Chapter 3
A theoretical framework: the cultural and ideological dimension

3.1 Introduction
The theoretical paradigm developed in this chapter is underpinned by the belief that theoretical constructs are inextricably tied to their contextual origins, and cannot simply be transferred to different contexts as if they were neutral “instruments” that can simply be “applied” to a given object of study, regardless of whether this object of study is part of the same temporal, spatial and cultural configuration as the theory, or whether it is far removed in time or space from the original context of the theory. Instead, this chapter postulates that it is essential constantly to interrogate the relevance and usefulness of theoretical concepts, as much as their metatheoretical underpinnings, wherever these concepts travel. In this sense, this study aligns itself with Edward Said’s (1983:242) comment that “it is the critic’s job to provide resistances to theory, to open it up toward historical reality, toward society, toward human needs and interests, to point up those concrete instances drawn from everyday reality that lie outside or just beyond the interpretive area necessarily designated in advance and thereafter circumscribed by every theory”. Or, as Prince (2003:12), in the context of narratological studies, has formulated it somewhat differently: “Theory must engage reality; the description must meet the phenomenon; the model must correspond to the modelled.”

This is also, in part, the motivation for the organisation of this study. The contextual background outlined in Chapter 2 explicitly informs the theoretical discussion in this chapter, insofar as the previous chapter provides a survey (even if necessarily limited) of the particular part of the South African situation with which this study is concerned: issues of language politics, education, reading, children’s books and translation in South Africa. The theoretical model is therefore developed as a response to the situation outlined in Chapter 2, and aims to provide an explanatory and analytical tool suited to this situation. However, it also looks forward to Chapter 4, which focuses on a textual analysis of selected translated children’s books. In this sense, the theoretical paradigm in this chapter integrates both extratextual and textual elements, though its focus is primarily extratextual, attempting to account, theoretically, for the specific cultural and ideological forces that play a role in the translation of children’s books in South Africa. It makes specific use of polysystem theory as well as cultural and postcolonial translation theory in order to explain the particular features of the situations in which the translation of children’s literature in South Africa takes place. It is also argued that an analysis of the South African situation makes visible in practical terms some of the “shortcomings” or blind spots of existing contextual theoretical approaches. In this, the study shares Tymoczko’s (1999b:33) belief that translation theory is often based on a limited set of (Western) texts and contexts, which require testing and elaboration in other contexts. A focus on local (and specifically non-Western) situations is crucial as a means of assessing, revising and supplementing theoretical constructs.
Translation theory is an extensive and varied field, characterised by a diversity of simultaneously oppositional and complementary theories that each embraces particular foundational assumptions, foci and methodologies. In very broad terms, however, it is possible to distinguish theories that are largely text-focused, and theories that attempt, in various ways and to various degrees, to relate the textual dimension to the contextual. The former category would include linguistic and discourse theories of translation, while the latter would include a wide range of theoretical approaches, such as functional, systemic, cultural, ideological and sociological theories of translation. These two groups of approaches are often described in essentially oppositional terms (as in the introduction to Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990), though they need not necessarily be (see Olohan, 2004:5-9).

The integrative approach of this study involves the textual as well the contextual dimensions, and is particularly concerned with the relationship between the two dimensions. Its aim is not to maintain distinctions between such oppositions as “inside” and “outside” the text, but rather to illustrate the ways in which the “outsides” and “insides” of translated children’s texts are related. For this reason its theoretical approach falls within the second paradigm of translation theories outlined above. As a first step, this chapter aims to develop a theoretical model that may account for the findings of the publisher and translator questionnaires reported in Chapter 2, specifically in terms of the tensions between original production and translation as related to the different language groups, and in terms of the tensions between domesticating and foreignising approaches. The findings of the questionnaires, together with the contextual information presented in Chapter 2, suggest a systemic relationship between different types of literary texts for children in South Africa. This systemic relationship is complicated by the dynamics and power differentials among the different languages in South Africa, which affect both the role and function of translation in different language groups and, consequently and simultaneously, the norms that govern translators’ perceptions of translation and their decision-making processes.

In order to account for these aspects in a systematic yet flexible way, the first section (see section 3.2) turns its attention to the implications of polysystem theory for this study. Proceeding from this, some insights from Toury’s (1995) descriptive approach are drawn into the ambit of the argument (see section 3.3). Toury’s (1995) formulations of the norms and laws that govern translation are investigated, particularly in terms of their relationship with the translators’ and publishers’ opinions evident from the questionnaires. Some of the findings from the questionnaire appear to be at odds with some of Toury’s ideas regarding norms and laws of translation. It is argued that these conflicts may be resolved or explained by “mediating” or supplementing Toury’s laws with perspectives from postcolonial translation theory (see section 3.4), and by extending the laws into a wider network of probabilities, as Toury’s recent work (2004) and Pym’s (2008) revaluation of Toury suggest. The aim of this is to provide a systemic-cultural-ideological paradigm from within which to explain the current situation in the translation of children’s literature in South Africa, while simultaneously providing the “outside frame” for the textual dimension of the study presented in the next chapter.
3.2 Polysystem theory and the positions of translated children’s literature in South Africa

Polysystem theory may be regarded as a reaction against static, prescriptive and ahistorical models of translation (Codde, 2003:92; Munday, 2008:107). Instead, its intents are, firstly, descriptive. As part of the descriptive strain in translation studies, it wishes to “delve into translation as a cultural and historical phenomenon, to explore its context and its conditioning factors, to search for grounds that can explain why there is what there is” (Hermans, 1999:5). Secondly, and more specifically, polysystem theory focuses on the dynamic nature of translation as socio-semiotic system, a dynamism that is characteristic of both the synchronic and the diachronic dimension (Even-Zohar, 2005:39-40; see also Hermans, 1999:106). It extends this view of translation as essentially dynamic outside the text, and views “translated literature as a system operating in the larger social, literary and historical systems of the target culture” (Munday, 2008:108). The concept of the system is crucial to the theory, since it allows for the concept of dynamism to enter the synchronic dimension of translation studies, instead of situating dynamism and change only in the diachronic dimension (see Codde, 2003:92; Even-Zohar, 2005:38-40).

The key concept is that of the polysystem, which is defined by Even-Zohar (2005:40) as “a heterogeneous, open structure... a multiple system, a system of various systems which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent”. The concept of the polysystem therefore combines a structuralist and functionalist approach with an emphasis on culture, which is seen as a dynamic, compound, diversified entity characterised by change both synchronically and diachronically (Codde, 2003:93). It should be emphasised, however, that the concept of the polysystem (or the system) is just that: a concept. In other words, polysystem theory does not view systems as realities or “facts”, but rather constructs them as heuristic tools that may be useful in understanding a particular aspect of the world (see Hermans, 1999:103). This “constructedness” of systems should be kept in mind in the discussion that follows.

