

Adapting Intertextuality: The case of nursery rhyme characters in creating new canons in children's culture

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Abstract

The increasingly common intertextual use of English nursery rhymes has had an impact upon their transfer into target cultures: entire nursery rhymes, fragments and characters are now found in translational situations. Most of these situations are adaptations of nursery rhymes into other media; one of the most evident examples is the use of nursery rhyme characters in a different context, often portrayed visually. Through a case study with Spanish students aged 12 to 14, the aim of this report is to address issues about the relevance of intertextuality in translation, as well as the assumptions in relation to discourse and visual input. In this qualitative mixed-method study, participants worked with nursery rhymes without any visual prompts and intertextually presented nursery rhyme characters, and offered insight into their expectations and anticipations. The results demonstrate how visual adaptation proves to contribute to children's and adolescent's acculturation and assumptions in relation to a hegemonic cultural model, thus reducing the openness to accepting foreignization in cultural transfers.

Key words: adaptation, intertextuality, nursery rhymes, translation, acculturation

Resumen

El uso cada vez más común de las nursery rhymes inglesas de forma intertextual tiene un impacto sobre su transferencia a la cultura meta: rimas enteras, fragmentos o personajes se encuentran ahora en situaciones de traducción. Muchas de estas situaciones son adaptaciones de nursery rhymes a otros medios; y una de las más evidentes es el uso de personajes de nursery rhymes en un contexto diferente, normalmente con un apoyo visual. A través de un estudio de recepción con estudiantes españoles de edades comprendidas entre 12 y 14 años, este artículo pretende ofrecer respuestas sobre la relevancia de la intertextualidad en la traducción, además de las presuposiciones en relación al discurso y a los mensajes visuales. A través de un estudio de métodos mixtos, un grupo de participantes trabajó con nursery rhymes sin apoyo visual y con personajes de nursery rhymes presentados de forma intertextual y con apoyo visual. El estudio ofrece información sobre las expectativas adquiridas y los patrones discursivos de los niños y adolescentes. En la revisión de los resultados, se demuestra que la adaptación visual influye en la aculturación y las presuposiciones de los niños partiendo de un modelo hegemónico, y reduce su capacidad de extranjerización en transferencias culturales.

Palabras clave: adaptación, intertextualidad, nursery rhymes, traducción, aculturación.

Resum

L'ús cada vegada més comú de les nursery rhymes ingleses de forma intertextual té un impacte sobre la seua transferència a la cultura meta: rimes senceres, fragments o personatges es troben ara en situacions de traducció. Moltes d'aquestes situacions són adaptacions de nursery rhymes a d'altre mitjans i una de les més evidents és l'ús de personatges de de nursery rhymes en un context diferent, normalment amb un suport visual. A través d'un estudi de recepció amb estudiants espanyols d'edats

compreses entre 12 i 14 anys, aquest article pretén oferir respostes sobre la rellevància de la intertextualitat en la traducció, a més de les pressuposicions en relació al discurs i als missatges visuals. A través d'un estudi de mètodes mixts, un grup de participants va treballar amb nursery rhymes presentats ací de forma intertextual i amb suport visual. L'estudi ofereix informació sobre les expectatives adquirides i els patrons discursius dels infants i adolescents. En la revisió dels resultats, es demostra que l'adaptació visual influeix en la aculturació i les pressuposicions dels infants tot partint d'un model hegemònic i redueix la seua capacitat d'estrangerització en transferències culturals.

Paraules clau: adaptació, intertextualitat, *nursery rhymes*, traducció, aculturació

Introduction

Every culture has its own nursery rhyme corpus, and some rhymes are even shared by several different languages; therefore, one could ask: is there any need for translation? The transposition and transformation of rhymes, their oral nature and their dissemination through the contact of cultures has already proven that nursery rhymes corpora are not static (Eckstein, 2012 [1906], p. 81-83; Opie, 1969, p. 9-14). However, the wide-spread use of media has had a direct impact on the fluidity of nursery rhymes, which is marked by a new characteristic: rhymes appear intertextually, alluded to in songs, books, films, graphic novels, videogames and other media. This intertextual presence, often found in adaptations, creates a new need to focus on their translation and their transfer between cultures. As Messenger-Davies (2010) argues, adaptation entitles “not only translating from one medium to another, as in the case of books to film or television; it also means making stories from the past, or from other cultures, relevant to child readers and viewers” (p. 139). In the case of nursery rhymes, it might prove to be not only a complex endeavor, but also one that impacts upon the ideology and acculturation of children.

Although nursery rhyme translation is not widely explored in children's literary research, there has been a focus on issues that offer varied interpretations and translational solutions: the analysis of a universal metric system and their rhythm (Burling, 1966; Arleo, 2006; Dufter, 2009); the link of nursery rhymes to orality and its features (Ong, 1982; Opie, 1996; Wray, 2002; Pullinger, 2017); and the cultural contents of the rhymes (Desmet, 2001; Nord, 2003).

The purpose of this paper is to present a unique situation that is increasingly found in media: the adaptation of nursery rhyme characters in translational situations, specifically from English to Spanish. This situation is not only limited to one language or to nursery rhymes but also affects general translated discourse as well as other traditional oral-related sources (folktales, songs). Since character names can be used to set expectations, reflect personality traits, amuse and evoke emotions (henceforth 'loaded names'); these names both help create the story and are

created by it (Epstein, 2012, p. 68-69). Names, and their usage, are paramount in the comprehension of children's discourse although they are very difficult to transfer into a target culture: should the translation focus on their function (Epstein, 2012, p. 72)? Should their transfer be discarded if it opens a possible "information overload" stemmed from the source culture references (Fernandes, 2006, p. 47-48)? Should their transfer enhance creativity, triggering a game with the reader (Desmet, 2001, p.33)? And, more importantly, how are they perceived by children of the target culture?

To understand the impact of this situation a case study was carried out aiming at analyzing and offering insight on:

- how these nursery rhyme characters are being used intertextually;
- how they affect and are affected by the context to which they belong, and
- how this contextual influence would potentially influence a translational strategy selection and the subsequent reception of these nursery rhyme characters.

A study with a sample group of students and subsequent quantitative analyses were completed; patterns were defined in the recognition and reception of nursery rhyme characters in their original context (textual) and their intertextual adapted depictions (visual).

1 Defining the terms: Intertextuality

I use the term intertextuality drawing upon Kristeva's definition: the ongoing process of signifying of the text as a summa of traditions, sociolects, literary corpora, etc. which have to be connected to the interpretation the reader makes; to sum up "inter- and intracultural dynamics and their operations" (Orr, 2003). The connection with Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogics is clear as, after all, Kristeva's original work on intertextuality is mainly a combination of Bakhtinian and Saussurian terms (Still, 1990, p.15ff; Orr, 2003). Therefore, intertextuality vouches for all texts being in dialogue with each other, with the echoes of one found in another, and direct references activated by the reader when in contact with previous or subsequent texts. Through the idea of influence, which includes what is located *outside* the text, intertextuality is also inherently linked with ideology, since intertext is a point of permutation where "the ideological implications of text (and its various ideologemes) are materialized even as the new text is also transformed by its contexts" (Orr, 2003, p.28). Like ideology, intertextuality is thus imbedded in language itself; inherently linked to the structure of nursery rhymes, and their reflection of formulaicity (Wray, 2002), and highlighting synchronic and diachronic assumptions. For example, in Spanish 'ganamos dinero', we 'win money' – it is not related to our effort or work;

whereas in English we ‘make money’ – and it means you are figuratively producing money through your effort or work. It would be interesting to research a further correlation between these ideas, their historical usage, and their connection with, for example, social systems or religious beliefs.

Since we have to describe a situation through words (a specific relation between a text and a reader with a culture, time, and place), we have to create a text to describe and define these specificities. Although it is true, as Irwin (2004) argues in his article *Against Intertextuality*, that intertextuality does not work retroactively (texts that allude to others do not change the alluded texts), I consider his point of view here is mistaken. It is true that neither the text, nor the traditional poetics of a genre will change (considering a folk tale, with the morphology analysis presented by Propp, for example). What *will* change through the textual dialogue with other texts *inside* the contextual situation is how these new texts should be perceived. This can be seen, for instance, through the dissemination of current subversive, story-changing children’s tales where the ogre is the hero (*Shrek*), Jack Frost is the assassin of a historical guild (*The Graveyard Book*), Little Red Riding Hood’s wolf is an IRA bomber (*Wolf*), women save themselves, evil characters decide to ignore their nature and become good-doers, and traditional positive elements are portrayed as negative and vice-versa. These intertextual relationships respond to new ideologies and create new canons that will become the norm for future discourse without losing their relation to the previous ones.

The way intertextuality is involved in the creation of meaning is illustrated in this paper as follows:

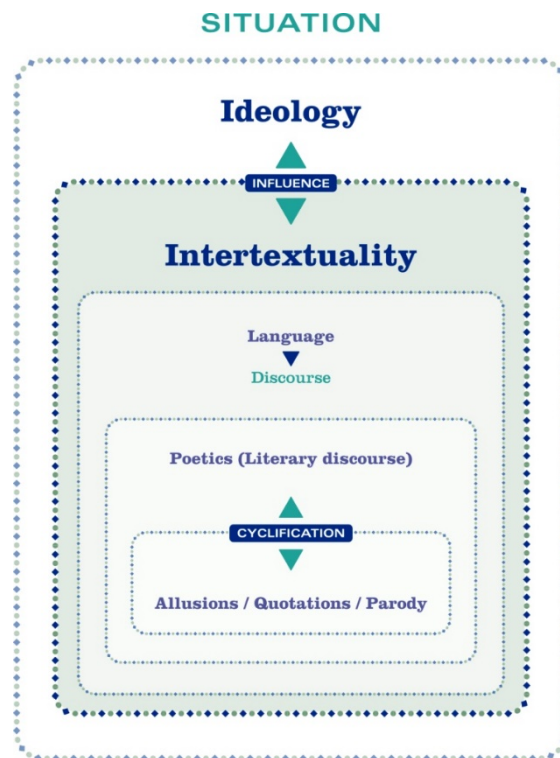


Figure 1: Intertextuality in the creation of meaning. This figure illustrates the relationship between synchronic situations and the diachronic perception of meaning linked to discourse.

McCallum & Stephens (2011) link intertextuality to identity and ideology by defining it as “a

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function of literature [...] to express the imaginative processes that govern how lived experience is remembered and retold in language and narrative, and thence shapes our understanding of human actions and their significances” (p. 364). The figure could be described as follows: ‘situation’ exists outside the text and is interpreted through ideology and in reference to previous situations. ‘Ideology’ is incorporated in any type of discourse – thus intertextuality, the relation of this discourse with other discourses would be found in a first level through the use of language, which would already limit its possibilities. This limitation, the use of language

in a synchronic moment, would directly impact poetics: the literary discourse or how genres are defined, how stories are told, what is expected from each genre, style and narratology in general (including how the creator speaks, how the story itself anticipates and assumes, how the reader/listener receives). Intertextuality speaks about the relationship of a text with another text, but also about the relationship of these texts with their culture, society and reader.

Allusions or quotations, thus, would be phenomena in which the author purposely intends to give a meaning to these references to other texts – regardless of their possible significance-activation by readers. However, as has been seen, many other intertextual references are present that the author him/herself might not be actively recognizing, but assuming and echoing.

For this reason, and considering the ‘reader’ as the receiver of any discourse, I argue that ideology and intertextuality are uniquely linked, as Hollindale (1988), Stephens (1992) and McCallum (2011) have pointed out before me. This does not mean that they are the same, but that intertextuality is the highest representative of ideology and defines any type of cultural base change. In other words, intertextuality at all levels will be recognized and assumed inasmuch as there is a shared ideology between the discourse and the reader.

