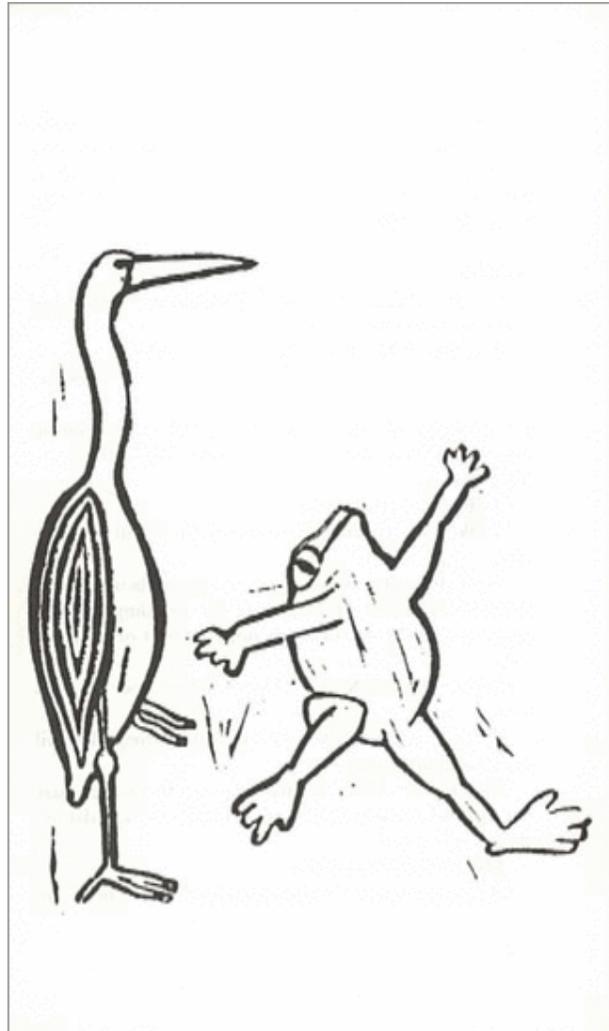


Translational Problems in *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* by Toon Tellegen.



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Introduction

Children's literature is slowly being recognized as a legitimate field of academic research. In this thesis about translation, Toon Tellegen's *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* [Not Everyone Could Fall Over], an interesting example of children's literature, is used as the source text (ST).

Toon Tellegen is among the most translated Dutch writers of children's literature ("Toon Tellegen", par. 4). He was born in 1941, and was also a poet, and writer of prose and drama for adults ("Toon Tellegen", par. 2). Tellegen has won a number of awards for his novels, including the Golden Owl in 2000, the Hendrik de Vriesprize in 2006, and the Constantijn Huygensprize in 2007 ("Toon Tellegen", par. 3). His books have been translated into more than 15 languages, including Finnish, Swedish, German, Spanish, Japanese, Polish and Russian ("Toon Tellegen bekroond met Poolse Duzy Dong," par. 3).

I will focus on the translation of *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* to Russian and create a tentative translation of the text in English, the respective target texts (TT) of this thesis. In my thesis I will use examples not only from my translated section of the text, but from the entire novel, as that will be more representative of the issues as a whole and not as limited in its scope of evidence. By comparing the Dutch with the English and Russian version of Toon Tellegen's *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, I will hopefully answer a question central to this research: What are the translational issues that arise when translating Tellegen's text to English and Russian.

This study will investigate translation difficulties between Dutch, Russian and English in *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* and lead to conclusions about those translation issues in children's literature in general. Looking at the diverse issues between different languages in children's literature can provide us with insights into possible solutions or tactics to overcome these differences. Because of the popularity of Tellegen's work and its position in the canon

of children's literature not only in the Netherlands, but also in the rest of the world, this research can also contribute to future translation of Tellegen's work.

Chapter one will discuss how Tellegen's work is situated in the fable genre and discuss important style techniques used in his texts. Chapter two will explain the problems arising from dual readership in regards to the interpretation of the text by different audiences. Chapter three will then discuss the language used in adult and children's literature, and chapter four will look at Dutch, English and Russian and the key differences in these languages in children's literature. My translation of the Dutch original can be found in chapter 5, and is followed by a brief conclusion in chapter 6.

Chapter 1: The setting

Toon Tellegen's *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* can be considered a fable, one of the many genres of children's and adult literature. It is an animal story in which animals live in natural surroundings and at times behave like real animals, but at other times show human characteristics. Animal stories are at times used as mild satires on human behavior, adding to why adults often like them (Adams, 194). The fable often gives animals human qualities for the purpose of imprinting a moral lesson on the mind of the reader (194). Originally, these tales were sung and not particularly intended for children, but as they were written down they became popular children's literature. This can be explained by the homogeneous world of the fable, and as such is an inner world which does not have to make sense (*Children's Literature in Translation*, 145). The animals in typical fables are easily definable as a 'type' with a major character trait, and thus quickly became moralizing as they reflected human qualities, only magnified (*Leesbeesten*, 201).

In the 1980s fantastical stories flourished in the Netherlands, and one of the extraordinary authors from those years is Toon Tellegen. Tellegen treads the line between philosophy and bedtime stories. It is difficult to determine whether or not his books are meant for children or adults. Tellegen uses everyday expressions in slightly different contexts to draw attention to the language that is being used, and the ideas that are proposed (Stoffelsen, par. 3). He created an animal kingdom in which everything is possible, and our familiar concepts of time, space and their correlation to objects are distorted (*Leesbeesten*, 288). The sea, meadows, forests and deserts are all next to each other (184). Toon Tellegen is very apt at creating absurd situations.

The characters in Tellegen's text more often than not portray human characteristics, and each in their kind is unique, with only one animal representing each species in the stories (Stoffelsen, par. 6). His characters do portray some animal habits too. The squirrel lives in a

tree and loves beech nuts and acorns, but other than that anything is possible. The most unlikely things happen in a plausible way, and ordinary things become extraordinary (205). Through his stories, filled with wordplay, multiple interpretable layers and refreshing imaginations, Tellegen wants to stimulate the creativity and imagination of his readers. He plays with boundaries, and through that makes his audience consider happiness, death, feelings, wonder and what is 'beyond' (*Leesbeesten*, 188). Through animals it is easier to make painful or sensitive subject appear less intimidating to children (*Leesbeesten*, 204). Toon Tellegen said that "it's easier to choose animals as characters for your stories than it is humans. Animals do not bring anything in from our world. If you are talking about people, you are tied to things as they are in society. With animals you have more freedom (*Leesbeesten*, 203)."