In the conceptualisation of the literary polysystem, which consists of various literary systems, there is a continuous dynamic of change and struggle for the central position in the literary canon (Munday, 2008:108). This is what lies at the root of the understanding of the dynamic nature of the polysystem. As Even-Zohar (2005:42) explains it:

These systems are not equal, but hierarchized within the polysystem. It is the permanent tension between the various strata which constitutes the (dynamic) synchronic state of the system. It is the prevalence of one set of systemic options over another which constitutes the change on the diachronic axis. In this centrifugal vs. centripetal motion, systemic options may be driven from a central position to a marginal one while others may be pushed into the center.

---

1 Codde (2003:92) emphasises that polysystem theory extends beyond translation studies, into a comprehensive model aiming to explain the relationships among different cultural systems as well as among the subsystems of any cultural system. The focus in this discussion, however, is on the literary polysystem, and particularly on translation.

2 Hermans (1999:102) emphasises that the polysystem approach is one dimension of the descriptive approach, but that the latter does not presuppose the former (see also section 3.3). Chapter 8 and 9 in Hermans (1999) provides a more detailed overview of the relationship between the two approaches, as well as a historical overview of the development of polysystem theory and its relationship to other theoretical approaches.
and prevail. However, with a polysystem one must not think in terms of one center and one periphery, since several such positions are hypothesized.

Within the literary polysystem one may thus distinguish central and peripheral positions. However, the “occupants” of these positions are not fixed, and change in the literary polysystem is brought about by a constant tension between the literary systems occupying central and peripheral positions.

As a starting point, Even-Zohar (1978:13) points out that “one could suggest that the whole of non-canonized literature, literature for youth and children, epigonic literature3 and the whole corpus of translated literature be considered secondary systems”. As far as children’s literature is concerned, a number of researchers have investigated the secondary or marginal position of this system, in a number of different contexts (see for example Ben-Ari, 1992; Pascua-Febles, 2006; Shavit, 1986). Generally, there appears to be a consensus that children’s literature assumes a marginal position in most literary polysystems, with the possible exception of some of the “classics” of children’s literature (see Shavit, 1981). The position of translated literature, however, is more ambiguous. In his further discussion of translated literature, Even-Zohar (1978:22) explains that whether translated literature becomes central or peripheral in a given polysystem is a result of the particular circumstances operating in the polysystem. He delineates three instances in which translated literature may occupy the central position.

Firstly, translation may occupy a central position in a literary polysystem when a literature is “young” and still in the process of being established (Even-Zohar, 1978:23; Munday, 2008:109). In this instance translation is used as a means of elaborating the uses of the language as a literary language and creating literary products for a growing readership. Even-Zohar (1978:23) emphasises: “Since a young literature cannot create major texts in all genres and types immediately, it benefits from the experience of other literatures, and translated literature becomes in such a way one of its most important systems.” Secondly, translated literature may occupy a central position when a literature is peripheral or weak. This, as Munday (2008:109) points out, may happen when a smaller nation (or cultural group) is dominated by the culture of a larger one, and may also happen at different levels. The last instance in which translated literature may occupy a central position is in the case of “turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a literature” (Even-Zohar, 1978:23), when established models are regarded as insufficient, resulting in a vacuum that foreign models may easily permeate (Even-Zohar, 1978:24). Codde (2003:106) summarises these ideas: “In other words, systems in crisis, characterized by some kind of social or cultural anemia, are especially susceptible to change: to a reordering of the system’s internal structure (a migration of cultural elements between center and periphery) or to the intrusion of foreign elements from adjacent systems.”

In situations where translated literature occupies a dominant position, it plays an active role in modelling the centre of the polysystem. This means that translation is an innovatory force, taking part in major events in literary history. It also means, as Even-Zohar (1978:22) emphasises, that “no clear-cut distinction is then maintained between original and translated writings”. However, in situations where translated literature occupies a secondary position, it has no influence on literary processes in the centre, and is based on conventional norms in

---

3 Epigonic literature refers to literary works based on previously dominant norms that have become peripheral or obsolete, but that are still in use and still have a readership (Even-Zohar, 1978:12).
the target culture. In this instance, translated literature becomes essentially conservative (Even-Zohar, 1978:24). These possible positions obviously have far-reaching and complex potential effects on translation practice.

Even-Zohar (1978:25) regards the default or normal position of translated literature as peripheral or secondary. Given the generally accepted peripheral position of children's literature, it could therefore be argued, as Ben-Ari (1992:222) suggests, that translated children's literature is a kind of doubly marginalised or peripheralised literary system. However, Even-Zohar (1978:24) himself suggests that matters may not always be this simple or straightforward: “The hypothesis that translated literature may be either a primary or secondary system does not imply that it is always wholly the one or the other. As a system, translated literature is itself stratified...”

This idea of stratification within systems provides a useful point of departure for considering the South African situation regarding translated children's books. The findings from the questionnaires for publishers and translators presented in Chapter 2 suggest differences in attitudes towards and norms governing translation prevalent in different language groups. The various language groups in South Africa, and the fact that translation is done from locally produced as well as international source texts, immediately complicate any simple or straightforward positioning of translated children's literature in the South African literary polysystem. Given this complexity, there may be a number of ways of conceiving of the South African literary polysystem. Whichever conception is selected, it needs to reflect the importance of the multilingual situation in South Africa. In terms of the system of translated literature, such a conception also needs to take account of the clear differences that exist between translation into Afrikaans and translation into the African languages (see Chapter 2).

One way of conceptualising the South African literary polysystem would be to define the literatures of the 11 official languages as systems that coexist in a hierarchical formation, vying for dominance. At the moment, clearly, English occupies this dominant position, followed by Afrikaans, with the other literatures of the other languages arranged in a hierarchical relationship. Within each of these linguistically defined systems, there would be subsystems defined on the basis of genre and audience (for example, popular fiction, “serious” fiction, poetry, biography, children's literature). Within each of these, translated literature may form a sub-subsystem, occupying a more or less dominant position in the subsystem and system depending on the dynamics of the particular language. In addition, I believe it is necessary to distinguish a kind of macro-polysystem, which would include the globalised system of literature, of which the South African polysystem is just one component, and from whence source texts for translation are often drawn.4

This conceptual model may be visually presented as in Figure 1. It is important to keep in mind that this hierarchical model is intended merely as an outline of the different conceptual levels used in the discussion that follows. The actual realisation of the polysystem involves a further hierarchical differentiation at each conceptual level. In other words, at the level of the system, the three language groups would themselves be arranged in a particular hierarchical

---

4 Codde (2003:112) calls the same concept a “mega-polysystem”. He also outlines the infinite regression implied by this kind of structure, where “every subsystem of a polysystem is in itself a polysystem consisting of several polysystemic (sub)subsystems, while every mega-polysystem is the subsystem of a still larger entity” (Codde, 2003:112). For the purposes of the argument here, however, the levels are limited and circumscribed as in Figure 1.
formation at a particular point in time (a formation which is mutable due to the constant struggle for dominance in the system). The same is true for each of the other levels.