2 Defining the terms: Adaptation

A holistic view of intertextuality underlines the difficulty in distinguishing the original parts of some tales or storylines. Therefore the term adaptation also needs clarification, as literature can be adapted in different ways and for several reasons. Oittinen (2000) mentions, when referring to children’s literature, that “adaptations may be abridgements of books or they may be created for a totally different medium, for instance when books become films” (p.77).

Adaptations, whether transferring into another medium or offering a contemporary version in the same medium as the original, serve to offer revisions. These are considered positive by many scholars, as, by adapting a text, it becomes part of the children’s discourse synchronically – and the adapted text gives a double reading: on the one hand the diachronic view of the original, potentially broadening the awareness of different cultural systems; on the other hand the updated adaptation (Oittinen, 2000, p. 78-81) which will always offer indicators of its particular cultural context (Costa Villaverde, 2009, p. 148).

When adaptation refers to transferring material from one medium to another, adapting an intertextual reference into audiovisual media has several effects. On the one hand, it becomes perceptible: the intertextual reference has to be portrayed physically and interact with the general discourse. On the other hand, this portrayal automatically reduces the different readings of intertextuality into one single visual output. Cervera (1991) already highlighted this idea, when considering visual input in children’s literature as reducing the ambiguity of a children’s text, since he considers this “ambiguity inherent to any literary text is a very efficient call to the child’s imagination. Illustration, as a single plastic interpretation of the text, can produce restrictive effects” (p. 20).

Visual adaptations are also considered positive by numerous scholars, especially as they are becoming the first contact to many literary references for children (Wilkie, 1996, p. 133; Messenger-Davies, 2010, p. 139) and are being used to preserve the children's literary canon. They can enhance the literary competences of the children of the target culture, when creating and translating allusions. In addition, they create "hipertextuality to help build an image of the reference" when there is no prior knowledge of the alluded reference in the target culture (Mínguez-López, 2012, p. 237); by belonging to the same allusion network, the reader/audience believes these allusions are part of the network.

There are several analyses of nursery rhyme character translations which have been successful by creating a situational translation – that is, a transposition (seen in Desmet, 2001; Mínguez-López 2012); Epstein (2012), however, underlines the impact of images on the chosen strategy of name translations (p. 78). For this reason, "the relationship between the illustrations and the verbal text is crucial, and the verbal text is reinforced by visual interpretation, but at the same time the illustrations on their own sustain further intertextual links not mentioned in the text" (Desmet, 2001, p. 36).

Adapting children's literature and including intertextual references might lead to a homogenization of culture and its reduction into a single visual representation. In the source culture, the visual representation of nursery rhymes could cover any possible dialogue with the text itself; in the target culture, the character becomes independent of its original text, representing particular attributes which exist in relation to other types of intertextuality: prior visual expectations and anticipations in relation to the story-telling format. These determinations carry as well the ideological features of the media-producing company. It is not only that extradition comes mainly from an Anglo-American source (Klingberg, 1986; Ghesquiere, 2006), but children's literary studies mostly follow an Anglophone focus (Lerer, 2009) given that their domination of media impacts upon cultural repertoires (Zipes, 2001). This pattern affects the whole sphere of children's discourse, including most of the highest-grossing film productions. Messenger-Davies (2010) explains that "local specificity [to be] an issue; this works on domestic television, less so on the big screen. Adaptations for Hollywood mean that local characteristics of stories can be lost, and more general, fantastic, universal (that is, recognizable to an American audience) ingredients have to be introduced" (p. 141). This limitation of imagery is viewed as negative by most scholars, since it refers to a hegemonic culture and an ideal, singular child. Hollindale (1988) requires more plurality by pointing out that "to appreciate the implications for children's literature demands acceptance that we do indeed

inhabit a fragmented society, where each of the fragments needs and deserves to feel a confident sense of its value” (p. 8).

The problems to be considered in the reception study thus focus, at a general level, on the following points that arise by the previous observations:

- The adaptations the children of the target culture receive: mostly belonging to an Anglo-Anglo-media dominated culture, and the consequences this might have;
- Whether or not the child is exposed to audiovisual messages prior to their literary experience and how this might affect the child-reader;
- And, connected to this, whether or not the audiovisual message reduces the potential readings of a character to only one.

3 The case study

The case study was conducted with the intention of analyzing to what extent these intertextual characters are being received and understood by children, regardless of their cultural connections or knowledge of the original text and context. Although there are many possible strategies when translating loaded names, this case study focuses specifically on the names of nursery rhymes characters; that is, characters that belong to one text and are found as characters in another text. As mentioned, several authors consider that if there is a clear intertextual play in the text to be translated, the priority should be to try to transfer this function, either into the target culture’s realm or by giving the translator the freedom to rewrite (Oittinen, 2000; Desmet, 2001; Nord, 2003; Fernandes, 2006), with the intention of creating a similar effect; others consider the impossibility of transferring the multiple layers of associations and vouch for a non-translation (Manini, 1996).

My intention through this case study was to better understand how intertextual nursery rhyme characters are perceived in a translated adaptation. The answers to the following questions are further discussed:

- how does a target language child perceive the nursery rhyme character – what expectations and assumptions are made from a different cultural perspective?

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- is the child reader/audience able to grasp the intertextual character once the reference had been presented?
- if so, do the original character, the visual reference and the intertextual character share the same assumptions and expectations?
- if not, what assumptions are made based on the visual information and how do these illustrate ideologies generated by media?

I selected the character of Jack, since it is immediately recognized in English-speaking cultures as a nursery rhyme/ fairy tale common stock character, whereas he is not popularly known in other cultures. In contrast, for example, Humpty Dumpty is well-known through media (illustrations of *Alice in Wonderland*, character in *Shrek*, card in *Shadowverse* Multiplayer Digital Card game, among others). The diverse Jack characters from different nursery rhymes have been used on several occasions in translational situations in Spanish, but retention (preserving the original name) has been the most common translation strategy.

The characters named Jack were selected for different reasons: (1) they all share the same name and have been translated following the same strategy, (2) as Jack is considered a stock character, the selection exemplifies the diverse variability of Jack types, and (3) all examples but one appear as characters in intertextual roles adapted into visual or audiovisual media. The characters studied in this article are: Jack Horner, Jack Spratt, Jack Frost, Jack (be nimble) and Jack (from Jack and Jill).

Subsequently, evaluating whether the characters are recognized when adapted intertextually is assessed. For the corresponding adapted characters, I was more interested in using different types of individuals that could illustrate specific personality traits through their image rather than choosing specific adaptation types. For this reason, the sources vary: illustration, film, animation film, videogame, comic book series and graphic novel. The selected characters were: Jack Frost from the film *Rise of the Guardians*, Jack Frost from *The Graveyard Book* novel (edition); Jack Frost from *The Graveyard Book* graphic novel version; Jack from the film *Jack and Jill*; Jack Spratt, from the film and videogame *Puss in Boots*; and Jack Horner, from the comic book series *Fables*.

3.1 Participants.

The case study took place in Valencia, Spain. The intention was to work with as many children who had just accessed secondary school as possible. The target was 12-year-olds, the entrance to adolescence, given that in the age range between ages twelve and fifteen, children enter the formal operational stage and can reason abstractly, deduce from hypotheses and make connections with ideas that do not relate to their personal experiences (Nodelman, 1992; Steinberg, 2005; Foster, 2006; Messenger-Davis, 2010). In fact, Steinberg (2005) concludes that cognitive development in adolescence linked to the current research in brain development in the second decade of life has focused on a “deepened understanding in the critical role of culture and context in the shaping of cognitive and brain development” (p. 70). As the case study took place in the spring semester of the school year, several students had turned 13 while others had been pulled back in a previous school year or had come into the school system late and were already fourteen. Out of the 136 students surveyed, the total was of: 66 twelve-year-olds (49% of those surveyed), 51 thirteen-year-olds (37% of those surveyed) and 19 fourteen-year-olds (14%).

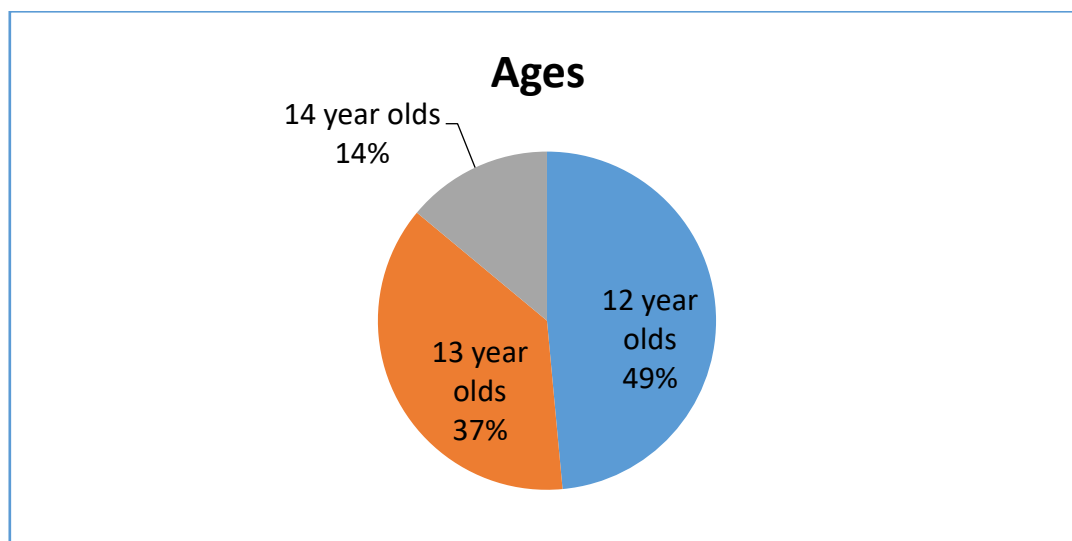


Figure 2: Age percentage of participants. This figure details the percentage of participants by age.

An effort of mixing backgrounds was the reason why the survey was carried out in two different public secondary schools, IES Salvador Gadea and IES Benlliure. Both schools were placed along the average of the Valencia Community grades in the last five years; the participants' experience with English out of school was also considered and was not determined to be a defining factor.

3.2 Procedure

The sessions lasted between 50 to 65 minutes with the collaboration and presence of the teachers. The sessions were divided into three different parts:

3.2.1. First part: inferring the character's traits

- a) General presentation of one of the nursery rhymes in class: structure, meaning, and initial inferences by the student group. The participants had to choose from opposing options in order to decide which physical and personality traits fit the characters best. This made the task easy for speakers of all levels of English, despite some possibly ambiguous terms (curious/boring, clumsy/able, mischievous).

Physical description	Personality description
Fat / thin	Clumsy / Able
Tall / short	Intelligent (smart or clever) / dumb
Athletic (fit) / weak (out of shape)	Good / bad / mischievous
Young / old	Curious
<i>How old do you think he is?</i>	Boring
Fair-haired, brunette, dark-haired	Lucky / unlucky
White-skinned, dark-skinned	

- b) The participants were divided then into groups of three, and a different nursery rhyme was given to each group. They worked together and filled in a description page individually. They could add any information they would like to. The teacher and researcher were available answering any vocabulary doubts.
- c) The results were presented to the class, so that all the participants got to know about the different rhymes and how their classmates had decided to describe the character.

