Chapter 5
Conclusion and avenues for further research

5.1 Introduction
This study has presented a wide-ranging investigation of the ways in which translation is used in the production of children’s books in South Africa. The investigation has aimed to make a contribution to particularly the first of the two branches in translation scholarship distinguished by Holmes (2000) – translation studies (as opposed to applied translation). According to Holmes (2000:176), translation studies has two main aims: to describe translational phenomena, and to account for these by means of general principles. From this springs two subdivisions within translation studies: descriptive translation studies, and translation theory. Descriptive translation studies, in turn, may be subdivided into product-oriented, function-oriented and process-oriented approaches (Holmes, 2000:176-177; see Hermans, 1999:29), all of which aim to describe different aspects of actual translations. Based on these descriptions, translation theory aims to “evolve principles, theories, and models which will serve to explain and predict what translating and translations are and will be” (Holmes, 2000:178).

This study, then, is comprehensive in the sense that it incorporates descriptive translation studies and translation theory, testing the one “domain” against the other. Furthermore, in its descriptive investigation, this study melds product-oriented, function-oriented and process-oriented approaches. This descriptive approach is not interested in formulating prescriptions or guidelines for translation, but rather in tracing the contours of translation as it happens. As Hermans (1999:7) points out:

> Seen in this light the term “descriptive translation studies” signals the rejection of the idea that the study of translation should be geared primarily to formulating rules, norms and guidelines for the practice or evaluation of translation or to developing didactic instruments for translator training. On the positive side, “descriptive” points to an interest in translation as it actually occurs, now and in the past, as part of cultural history. It seeks insight into the phenomenon and the impact of translation without immediately wanting to plough that insight back into some practical application to benefit translators, critics or teachers...

The specific focus of this study has been the translation of children’s literature, viewed against the educational context in South Africa. The integrative descriptive and theoretical approach followed here goes against the grain of much traditional scholarship in the study of children’s literature, which often tends to be both interpretative and evaluative. Instead, this study has first explored how translation is used in various scenarios for the production of various types of children’s books in South Africa. It has traced the translation process – including the selection of texts for translation, translation policies and translation practice –

---

1 This paper was first published in 1972.
2 Translation theory is further subdivided into general translation theory and partial translation theories. The latter is then subdivided even further (see Holmes, 2000:178-180).
from the perspective of both publishers and translators (see Chapter 2). It has correlated these findings with an analysis of a sample of translation products, to investigate how text selection, translation policy and translation practice precipitate in translated texts (see Chapter 4). Both these strands of investigation are linked by a continuous awareness of the function of different types of translated texts in the South African context. Finally, this “how” of translation has been integral in postulating some theoretical answers about why translation is used in the particular ways that it is in the South African children’s books industry. The study is thus broadly based on what Chesterman (2000) calls the causal model in translation studies research, but it integrates all three models of translation evident in translation studies research: comparative, process and causal. The comparative model rests on the comparison of source and target texts (see Chapter 4), while the process model considers the actual process of translation (see Chapter 2). The causal model focuses on the causes and effects of translation in various domains (see Chapters 2 and 3). This study thus makes use of all three models, and correlates them with the ultimate aim of arriving at overarching causal conclusions.

This chapter presents a broad synthesis of the findings of the study. Since Chapter 2, 3 and 4 each conclude with systematic and comprehensive summaries of the findings of the particular chapter, these detailed findings are not repeated here. Rather, this chapter takes a step back and considers the bigger picture. It sums up the conclusions of the study in terms of the hypotheses originally formulated (see section 5.2), and sets out the contribution and significance of the research in the fields of children's literature and translation studies (see section 5.3.1). The chapter concludes with a brief overview of some further avenues of investigation that emerge from the research (see section 5.3.2).

5.2 Conclusions

As pointed out in Chapter 1, comprehensive investigations of the use of translation in the production of children’s books in South Africa are lacking. This study has aimed to fill this lack, by exploring both to what degree translation is utilised and how it functions in the production of children’s books. In this section, the conclusions of the study are organised around the hypotheses set out in Chapter 1.