Figure 1: Hierarchical conceptualisation of the South African literary polysystem

This conceptualisation is useful for the purposes of this study, as it allows for distinctions and comparisons between:

1. the position of the children’s literature subsystem within each language group, and
2. the position of translation within the children’s literature subsystem within each language group.

Based on the conclusions reached in Chapter 2, it is therefore possible to surmise that translated children’s literature assumes a radically different position in Afrikaans and the African-languages literary systems. In the case of Afrikaans, translated children’s books occupy a peripheral position in the subsystem of children’s literature. It is regarded as supplementary to original Afrikaans writing for children. This affects the norms governing the translation process – a matter which is discussed in more detail in section 3.3.1.

In the case of the African languages, however, translated children’s books occupy a central and constitutive position in the subsystem of children’s literature. As is evident from Chapter 2, almost all children’s books (for ages 0 to 12) in the African languages are translations, with little original production. The literary system for the African languages, as a whole, and the children’s literature subsystem specifically, does conform to the three conditions under

---

5 And, furthermore, the literary systems of the various African languages would also be configured in a roughly hierarchical relationship.
6 Of course, the African-languages system is in reality nine separate literary systems. However, for the purposes of the argument here, they are grouped together since the distinctions between the systems of the various African languages do not form part of the main argument here.
7 For the purposes of this research, the focus will fall only on the second of these aspects.
which translation may occupy a central position in a literary polysystem outlined by Even-Zohar (1978:23-24). Firstly, the system of written African-language literature is comparatively young, and children’s literature especially is still in the process of being established. Translation is used as a way of making texts available to a growing readership—a readership that is, in this instance, largely created by the requirements of the educational discourse. Secondly, African-language literature in South Africa still, itself, occupies a peripheral or weak position in the South African literary polysystem, as is evident from the analysis of the publishing situation in South Africa presented in Chapter 2. Within this system, children’s literature occupies an even more peripheral position—hence, in the logic of the polysystem, the dominance of translation. Lastly, it may well be that the subsystem of children’s literature in the African languages does find itself at the kind of turning point, crisis or vacuum that Even-Zohar (1978:23) describes as the third condition for the dominance of translation in a literary polysystem. The requirements of the educational discourse have precipitated a kind of crisis in terms of the availability of reading materials in the African languages, and publishers have seized on translation as a way of dealing with this crisis in an economically viable way.\(^8\)

As in the case of children’s books translated into Afrikaans, the position of children’s books translated into the African languages in the polysystem has a definitive effect on the norms governing the translation process and product. This matter is discussed in more detail in section 3.3.1.

Even-Zohar’s (1990:31) adaptation of Roman Jakobson’s well-known model of communication suggests the power relationships linked to some of the above aspects.\(^9\) In Jakobson’s model, a sender and receiver exchange a message, which needs to be understood in a particular context, which is based on a shared code between the sender and receiver, and which is conditioned by a particular kind of contact. Even-Zohar (1990:31) reformulates the model as shown in Figure 2, with Jakobson’s original terms in brackets.

\[\text{INSTITUTION} \quad \text{[context]}\]
\[\text{REPERTOIRE} \quad \text{[codel]}\]
\[\text{PRODUCER} \quad \text{[addresser]} \quad \text{[addressee]} \quad \text{CONSUMER} \quad \text{["writer"] ["reader"]}\]
\[\text{MARKET} \quad \text{[contact/channel]}\]
\[\text{PRODUCT} \quad \text{[message]}\]

**Figure 2: Even-Zohar’s (1990:31) reformulation of Jakobson’s communication model**

As Codde (2003:94) points out, the radical change in the new model involves the replacement of “context” with “institution”, thus replacing the idea of referentiality (which Even-Zohar regards as of little importance) with the (to Even-Zohar) more important idea of

---

\(^8\) In this regard it is telling that Even-Zohar (1990:27) identifies these kinds of turning points and crises (if they can be managed by the system) as evidence of a vital rather than deteriorating system.

\(^9\) However, it should be emphasised that Even-Zohar does not primarily conceptualise his model in terms of power relationships, but rather in terms of interdependent relationships.
the institutional dimension of semiotic phenomena. Even-Zohar (1990:34) emphasises that all the factors in the model are interdependent, and explains:

Thus, a CONSUMER may “consume” a PRODUCT produced by a PRODUCER, but in order for the “product” (such as “text”) to be generated, a common REPERTOIRE must exist, whose usability is determined by some INSTITUTION. A MARKET must exist where such a good can be transmitted. None of the factors enumerated can be described to function in isolation, and the kind of relations that may be detected run across all possible axes of the scheme.

While Even-Zohar does not apply this model to translation specifically (he describes it as a model that is mainly focused on the macro-factors that play a role in the functioning of the literary system – Even-Zohar, 1990:32), the model may contribute to an understanding of the translation of children’s literature in the South African polysystem.

Firstly, the emphasis on the existence of a market is crucial, since it emphasises the role of market forces in literary production – and also in translation. In South Africa, the markets for children’s books in Afrikaans and in the African languages are clearly very different, with the African-language market at the moment being driven much more strongly by educational incentives than the Afrikaans market. This, as pointed out above and elaborated in Chapter 2, affects translation policies in institutions, in this instance, publishers. Other institutions that contribute to these policies are the government (in this case, specifically the educational institutions) and universities.

These policies have to do with the selection of texts, but also with translation strategies – related to what Even-Zohar (1990:39) calls repertoire. Repertoire may be regarded as the cumulative collection of rules and materials involved in the making and use of any product (Even-Zohar, 1990:39) – in this instance, translated children’s books. Even-Zohar (1990:37) emphasises the role of the institution as determining force in the process of selection from the repertoire, stating: “It is the institution which governs the norms prevailing in this activity [e.g., translation – HK], sanctioning some and rejecting others. Empowered by, and being part of, other dominating social institutions, it also remunerates and reprimands producers and agents.”