3.2.2. Second part: connecting assumptions and images

Each participant received a sheet with the image of six characters that had been used intertextually in visual adaptations. Individually they had to decide upon the character traits, minus the physical ones. They could then conclude whether the character was one of the previously mentioned Jack characters or not. The datasheets were collected after approximately 12 minutes.

3.2.3. Third part: contrasting information

The images were shown in class together with movie clips and the correct answers were given. The participants could express their opinion and ask about the use of intertextuality in media.

The study is, therefore, a qualitative mixed-method analysis, which measures the participants' answers to both surveys. The number of nursery rhyme inferential surveys (first part data sheet) is lower than that of the intertextual character sheet (second part data sheet).

3.2.4. Limitations of the case study

Due to technical shortages and personal decisions, this study has several limitations. On the one hand, I intended to select a variety of nursery rhymes in order to have each class include the analysis of at least two groups per nursery rhyme, and to generate a variety of responses. Because of this, each rhyme was analyzed in less detail. Although all rhymes were read aloud and all traits for each nursery rhyme character were collected on the board, it is possible that defining assumptions made by one group influenced all participants in the class. This could possibly affect the outcome of the second part data, influencing the selection of one of the visual images as a Jack character. Since the groups that had a Jack which corresponds to an adapted visual version did not increase the percentage in relating both characters, I would consider it was not a significant impairment.

In addition, due to the classroom setting, however, participants could very easily influence each other. In one of the classrooms, for example, a student, when given the character selection sheet, shouted out loud "that is Jack Frost, from *Guardians of the Galaxy*". The results from this class, however, did not vary from the results from other classes. For future reception analyses, I would suggest that the information sheets be computer-based, a trend which is currently implemented in literacy and second language acquisition samples. The participants might have a stronger perception of doing something fun and independently, and might be more motivated to answer even if they are not sure about their inferring.

It would also be interesting - and a computer-based study permits this- if the analyses were not static, that is, not based on images, but on actions, when possible. Thus, if the selected character belonged to a movie, the participant could see a clip of the character in action – or if the selected character belonged to a graphic novel, the student could read a few pages to follow the character's action, as children's literature defines its characters very acutely through their actions.

4 First part results

The first part of the study focused on the encounter of Spanish-speaking participants with English nursery rhymes as a text. Several different reactions were registered which are meaningful in relation to the way children and adolescents perceive story-telling. The individual results were as follows:

4.1. Jack Horner

The number of participants that answered the Jack Horner nursery rhyme sheet was 28. The following graphic was produced for the selected physical traits the students inferred of the character, henceforth "appearance frequencies":

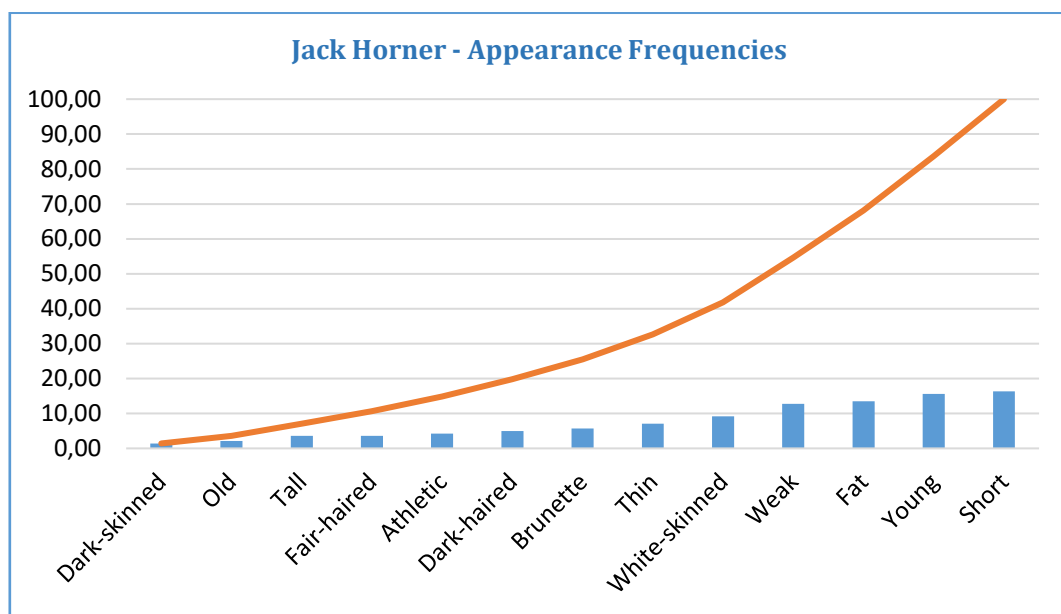


Figure 3: Appearance Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Horner: Percentages. This figure illustrates the percentages of physical description traits the participants selected.

Most students considered the character to be a child. Because he was placed in a food-related situation, they inferred he was fat. The most frequent appearance markers are those that indicate similarities to the body of students (white-skinned, brunette or dark-haired).

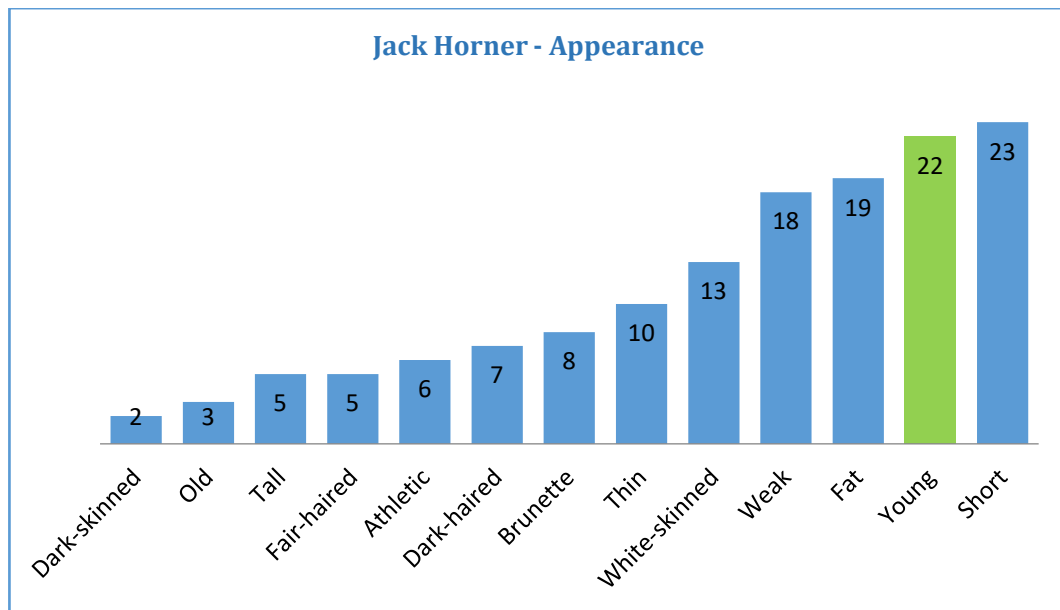


Figure 4: Appearance Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Horner: Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the number of physical description traits the participants selected.

In relation to the character's personality traits, Jack Horner is perceived mostly in positive terms with traits such as intelligent, curious, and lucky dominating the average. Mischievous could be perceived as an ambiguous trait, which might be seen as positive or negative. One of the student groups -three students - added 'lazy' to the traits. The personality frequencies are as follows:

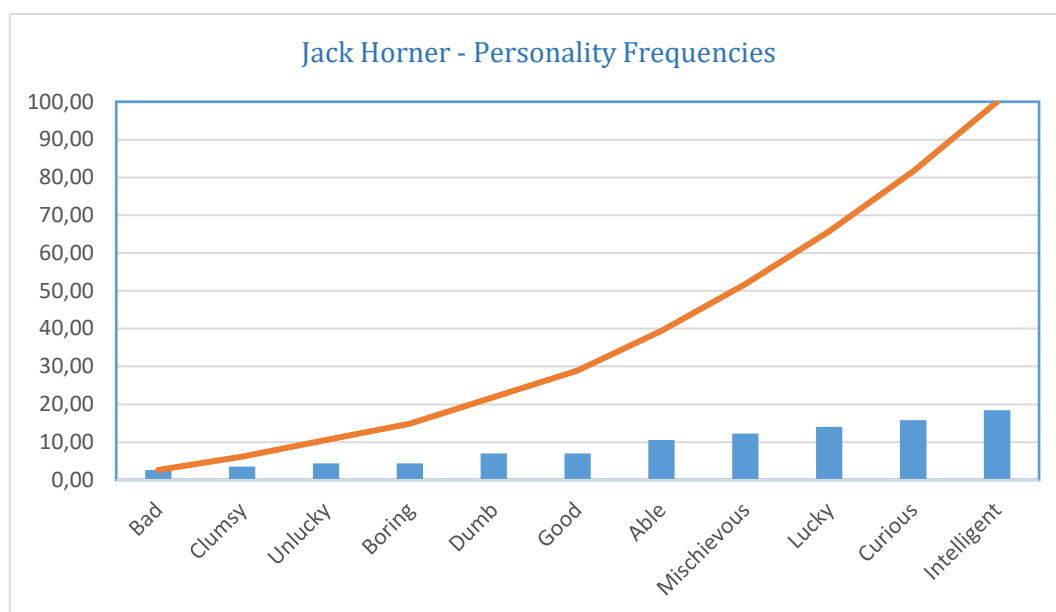


Figure 5: Personality Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Horner: Percentages. This figure illustrates the percentages of personality description traits the participants selected.

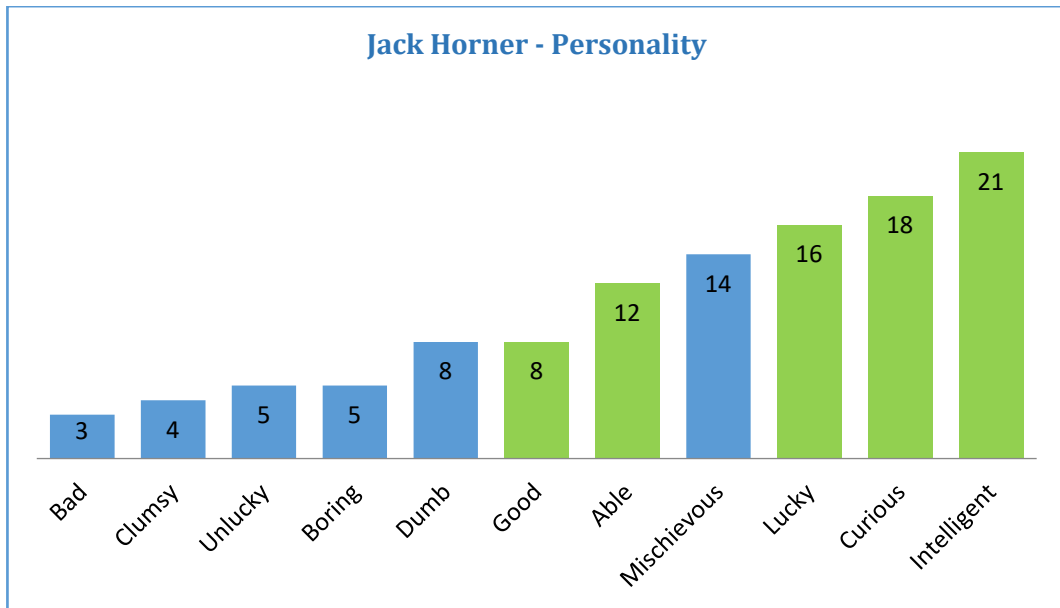


Figure 6: Personality Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Horner: Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected.