Anne de Vries researched the perception of children's literature after 1980 and writes that children's book's no longer need to be childish, which gives them the opportunity to become interesting for adults (65). Besides the difference in life- and reading experience, children and adults are not so different, she claims (65). The idea that the simple language used in children's books means that the themes are less profound is a misconception. It is simply less obvious, which creates an abstract level from which the reader can extrapolate another meaning (65-66).

Due to the lack of complexity, narrative tension or intrinsic plot in the stories, Tellegen's writing does not appear to be adult literature, but due to the surprising twists, witty characters and the subtle use of language it exceeds children's literature (Stoffelsen, pars. 8-10). These aspects in Tellegen's text target another reader altogether, one that is only implied. That reader can abstract different things from the text than the child, picking up on philosophical, literary themes in the text that Tellegen plays with without making them explicit. I aimed to maintain these elements in my English translation.

Chapter 2: Dual Readership

Dual readership is a phenomenon at play in children's literature because besides the intended children's audience, adults are often the mediator of these stories and therefore become an audience as well. The existence of children's literature supports the presumption that children and adults read different types of literature. But certain aspects in children's literature can draw the attention of adults to it, as well. This can be the case when dual readership is explicitly present in a text, for instance when an author addresses the child with a straightforward plot, but uses an ironic or sarcastic tone to address the adult reader. Typical characteristics of children's fiction, like simplicity, simple structures, simple lexical patterns and short texts, can be interwoven with originality and creativity in a plot and an absurd and varied range of speech patterns by its characters (*Children's Literature in Translation*, 162). Interpretations of one text can therefore vary immensely determined by whoever is reading.

Children have a different sense of humor and comprehension level than adults. This is why children's fiction often makes use of literal meaning more than metaphorical, something seen in Thompson's research on the corpus of children's fiction. Irony often does not register with a child, whereas the adult reading the story finds these instances hilarious. In order for a child to understand the humor in a certain situation, he has to recognize absurdity (*Leesbeesten*, 97). Irony, but also the figurative meaning in a play of words are difficult to understand. Research shows that children aged 8 often (40%) recognize the absurdity but do not understand the intended joke (10%) (*Leesbeesten*, 98). Of the children aged 11, 29% understands the intent. Abstract forms of humor mostly develop from age 12 on (97).

In Toon Tellegen's books, children laugh at strange combinations or impossible situations, but not at the wordplay or bizarre reasoning of the animals (97). This is noticeable when the books are read out loud to the child. Both adult and child at this point, are the audience, yet both have a different way of interpreting the material. Every reader has a set of

preconceptions when reading, and absorbs certain parts of a text that can be shaped into a logical unit (Ghesquiere, 103). Things that are left unsaid or implied, the reader will make explicit in his mind (p. 103). Even though this will differ for every person, it will most certainly differ between adults and children. And it is that which makes children's fiction attractive to adults too, because in some children's fiction, there can be a mix of techniques.

Dual readership is an important aspect of Toon Tellegen's *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*. There are four aspects in Tellegen's text which re-occur and create this dual readership. The first, and most subtly used, are the ironic remarks made by Tellegen's characters, or plays with words which create puns which are often only understood by the adult reader. For instance, the squirrel and the elephant sit together on a tree branch next to a little sign that says "don't fall" (*Leesbeesten*, 205). This is obviously amusing to the adult reader, since it overstates something rather obvious, while painting an enticing image of an elephant sitting in a tree.

Another example of this is in the following sentence: "*De eekhoorn was op weg naar de mier om met hem op reis te gaan of samen thuis te blijven. Plotseling zag hij de egel hangen (Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen, 12).*" This translates to "The squirrel was on his way to the ant to go on a journey with him or to stay in together. All of a sudden he saw the hedgehog levitating." Children who read this passage will automatically focus on the last part, the image of a hedgehog hanging about in the sky. The adult however, might be puzzled by the seemingly certain intent of the squirrel to visit the ant, when they are thrown off their trail of thought by the end of the sentence. It seems like a contradiction to say that the squirrel is on his way to stay in together. This is because two incomparable activities are being compared, a journey (indicating a long event) and staying in together (which lasts a couple of hours). The fact that it is previously stated that he is on his way to the ant, makes his purpose vague and contradictory. The Russian translation is "*Белка отправилась к муравью, чтобы*

вместе с ним путешествовать или просто посидеть дома. И вдруг она увидела ежика [The squirrel was on his way to the ant to go on a journey with him or to stay in together. All of a sudden he saw the hedgehog levitating.] (*He все умеют надать*, 12).” To the Russian native speaker, this sentence has lost the oddness the Dutch equivalent has.

Путешествовать, the verb ‘to travel’, is used and can indicate both a journey and a simple ‘short wandering around’. Because of this, the sentence simply offers two activities which are interchangeable, and this conveys the closeness of the ant and squirrel because to them it does not matter in what way they spend their time. Another example with respect to this aspect can be found on page 29 of this thesis, in my translation of the utterance of the mole. He shares the dark belief that there are days when everything collapses. Although the young reader might not notice, the adult reader will also take in the fact that it is rather ironic that the mole says this, seeing as he lives underground and always has to be prepared for his tunnel to collapse.

The second tactic Tellegen applies is juxtaposing philosophical ideas with naïve dialogs, thoughts and considerations of the animal characters (Bulcaen, 2). An example of this is a conversation between the earthworm and the firefly about the fear of the latter that his light will no longer turn on some day (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 15). The earthworm says that he himself cannot imagine ever lighting up at all. The animals are both surprised, which is no wonder considering their conversation is ‘very odd’, according to the narrator. This serves as a huge contrast to the topic they are discussing, the essence of their being and whether or not it can be lost. Another example in this category is the question of finiteness. The ant asks the squirrel whether he thinks they will at some point ‘end’ (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 59). The ant likens this finiteness of his being to the ending of a party, or a journey. Innocently, the squirrel asks how that would work, since after a party the guests return to their houses. He does not understand what would happen when they end. This is a

question deeper than anything a child would comprehend, so to hear childlike creatures ponder this subject is striking to the adult reader.