There is thus an inextricable link between the institution, the selection from the repertoire (done by the producers, which, in this instance, also include translators),10 the market, the consumer,11 and the final product. Simply stated, the market and the institution are intermediaries between social forces and repertoires, and both are social factors that affect the norms governing text selection and repertoire selection (see Codde, 2003:101).12 At this point, the question of norms becomes particularly important. As far as translation, 

10 Even-Zohar (2005:27) defines a producer as “an individual who produces, by actively operating a repertoire, either repetitively producible, or ‘new’ products”. In addition, he explains that production is not usually limited to a single producer; rather producers are better thought of as organised social communities involved in production. They therefore “already constitute part of both the literary institution and the literary market” (Even-Zohar, 1990:35).
11 Consumers, according to Codde (2003:101) consume a product by passively (in Even-Zohar’s sense, not in the more general sense) operating a repertoire. Like producers, consumers are individual as well as collective. In the latter instance they constitute the public. While Even-Zohar (1990:37) suggests that there is clearly a link between the collectivity of consumers and the other factors in the model, the exact nature of this link is not clear.
12 The issues of text selection and repertoire selection are addressed in practical terms by the textual analyses presented in Chapter 4.
specifically, is concerned, Even-Zohar (1978:22) touches on this idea in the following comment:

My argument is that translated works do correlate in at least two ways: (a) in the way they are selected by the target literature, the principles of selection never being uncorrelatable with the home co-systems (to put it in the mildest way); and (b) in the way they adopt specific norms, behaviors, and policies which are a result of their relations with the other co-systems. These are not confined to the linguistic level only, but are manifest on any selection level as well. Thus, translated literature may possess modelling principles of its own, which to a certain extent could even be exclusive to it.

The following section takes up the question of norms from the viewpoint of Toury’s (1995, 2004) descriptive translation studies, specifically focusing on his ideas regarding norms and laws of translation, and points out where (and possibly why) the situation in South Africa departs from these proposed laws. It is postulated that matters of ideology and power, particularly related to the idiosyncratic postcolonial situation in South Africa, complicate the scenario.

3.3 The descriptive approach: Gideon Toury

In his outline of the relationship between the function, product and process in translation, Toury (1995:13) echoes much of the work of Even-Zohar. He argues that the systemic position and function of a translation in the target culture determines its appropriate surface realisation, which in turn governs the translation strategies (see Figure 3).

![Figure 3: The relations between function, product and process in translation (adapted from Toury, 1995:13)](image)

In developing descriptive translation studies as a systematic approach to the study of translation, one of Toury’s key interests is to investigate the process of translation by means of a combination of contextual and textual analysis. Munday (2008:111) explains that the ultimate aim of Toury’s (1995) approach is “to distinguish trends of translation behaviour, to make generalizations regarding the decision-making processes of the translator and then to ‘reconstruct’ the norms that have been in operation in the translation and make hypotheses that can be tested by future descriptive studies”. In this a kind of “reverse engineering” process is followed (Hermans, 1999:23), whereby the artefact (usually translations themselves, but also statements about translation by, for example, translators) is analysed on
the assumption that the evidence of the ways in which problems have been solved in the translation process reflects the decision-making process involved in translation, and the norms operative in translation.

Hermans (1985:10-11), while emphasising the diversity contained within descriptive and systems approaches, succinctly summarises the key principles of the approach:

What they have in common is, briefly, a view of literature as a complex and dynamic system; a conviction that there should be a continual interplay between theoretical models and practical case studies; an approach to literary translation which is descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systemic; and an interest in the norms and constraints that govern the production and reception of translations, in the relation between translation and other types of text processing, and in the place and role of translations both within a given literature and in the interaction between literatures.\footnote{See Hermans (1999:32-45) for an in-depth analysis of this brief definition.}

In the section that follows, the strand of investigation focusing on norms is pursued in more detail.

\subsection*{3.3.1 Translation norms}

Before discussing Toury’s (1995) application of the concept of “norms” to translation specifically, some clarification of the concept as it is used here, and its relation to the broad systemic approach followed in this chapter is required. Figure 3, and Toury’s usage of terms like “determines” and “governs” suggests a rather deterministic, and even behaviourist view of how position in the polysystem relates to the translation process, translators’ decision-making processes, and the norms involved in translation. Hermans (1999:75) points out this difficulty in Toury’s earlier work:

His initial approach was behaviourist: when we observe regularities in a translator’s conduct, we may go on to inquire how to account for them. If we disregard regularities attributable to structural differences between the languages involved and focus on non-obligatory choices, we can look for external, socio-cultural constraints to explain the recurrent preferences which translators show. These constraints Toury calls norms.

Toury’s (1995) usage of the term “norm”, then, needs to be distinguished from the prescriptive use of the term in the sense that Toury and other descriptive theorists are not interested in validating or expounding particular prescriptions and proscriptions for translation, but are simply interested in describing these norms as they emerge from an analysis of translated texts.

While the descriptive approach in itself therefore clearly eschews a normative or prescriptive function for the theoretical approach itself, the prescriptive element of the norm concept remains central in descriptive translation studies. Toury (1995:54-55) defines norms as “the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community – as to what is right or wrong, adequate or inadequate – into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations”.\footnote{Norms thus clearly have a social dimension. However, it may also be argued that some norms have a cognitive dimension, specifically the operational norms. The translator’s decision-making process is cognitively determined as much as socially affected. This issue is not argued in further detail here, though it is touched upon again later in this chapter.} As far as translation is concerned, these “performance instructions” guide the transformation of one text (itself an embodiment not only of a particular language...
and culture, but also of a particular, related set of norms) into another text that will fulfil the culturally and linguistically normative requirements of the target culture and language (Toury, 1995:56).

To return to the problem of determinism (also evident in the definitions above), as Hermans (1999:79-80) points out, a problem for norm theory in translation studies is to set the regulatory aspect of norms against “the translator’s intentionality, and thus to balance constraint with agency. After all, translators do not just mechanically respond to nods and winks, they also act with intent”. Against this background, it should therefore be noted that while the largely prescriptive and conventionalised nature of norms is accepted in this study, the relationship between systemic position, norms and translators’ decision-making is not understood in a deterministic and behaviourist way (even when terminology suggests so). Rather, a more integrative and probabilistic understanding of the relationship between various contextual aspects, norms and the translator’s decision-making process informs the discussion, as will become evident in the sections that follow. Norms, in this understanding, are more like conditioning factors among a number of probabilities and less like irrevocable determinants.

Having more clearly set out the understanding of the norm concept informing this research, the argument can now return to Toury’s (1995) analysis of norms in translation. In Toury’s estimation, translation is an activity governed by norms, and analysis of the translation product provides insight into the norms governing the translation process as well as the decision-making process of the translator (Munday, 2008:112). There is also another way in which insights regarding the norms governing translation may be reconstructed, namely by collecting explicit statements about norms made by translators, publishers, reviewers and others involved in the translation process (Hermans, 1999:85; Munday, 2008:112). It should be noted that Toury (1995:65) is doubtful of the validity of such explicit statements, since they may be incomplete or biased. This is a valid concern, which is why this study depends on a multidimensional investigation, utilising a kind of triangulation to validate and elaborate the findings of the questionnaires for publishers and translators. Thus, the findings of the survey of publishers and translators and the analysis of publication data presented in Chapter 2 are correlated with the textual analyses in Chapter 4.