In relation to his age, most students considered that the character is young although many selected not to answer:

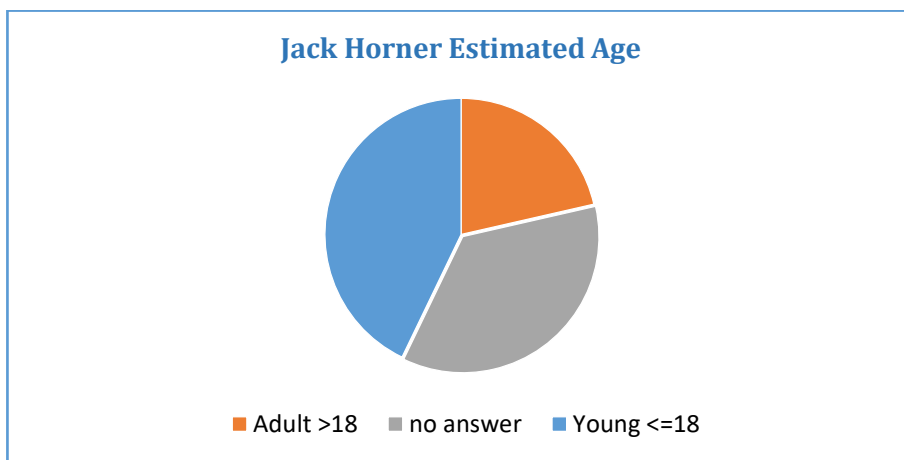


Figure 7: Jack Horner: Estimated Age. This figure illustrates the proportion of age selection by participants in relation to the character of Jack Horner.

The majority of who though he was young, selected an age between 10 and 14 (six selections of 10, four selections of 12 and two selections of 14).

4.2. Jack Spratt.

The number of students that answered the Jack Spratt nursery rhyme sheet was 31. The following graphic was produced for the appearance frequencies:

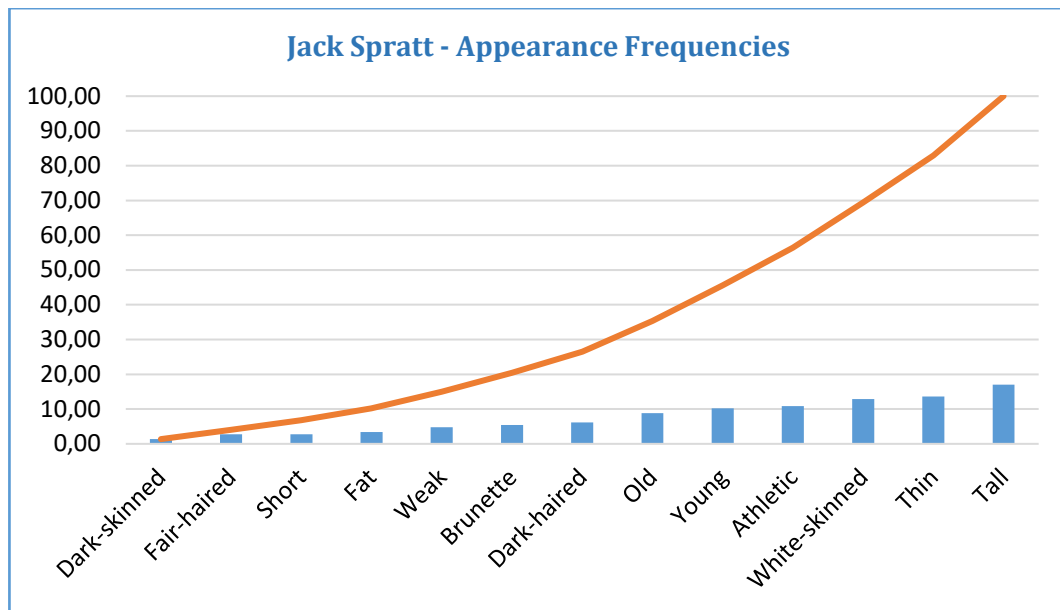


Figure 8: Appearance Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Spratt: Percentages. This figure illustrates the percentages of physical description traits the participants selected.

In relation to his actions described in the rhyme (eating lean), most students inferred that the character was thin and tall. Surprisingly, although it is mentioned that he is married, almost half of the students considered that he was young. Again, the physical traits that dominate are those mostly found in the classroom (white-skinned, brunette and dark-haired). A student who chose to describe him as 'fat' explained his reasoning: "he can't eat fat because he is on a diet" (Miguel, 12).

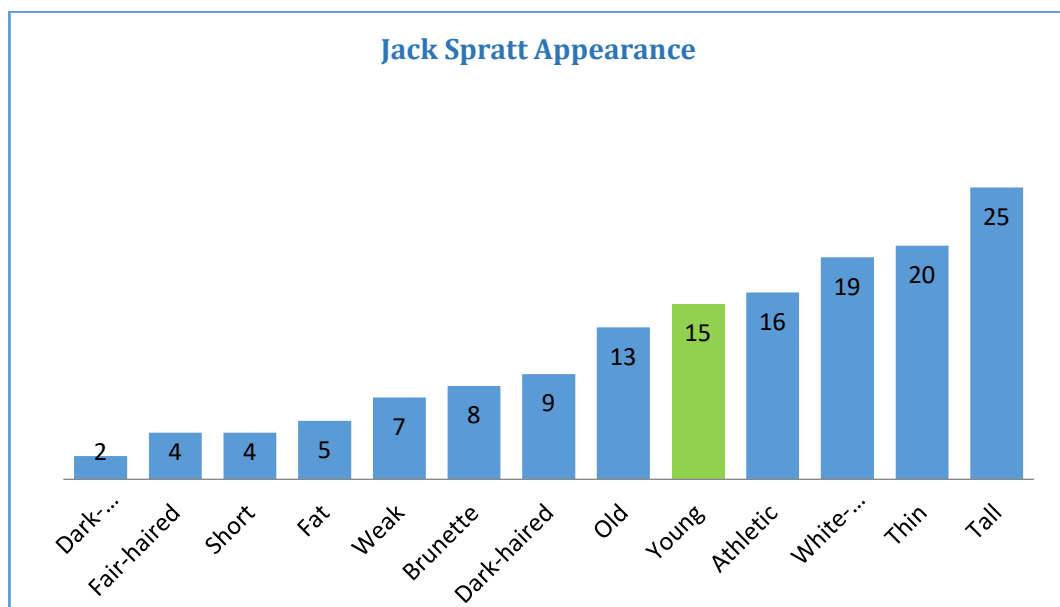


Figure 9: Appearance Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Spratt: Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the percentages of physical description traits the participants selected.

Concerning personality, the following frequencies were found:

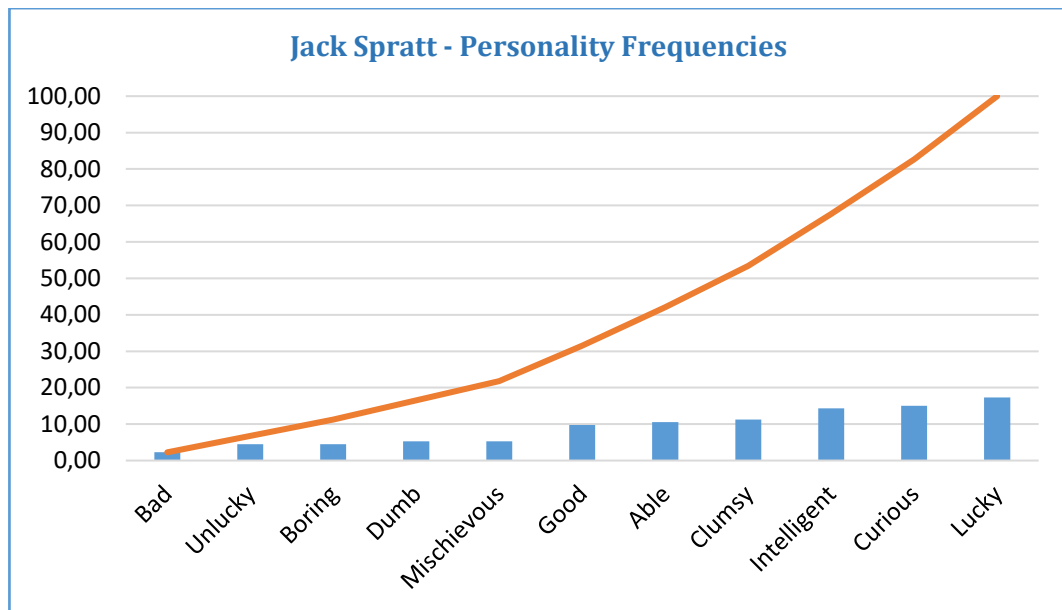


Figure 10: Personality Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Spratt: Percentages. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected.

Positive terms were more frequently used, with lucky, curious and intelligent selected by the majority of students.

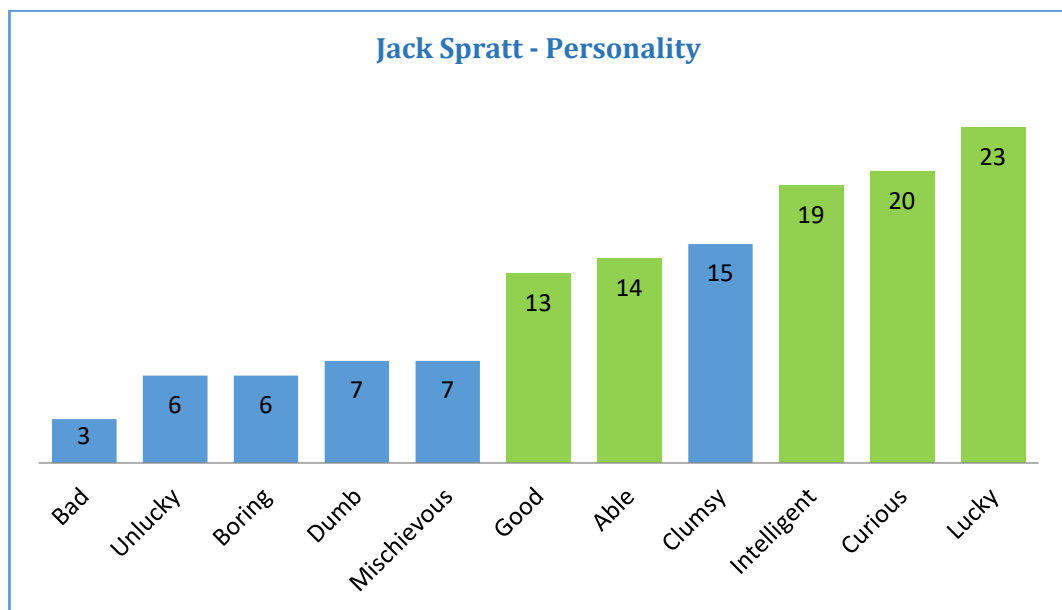


Figure 11: Personality Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Spratt: Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected.

In contrast with the common selection of the physical trait 'young', when specifying the age, most student defined the character as an adult, with eighteen students selecting an age group from 20 to 30 and seven students selecting an age group from 31-50.