5.2.1 Hypothesis 1

Translation is used to a significant degree in the production of children’s books in South Africa, but notable differences exist between the degree to which translation is used in producing books in the African languages, and in Afrikaans and English. Specifically, translation is used much more extensively in the African languages, with a correspondingly lower incidence of original production.

The survey research among publishers and translators, as well as the analysis of the data from the Writings in nine tongues catalogue (PASA, 2007b) (see Chapter 2) confirms this hypothesis. Translation is used to a considerable but varying degree in the children’s book market in South Africa. Translated children’s books occupy a peripheral position in the Afrikaans and English children’s literature systems, while translation fulfils a constitutive and central role in the production of children’s books in the African languages, with almost all African-language children’s books in the age group 0 to 12 years being translations. This has significant implications for perceptions of the norms governing translation (see hypothesis 4).
5.2.2 Hypothesis 2

The educational discourse has a profound effect on the uses of translation in the production of children's books in South Africa. However, the educational discourse has a greater determining effect on the production of books for children in the African languages than in Afrikaans and English.

The findings presented in Chapter 2 support this hypothesis. An analysis of book publishing data suggests that in the absence of a guiding discourse that promotes the publishing and sale of books in the African languages, specifically the educational discourse that specifies that educational books for young learners should be available in their mother tongue, African-language books have little support from book buyers. The African-language market, at the moment, remains strongly based in the educational subsector, rather than the trade subsector. However, the increasing number of leisure books for children translated into the African languages may signal a trend towards an expanding, diversifying, less exclusively educationally driven market for books in the African languages, which will also affect the uses of translation in the production of children’s books in the African languages.

5.2.3 Hypothesis 3

Contemporary translation theory (especially polysystem theory) provides some explanation of the translational dynamics evident in the production of children’s books in the different languages in South Africa. However, some aspects of the South African situation do not neatly “fit” into existing theory, and some parts of the theory therefore have to be mediated or reconsidered to satisfactorily account for the South African situation. Theoretical discourse surrounding domestication and foreignisation is particularly problematic in the South African context.

Polysystem theory provides a starting point for a theoretical understanding or account of why translation functions in the way it does in the context of South African children's literature. In South Africa, translated children’s literature in Afrikaans and in the African languages occupy two vastly different positions in the polysystem. In Afrikaans, translated children’s literature occupies a peripheral position in the subsystem of children’s literature. In the African languages, translated children’s literature occupies a central and constitutive position, mostly because the African-languages children’s literature system is still young, is peripheral and weak, and is characterised by a vacuum that requires urgent filling. This affects perceptions of the norms governing translation (see hypothesis 4), but does so in ways that contradict commonly held theoretical assumptions in polysystem theory. Specifically, polysystem theories see a peripheral position for translation as aligned with a domesticating tendency, while a central position for translation is associated with innovative and foreignising tendencies. The opposite pattern seems to emerge from the findings of the questionnaire for translators presented in Chapter 2.

To account for this, it was argued in Chapter 3 that polysystem theory needs to be mediated by perspectives from postcolonial theory, adding to the system of probabilities that affect decisions about source- or target-culture orientation. However, the argument in Chapter 3 goes even further, suggesting that the postcolonial and neocolonial linguistic and cultural situation in South Africa destabilises the very system of binaries upon which much of translation studies depends. Instead the chapter advocates an understanding of postcolonial societies as a multiplicity of foreigners and domestics, and questions the conception of domestication and foreignisation as mutually exclusive oppositions and the assumption that...
foreignisation is intrinsically a resistant strategy and domestication intrinsically hegemonic. Instead it is argued that both strategies may fulfil particular functions at particular times in particular societies.

The theoretical model set out in Chapter 3 is further explored in the practical analyses (addressing hypothesis 5) presented in Chapter 4.

5.2.4 Hypothesis 4
Translators from different language groups have different opinions about whether children’s books should be translated using domesticating or foreignising approaches.