Toury (1995:56-61; see Hermans, 1999:75-76) distinguishes three broad categories of norms: the basic initial norm, preliminary norms and operational norms. These three categories may be briefly defined as follows:

- **The basic initial norm:** This refers to the translator’s basic choice between an orientation towards the norms of the source text, or the norms of the target culture (Toury, 1995:56). In the former instance, the translator chooses to subject the translation process and product to the norms of the source text, language and culture. In the latter instance, the translator selects to align the translation with the norms of the target language and culture. Toury (1995:56-57) seems to suggest that the two orientations are not mutually exclusive, but rather coexist in particular formations: “…whereas adherence to source norms determines a translation’s adequacy as compared to the source text, subscription to norms originating in the target culture determines its acceptability”. Toury’s ideas of adequacy and acceptability are closely aligned to the tensions between foreignisation (as an essentially source-text oriented approach) and domestication (as an essentially target-text oriented approach). Parallels with Even-Zohar’s (1978:22)
innovation” and “conservatism” are also invited (see section 3.2). This binary “alignment” of basic orientations to translation is addressed in more detail in section 3.3, and questioned by the argument in section 3.4 and 3.5.\(^{15}\)

- **Preliminary norms:** Preliminary norms include two aspects. The first is translation policy, which Toury (1995:58) takes to refer to the factors that determine which texts are selected for translation (and thus for import into a particular culture). The second aspect involves a number of questions surrounding the directness of the translation, and also (by extension) the visibility of translation. Toury (1995:58) outlines some of these questions: “[I]s indirect translation permitted at all? In translating from what source languages/texts-types/periods (etc.) is it permitted/prohibited/tolerated/preferred? What are the permitted/prohibited/tolerated/preferred mediating languages? Is there a tendency/obligation to mark a translated work as having been mediated, or is this fact ignored/camouflaged/denied?”

- **Operational norms:** According to Toury (1995:58), operational norms direct the decision-making process of the translator. Two subcategories of operational norms may be distinguished: matricial norms and textual-linguistic norms. Matricial norms have an effect on the completeness of the translation, the location or distribution of target-language material in the translation, and the textual segmentation (Toury, 1995:58-59). Textual-linguistic norms govern the selection of linguistic formulations in the target language to replace the linguistic formulations of the source text.

As far as the norms governing the translation of children’s books in South Africa are concerned, the results of the questionnaires (reported in Chapter 2) suggest significant differences between translation into Afrikaans and translation into the African languages. These differences may be ascribed to the different polysystemic positions that translation assumes for the different language groups, as outlined in section 3.2.\(^{16}\)

In the case of Afrikaans children’s literature, translation assumes a peripheral position. Translations are therefore regarded as supplementary to the production of original material. As a consequence, many Afrikaans translators and publishers advocate a source-text oriented approach or a text-dependent decision about cultural adaptation or foreignisation, since there is sufficient original production providing children with material related to the familiar cultural milieu (see Chapter 2). The position of Afrikaans translated children’s literature in the polysystem may therefore affect the basic initial norm in the sense that translators and publishers are more likely to either advocate a source-text oriented approach (to enrich and diversify the corpus of Afrikaans children’s literature and children’s reading experiences) or to advocate a highly individualised text-dependent decision about whether to align the translation with source-text or target-culture norms. This contrasts sharply with the case of children’s literature translated into the African languages, with African-language translators apparently more inclined to endorse a target-culture oriented approach of adaptation and domestication, for reasons elaborated in Chapter 2. It appears that the fact that translated texts occupy a central position in the subsystem of African-language children’s literature (with little original production in the African languages) has a profound effect on translators’ expression of the basic initial norm they ascribe to, compelling

\(^{15}\) See Hermans (1999:76-77) for criticism of the “adequacy” vs “acceptability” concepts. This matter is taken up again in section 3.3.3, 3.4 and 3.5, and is therefore not explored in further detail here.

\(^{16}\) The questionnaires solicited information pertaining specifically to the basic initial norm, and the preliminary norms. The operational norms will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, dealing with the text analyses. Chapter 4 also provides a text-based investigation of the preliminary norms.
translators to favour a target-culture oriented approach to ensure that young readers have access to reading material that reflects their lived experience.

This polysystemic position also affects the preliminary norms. In terms of the selection of texts, most publishers indicated that educational concerns play an important role in choosing texts for translation. Only three publishers did not choose educational concerns as a motivating factor for the selection of particular texts for translation, and two of these three were the predominantly Afrikaans publishers. As argued in Chapter 2, it appears that a different dynamic drives the selection of texts for translation in Afrikaans and in the African languages. Afrikaans publishers feel that they can choose texts that either enrich the indigenously produced Afrikaans literature, or fill particular lacunae in this literature. In the case of the African languages, however, there is a more direct and urgent educational incentive driving text selection.

While no specific questions regarding the directness of translation were asked in the questionnaires, it appears that most translation into Afrikaans is done directly, without a mediating language. However, in the case of the African languages, English is often used as a mediating language, as elaborated in Chapter 2. In addition, this mediation is often covert, in the same way that the fact of translation itself is often covert. This contrasts sharply with the situation in Afrikaans, where translation is almost universally acknowledged.17

This brief (and limited outline) of the norms that seem to be operative in the translation of children's literature into Afrikaans and the African languages suggests a problematisation of the model of Even-Zohar (1978), who aligns the peripheral position of translation with “conservatism” and the central position of translation with “innovation” (see section 3.2). This problematisation becomes more apparent when the ideas of Even-Zohar are correlated with Toury's proposed laws of translation.

3.3.2 Laws of translation

The step that, for Toury, logically follows from the delineation of norms governing translation (based on individual cultural and textual comparative analyses) is the formulation of generalised laws of translation.18 Toury (1995:267-279) proposes two tentative laws:

- **The law of growing standardisation:** This law states that “in translation, textual relations obtaining in the original are often modified, sometimes to the point of being totally ignored, in favour of [more] habitual options offered by a target repertoire” (Toury, 1995:268). Essentially, then, there is a move towards target-culture options, a loss of source-text patterns, and a selection of linguistic options that are more common in the target language (Munday, 2008:114), so that translations often manifest greater standardisation and generalisation than their source texts (Toury, 1995:268).
- **The law of interference:** According to this law, “in translation, phenomena pertaining to the make-up of the source text tend to be transferred to the target text” (Toury, 1995:275). This law includes two dimensions: negative transfer and positive transfer. The first refers to deviations from habitual, codified practices in the target system, while the

---

17 See Chapter 4, where this matter is taken up in the textual analyses dealing with the paratexts of a sample of children’s books.
18 Hermans (1999:92) is particularly critical and sceptical of the “quest for laws along these lines”. His criticism is valid, but for the purpose of the argument here, Toury’s (1995) line of argumentation is followed for the moment.
second involves the “greater likelihood of selecting features which do exist and are used in any case” (Toury, 1995:275).