Tellegen's third way of incorporating dual readership into the text is by contemplating words or expressions, and creating an element of surprise by plays of words or ideas expressed by the animals. A direct example in the text is when the ant receives the squirrel's letter, in which the squirrel writes that he should probably tell him the news instead of writing to him (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 8). This absurd exchange of information reaches a point where the reader starts questioning communication in itself. Another example is when the rhino is unsure of what to ask for his birthday, and he goes to the cricket, who has opened a store for wish lists (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 23). This in itself is odd, since ordinarily people write their own wish lists, but the cricket writes one for the rhino and puts a grass-pie on the list, and "van alles" ('all sorts of things', in the Russian *все подряд*). The rhino asks what "van alles" means, and the cricket says, that because he does not know what he wants, it makes all the more sense to put all sorts of things on the wish list. Tellegen cleverly uses this word again at the end of the chapter, when he says that the rhino received a grass-pie from the cricket, and 'all sorts of things' from the other animals. The Dutch reader is pointed to an often used expression and forced to look at its meaning, through the eyes of the animals. The word re-occurs later in the text in the same fashion in which the reader would normally use it (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 25). Now however, even in the normal application, the reader reconsiders the word, showing that Tellegen's intention worked. A couple of other striking occurrences throughout the text are the image of a "dwarrelende olifant" [fluttering elephant], the idea that even the whale and the worm are able to fall over, and the elephant apologizing to the ant for stepping on his feet during their dance (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 19, 6, 73).

The final technique in Tellegen's text is the contrast between the grimness that

shimmers through the stories and the lightness caused by the absurdity in both settings and characters (Bulcaen, par. 3). In my translation to English the event of the cricket blowing up is both entertaining in its absurdity and frightening because the beetle ‘taking the happy thoughts’ when he puts the cricket back together is terribly sinister. Another rather dark event which is portrayed in an amusing way is the heaviness in the ant’s head (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 28). The ant knows so much that his head is too heavy, and his body can hardly move by that weight. The squirrel, his best friend, suggests that he tries to forget some things, like the taste of honey, or the whales’ birthday or his winter coat. Nothing works. The squirrel proposes that the ant forget him, and the ant closes his eyes and becomes so light that he shoots into the sky (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 30). Then he remembers and crashes back into the earth. Simplifying the concept of forgetting, to the point where you can forget your best friend is a petrifying notion. The ant and the squirrel however, after this event, return to their house to eat some honey, as if nothing has happened.

In translation it is necessary to pick up on these aspects of dual readership and decide whether or not to translate them into the target language. *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* was also translated into Polish, and in that translation for instance, the translators aimed the text more towards children than adults, and the accompanying illustrations have been simplified and made childish (Kalla, 65). In my translation to English I tried to maintain dual readership, something I tried to add whenever it was difficult to maintain in other instances. “He and the rhino ran at the heron at full speed and crashed into him. It was a heavy blow.” In this case I underpinned the double meaning of heavy blow, when it was less noticeable in the Dutch text, but in my opinion a case of dual readership. Gideon Toury proposes two approaches to translation, adequacy and acceptability (Toury, 166). In the case of adequacy, the translator tries to have a minimum amount of translational shifts in the TT in order to conform to the norms of the ST and the source culture. This could decrease the acceptability in the target

culture, which is why I have chosen to take a more acceptable approach to my translation whenever necessary. In translating Tellegen's work, I believe that a union of the two approaches would bring the best results. My target audience is children, with the adult reader as a secondary audience.

Sometimes dual readership is lost in translation. An example is the use of *boktor* [beetle] in the original Dutch, which calls to mind the similar sounding *doktor* [doctor]. The Russian translation uses *жук-доктор* [beetle doctor] which creates an explicit meaning, forced onto the reader. Whether or not this is desirable is questionable. By using any form of 'beetle doctor', the text loses its nuances regarding dual readership. Pointing out that the beetle heals other animals simplifies the text. This change makes explicit the function of the beetle in the text before the text has a chance to surprise the reader, and even adds it when it is conspicuously missing from the original Dutch (Chesterman, 258). However, since the ST makes use of associations tied to the sound of the word, it is preferable (especially aiming foremost at a young audience) to translate *boktor* into beetle doctor. One of the other options would be 'longicorn', a rather scientific word which is not commonly used by children *or* adults, judging from my short questionnaire among American students. The choice to translate *boktor* as 'beetle doctor' is categorized by Chesterman as a 'change of information' (Chesterman, 259). This is the addition of information which cannot directly be derived from the ST, but is considered relevant to the TT by the translator.

In order to maintain the dual readership present in Tellegen's text, the translator has to create the same juxtaposition of ideas and tone which are present in the Dutch text. Part of the text's duality is created by the events described in the novel. These should be translatable into both English and Russian, along with implied ideas called forth by the sentences. Besides the aforementioned example of the beetle-doctor, an infrequent occurrence of untranslatability,

the duality in *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* is also created by stylistic features and language usage, something I will discuss further in the next chapters.

Chapter 3: The Language in Children's Literature.

The language used in children's literature is distinctly different than that in adult literature. Tellegen incorporates features similar to those in children's *and* adult literature in his text. This makes it beneficial to look at a number of differences between adult and children's literature. A study of the differences between English fiction for 8-10 year old children and adult fiction by Paul Thompson and Alison Sealey shows that even though the two categories are similar, there are distinct differences ("Through Children's Eyes", 1). This can help when translating Tellegen, because it shows which of the features in his text are inherent to children's literature and which are not. By creating a similar mix of features in a translation, it might be easier to recreate the atmosphere of *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*. Thompson and Sealey looked at the frequency of different words and word types, repeating patterns and sequences of words, semantic differences, and time space correlation.