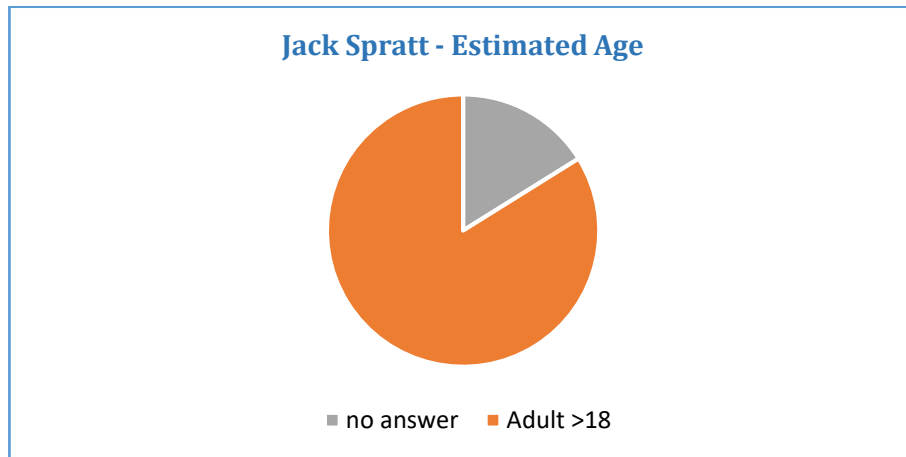


Figure 12: Jack Spratt: Estimated Age. This figure illustrates the proportion of age selection by participants in relation to the character of Jack Spratt.

4.3. Jack and Jill

The number of students that answered the Jack and Jill nursery rhyme sheet was 22. The following graphic was produced for the appearance frequencies:

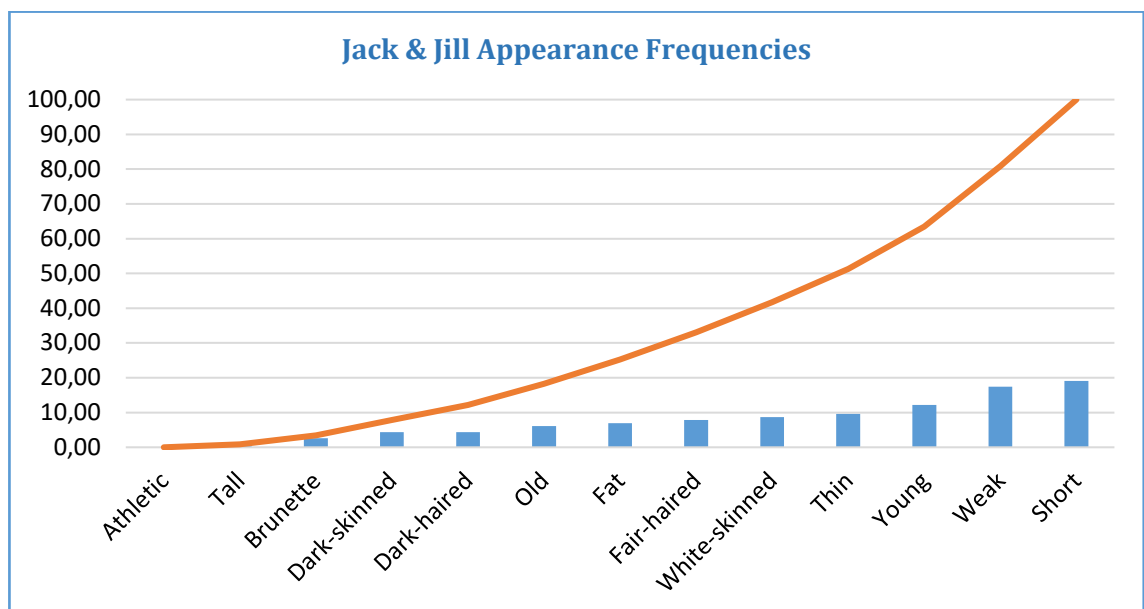


Figure 13: Appearance Frequencies for the textual character of Jack (& Jill): Percentages. This figure illustrates the percentages of physical description traits the participants selected.

Concerning the actions described in the rhyme, Jack was mostly considered to be weak, short, and young by the majority of students. He is inferred to be white-skinned, and many students have considered the character as fair-haired.

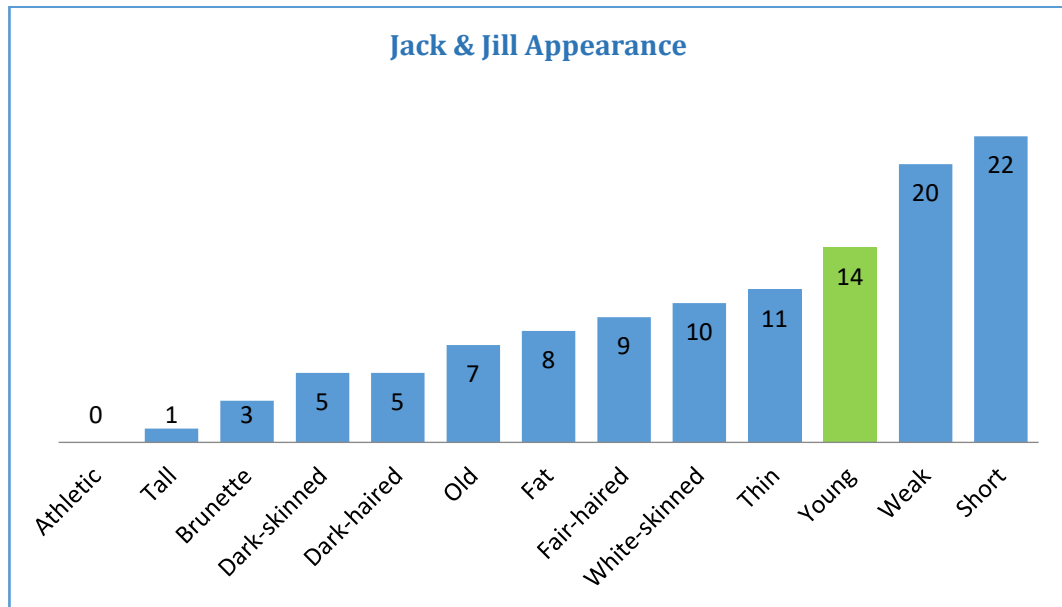


Figure 14: Appearance Frequencies for the textual character of Jack (& Jill): Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the percentages of physical description traits the participants selected.

In relation to personality, the following frequencies ensued:

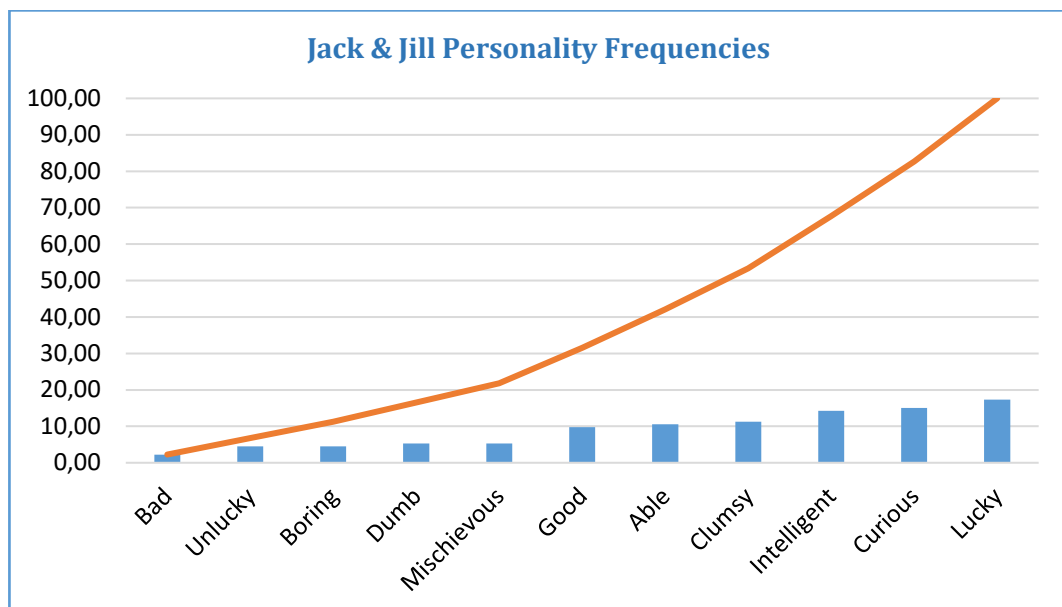


Figure 15: Personality Frequencies for the textual character of Jack (& Jill): Percentages. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected.

Again, mostly positive traits were found, with lucky as the most common response. This presumably means that students did not expect the character would die after breaking his

crown. Clumsy could be perceived as a negative trait and could be related to the action of the character. The numbers are as follows:

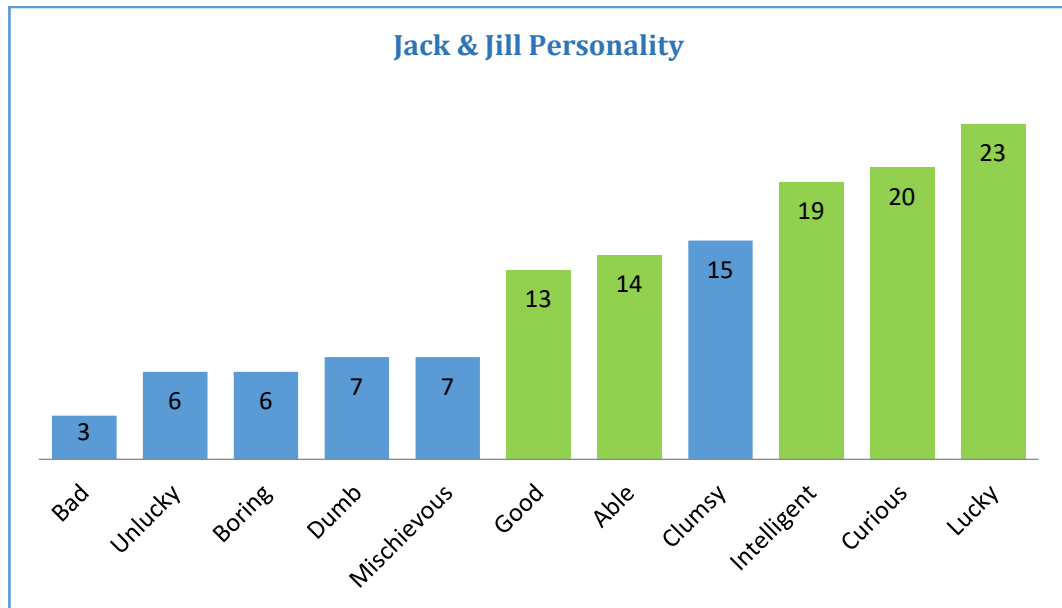


Figure 16: Personality Frequencies for the textual character of Jack (& Jill): Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected.

In relation to age, most students consider Jack to be a child. Therefore the sexual connotations found in other studies of the Jack and Jill rhyme (Opie, 1969, p. 226; Foster, 2008, p.82f) are not part of the adolescents' awareness. Most students selected the character to be under 18, with a large number of students considering Jack to be younger than them (three selected 6 years old, two selected 7, six selected 8).

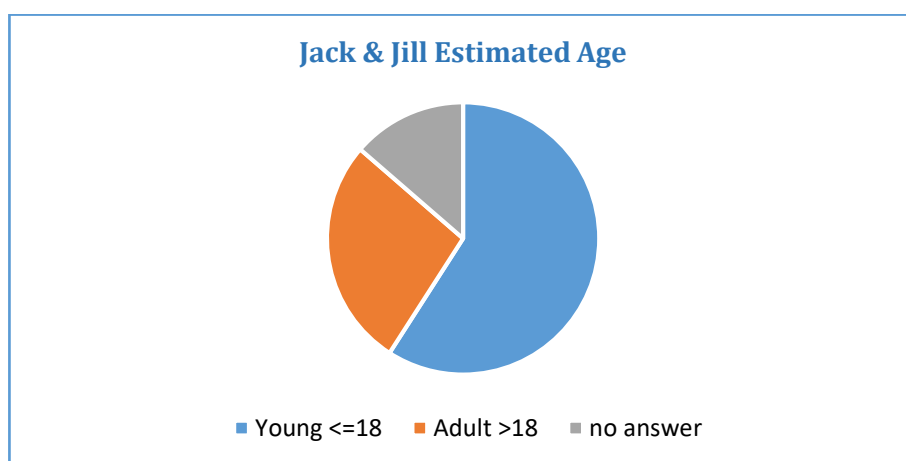


Figure 17: Jack (& Jill): Estimated Age. This figure illustrates the proportion of age selection by participants in relation to the character of Jack (& Jill).

