relatability were explored: whether the characters or situations enabled the children to feel that they can relate to them as children, and as Filipino readers. In terms of being able to relate to them as children, the results show that when two texts possess relatable content, the more relatable humor appears to be that which is more realistic for the children. Conversely, the text that leans more on fantasy, although equally relatable, is perceived to be less humorous. With realistic content, the children only need to turn to established knowledge as the events belong to the real world. On the other hand, with fantastical content, it is necessary for the children to "fantasy-assimilate" the depicted events, a process "necessary for perceiving those events as humorous" (McGhee 1975: 20). Thus, 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.

The research also aimed to discover whether "intercultural communication" (Wang 2014: 2424) – or two or more cultures meeting – in the translated texts was discernible for the children and whether this could have impacted on the funniness of the translations. Most of the children reported that they could relate to the poems and did not perceive the poems as foreign. Therefore, the failure of the poems to elicit humor among some participants could not be due to the cultural contexts of the poems. Only a few children stated that the poems' foreignness was visible, citing, for instance, how different they were from Filipino legends. Children who said that they could relate to the poems as Filipino readers mentioned how the themes of the poems and the events in the poems were universal and how the poems were already in a language that they and other Filipinos could understand. Thus, children at this age are already aware of the importance of translation in allowing people to read and appreciate materials that were initially written in a language that was not their own. According to Zafra (2023, personal communication), Filipinos are exposed to translation beginning at a young age because of the multicultural and multilingual (including foreign languages such as English) landscape of the Philippines. Thus, translation is part of their everyday life.

The quality of the language and word choices in the translation, however, affects text relatability according to the children and puts them in two different sides. On the one hand, a translation that is "done well" with "deep" words sounds familiar and natural to target readers and gives the impression that the translation is the original text. On the other hand, when the translator uses words in the target language that are "deep" and difficult to understand, the

translation tends to sound more foreign because a translation is believed by the children to contain simple words. The children who were not fluent in Filipino felt this way on account of the translator's diction (word selection and use).

This work tentatively suggests that between personal relatability (i.e., can relate as children) and cultural relatability (i.e., can relate as Filipinos), the more determining factor when reading a humorous poem is personal relatability. Although most of the children could relate to the poems as Filipinos, less than half of them, as children, could find commonalities with the characters or situations which could have contributed to the poems being only "somewhat funny" or "not funny" for many of the participants.

9.2.6 Primacy of content over form when translating humorous poems

In translating poetry, Nida advises aiming for both form and content to avoid producing a mediocre translation. But as mentioned in Chapter 4, quite often, the translator cannot be faithful to both meaning and aesthetic effects and there will always be tension between the two (Nida 2012, Matthews 1959). If this happens, Nida (1984: 83) maintains that meaning should be prioritized over manner while Jakobson (1959: 238) places greater value on form as the poem's meaning relies on sound. Therefore, this thesis sought to address whether it is form or content that is more decisive in preserving humor in translated poems.

The responses towards Silverstein's poem did not indicate any difference between the form-centered and content-centered translations: more children thought the poem was "very funny" and "somewhat funny" in both translations. Nevertheless, the same is not true of Dahl's poem. The results indicate that humor is more responsive to content than form: many of the children who were presented with the content-centered translation of Dahl's poem found it humorous in contrast to the children who were presented with the form-centered translation. This work suggests that when the translator needs to prioritize either form or content in the translation of a funny poem, humor is better preserved when content is prioritized over form. This also suggests that, contrary to general belief, rhyme does not have to be an essential component of humorous poems for children. These findings therefore contradict the predicted results of the study proposed in Chapter 6.

Emphasis must be given to the fact that the findings of this study do not challenge the results of many preference studies that illustrate children's partiality towards rhymed poetry in general over one that is unrhymed. However, the study's findings show that children also favor free verse when it is funny. For a humorous poem to appeal to 8- to 9-year-old children, content is more important than form and even without the formal elements, a humorous verse can still be funny for them. As a matter of fact, even if the rhyme scheme AABB was retained in the form-centered translations, the poems were still only slightly funny for most children and the content-centered translations were considered funnier. The AABB rhyme scheme is characteristic of many children's poems

for children, even funny ones. It was identified in the literature as instrumental in creating humor. For example, Tsur identified the AABB scheme as "wittier" than the ABAB rhyme pattern which requires more prolonged and complex processing. Thus, the current views on the effect of rhyme on humor, including popular perception, seem insufficient to explain the results of this study. This would be an interesting subject for future studies.