Examining their frequency data, they find that in adult fiction there is a higher frequency for nouns, while in children's fiction more proper nouns and pronouns are used. This suggests a higher degree of reference to people (6). This is definitely true for Tellegens' text. Since none of the animals have names, we can consider the nouns representing each animal to be a proper noun. When comparing the usage of lexical verbs in adult and children's literature, the results are similar. The exception is the verb *said*, which is more common in children's fiction, which demonstrates the use of direct speech. This is confirmed by the high frequency of quotation marks in those texts (8). A large part of Tellegen's text is dialogue between the animals, proving Thompson and Sealey's study. After counting the number of lexical verbs in both the English fragment of the translation (141 lexical verbs, 19 of which *said*) and that section in the Dutch text (134 lexical verbs, 21 of which *zei*), the words *said* makes up 13,5% of the English lexical verbs, and 15,7% in the Dutch. This is extremely high compared to the adult literature, in which *said* made up 3,7% of all lexical

verbs. Of course, this is too small a section of the text to base the research on, but it gives a high indication for the overall text. This would mean that Tellegen uses dialogue extremely often as a tool in his text. I managed to maintain a similar percentage in my translation.

After Thompson and Sealey counted nouns in the third position in phrases in A-sequences (prep + art + noun + *of* + art + noun: *in the middle of the road*), it turned out that more than 51% of the top six nouns in children's literature occur in A-sequences (14). This is a far higher number than that of the adult fiction nouns (32%). This shows that there are distinct patterns in children's fiction which are different from those in adult fiction. In my translation to English, I took notice of instances such as "the heron [...] in the reed on the banks of the river" (an A-sequence), but had trouble finding many other examples in Tellegens' text. This is an indication that even though Tellegens' text is considered children's literature, and makes use of direct speech, it incorporates an atypical language pattern for children in order to reach complexity in its sentences.

Proceeding from frequency to semantic analysis of adult and children's fiction, Thompson and Sealey questioned whether discourse in children's fiction is unique in its representation of the self in the world and of the world by the self (15). They find that the world in children's fiction stands out in the importance it gives to animals (and other living creatures), food and plants, but also to communication and direct speech (15). Tellegens' text incorporates this completely on the surface of the text. Actions and events between animals play the most important role in the narrative, and the surroundings are dominantly natural. Movement, bravery, fear and size of objects or creatures are prominent subjects in children's fiction. Tellegen plays with this by magnifying it to the extent that most children's books do not. The elephant in *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* occasionally steps on the ants' toes and by means of apology suggests that the ant can of course do the same thing to him. Themes such as fear and bravery are also prominent in his novel, but imply a far deeper meaning than

children's literature would in general. Tellegen incorporates life-questions into his literature, something more often found in adult fiction (Thompson, 15). An example of this is question of finality. The squirrel and ant wonder whether their lives at some point will end (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 59). This is a discussion of mortality, which some would argue would be better suited for adult literature. Intimacy and sexuality, beliefs and social norms are also more dominant in adult fiction (Thompson, 15). Fiction written for children makes greater use of literal meanings rather than figurative or metaphorical meanings (16). It is possible that adults read more into these literal sentences, causing a completely different interpretation of children's literature when read by adults. As discussed in the previous chapter, Tellegen's text incorporates double layers in his text. An example of a double layer is the aforementioned irony apparent when the mole says everything sometimes collapses. The adult realizes that the mole is living underground, and that this makes his statement amusing.

Finally, Thompson and Sealey look at the presentation of time and space, and conclude that time for children can pass more slowly, but is also more immediate in its use. For instance, *in time* in children's fiction would sooner refer to completing an action within the necessary time, than to gradual unfolding of events, which is more common in adult fiction (p.19). In Tellegen's text mentions of time are not good indicators for how much time has passed in the entire story, but are used to stress the immediate time span of occurrences, which confirms Thompson's research. For instance when the attempts to make the heron fall fail, there is mention of the animals giving up their attempts when the sun goes down (*toen de zon achter de horizon verdween*). Other indications are the time it takes the squirrel to get to the ant's house, but the words used are unspecific: *niet lang daarna* [not long after], *even later* [a little later], *die avond* [that evening], and *wilde juist een uurtje gaan slapen* [was just about to take a nap]. Maria Nikolajeva calls the unity of time and space in fiction the

chronotope, and states that compressed time and concrete, limited space are the typical chronotope of a modern children's novel (121, 129).

The plot, the order of the events told by the author, and the fabula, their chronological order, determine the difficulty of the text (Ghesquiere, 151). Discrepancy between the two makes the text more difficult to read, and this is also the case with flashbacks, flash forwards and ellipses, all of which break up the chronology of the plot. To adults, children's fiction can seem very simple. Tellegen's text is both very simple and difficult at the same time. His story seems to consist of unrelated short passages regarding a similar topic. If seen as unrelated short stories, they are extremely straightforward. If, however, one would try to distinguish a chronological storyline, his would be a complicated text. This is tempting to try, because of the recurring characters in later sections of the text. In a section at the end of Tellegen's text, the ant is writing a letter to the squirrel, which immediately calls to mind the latter's letter to the ant (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 107). This makes it seem like the events are related and supposed to be placed in a timeframe.

Judging from Thompson and Sealeys study on the language used in children's literature, we can establish that Tellegen's text has features similar to those in children's and adult literature. His text proves to be childlike in the way it uses pronouns and direct speech to create an uncomplicated dialogue-based story, but the lack of A-sequence occurrences shows that he uses the language in an adult manner. Tellegen also integrates life-questions into a text filled with nature, animals and the relations of things to each other in size. By doing this he blends children and adult stylistics. The lack of importance of time simplifies the text, but the lack of chronological storyline complicates the text, adding another complexity to the overall work.

Chapter 4: Contrasting English, Dutch and Russian

Another problem which arises when translating Tellegen's text, is the different aspects which are inherent to the three different languages discussed. Languages use different techniques to convey emotions, or are simply grammatically different. In order to translate the Dutch *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* into the Russian *Не все умеют падать* and into English, it is necessary to look at the inherent differences between those languages. Some of the choices I made whilst translating the ST will be argued and explained in the footnotes of the translation. There are however, recurring problems that I will discuss in this chapter, such as gender usage, use of augmentatives and diminutives, pragmatic particles and how these aspects of language translate into other languages. Nord, in her article in *Denken over Vertalen* describes these as specific translation issues which occur when the source language and target language have different sets of conventions (237).