4.4. Jack be nimble

The number of students that answered the Jack be nimble nursery rhyme sheet was 24. The following graphic was produced for the appearance frequencies:

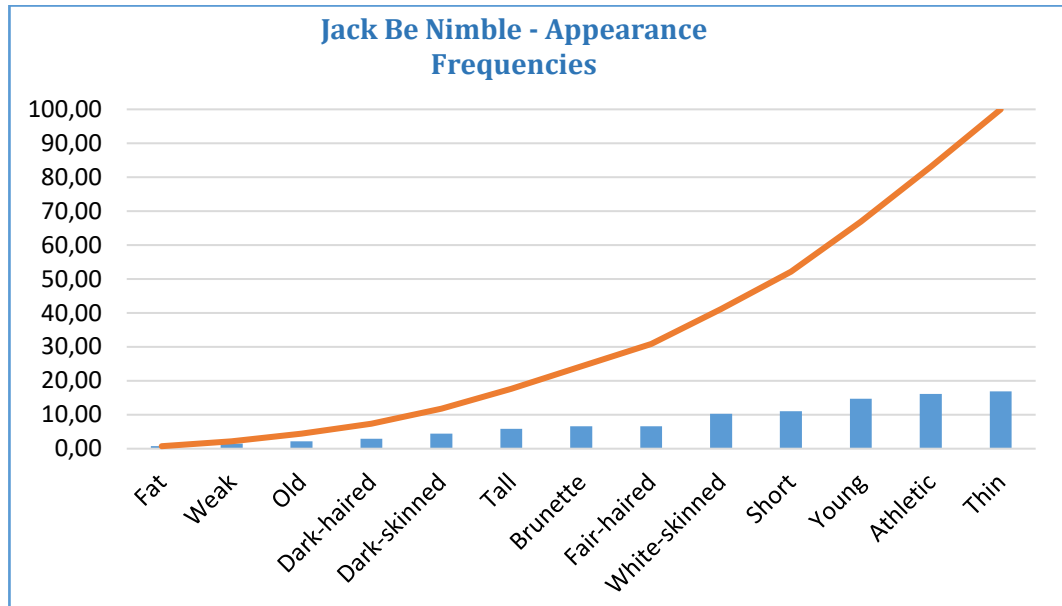


Figure 18: Appearance Frequencies for the textual character of Jack (be nimble):

Percentages. This figure illustrates the percentages of physical description traits the participants selected.

Therefore, most students inferred through his actions that Jack was athletic and thin. Many students also considered the character to be young (20 students). Most students selected the character to be white-skinned and the further physical description of brunette and fair-haired is distributed evenly.

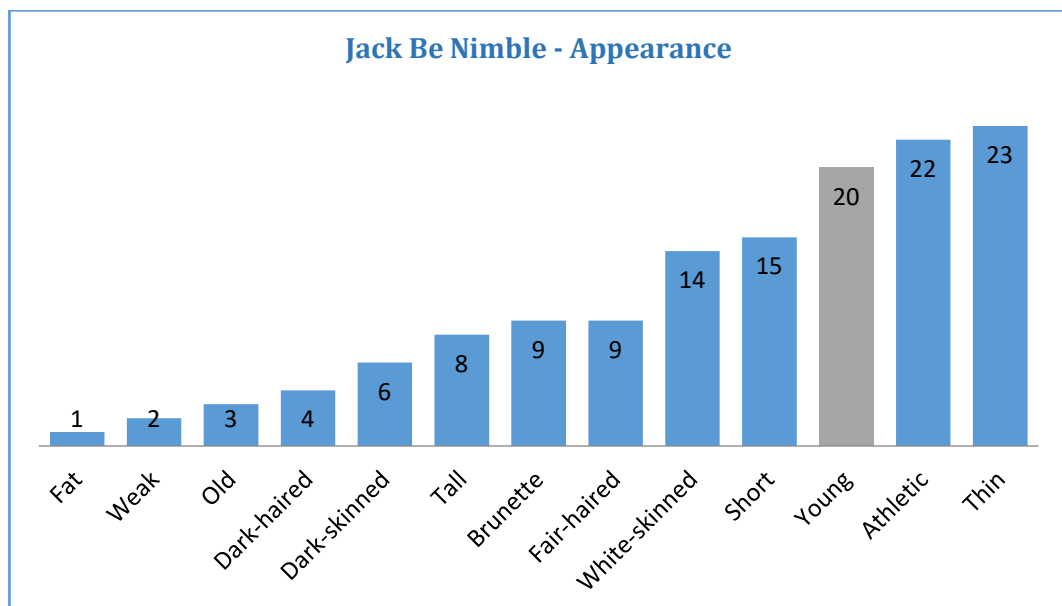


Figure 19: Appearance Frequencies for the textual character of Jack (be nimble): Bar Graph.

This figure illustrates the percentages of physical description traits the participants selected.

In relation to the character's personality, the frequencies are as follows:

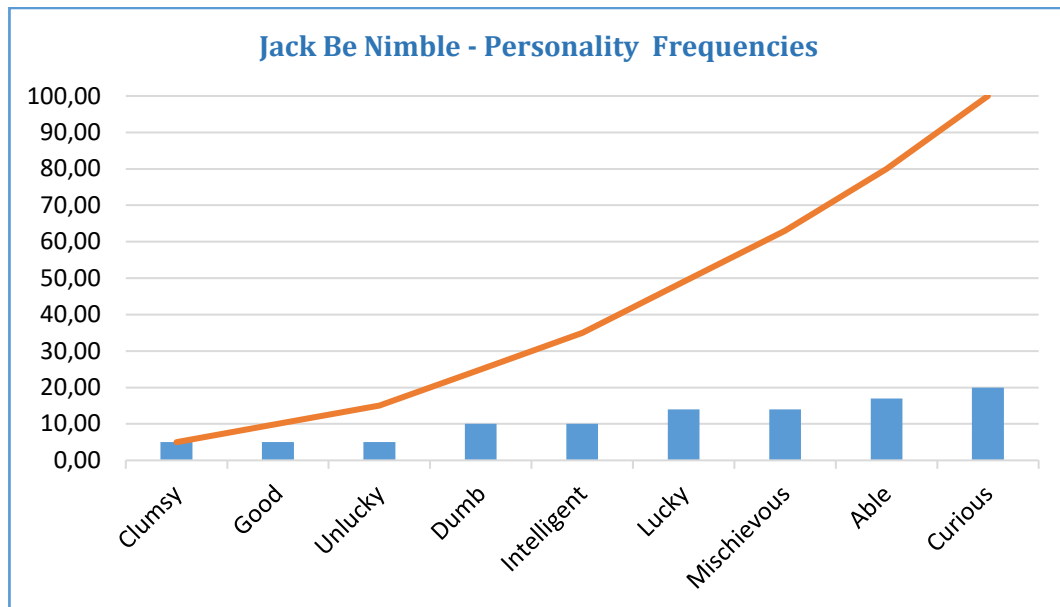


Figure 20: Personality Frequencies for the textual character of Jack (be nimble): Percentages. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected.

Jack (be nimble) is given mainly positive features and his actions represent a curious nature and the fact that he is able (this term appears in opposition to clumsy, therefore defining a skilled or graceful character). He is also strongly considered mischievous which probably portrays the idea of jumping over fire as something which might be disapproved of by adults, but regarded as a feat by children.

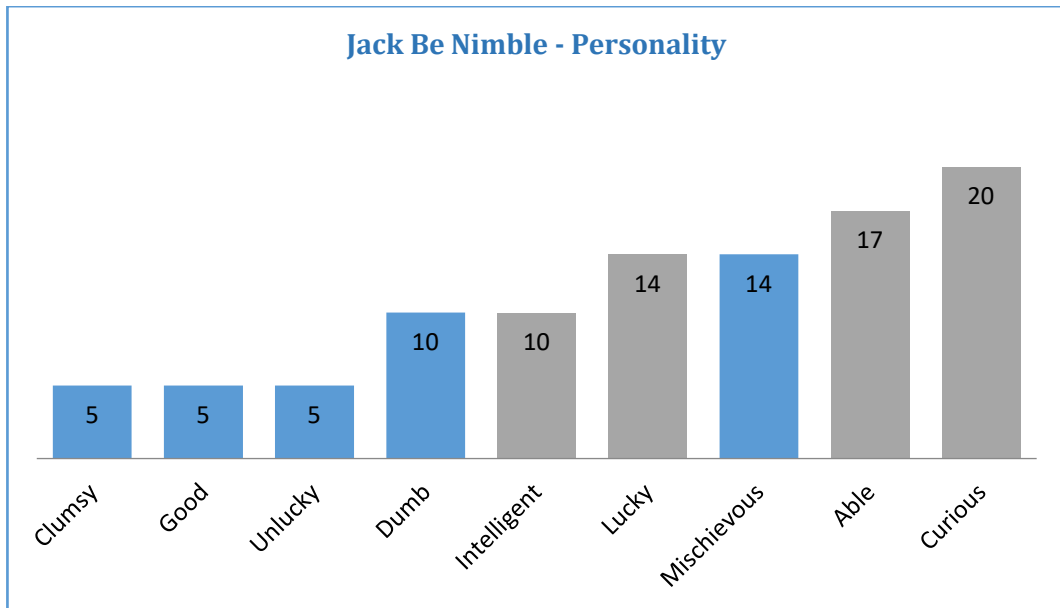


Figure 21: Personality Frequencies for the textual character of Jack (be nimble): Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected.

In relation to age, the majority infer that the character is young, with most of the age range being similar to that of the students participating in the case study; three selected 12 years, two selected 13, one selected 14, seven selected 15 and one selected 16. Those that considered the character to be older selected ages 21 and 25. It can be presumed that the action taking place in the rhyme is considered daring and thus would be done by an older adolescent and/or younger adult.

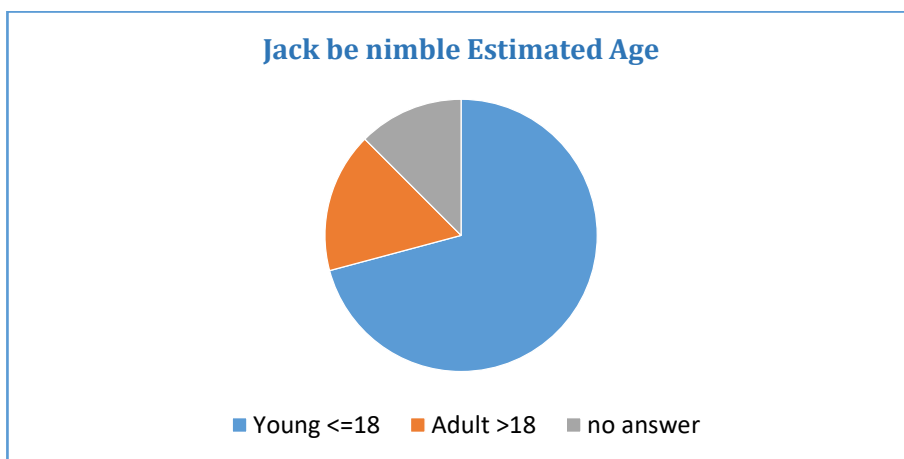


Figure 22: Jack (be nimble): Estimated Age. This figure illustrates the proportion of age selection by participants in relation to the character of Jack (be nimble).