The descriptive survey research in Chapter 2, and the theoretical work in Chapter 3 confirm this hypothesis. The different polysystemic positions of translated works in the Afrikaans and African-language children’s book systems (outlined above) affect translators’ perceptions of the norms governing translation. In the case of the Afrikaans children’s book market, translation is seen as supplementing original production in Afrikaans, thereby providing an enriched and diversified reading experience for children. Correspondingly, translators working from English to Afrikaans do not feel compelled to advocate cultural adaptation, instead favouring a source-text oriented approach (or a text-dependent decision about the most appropriate approach), based on the motivation that translation contributes to the cultural enrichment of Afrikaans readers.

In the case of the African languages, translation fulfils a constitutive role in production for children’s books in the age group 0 to 12. Consequently, translators working in the African languages advocate cultural adaptation more strongly than their Afrikaans/English counterparts, since for them translation is, at the moment, the means by which a basic corpus of reading material in the African languages is being developed.

5.2.5 Hypothesis 5
Translators’ opinions about domestication and foreignisation do not necessarily correspond to translation practices. Rather than an exclusive, binary adherence to domesticating and foreignising approaches, analyses of the operational norms evident in translated children’s books demonstrate a hybridised mix of domesticating and foreignising strategies, which vary according to the type of book.

The textual analyses presented in Chapter 4 seem to support this hypothesis. The microtextual analyses of translation choices in the sample of children’s books presented in this chapter show that domesticating and foreignising strategies are without exception used in hybridised and mixed ways in single books as well as across the sample, suggesting a “both/and” rather than an “either/or” orientation. However, there does seem to be greater emphasis on one strategy rather than another for particular types of children’s books, and certain language combinations. Most pertinently, international picture books translated from English to Afrikaans appear to demonstrate the highest degree of domesticating strategies (compared to local readers and local picture books). The findings of the microtextual analyses form the basis of the following generalisations:
Conclusion and avenues for further research

- **International picture books** that are translated to Afrikaans demonstrate a greater degree of more uniform localisation and domestication in the translation of proper nouns and forms of address, and the use of loan words. Cultural items are mostly retained, though adapted in more instances than in the other two subsamples of translated books. Idiomatic expressions are mostly domesticated.

- **Local picture books** demonstrate the highest degree of mixed strategies and cultural and linguistic hybridity in both source and target text, as reflected in the translation of proper nouns and forms of address, and the use of loan words. Cultural items are mostly retained, though sometimes adapted or domesticated. Idiomatic expressions are mostly domesticated for the target reader.

- **Local readers** also make use of mixed strategies for the translation of proper nouns and forms of address. However, they are more restrained in their use of loan words, and overall less culturally and linguistically hybrid. Cultural items are mostly retained, though sometimes adapted or domesticated. Idiomatic expressions are mostly domesticated for the target reader.

Translators' perceptions of the familiarity and strangeness contained in children’s books, as well as their perception of the function of particular books thus clearly seem to affect their translation decisions. Even though picture books with international originals seldom contain cultural material that is strange to young Afrikaans readers, translators nevertheless tend to favour domesticating strategies somewhat more for this type of book. However, since local picture books are perceived to be immersed in the hybrid South African reality, and since educational and broader social discourses in South Africa place so much emphasis on multiculturalism, translators favour highly hybridised approaches to domestication and foreignisation in the translation of local children’s books, expressed on both content and linguistic levels. This is also the case for local readers, but the perceived educational function of readers constrains the degree of especially linguistic hybridity regarded as acceptable in the translation of these texts.

5.2.6 Hypothesis 6

An analysis of translated children’s books demonstrates that the selection of books for translation (influenced by preliminary translation norms) is dependent on contextual as well as textual factors, with ideology and function playing particularly important roles. These roles differ for different types of books.