4.1 Gender

Toon Tellegen's stories revolve around an animal kingdom. In Dutch, the animals are sexless, as they would also be in English. This is because Dutch does not attach gender to words. In the Russian language, however, each adjective has to agree with the noun it is modifying. That is because each noun has a gender, that can be distinguished by the ending of the noun. Like Polish, Russian words will quickly link to one of the two sexes in the mind of the reader (Kalla, 64). The Polish translators of Tellegen's stories underpinned this by changing the illustrations in the book from scientific, black and white animals into colorful animals wearing clothes (even heels if they were feminine) (Kalla, 63). The black and white illustrations in the Dutch original underpin the way they are portrayed in the Dutch text, namely sexless and a representative of their kind (species). The Russian translation is not able to avoid gender completely. Animals like the ant (*муравей*), elephant (*слон*) and hedgehog (*ежик*) stay masculine. Animals like the squirrel (*белка*), heron (*цапля*) and the wasp (*оса*)

become feminine (the ending of the nouns determines this), and therefore all the verbs in past tense decline to their gender too. In Russian a past tense verb acquires a *-ла* [la] ending after a female subject, a *-ло* [lo] ending in the neuter or *-л* [l] ending after a masculine subject. There is nothing about this that can be changed, but the TT refrains from making it overly explicit, in contrast to the Polish text.

4.2 Diminutives

Another point of interest is augmentatives, but especially diminutives, key to the Russian language and greatly used in Dutch, but unfamiliar to the English language. Diminutives are the primary resources in Russian to convey emotional and expressive nuances in spoken language (Bratus, vii). Bratus writes in *The Formation and Expressive Use of Diminutives*: “Diminutives are special forms of words derived with the aid of diminutive suffixes, which give to the words the additional meanings of smallness, tenderness, irony, disparagement (1).” From the electronic database on Dutch language (the *ANS*) we learn that diminutives in Dutch can either be used to simply indicate the ‘smallness’ of a noun, compared to its original form, but can also be used in various other ways. The diminutive can be used to express a negative meaning, a condescending meaning and even ironic or euphemistic. In Dutch the diminutive can also be used to cherish something, or make it sound endearing, or even fragile. In the English language, diminutives are sometimes found in proper nouns and at times in adjectives, but overall are rare.

To illustrate the difficulty in translating diminutives, Bratus gives Dostoyevsky’s novel *‘История одной семейки’* [The History of A Family] as an example. “[T]he Russian is not simply *семьи* [family] but *семейки* [diminutive of family], with an ironic, condescending undertone (6).” This would be possible to translate into Dutch by using *gezinnetje* [diminutive of family], although it would not necessarily be ironic. To translate it into English would be more difficult, and in Russian there are more than just that diminutive

for the word *семьи*! The Russian diminutive has its roots in colloquial language, especially in folk idiom, from which it spreads into the literary language. The average Russian, due to his basic linguistic experiences, interprets these diminutives without difficulty in their full expressive meaning, even if he/she sees them for the first time (11).

Trofimova, when translating Tellegen's text, chose an 'adult audience', judging from the addition of "*Сказки для взрослых*" [tales for adults] on the cover of the book. This is an interesting choice, because the ST is targeted at children aged 9 to 12 (this is stated on the back cover of the book). Making the implied adult reader explicit is a bold move on Trofimova's part, and might cause the text's tone to shift. If the TT is in this case addressing adults, the diminutives serve more as a beacon for adults to notice the contrast. Trofimova plays into the idea that "a text with a high saturation of 'diminutives' tends to characterize tales told by older women and especially to small children" (Hanley, 21). She uses diminutives in the Russian translation of *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* to balance out the high style of the language used, and the ideas proposed in the text. This is caused by the use of participles in the Russian translation, which cause a high style text. Examples of these participles are *повернув* [having turned], *сидевшему* [who was sitting], and *пахнувшим* [smelling]. These are contrasted with diminutives like *лапку* [little leg], *лягушонок* [little frog], and *солнышко* [little sun] (5, 6).

What is interesting when looking at the translation of Toon Tellegen's *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* is that the Russian translation seems to apply the use of diminutives when the Dutch source text does not, or vice-versa. An example of this is a conversation between the earthworm and the firefly about the fear of the latter that his light will no longer turn on some day (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 15). The earthworm says that he himself cannot imagine every lighting up at all. This exchange is followed by: "*Ze keken elkaar verbaasd aan. Het was ook een raar gesprekje en lange tijd zeiden zij niets.*" [They looked at each other with

surprise. It was a weird little conversation after all, and for a long time neither of them said anything.] *Gesprekje* translates literally as a ‘weird small conversation’, and is a prime example of diminutive usage. The Russian “*это был весьма странный разговор*”, tries to maintain the Dutch by using the words “it was a fairly strange discussion”. Here, however the Russian could have easily employed a diminutive form of *разговор*. A fundamental concept of translation theory is that sometimes it is necessary to ‘change something’. If a translator is not happy with a sentence, because it sounds a-grammatical or semantically odd, it is better to change it (Chesterman, 243). The strategies used to make these changes is critical to a translation. A translator can opt to add a stylistic feature where it was non-existent in the ST, or instead of employing it, in this case the diminutive, in the same spot, chose to incorporate it into a different part of the text. This can cause the TT to read better and maintain an ambiance similar to that in the ST.

An example that illustrates the attempt to maintain the same atmosphere in the English translation of *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* occurs when the cricket arrives at the beetle’s house. The cricket has been blown up into nothingness, and asks the grumpy beetle to put him back together. The latter complies, but secretly keeps the cricket’s happy thoughts to himself (10). He can use a little happiness, is his argument (10). Tellegen applies different techniques to create the right setting for this scene. In the second line “*Hij was moe en wilde juist een uurtje gaan slapen, toen er op zijn deur werd geklopt* [He felt tired and was about to nap for an hour, when there was a knock at his door,]” the word ‘*juist*’ is old-fashioned as compared to the more typically used ‘*net*’ (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 10). The diminutive used is ‘*uurtje*’, which directly translates to ‘sleeping for a small hour’. The diminutive form of an hour does not exist in English, so here I chose to paraphrase in order to translate the pragmatic meaning of the idiomatic original into the TT (Chesterman, 255). “About to take a short nap,” was as close as I could get.

