La ventana indiscreta
Author:
Marina Sáez
Reader:
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Story:

La ventana indiscreta is a highly playful story about Julia, who is confined at home with a broken leg and amuses herself by observing the activities of the neighbours in the building opposite and on the street below through her binoculars. She gives us a glimpse of the private lives of the people who make up her local community, presenting them as widely diverse, yet all connected by the normality of everyday life and the shared values of family, friendship and a harmonious co-existence: a diverse community living together in mutual appreciation. She spends the day at her window, while her family look after her, and her friends visit, and daily life goes on around her as she observes the ways different people live their ordinary lives. The story is really about giving its readers lots of opportunities to think about what she sees.

However, the book format is mostly illustrations with accompanying text written over them. The pictures are full of small details, and in this way the story offers additional options for readers to be creative with the book and play with the images, by exploring them and discovering everything that's going on in the descriptions of what Julia is observing, such as at the end when we are invited to look out for what Jana was up to during the day. So the book encourages the reader to study the pictures more carefully, where they will find plenty of inspiration for ideas and learning, and to create discussion in a group context. The options presented go far beyond the pictures and text, as both introduce ideas for readers to continue exploring, such as Ares, who is dressing up as a princess. Julia comments that sometimes they feel more like a girl, and sometimes more like a boy. The pictures introduce and develop the text and offer the reader the chance to think about different perspectives.

All in all the book encompasses many ideas and possibilities to both an individual reader and in a teacher-led setting, which a translation would have to bear in mind when considering any choices in preparing the book for foreign audience. It would be wise to think about the potential activities resulting from the text, although this would not necessarily affect the translation itself. And the majority of content comes from the images, which would be the same in an English version of the book.

The title *La ventana indiscreta* might actually be the biggest translation question of the text, and obviously the author's intention is relevant in this choice. The reference to Hitchcock's film The Rear Window becomes far stronger in a retranslation back to the original, and unfortunately would not be suitable either for the meaning or the subject of this book: the window is not at the back, and the subject of Hitchcock's thriller is a lot more macabre than the author or publisher would presumably intend this book to be. A direct translation of indiscreet must also be discarded for its negative connotations of shame in English usage, which is the exact opposite of what the author intends. One suggestion offered is The Open Window, but perhaps it would be prudent, if the reference

to Hitchcock's film is to become irrelevant, to put the emphasis on the observer instead of the window, with something like Spy at the Window, or The Secret Spy, or even find an alternative reference that a UK audience would be familiar with. The translator would have to give this some consideration, and ideally consult with the author as well as the publishers on all the points to take into account and any marketing implications.

That aside, the language of the story itself is not problematic for translation, the only issues being relative to cultural references rather than linguistic ones. The companion guide at the end of the book is written in more adult language, and while it does directly address the reader, the language is a bit of a mixture between a simple introduction to concepts explained to a child and some language that is perhaps more for an adult understanding. It might take a little creativity to convey this idea in translation and maintain the balance, as it's quite a complicated intention. The author presents the concepts very directly and openly, with the clear intention of demonstrating there is no shame in discussing these themes, and addressing the readers with no condescension. On the other hand, some of the concepts are quite theoretical and would probably require further explanation and discussion with an adult companion. This makes the book ideal for school, for example for group reading with discussion or teacher-led exercises.

The story addresses all sorts of contemporary ideas that are being, and still need to be, brought into the light for new generations. It deals with them in a fun and very open way that presents questions of sex and gender with a complete lack of sensationalism and rejects any conformity to traditional shame and judgement, representing all types of people as normal, simply by allowing Julia and the readers to view their lives without the perspective or restrictions often still imposed by society.

These issues of acceptability, normality and community would not give any particular challenge for translation. The representation of people from all backgrounds and orientations is something that can be represented in everyday UK culture just as well as in Spanish culture. And in fact some of the aspects of this totally normal Spanish neighbourhood, such as living in a block of flats and being able to observe the neighbours' windows and the street below, offers an interesting contrast to traditional UK society where children might be more likely to live in a house without the bird's eye view of their neighbours or things like street level businesses and activities.

This book would undoubtedly do well in an English-speaking market, as an easily accessible book that offers far more than just an enjoyable story. It encourages its readers to explore further on their

own and could be used by parents or teachers with groups to stimulate new topics and ideas. There are countless directions readers could take from the pictures and text, but it can also be simply a fun book for children to entertain themselves with.