4.5. Jack Frost

The number of students that answered the Jack Frost nursery rhyme sheet was 31. The following graphic was produced for the appearance frequencies:

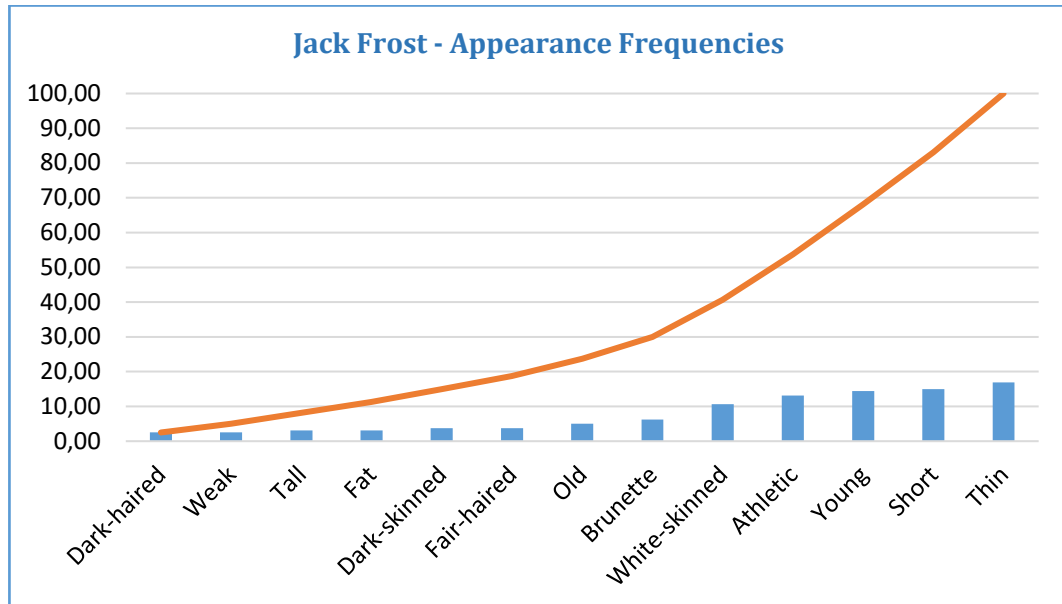


Figure 23: Appearance Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Frost: Percentages. This figure illustrates the percentages of physical description traits the participants selected.

Most student inferred the character as being thin and short, possibly because he is called 'little' in the rhyme, although young and athletic were also frequently mentioned.

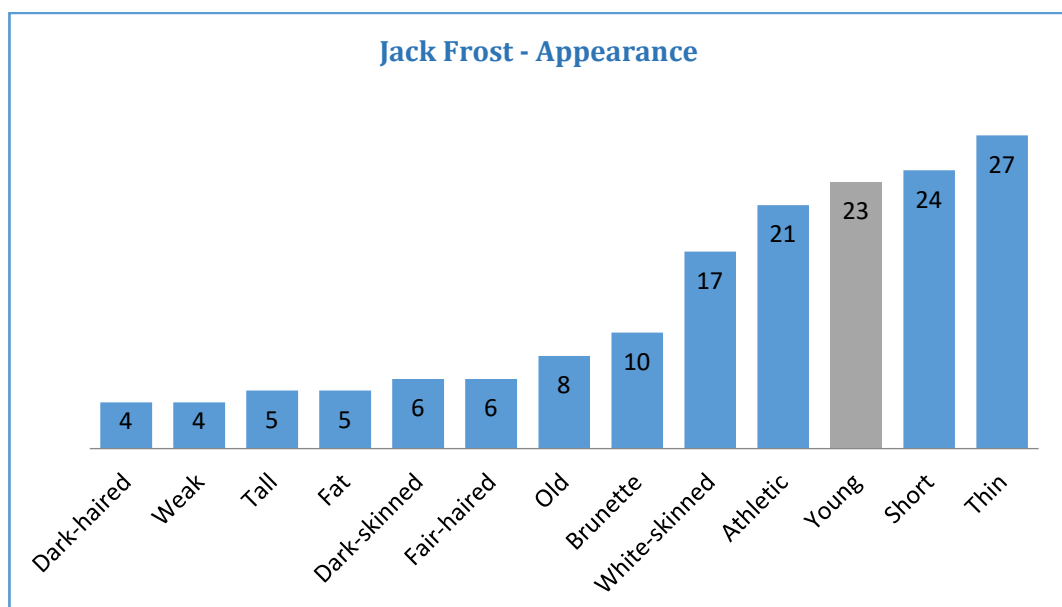


Figure 24: Appearance Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Frost: Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the percentages of physical description traits the participants selected.

In relation to his personality traits, the following frequencies resulted:

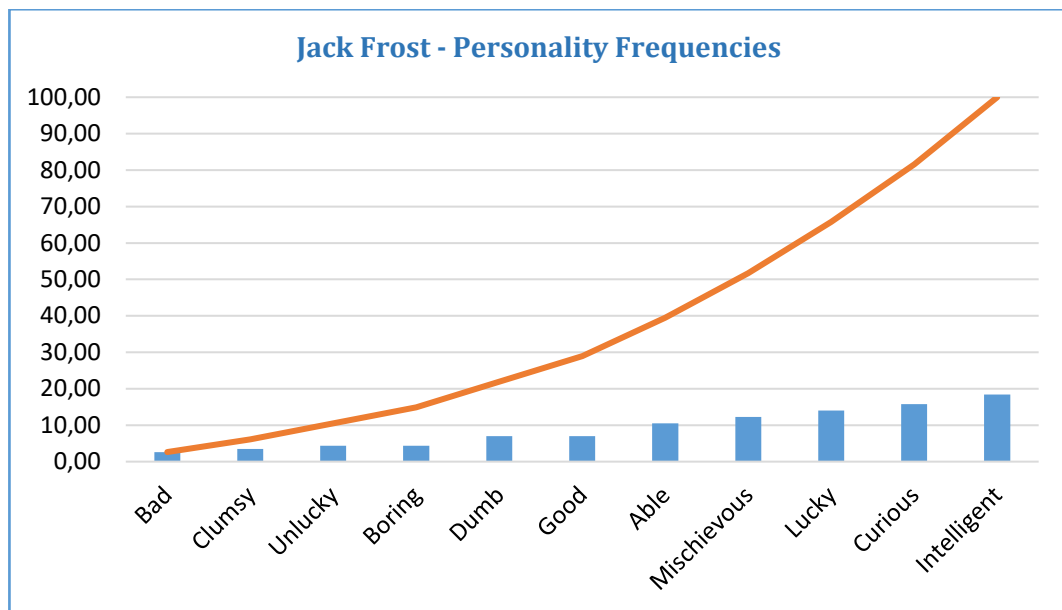


Figure 25: Personality Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Frost: Percentages. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected.

The positive traits dominate, although the poem defines the character as working through the night and being 'after fingers and toes'. Perhaps this information is contrasted through the usage of terms such as 'gay' and 'sprite'. Almost half of the students that answered the survey did highlight this possible ambiguity between the actions and descriptions, by defining the character as mischievous.

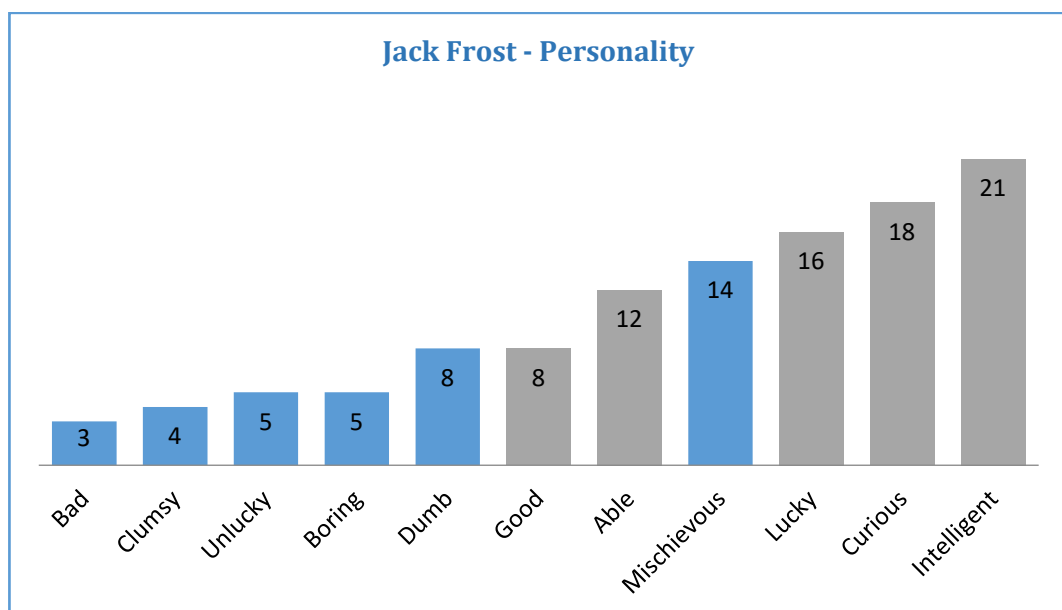


Figure 26: Personality Frequencies for the textual character of Jack Frost: Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected.

In relation to age, the majority of students chose not to answer, followed closely by being defined as an adult by ten students and as young by eight students.

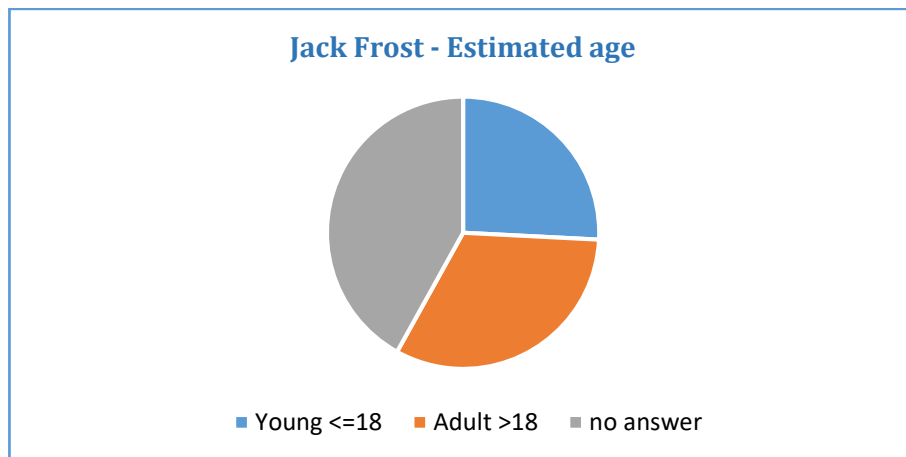


Figure 27: Jack Frost: Estimated Age. This figure illustrates the proportion of age selection by participants in relation to the character of Jack Frost.