Another instance comes about when the beetle opens the door, and the cricket voices that his body is incomplete. The beetle simply sighs the word “*werk*” [work] to express that he is not looking forward to helping the cricket. ‘*Werk*’ therefore carries a negative connotation in the ST, especially since the beetle uses Dutch colloquialisms later in the texts, namely “*welja*” and “[*i*]k ben er altijd wel weer goed voor” [I am always the one who has to deal with this] (*Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen*, 10). Because of this frustration, I decided to emphasize the feeling in the English translation, since I could not incorporate the same colloquialisms, nor an augmentative. “I carry all the weight around here, he thought. They always come to me when someone blows up.” I decided to incorporate a style-figure, which was not present in the ST (Chesterman, 251). The translator of the Russian used colloquialisms and diminutives, and even an augmentative to create the same setting.

Работенька is the augmentative of ‘work’ applied to the TT. These contrasts in the language used cause a clash that makes the adult reader realize that this is not merely a children’s story.

4.3 Pragmatic Particles

Pragmatic particles are often used in the Dutch language, especially compared to other languages (Van Leuven, 307). Kitty M. Van Leuven- Zwart writes that words like *wel*, *toch*, *dus*, *maar*, *eens* and *die* do not have a set definition, but are used to convey the speaker’s demeanor. Tellegen’s text uses many of these, which make the text well-written. An example of this is when the heron says: “‘*Het is onwrikbaar.*’ *Hij fronste zijn wenkbrauwen en zei: ‘Geloof me nou toch’*”, a sentence which has two pragmatic particles which are difficult to translate into English. I translated this with “‘It’s immovable.’ He puckered his brows and said (emphatically), ‘You have to believe me.’” In order to convey the same emotion as the Dutch original, it would be necessary to add ‘emphatically’ to the English. However, since this is not very common in the English language and breaks up the flow of the text, it will likely be omitted from the final version of the translation.

When the ST used pragmatic particles, I opted for a change in location to convey an overall similar effect at times. Whenever sentences in English became forced, I paraphrased to convey the same feeling as the source text, something Nida deems acceptable when necessary (Munday, 42). By deletion of those textual aspects in one paragraph, but addition of similar aspects in a different area, the translator can compensate and achieve a similar end product (Toury, 168). Nord writes in her article in *Denken over Vertalen* that to create a good translation, you need to look at the way the source text is set up. Tellegen's text features a lot of short, active sentences, which I tried to incorporate into my English translation, because they reflect the playful nature of children's literature. To make up for the lack of pragmatic particles, I often exaggerated these playful aspects of the text to create a better TT.

This is illustrated by the following example: "*De eekhoorn besloot de hulp van de mier en de andere dieren in te roepen. Volgens de mier kon iedereen omvallen.*" [The squirrel decided to call in the help of the ant and the other animals. The ant thought that everyone could fall over if they wanted to.] In this case I added 'If they wanted to' to the English translation. I did this to make up for the loss of emotion in instances where I could not translate the pragmatic particle and lost some of the emotional charge. This is categorized by Chesterman as an action to make the TT more explicit (258).

The Russian text uses a lot of indefinites to recreate the effect the pragmatic particles have. These insertions are mainly fillers, to create a comic effect. This is extremely visible in the section where the squirrel writes a letter to the ant. The Russian translation uses *наверное* [surely], *хотя* [while], *может быть* [maybe], *в любом случае* [in any case] and *все такие* [all of these]. The translators opted for this strategy because it underpins the absurdity of this specific story. The squirrel is being indecisive, and keeps writing the ant to tell him nothing of use. The Russian indefinites create words and sentences which, like the squirrel's letter,

contain nothing at all.

4.4. Courtesy in language

The Dutch language uses the courteous form of ‘you’ in certain cases, known as *vous-voyeren* in Dutch or the T-V distinction in English. The way the speaker addresses someone can be determined by the choice made in *you*-form. English does not distinguish between ‘thou’ and ‘you’ any more, and employs different strategies to achieve this difference in texts.

When the cricket comes to the beetle-doctor for help, the beetle politely asks where the cricket is, as he cannot see anyone. ‘*Waar bent u?*’ is translated as ‘Where are you?’, but loses any sense of courtesy. The only way to incorporate this into the English text would be to change the verb ‘to ask’, to ‘to inquire’. This however was impossible to use in the TT without making myself extremely visible as a translator. I decided to incorporate this at the risk of being visible. When the cricket later asks the beetle if he can fix him (“*Kunt u mij maken?*”), I was unable to maintain the courteous atmosphere. This underpins the earlier decision to make explicit the fact that the beetle is a beetle-doctor, as it re-establishes some of their ‘professional’ attitude towards each other.

The Russian language distinguishes between *Bt* [you] and *Tt* [thou] and uses this to create the distinction between the way the beetle addresses the cricket and vice versa. This is done in the same way as the ST, and maintains in its translation the same message and reception of the ST.

Chapter 5: Translation

In this chapter you will find the section of Tellegen's text which I chose to translate. These are the first three short sections of text, translated in the same order to leave the decision of whether these stories should be in a specific order up to the reader. My English translation is juxtaposed with the original Dutch to clearly show translational differences and to make it easy to refer back to certain sections in the text without having to go back and forth between the ST and the TT.

Not Everyone Could Fall Over¹

“Don’t you ever fall over?” the squirrel asked when he saw the heron standing in the reed on just one leg.²

“No,” said the heron. “I can’t fall over.”

“Have you ever tried?” the squirrel asked.

“Yes, many times”, the heron replied. “But I can’t.”

“I think everyone can fall over,” the squirrel said.

“Except for me,” the heron said.³

It was quiet for a moment. Then the squirrel said softly, “I am *sure* you can fall over.”

“Frog,” the heron said, and turned his head towards the frog, who was sitting on a big lily pad. “Can I fall over?”