However, both these laws are conditionalised or probabilistic (Hermans, 1999:92). Apart from the individual or cognitive variables that influence a translation (Toury, 1995:270), the position of translation in the polysystem has a determining effect on the effect of the law. In the case of the first law, Toury (1995:271) postulates that the more peripheral the status of translation in the polysystem, “the more translation will accommodate itself to established models and repertoires”. The case of the second law is slightly more complex. Toury (1995:275-276) emphasises that the law of interference is the external result of a general cognitive law, additionally postulating that “the more the make-up of a text is taken as a factor in the formulation of its translation, the more the target text can be expected to show traces of interference” (Toury, 1995:276). However, he also points out the conditioning role of socio-cultural factors, particularly the relative prestige of cultures and languages as perceived from the target system, and the power relations that have a bearing on the relationships between cultures and languages. Specifically, Toury (1995:278) argues that “tolerance of interference – and hence the endurance of its manifestations – tend to increase when translation is carried out from a ‘major’ or highly prestigious language/culture, especially if the target language/culture is ‘minor’, or ‘weak’ in any other sense”.

In summary, then, Toury’s laws appear to echo and elaborate the ideas of Even-Zohar. Even though their terminology is different, both suggest that socioliterary and sociocultural factors affect translators’ decision-making. Even-Zohar (1978:25-26) argues that if translation occupies a central position in the literary polysystem, translators do not feel the imperative to adhere to target-culture models, which results in a translation that aligns itself with adequacy (in Toury’s sense). However, if translation occupies a peripheral position in the literary polysystem, translators feel compelled to find the best existing domestic models for the translated text, thus creating a translation that approaches non-adequacy (Even-Zohar, 1978:26), or put differently, acceptability rather than adequacy. In Even-Zohar’s (1978:26) argument, the link between translation norms and behaviour, and position in the polysystem is clear: “In other words, not only is the socio-literary status of translation dependent upon its position within the polysystem but the very practice of translation is strongly subordinated to it.”

Toury’s ideas of adequacy and acceptability as the visible results of the initial norm at work are clearly closely related to this. His proposed laws function in a similar source versus target orientation, and develops a similar probabilistic if... then approach.

### 3.3.3 The limitations of laws, norms and systems

From the work of Toury and Even-Zohar a kind of binary\(^9\) and conditionalised matrix emerges, even though both take care to say that the two dimensions or positions are not mutually exclusive. A very simplified model summarising these tensions is presented in Figure 4.

---
\(^9\) While this binary system is accepted here for the purposes of the argument at this point, it is argued in section 3.4 and 3.5 that this kind of binary conception of translation does not hold in the South African context.
A theoretical framework: the cultural and ideological dimension

Figure 4: Visual summary of Even-Zohar and Toury's ideas regarding polysystemic position and translation orientation

However, as already pointed out, the inverse appears to be the case from responses to the questionnaire for publishers and translators discussed in Chapter 2. In the Afrikaans literary system, translation occupies a peripheral position in the subsystem of children’s literature. Yet translators advocate a source-text orientation (or a flexible and individualised text-dependent decision about source-text or target-culture orientation), with a concomitant emphasis on adequacy and stronger presence of the law of interference. In the African-languages literary system, translation occupies a central position in the subsystem of children’s literature. Yet, contrary to Even-Zohar and Toury’s probabilistic laws or conditionalised predictions, translators seem to advocate a target-culture orientation, with an emphasis on acceptability and a stronger stress on the law of standardisation. Even though the situation for translation into African languages does conform to Toury’s condition that translation is carried out from a more prestigious to a less prestigious language, and into a literary system that is weak, translators do not seem to demonstrate the greater tolerance for interference suggested by Toury’s law.

Why would this be? It is important to note that Toury (2004:29) explains that the notion of a law “has the possibility of exception built into it... it should always be possible to explain away (seeming) exceptions to a law with the help of another law, operating on another level”. He also, crucially, explains that:

There is no doubt a vast array of factors which have the capacity to influence the selection of a particular translational behavior or its avoidance. Although we have no real list, it is clear that this array is heterogeneous in its very nature: some of the variables are cognitive, others cross-linguistic or socio-cultural, and there are no doubt more. Due to this vastness and heterogeneity, there can be no deterministic explanation in Translation Studies. First of all, there seems to be no single factor which cannot be enhanced, mitigated, maybe even offset by the presence of another. Secondly, the different variables are present (and active) all at once rather than one by one, so that there are always several factors interacting, and hence influencing each other as well as the selected behavior.
The situation for the translation of children’s books in South Africa is obviously more complicated than a simple, one-dimensional if 1 then 2 proposition could account for. There are many more variables than the ones that have been considered so far, which mostly relate to position in the polysystem. A much more elaborate proposition would actually be required, along the lines of Toury’s (2004:26) formulation: If 1 and 2, and 3, and ... ∞, then there is great likelihood that X. Or, an even more nuanced example which also suggests the interaction between variables and their relative importance: If 1 and 2, then the likelihood that X is greater than if only 1, and it is even greater when 3 is present too. The effect of 3 may be so strong that it completely overrides 1 (Toury, 2004:26).

It is not within the scope of this study to consider all possible variables that may affect the norms governing South African translators’ decision-making in the process of the translation of children’s books into various languages. For instance, cognitive and cross-linguistic variables fall largely outside the scope of this part of the study, which has a more socio-cultural emphasis. But even within the socio-cultural domain, there are likely to be a vast number of variables. The following section explores one other socio-cultural-linguistic variable that may be used to account for the exceptions to Toury’s laws of translation evident from South African translators’ and publishers’ opinions about the translation of children’s books. It will also be argued that this variable, in fact, has the potential of destabilising the entire binary conceptualisation of translation that results from the essentially polysystemic approach outlined above. This variable has to do with ideology, power differentials and socio-political relationships among languages in the specifically postcolonial South African context.

3.4 Postcolonial approaches: power, ideology and language

3.4.1 The roles of ideology in translation

While the work of descriptive polysystem theorists like Even-Zohar and Toury has been crucial in shifting the focus away from static and text-based approaches to translation studies towards a more dynamic, social and culturally aware approach, Munday (2008:115) points out that Toury’s earlier work did, in some instances, run the risk of overlooking “some of the complex ideological and political factors such as the status of the ST in its own culture, the source culture’s possible promotion of translation of its own literature and the effect that translation might exert back on the system of the source culture”. Other scholars have levelled similar criticisms against polysystem theory. Hermans (1999:159-160) states that translation studies generally “but the descriptive school in particular, urgently needs to take account of developments in some of the more vigorous intellectual and social movements of our time, including gender studies, poststructuralism, postcolonial and cultural studies, and the new interdisciplinarity invading the human sciences”. Venuti (1998:29) is more explicit in his criticism:

Toury’s method... must still turn to cultural theory in order to assess the significance of the data, to analyze the norms. Norms may be in the first instance linguistic or literary, but they will also include a diverse range of domestic values, beliefs, and social representations which carry ideological force in serving the interests of specific groups. And they are always housed in the

---

20 See Chapter 11 of Hermans (1999) and Buzelin (2005) for other criticisms of the descriptive approach and specifically systems theory.
social institutions where translations are produced and enlisted in cultural and political agendas.\textsuperscript{21}

Contemporary assessments of polysystem theory, and the descriptive approach generally, (see for example Hermans, 1999) therefore suggest that these approaches form part of a continuous process of “expansion and displacement” (Hermans, 1999:15), in which descriptive approaches like polysystem theory are both integrated in and questioned by more recent ideological and also sociological theories.\textsuperscript{22} The current study wishes to contribute to this process of simultaneous “expansion and displacement” by situating a descriptive and polysystemic approach in the bigger context of postcolonial discourse, specifically against the background of the South African situation.