4.6. Trends and reflection.

In each rhyme, there is a main action (eating, fetching water, jumping over a candlestick, working

The participants have a certain representation of the characters in their mind and this is reflected in their responses. More specifically, the characters are expected to be young [...] and the characters are perceived in a positive light [...], and the most prominent ambiguous trait is 'mischievous'.

through the night) and thus, the children assume the common children's literature parameter that "a majority of children's books are undoubtedly action-oriented" (Nikolajeva, 2004, p.168). The participants have a certain representation of the characters in their mind and this is reflected in their responses. More specifically, the characters are expected to be young (with the exception of Jack Spratt, who is specifically mentioned in the rhyme as having a wife) and the characters are perceived in a positive light (with 'lucky', 'curious' and 'intelligent' dominating over 'good'), and the most prominent ambiguous trait is 'mischievous'. Being mischievous is

associated with characters whose actions might receive adult admonishing, such as Jack (be nimble); or who might not be described in the Manichean good vs. bad definition, such as Jack Frost – who is not assumed as a negative character, but who is questioned in this way by the adolescents' assumptions.

The characters are also presumed to be similar to participants, as is observed through the physical traits inferred of the Jack characters, with most of them being 'short', 'athletic' and

'white-skinned', with only Jack Spratt being considered 'tall' – as he is perceived as an adult. Even if the children are (a) not native English speakers, (b) do not fully understand all the vocabulary, and (c) even if most of the actions are not contemporary (fetching a bucket of water, jumping over a candlestick, eating a Christmas plum pie, working through the night as a sprite); these results highlight the ability children have to assimilate foreignness or otherness (Petit, 2002; Lerer, 2009). Thus, when cultural references are not transferred into a target culture, adolescents as those that have taken place in the case study assume a likeness to the main character. This process compensates for any unspecified foreign elements.

5 Second part results

As previously mentioned, when confronted with visual prompts, the adaptation of intertextuality proves to have several effects. On the one hand, it becomes perceptible: the intertextual reference has to be portrayed physically and to interact with the general discourse. On the other hand, this portrayal automatically reduces the different readings of intertextuality into one single visual output. For instance, in Dreamworks' *Rise of the Guardians*, Jack Frost is an adventurous, mischievous, athletic, magical, powerful young man. The connotations of Jack Frost as being sprite-like, malicious, impish or old are almost nonexistent for a younger generation of English speakers who have viewed the film and are aware of the Jack Frost nursery rhyme. For non-English speaking cultures who are viewing *Rise of the Guardians*, the Jack Frost offered by Dreamworks is the only possible one. As there is an average total of 11.4% of correct answers in the case study inferential study, the relevance of these visual adaptations is paramount. The case study concludes that adolescents are clearly not able to discern intertextual characters that do not belong in their culture or they are not familiar with, even if one of them is in a blockbuster movie: although the inferential results for the DreamWorks film offered the highest amount of correct answers, it was still only 39% of participants that connected the Jack Frost nursery rhyme character to *the Guardians of the Galaxy* character.

The case study concludes that adolescents are clearly not able to discern intertextual characters that do not belong in their culture or they are not familiar with, even if one of them is in a blockbuster movie

Further research should be done with source culture children and adolescents, different background children in both source and target cultures, and other types of intertextual references. It would be interesting to follow up with analyses similar to those presented by Stephens with regards to story-telling assumptions in general (Stephens, 1992). The data from

the case-study show that intertextual allusions and references do not cross cultures in children’s literature, and pose the question of how these references change diachronically in the source culture itself. For example, it would be interesting to ask a sample group of adults and children about the intertextual references in *Alice in Wonderland*.

In contrast, unless characters are specifically presented to be ambivalent, participants as those that have taken place in the case study make immediate assumptions based on images. These assumptions undoubtedly follow those of the culture that has adapted the images and is, subsequently, impacting a much larger audience. This speaks loudly about the need of visual literacy, since these images are creating, preserving and disseminating children’s discourse canons. It also exemplifies how “modernity – print, graphic reproductions, and now, of course, television” is what gives familiarity (and consequently only one portrayal) to oral transmission figures (Warner, 1998, p.42).

As a result, Jack Frost from *The Graveyard Book* is assumed to be bad and old (as considered by 91% in both of his portrayals), while Jack Frost from *Rise of the Guardians* is assumed to be good and young (97%). Although with a weaker correlation than I anticipated, bad characters are mostly considered unlucky - since they normally do not succeed in their schemes.

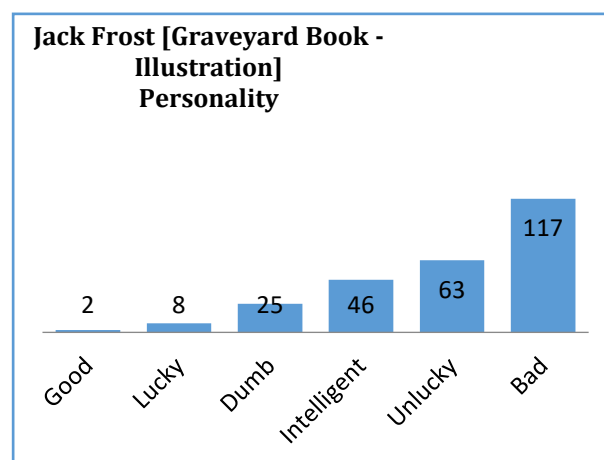


Figure 28: Personality Frequencies for the visual character of Jack Frost [Graveyard Book Illustration]: Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected

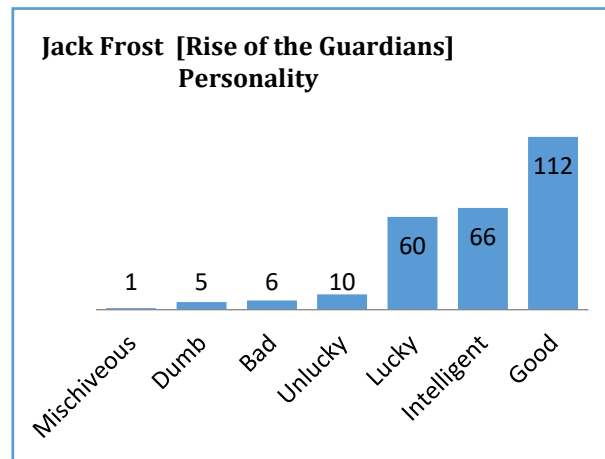
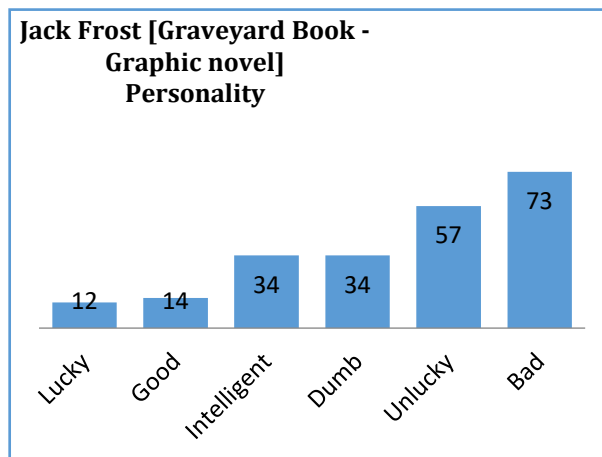


Figure 29: Personality Frequencies for the visual character of Jack Frost [Graveyard Book Graphic Novel]: Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected.

Figure 30: Personality Frequencies for the visual character of Jack Frost [*Rise of the Guardians* film]: Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected.



Jack, from *Jack and Jill*, is considered good and dumb - Adam Sandler excels in his stereotypical role and this becomes apparent to the viewer; Jack Horner and Jack Spratt seemed to be good and lucky. Participants' commented about Jack Spratt that he is "good because he is rich and he doesn't need to be bad" (Maika, 12) and "good because he has money" (Angel, 13). This offers an interesting insight into current sociopolitical situations and creates a link between wealth and morality.

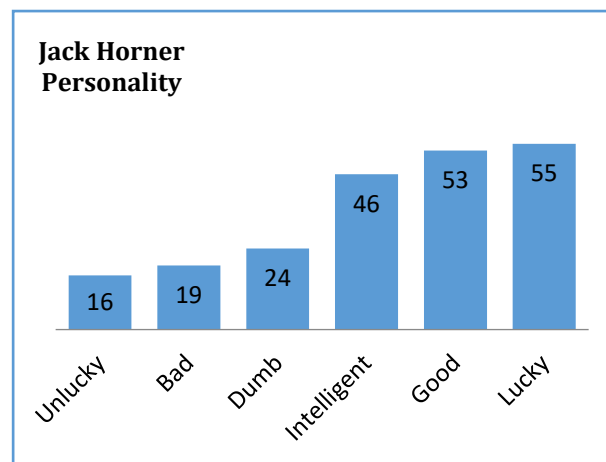


Figure 31: Personality Frequencies for the visual character of Jack Horner: Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected

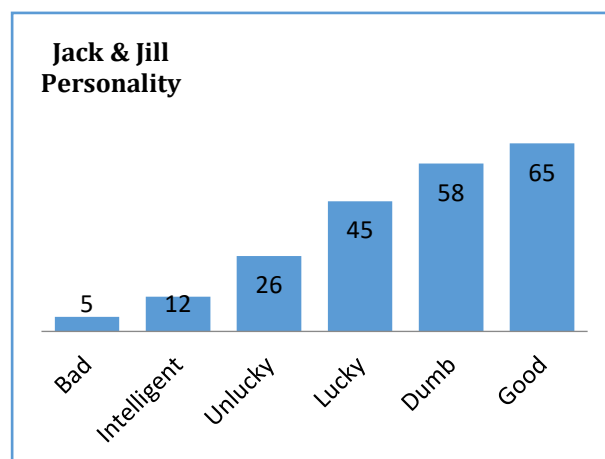


Figure 32: Personality Frequencies for the visual character of Jack (& Jill): Bar Graph. This figure illustrates the number of personality description traits the participants selected

6 Conclusions

Intertextuality, as the main carrier of ideology in culture, is a powerful tool to create a community and to pinpoint and define 'otherness'. The audiovisual impact on children's and adolescent's discourse has proven to redefine intertextual references. The case study results illustrate that this audiovisual impact can influence and create assumptions cross-culturally. In an increasingly connected world, if there is a dominant culture exporting a single possible visual

representation of any type of intertextual references, that representation can very well overpower any other.

There is a current trend that confronts traditional roles of characters to present innovative storylines, presumably creating a base-change in the intertextual references proposed (as seen in *Shrek*, *Despicable Me* and the overwhelming success of minions, *Fungus the Boogieman* adaptation or *Hotel Transylvania*). This trend could relate to the carnivalistic tradition of upside-down roles; that is, unexpected characters becoming heroes. However, they become so by representing the main ideological assumptions of the culture (protecting family, worrying about children, protecting children's innocence, fighting injustice). The canon, therefore, engulfs the transgression and brings it tamely into the mainstream. Other studies have analyzed as well how this takes place with the introduction of racially diverse characters and gender-changing roles, and whether this new trend is actually making a variation in ideologies or is a collection of token samples. What needs to be underlined is that intertextuality can be the indicator of any type of cultural base change, whether it is generational, gender-related, racial, ethnic or class-related. The way intertextuality is represented and, more importantly, perceived, offers a set of discourse and cultural markers that impact upon the acculturation the child, underlining what ideological assumptions are considered appropriate and which are discarded.

Intertextual references in visual media can have a great impact on the homogenization of culture and can impact the abilities of children and adolescents to acquire new cultural references. Perhaps the only way to meet and, if necessary, challenge these assumptions is through an education that helps children, adolescents, -and adults- recognize them.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following individuals and institutions for their generosity and time in the completion of this case study: Josep Delgado for his invaluable collaboration, Cynthia Rodríguez, María José Alcaina, Miranda Pardo, Lucía Carel, IES Benlliure and IES Salvador Gadea. I would also like to thank all students for their involvement, feedback and insight.