“No,” the frog said. “But I can!”

He stretched, stood up on one leg, wobbled, slipped, cried “ho!” and fell over backwards into the water.

¹ Categorized by Chesterman as antonymy (Chesterman, 252).

² Adding ‘just’ to make it more pronounced

³ ‘Except for me’ uses negation to underpin the desperation of the situation (Chesterman, 253).

Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen

“Val jij nooit om?” vroeg de eekhoorn toen hij de reiger op één been in het riet zag staan.

“Nee,” zei de reiger. “Ik kan niet omvallen.”

“Heb je het wel eens geprobeerd?” vroeg de eekhoorn.

“Ja, heel vaak,” zei de reiger. “Maar ik kan het niet.”

“Volgens mij kan iedereen omvallen,” zei de eekhoorn.

‘Maar ik niet,’ zei de reiger.

Even was het stil. Toen zei de eekhoorn zachtjes: “Ik weet zéker dat je kan omvallen.”

“Kikker,” zei de reiger en hij draaide zijn hoofd om in de richting van de kikker, die op een groot lelieblad zat.

“Kan ik omvallen?”

“Nee,” zei de kikker. “Maar ik wel!”

Hij rekte zich uit, ging op één been staan, wankelde, glibberde, riep ‘Hola!’ en viel achterover in het water.

A moment later he climbed back onto the lily pad and shouted: “Well? Wasn’t that a magnificent fall?”

“Yes,” the heron replied. “Magnificent. But I can’t do that.”

But the squirrel wouldn’t believe him.

“What if you throw that leg you’re standing on up into the air?” he said.

“Then you’re sure to fall.”

“I can’t throw that leg up,” the heron said.

“Why not?”

“It’s immovable.” He puckered his brows and said, “You have to believe me.”

“Would you like to fall over?” the squirrel asked.

“Yes, I would love to”. The heron said. “I would really love to.” A tear slid from his eye down his cheek.

The squirrel decided to call in the help of the ant and the other animals. The ant believed that everyone could fall over if they wanted to.⁴

Even later klom hij weer op het lelieblad en riep: “En? Viel ik niet schitterend?”

“Ja,” zei de reiger, “schitterend. Ik kan dat niet.”

Maar de eekhoorn wilde hem niet geloven.

“Als je nou dat been waar je op staat eens omhoog gooit,” zei hij. Dan val je vast.”

“Ik kan dat been niet omhoog gooien,” zei de reiger.

“waarom niet?”

“Het is onwrikbaar.” Hij fronste zijn wenkbrauwen en zei: “Geloof me nou toch.”

“Wil je graag omvallen?” vroeg de eekhoorn.

“Heel graag,” zei de reiger. “Heel heel graag.” Er gleed een traan uit zijn oog langs zijn wang naar beneden.

De eekhoorn besloot de hulp van de mier en de andere dieren in te roepen. Volgens de mier kon iedereen omvallen.

⁴ Categorized by Chesterman as an action to make the TT more explicit (258). I opted for this in order to create a bigger emotional response from the reader, because the TT lacks pragmatic particles.

“Even the whale,” he said. “And the worm.” He was sure of that.

Before long many animals gathered on the banks of the river.

They all knew how to fall over very well, and wanted to do the heron a favor.

The elephant was the first to come up with an idea.

He and the rhino ran at the heron at full speed and crashed into him. It was a heavy blow. The rhino and the elephant fell into the water on their backs and thrashed about with a look of dismay.

But the heron was still standing, on one leg, and all he said was: “Ouch”.

Then the other animals tried to make the heron fall over. They tickled him, made sudden sounds just behind his ears, told him extremely peculiar stories, dangled a steaming pie of scales in front of his beak and stepped on his toes as hard as they could.

But the heron did not fall over.

“Zelfs de walvis,” zei hij. “En de worm.”

Hij wist dat zeker.

Algauw verzamelde zich een groot aantal dieren aan de over van de rivier.

Ze konden allemaal goed omvallen en wilden de reiger graag een dienst bewijzen.

De olifant had als eerste een idee. Samen met de neushoorn rende hij in volle vaart op de reiger af en botste tegen hem aan.

Het was een harde klap. De neushoorn en de olifant vielen op hun rug in het water en spartelden beteuterd rond.

Maar de reiger stond daar nog, op één been, en zei alleen maar: “Au.”

Daarna probeerden de andere dieren de reiger te laten omvallen. Ze kietelden hem, maakten onverwachte geluiden vlak achter zijn oren, vertelden hem zeer eigenaardige verhalen, lieten een dampende schubbentaart voor zijn snavel heen en weer bungelen en gingen zo hard mogelijk op zijn tenen staan. Maar de reiger viel niet om.

“Some days are like that” the mole
muttered, who was digging a path under
the heron’s feet. “When everything
collapses, no matter what you do.”
“Yes,” the ant said. “There are those
days.”

When the sun disappeared below the
horizon, the animals gave up on their
attempts and went home.

The heron remained by himself, in the
falling dusk, in the reed on the banks of the
river. I stand and I stand, he thought with
sadness.

And now and then he looked enviously at
the frog, who was jumping back and forth
on the lily pad, slipping again and again,
falling over with no effort at all.

One morning the squirrel wrote a letter to
the ant.

Dear ant,

*I would like to tell you something, but I
think it would be better if I wrote it. That’s
why I am writing to you.*

“Er zijn dagen,” mompelde de mol, die een
gang onder de voeten van de reiger groef,
“dat alles instort. Wat je ook doet.”

“Ja,” zei de mier. “Zulke dagen zijn er.”

Toen de zon achter de horizon verdween,
gaven de dieren hun pogingen op en
gingen naar huis. De reiger bleef alleen
achter, in de schemering, tussen het riet,
bij de over van de rivier. Ik sta maar en sta
maar, dacht hij bedroefd. En af en toe
wierp hij een jaloerse blik in de richting
van de kikker, die op het lelieblad heen en
weer sprong en telkens moeiteloos uitgled
en omviel.

Op een ochtend schreef de eekhoorn een
brief aan de mier.