The macrotextual analyses in Chapter 4, investigating the preliminary norms that appear to be operative in the selection of books for translation, suggest that different preliminary norms apply for different categories of books. The following preliminary norms may be generalised from the findings in Chapter 4:

- **International picture books** are selected for translation on the basis of their entertainment function, with little emphasis on socio-cultural or didactic concerns. Culture tends to be neutralised, or highly homogenised. Fantasy plays an important role. These picture books make extensive use of sometimes sophisticated linguistic, visual, narrative and typographical innovatory techniques. A high premium is thus placed on creativity and originality.

- The selection of **local picture books for translation** is based on an entertainment function that is interwoven with socio-cultural didactic concerns. The mixture of didactic-social and entertainment functions means that realism is much more common
than fantasy, and that illustrations, language, narrative elements and typography are used in noticeably more conventional ways than in the international picture books. There appears to be some difference between the Afrikaans and English local originals selected for translation, primarily in terms of culture. **Local Afrikaans originals** selected for translation are non-specific, homogenised, neutralised and Westernised in terms of geographical, social, economic and cultural background. Fantasy plays an important role, and space is conceived of in limited ways, focusing on the home, family and school. **Local English originals** selected for translation are more specific, diversified and hybridised in terms of geographical, social, economic and cultural background. The style is largely realistic and there is little fantasy. Space is conceived of in terms of the wider social environment, resulting in a conception of space that is much more social in nature than in the Afrikaans source texts.

- **Local readers** are selected for translation based primarily on their educational function. Correspondingly, these books are mostly conventional in terms of their use of linguistic, visual and typographical elements, though humour, repetition and cartoon-like illustrations are used to capture the reader's interest.

Once again, perceived function, coupled with ideological concerns, play a significant role in the translation process – however, here in terms of decisions about the selection of texts for translation rather than decisions taken in the translation process itself. Ultimately, therefore translators’ and publishers’ opinions and practice about which texts should be translated and how they should be translated are strongly affected (though not in predetermined ways) by their ideologically coloured perceptions of the function and value of particular children’s books and their content.

### 5.3 Significance and avenues for further research

#### 5.3.1 Significance

The broad findings outlined above, and the specific findings set out in the conclusions to Chapter 2, 3 and 4, contribute to the discipline of translation studies in the following broad ways.

Most obviously, the study has investigated a dimension of translation that has only recently started to receive rigorous attention – the translation of children’s literature. This study has also explored the South African context specifically, thus contributing to the diversifying of perspectives within translation studies.

It is hoped that the study will contribute to the expansion of the descriptive approach by integrating more ideologically sensitive theories into an approach (the descriptive and systemic approach) that has been accused of basing itself on a false objectivity. Hermans (1999:118) voices some of the criticism of descriptive polysystemic approaches:

... studies of this nature are not only ferociously abstract and depersonalized, they also run the risk of being ultimately deterministic. There are two reasons for this. One is that polysystem theory is aware of the social embedding of cultural systems but in practice takes little heed of actual political and social power relations or more concrete entities such as institutions or groups with real interests to look after. For all its emphasis on models and repertoires, polysystem theory remains thoroughly text-bound. Literature and culture in general are described as sites of conflict, but the stakes remain invisible, and the struggle is waged by
competing norms and models rather than by individuals or collectives who stand to gain or lose something by the outcome.

This study has aimed to counter this criticism by paying specific attention to an analysis of the context involved in the production of children’s books in South Africa, the discourses and institutions that play a role, and the stakeholders who have different interests in the children’s book industry. This study has thus moved beyond the boundaries of the text usually held to by descriptive approaches.

In this process, some of the more oversimplified deterministic tendencies of descriptive approaches have been challenged. It has been argued that the relationship between polysystemic position and translation norms cannot be conceived of in simple unidirectional causal terms, such as *If the polysystemic position of X is Y, then Z norm applies.* Rather, there is a complex array of interwoven factors involved in not only polysystemic relationships themselves, but also among these relationships and the relationships between translators’ perceptions of the norms governing translation and translation norms as evident from translation practice.