The work of Lefevere (1992) constitutes one example of such an ideologically sensitive approach. Hermans (1999:125) points out that the main difference between Even-Zohar’s and Lefevere’s concepts of the system lies in the latter’s emphasis on the interaction between the system and the environment, the internal organisation of the system, as well as control mechanisms that affect the system. The aspect of control mechanisms is of particular importance for this study.

Lefevere (1992:11-40; see Munday, 2008:126-127) argues that there are three main factors that control the literary system (in which translation, as a kind of rewriting, takes place):

- professionals in the literary system (i.e. translators who make decisions regarding the poetics and ideology of a translation, and reviewers, teachers and critics who determine the dissemination of and response to a translation)
- patronage outside the literary system (i.e. the extraliterary persons or institutions who determine the production and distribution of translation, such as publishers, the media, a political party, the educational establishment, academia)
- the dominant poetics (i.e. the literary devices available to producers of literature, and the prevalent concept of the role of literature).

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that all three these factors play an important role in the production of translated children’s books in South Africa. In particular, it appears that the translation of children’s books in South Africa hinges on patronage outside the literary system, with the educational establishment playing a particularly crucial role, especially for the African languages. Lefevere (1992:16) identifies three elements involved in this patronage from outside the literary system. The key element is that of ideology, which “constrains the choice of subject and the form of its presentation” (Munday, 2008:126). Furthermore, extraliterary patronage also has an economic component, which involves financial reward for the producers of texts, and a status component, which reflects the worth or value assigned to the literary product in the system (the economic and status components are closely related to the Bourdieusian concept of capital, both in the economic and the symbolic sense – see Gouanvic, 2005:161-162).

\textsuperscript{21} See also Weissbrod (2008:52).
\textsuperscript{22} The more recent integration of sociological theories, particularly the work of Pierre Bourdieu, in translation studies, is also crucial in this regard (see, for example, Buzelin, 2005; Gouanvic, 2005; Inghilleri, 2005; Simeoni, 1998). Bourdieu’s ideas regarding the relationship between field, habitus and capital offer a potentially meaningful angle of interpretation for this study. However, this angle is not pursued here, but is briefly explored as a further avenue of research in Chapter 5.
In the context of the translation of South African children’s books, the three components of patronage are strongly interwoven, with ideology playing a key role. In all cases, ideology influences the selection of texts for translation as well as the translation strategies chosen by the translator – or, formulated somewhat differently, the norms governing the translation process. It will be argued in more detail in section 3.4.2 that it is the particular configuration of power differentials and ideology in postcolonial South Africa that (at least in part) accounts for translators’ opinions regarding which strategies are more appropriate for the translation of children’s books.

The issues of remuneration and status warrant brief consideration here, since an analysis of the situation in this regard sheds additional light on the different positions of Afrikaans and the African languages in the polysystem of South African (children’s) literature. As argued above, the position of translators who translate children’s books into the African languages often remains covert and even wholly unacknowledged. However, translators working into Afrikaans are often acknowledged, and even quite well known, particularly also since there is a bigger market for Afrikaans translations outside the educational environment, which also includes translations of international bestsellers like the Harry Potter series. As a result, translations into Afrikaans (and their translators) generally enjoy a higher status than translations into the African languages (and their translators).23

In terms of the economic component of patronage, it should be noted that (with the possible exception of translated bestsellers), South African translators generally are paid a translation fee, rather than royalties. This means that in the case of the production of children’s books in the African languages, translators are usually paid a once-off translation fee, while royalties for translated books accrue to the original (English) authors. The power imbalance between the various South African languages is therefore also visible in this regard.24

The following section turns its attention more specifically to the issue of ideology, in particular taking up positions from postcolonial translation theory to add to the system of probabilities that condition Toury’s laws of translation in order to account for the ways in which the South African situation appears to not correspond to Toury’s laws (as outlined in section 3.3.2), and, in fact, problematises the entire system of oppositions outlined in section 3.3.3 and Figure 4.

3.4.2 Sociolinguistic imbalances, domestication and foreignisation in the postcolonial South African context

Bassnett and Trivedi (1999a:2) emphasise that translation “is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems”. The hierarchical organisation of

---

23 See Chapter 4 for an analysis of paratextual information linked to the visibility and status of the translator in the sample of children’s books selected for this study.

24 It should be noted that the questionnaires did not solicit remuneration information as it was foreseen that publishers and translators might feel compromised by the solicitation of such information. The interpretation provided in this paragraph is thus based on personal experience and anecdotal evidence. A number of translators were asked how they were usually remunerated – most indicated a once-off fee. An African-language translator was particularly adamant about the unjustness of a situation in which large series of originally English-language readers are translated into the African languages, with royalties of sales on all books (regardless of language) continuing to accrue to the original authors while translators are paid a once-off fee. Furthermore, despite the fact that translation into the African languages often involves adaptation and rewriting, translators are not always acknowledged.
the literary systems associated with the various languages in South Africa has already been discussed in section 3.2. This section aims to cast the situation in specifically postcolonial terms, by foregrounding more explicitly the postcolonial and neocolonial linguistic situation in South Africa, and its consequences for the norms involved in the translation of children’s books. Tymoczko (1999b:293) points out that there is a evident relationship between polysystem theory and postcolonial approaches to translation, since the latter extends the former by offering particular examples that highlight differences in the status and systemic positions of cultures and languages, which have profound implications for translation on both the macro- and the micro-level.

The issue of domestication and foreignisation resurfaces at this point in the discussion, though the argument here will extend beyond a discussion of the conflict between the two strategies, and problematise the dichotomous conceptualisation of the terms as part of a move towards an understanding of translations (in the case of South African children’s books specifically) as essentially hybrid and dynamic postcolonial entities.

Specifically, two main points will be argued in this section:

- African-language and Afrikaans translators’ divergent opinions about whether a source- or target-culture orientation (or foreignisation or domestication; or Toury’s basic initial norm) is preferable for the translation of children’s books may be ascribed to the effects of the postcolonial and neocolonial ideological environment of South Africa. These ideological influences explain the apparent contradiction between the results from the questionnaires and Toury’s conditionalised laws of translation, and should therefore be factored into the set of probabilities that conditionalise the laws to account for the particular situation in South Africa.