Beste Mier,

*Ik wil je iets zeggen, maar ik denk dat ik
het beter kan schrijven. Daarom schrijf ik
je.*

*But maybe it would be better if I said it to
you after all.*

Squirrel

The wind carried the letter to the ant. It was a beautiful day and not long after he received it, the ant entered the squirrel's room.

"Hello squirrel," he said.

"Hello ant," the squirrel replied, and he rubbed his hands together with pleasure.⁵

A little later they were eating honey, candied beech-nuts and sweet willow wood, and they talked about things the ant knew, and the squirrel did not yet know or had forgotten.

In the distance the lark sang. The sun shone through the open window.

Eventually the ant cleared his throat and asked: "What is it exactly that you want to tell me?"

*Maar misschien kan ik het je toch beter
zeggen.*

Eekhoorn

De wind blies de brief naar de mier. Het was een mooie dag en niet lang daarna stapte de mier de kamer van de eekhoorn in.

"Hallo eekhoorn," zei hij.

"Hallo mier," zei de eekhoorn en wreef zich in zijn handen.

Even later aten zij honing, versuikerde beukennoten en zoet wilgenhout, en hadden ze het over dingen die de mier wist en die de eekhoorn nog niet wist of vergeten was.

In de verte zong de lijster. De zon scheen door het open raam.

Tenslotte schraapte de mier zijn keel en vroeg: "Wat wil je mij eigenlijk zeggen?"

⁵ Categorized by Chesterman as an action to make the TT more explicit (258).

The squirrel thought hard for a minute, looked at the floor and the ceiling, heaved a deep sigh and said: "I think it would be better if I wrote to you."

"Alright," the ant said.

That night the squirrel wrote a new letter to the ant. He wrote that eventually it would be better to say what he wanted to write, but that in any case it wasn't anything special.

When the ant received that letter he became really curious.

The beetle-doctor sat in a chair by his window and sighed. He was tired and just about to take a short nap, when there was a knock at his door.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Me," said a voice. "The cricket." The door swung open, but nothing visible entered the room.

De eekhoorn dacht diep na, keek naar de vloer en naar het plafond, zuchtte diep en zei: "Ik denk dat ik je dat beter kan schrijven."

"Dat is goed," zei de mier.

Die avond schreef de eekhoorn een nieuwe brief aan de mier. Hij schreef dat hij uiteindelijk toch beter kon zeggen wat hij wilde schrijven, maar dat het in elk geval niets bijzonders was.

Toen de mier die brief kreeg werd hij pas echt nieuwsgierig.

De Boktor zat in een stoel voor zijn raam en zuchtte. Hij was moe en wilde juist een uurtje gaan slapen, toen er op zijn deur werd geklopt.

"Wie is daar?" vroeg hij.

"Ik," zei een stem. "De krekel." De deur ging open, maar er kwam niets zichtbaars binnen.

“Where are you?” the beetle inquired.

“I am just the cricket’s voice,” the voice said. “The rest will be here in a minute.”

The beetle sighed deeply. There’s work to be done, he thought.

Then the smell of the cricket spiraled in through the open door, while the wind blew his feelers, jaws and body onto the carpet.

A little while later there was a sudden turmoil in the room. It was the thoughts of the cricket, flying in through the window one after the other.

“I blew up,” the voice said.

“I can tell,” said the beetle.⁶

“Can you fix me?”

“Sure,” the beetle said.

I carry all the weight around here, he thought. They always come to me when someone blows up.

Shortly afterwards the cricket was all put together again.

“Waar bent u?” vroeg de boktor.

“Ik ben alleen de stem van de krekkel,” zei de stem. “De rest komt zo.”

De boktor zuchtte diep. Werk, dacht hij.

Even later kringelde de geur van de krekkel door de open deur naar binnen, terwijl de wind zijn voelsprietten, kaken en lijf op het vloerkleed blies.

Kort daarna werd het plotseling onrustig in de kamer. Het waren de gedachten van de krekkel, die een voor een naar binnen vlogen.

‘Ik ben ontploft,’ zei de stem.

‘Welja,’ zei de boktor.

‘Kunt u mij maken?’

‘Zeker,’ zei de boktor.

Ik ben er altijd wel weer goed voor, dacht hij, als er iemand ontploft.

Even later zat de krekkel weer in elkaar.

⁶ Another example of a pragmatic particle in Dutch.

He puckered his eyebrows, pulled his knees up to his chin and gave his coat a quick shake. Everything was in order.

He thanked the beetle.

And yet when the cricket stepped out onto the street he felt gloomy, because without his noticing, the beetle had kept all of the cricket's happy thoughts for himself.

I could probably use some of those today, he thought.

When the cricket had disappeared from sight, the beetle climbed onto his table and his head filled with those thoughts did a little dance and shouted "Oho", something he had never shouted before and had never heard anyone else shout either, as far as he knew.

Then he went to nap for an hour or so, in the chair by his window.

Hij fronste zijn wenkbrauwen, trok zijn knieën tegen zijn kin en liet zijn jas even wapperen. Alles werkte.

Hij bedankte de boktor.

Maar toch stapte hij somber de deur uit, want zijn vrolijke gedachten had de boktor ongemerkt achtergehouden.

Die kan ik vandaag best gebruiken, dacht hij.

Toen de krekkel uit het gezicht was verdwenen, klom de boktor op zijn tafel en met die gedachten in zijn hoofd maakte hij een klein dansje en riep "Oho", wat hij nog nooit had geroepen en zover hij wist ook nog nooit door iemand had horen roepen.

Toen ging hij weer een uurtje slapen, in de stoel voor zijn raam.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In translating *Bijna Iedereen Kon Omvallen* from Dutch into English and Russian, multiple problems arise. These problems have to do with the aspect of dual readership in the fable, which poses a question to the translator about whether or not to maintain this in translation. Dual readership is at times also difficult to translate, which can be caused by inherent differences in these three languages. This entails, but is not limited to: gender usage, use of augmentatives and diminutives, pragmatic particles and courtesy in language. More research about the differences in these languages might lead to new insights about obstacles which occur. This would also help to provide possible solutions and ways to overcome these problems. Even more of Tellegen's work can then be translated into Russian and English and reach a larger audience in the rest of the world.

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