It is believed that a last significant contribution of this study is its “testing” of received theoretical notions by placing them in a context different to the one in which they were developed. In particular, the postcolonial South African context challenges many theoretical ideas around domestication and foreignisation, in the process contributing to the continuous interrogation of theoretical constructs in a variety of contexts.

5.3.2 Avenues for further research

The largely exploratory investigation of the research opens up numerous avenues for further investigation. The most obvious is the investigation of African-language translations of children’s books. While the findings from the questionnaires outlined in Chapter 2 have formed the basis for some theoretical speculation about differences in polysystemic position for Afrikaans, English and African-language translations of children’s books in Chapter 3, these theoretical speculations could only be textually investigated in Afrikaans and English children’s books. In order to further validate and refine the findings of this study, it is crucial that similar studies of translated African-language children’s books are undertaken. This is part of the reason why the text-selection process outlined in Chapter 4 has specified that at least some of the books in the sample used in this study should also be available in African-language translation.

Secondly, this study is synchronic in nature, and has investigated translation policies and practices over a very limited period of time. The findings of this study may be further tested and refined by undertaking a more historically oriented study, investigating changes in translation policy and practice in the various South African languages over time.

Thirdly, it is acknowledged that the method of textual analysis used in this study, depending as it does on the individual, cumulative analysis of lexical items in the text and relating them to contextual factors, is limited in terms of its empirical validity. For this reason it would be particularly useful to supplement the textual dimension of the analysis by means of a more rigorous empirical methodology, possibly utilising quantitative corpus-analysis approaches together with qualitative analysis to test the findings of the textual analysis presented in this study (see Baker, 1995, 1999; Olohan, 2004). In terms of method, it may also be useful to do a comparative study involving the texts in this study and children’s books from another
country where translation is used extensively in the production of children’s books, but where cultural diversity is much more limited (as, for example, in some Scandinavian countries). Translation strategies with domesticating and foreignising effects may then be compared in the two samples of books to investigate whether the hybrid translation strategies found in this study result from the particular South African socio-cultural situation, or whether it is a more general translation approach evident even among translators in societies where “domestic” and “foreign” are somewhat more distinct.

A fourth avenue of further research concerns the theoretical dimension of the study. As pointed out in Chapter 3, the systemic approach to translation studies has a number of limitations, which Buzelin (2005:195), based on Hermans (1999), summarises as the lack of attention to the translation agents involved in the translation process, the deterministic nature of the theory, and the theory’s emphasis on contextual rather than cognitive factors. In this study, some of these limitations have been addressed by melding the systems approach with a more ideologically sensitive postcolonial approach. However, other theoretical perspectives may illuminate different aspects of the situation outlined in this study, providing alternative or complementary interpretations. As mentioned in Chapter 3, sociological theories of translation utilising the ideas and concepts of Pierre Bourdieu offer promising possibilities. The relationship between field, habitus and capital seems particularly relevant. Gouanvic (2005:148) explains the relationship between the former two elements, and the relevance of this relationship for translation studies, as follows:

... Bourdieu develops a philosophy of action by constructing a fundamental relationship between the social trajectory of the agent (based on his or her incorporated dispositions, or *habitus*) and the objective structures (specified under fields). This is a “two-way” relationship... the social trajectory that constitutes the *habitus* contributes to the structuring of fields, which in turn structure the *habitus*. On a global level, the object of research in translation studies ultimately becomes the analysis of the differential relationship between the *habitus* of translation agents (including publishers, critics, etc.) who have taken a position in a given target field in a given epoch, and the determinant factors of the target field as the site of reception of the translation. Additionally, of course, the object of translation research is a differential analysis of source and target texts as exhibitors of pertinent traits studied in the *habitus* of agents and in the fields in question.