9.2.7 Use of group interviews to study children's humor

This work demonstrated that group interviews are particularly suitable for studying humor among primary-aged children. The approach allowed for interaction which the children preferred. When asked whether they like reading funny texts individually or with others, many of the children said that reading with other people makes the texts funnier and reading more enjoyable. They found pleasure in hearing what the other children thought of the funny poems presented to them, especially when their storytelling abilities were tested and they made up alternative comical endings to the poems. The participants gave unique answers when asked to make the poems funny or funnier, possibly comparing their answers to those of others, demonstrating creative thinking. Aside from enhancing the reading of funny texts, the group setup also served to test whether laughter is indeed "a social signal" (Addyman et al. 2018). Although some children reported that laughter increases with company, strengthening the notion that laughter is a social phenomenon, most of the children in the study did not laugh at the poems as they were recited to them even if they found the poems "somewhat funny." Thus, the physical response was not consistent with the verbal response. Even among the few who perceived the poems as "very funny", only two exhibited laughter at hearing the poems. However, there were more instances of laughter when the children shared ideas on how to make the poems funny, with some laughing at their own or other children's suggestions. It would not have been possible to observe how children physically respond to humor had a one-to-one interview was employed as listening to the poems alone was not enough to elicit laughter. Such group dynamics cannot be captured by a survey as well. This study then recommends using group interviews to examine better what children in primary school find funny.

9.3 Recommended topics for further study

This work can also serve as a starting point for future studies. Among the topics that could be further explored are the following:

1. Would more children have found the poems "very funny" had they read the original texts in English? In the study, none of the participants had previously encountered the poems in English, making the relatability questions in the poetry reading sessions relevant.

2. How would children receive the humor of funny poems when they are instead presented with translations from Filipino into English? Would their preferred language for reading (English) affect the funniness of the translations?

3. It was inferred that the self-reported poor comprehenders who found the poems funny could have assessed the poems' humor in parts, some which were funny for them. In contrast, the self-reported good comprehenders who did not find the poems funny could have measured the funniness of the content in its entirety rather than by parts. The difference between focusing on details and looking at the big picture and their implications on humor reception could be examined in another study.

4. It was found that introducing children to humorous poems can change their attitudes toward poetry for the better. Would this likewise make them respond better to other humorous poems that are subsequently presented to them and make the poems "very funny" for them?

5. How different will the findings be when the study is done with children from other age groups? This is important in understanding humor from a developmental perspective.

6. Would interviewing children individually rather than as a group have any effect on the funniness rating of a poem? This study used only a group interview which, as mentioned, had its own advantages.

7. The study of Menninghaus et al. (2014) involving adults found that rhyme and meter increased the funniness ratings of couplets but the funniness ratings were highest when both rhyme and meter were present. They noted that this was due to the use of meter and rhyme in the funny couplets as deliberate deviations from "good verse-making" which themselves serve as funny poetic features. This could partly explain why form was not crucial in Silverstein's poem. There were no intended deviations from culturally prescribed rules that contributed to the poem's funniness. However, such explanation also assumes that children can detect these departures. Although the study cannot prove this, it is suspected that children 8 to 9 years old, with their limited knowledge of poetry and poetry-making, are not sensitive to such deviations. A study that applies a similar methodology to children can help shed light on this subject.

8. Fisher and Natarella (1982) found that rhyming poems which are made for listening could have evoked an "immediate positive response" among school children while lyric poems or haikus which are made for reading gave them time to reread or reflect on them. However, although the children in this study listened to the poems, the response described by Fisher and Natarella was not observed among the participants, possibly because they were also provided a visual input which they could follow

while listening to the poems. Thus, Fisher and Natarella's assumption about how reading affects children's response to funny poems could not be confirmed. It is suggested that a study which allows the children to listen solely to poems be conducted to derive conclusive evidence.

This study provided conceptual and practical information that is useful not only for researchers but also for translators, parents and teachers in obtaining a deeper understanding of children's humor (that is, detecting and interpreting humor) and their appreciation of literary texts particularly poems. It is hoped that the results of the current study will lead to more child-centered approaches in the fields of translation, publishing and education that take into account the preferences and needs expressed by children themselves.