This integrated approach is similar to the approach followed in this study. However, a Bourdieusian analysis of the situation would open up numerous further analytical possibilities. For example, a focus on the habitus of production agents involved in translation (including authors, publishers and translators) may provide a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the data presented in Chapter 2, providing additional insights focusing on the agents involved in the translation of children’s literature in South Africa. Also, while habitus may be seen as related to norms; the concept of a “norm” evokes something external and conscious, whereas the habitus remains largely unconscious and internalised. The concept of habitus may thus be used to emphasise the internalised nature of translation norms (briefly argued in Chapter 3; see also Simeoni, 1998), contributing to a more cognitive and less determinist conception of why translators make the decisions they do. In the context of this study, for example, a closer, more detailed and more personalised (see Buzelin, 2005:203) investigation of the social trajectories and habitus of particular translators working in Afrikaans and the African languages may account for their preference for particular translation strategies, which may be related to power struggles (linked with
economic, social and symbolic capital) within the field of translated children’s literature in South Africa. As Bourdieu (1990:143) points out:

I would say that the literary field is a force-field as well as a field of struggles which aim at transforming or maintaining the established relation of forces: each of the agents commits the force (the capital) that he has acquired through previous struggles to the strategies that depend for their general direction on his position in the power struggle, that is, on his specific capital.

Of course, translators are not the only agents involved in the production of translated texts. An investigation of the social trajectories and habitus of publishers and authors could also contribute to a more fine-grained understanding of the processes and forces involved in the translation of children’s literature in South Africa. As far as authors are concerned, the issue of white authors writing black characters (briefly raised in Chapter 2) may tie in here. How are the social trajectory and habitus of a particular author reflected in her choice of writing strategies, and how does this relate to power struggles for capital in the field of children’s books in South Africa? These, and other questions, could be productively explored utilising the ideas of Bourdieu, and other sociological theorists (see Buzelin, 2005).

Lastly, the study has been textual and contextual in nature, and has not paid any attention to actual child and adult readers’ responses to translated children’s books. In terms of Chesterman’s (2000:20) causal model of translation, it has focused on the causal relationship between socio-cultural conditions, the translation event, the translation act and the translation profile. However, the causal relationship between the translation and the cognitive, behavioural and social responses and effects created by it has fallen outside the scope of investigation of this study. The investigation of such responses and effects may take numerous forms. Most pertinently, analyses of domesticating and foreignising strategies in translated texts need to be measured against readers’ actual perceptions and experiences of these strategies: to what extent do real readers experience the textual outcomes of particular translation choices as culturally familiar or strange? In this, the distinction and relationship between an analysis of textual features (such as the analysis presented in Chapter 4), and readers’ cognitive constructions of these features is particularly important. This avenue of future investigation will require careful empirically controlled reading experiments with both child and adult readers (see Bortolussi and Dixon, 2003).

There is also the possibility of exploring how micro-level translation changes (on the linguistic level) affect macro-level reader processing (on the narrative level). Most pertinently, the question arises whether preferences for domesticating or foreignising approaches may be traced in changes to the narrative voice of the text, linked particularly to the elements of focalisation and narration. Since these two aspects may be regarded as particularly crucial for the child’s identification with the text, shifts in narrative voice may well have a significant effect on the way in which the child reader relates to the text. Significant further possibilities in the interface between translation studies and narratology thus emerge from the study, building on and refining existing work by, for example, Bosseaux (2007), Hermans (1996), Kruger (2001, 2009), Levenston and Sonnenschein (1986), and May (1994).

Ultimately, the research presented here hopes to provide a starting point and some future possibilities for the study of the translation of children’s books in South Africa – a direction of enquiry that feeds into the discipline of translation studies as a whole, challenging accepted ideas and broadening horizons from a particularly South African perspective. It is
hoped that this study will contribute to the ever-expanding discourse on translation in an increasingly interconnected yet fractured world. As Hermans (1999:159) points out:

Appropriate tools need to be devised to study translation in our contemporary social and technological world, tools which can cope with the mobility and interpenetration of communities, with multiple identities and mixed languages... But the methodologies required to study text-based translation... also merit further attention, especially as translating and interpreting in the non-Western world are becoming better known in the West.