- However, the hybridisation resulting from domestic multilingualism and multiculturalism and the pervasiveness of global culture in South Africa creates a situation where the domestic and the foreign are no longer easily distinguishable, which, by extension, problematises conceptions of domestication and foreignisation in the South African context. It is therefore hypothesised that despite translators’ ideologically founded opinions about source- and target-culture orientation (the initial norm as expressed in translators’ opinions), their translation practice (or the operational norms as expressed in the text) will be characterised by a large degree of hybridity, with both domestication and foreignisation being evident in an interplay of strategies. This hypothesis is tested in the textual analyses presented in Chapter 4.

Bassnett and Trivedi (1999a:3) point out the complicity of translation and the colonial project (see also Robinson, 1997a). Translation has been instrumental in constructing “images” of both coloniser and colonised in order to validate and further the colonial project (see Lefevere, 1999; Niranjana, 1992; Tymoczko, 1999b). Moreover, the processes of selecting texts for translation have been profoundly imbricated in colonial ideology – including or excluding texts from European consumption based on their potential to further the colonial cause. Part of this is, as Bassnett and Trivedi (1999a:5) note, that translation has, for a long period of time, been a one-way process, with texts being translated into European languages for European consumption. In the colonial context, translation has therefore often pertinently not played its popularly imagined role of facilitating a two-way process of cultural exchange. Niranjana (1992:2) extends the point: “Translation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate
under colonialism.” Translation is therefore not only influenced by these asymmetrical relations of power, but in itself contributes to their continued existence.

In the postcolonial (and neocolonial) world, much of these power relations continue to replicate themselves, so that translation often remains a kind of cultural colonisation (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999a:5). The case of “international children’s literature” illustrates this point. Garrett (1996, quoted in Stan, 1999:168) points out that in the USA, the concept of “international” children’s literature is used ethnocentrically to refer to “all the children’s books in the world that are not ‘ours’”. In this view, children’s books from other/Other places in the world are selected and translated on the basis of providing American children with particular, ideologically acceptable versions of or perspectives on cultural difference, perspectives that function to keep the ideological status quo intact. Stan (1999:174-175) emphasises:

 This hegemony of language, culture, and political climate permeates the international fare to which American children are exposed, influencing both the books that are brought to the United States and the form in which they are published. Generally speaking, American publishers choose to publish international books of two kinds: either “the best” in their own countries (often prize winners) or books with universal storylines and generic settings that could be construed as American. The books in the latter category far outnumber those in the first...

Of course matters are not as clear-cut as the above suggests. Convenient dichotomies between “self” and “other”, “coloniser” and “colonised”, “centre” and “margin”, and, indeed, “domestication” and “foreignisation” are, inevitably, a simplification of actual situations. Viswanatha and Simon (1999:162) comment that translations “enter into relations of transfer whose results are not entirely predictable. It is because they are products of the interaction between cultures of unequal power, bearing the weight of shifting terms of exchange, that translations provide an especially revealing entry point into the dynamics of cultural identity-formation in the colonial and post-colonial context”.

These “cultures of unequal power” cannot be conceptualised in terms of simple dichotomies. Inequalities of power are not solely located on the national level, but exist within countries, nations and communities. Increasingly, postcolonial studies is taking cognisance of the fact that “the other” or “the colonised” cannot be regarded as a homogenised and singular group of people (Tymoczko, 1999b:15). Rather, there needs to be an awareness of the multiplicity of power differentials, on a local as well as a global scale. In this, the issue of relationships of power between different languages (and, of course, cultures) is crucial. As Bassnett and Trivedi (1999a:13) explain: “Meanwhile, however, the old business of translation as traffic between languages still goes on in the once-and-still-colonized world, reflecting more acutely than ever before the asymmetrical power relationship between the various local ‘vernaculars’ (i.e. the languages of the slaves, etymologically speaking) and the one master-language of our post-colonial world, English.”

Various other translation scholars also comment on these tensions. Niranjana (1992:48) argues that translation studies has been by and large unaware that the power differentials between languages involved in translation need to be taken into consideration. These power imbalances most obviously involve tensions between national and local languages and English, but in multilingual countries, like South Africa, there are additional complicated
and crucial interlinguistic dynamics. Tymoczko (1999a:32) remarks on the tension between the internationalisation of literature and “American cultural and economic hegemony”, and also points out that conventional oppositional conceptions of source and target languages and cultures, and the domestic and foreign, do not always hold:

Issues about intended audience are often deceptive; for example, paradoxically translations are at times produced for the source culture itself when, say, a colonial language has become the lingua franca of a multicultural emergent nation or of a culture that has experienced a linguistic transition of some sort. The most efficient way of addressing such a nation after a colonial period may be through translation into the colonizer’s language. A translation of this type, however, is produced within an ideological climate that is quite different from a translation oriented primarily at an international audience, and the translation strategies are, accordingly, divergent (Tymoczko, 1999a:31).

Bassnett and Trivedi (1999a:11) provide another example of complicated interlinguistic dynamics in their comment that in India most translations now are done from one Indian language to others; this clearly problematises a view of translation as negotiating tensions between a simplified and homogenised foreign and an equally simplified and homogenised domestic. This has significant implications for the translation strategies chosen, particularly when these are viewed in the paradigm of domestication versus foreignisation (or, indeed, other binary paradigms that hinge on the familiar/strange opposition). Ultimately, as will be argued below, the complexities of power relationships between languages and cultures in and around the multilingual South African environment complicate the relationship between the domestic and the foreign, and affect perceptions about domestication versus foreignisation while simultaneously problematising the distinction between the two. The norms that operate in translation, and the possible formulation of laws of translation that may result from them, are thus profoundly affected by the uniquely postcolonial and neocolonial power relationships between languages and cultures in South Africa.

In the very first instance, it seems clear that translators’ opinions about whether domestication or foreignisation is the best approach for the translation of children’s books in South Africa (in other words, their formulation of the initial norm at work) may be linked to translators’ ideological beliefs, which (at least in part) spring from their subject positions as participants in postcolonial and neocolonial culture. Viewed from a postcolonial perspective, African-language translators’ preference for cultural adaptation and domestication may be (broadly) read as informed by a spirit of abrogation (see Ashcroft et al., 1989:38–77), or resistance against the hegemony of powerful colonial and neocolonial languages and cultures by means of a “refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard ...” (Ashcroft et al., 1989:38). Because of the lack of status and power associated with the African languages, translators who translate children’s books into these languages feel the need to assert the value and importance of their culture and language by means of cultural adaptation and domestication. Domestication, here, becomes a strategy of resistance against the dominance of colonial and neocolonial language and culture.

---

25 Viswanatha and Simon (1999:164) point out a similar situation in India, stating that these “crucial interlinguistic dynamics have yet to be given sufficient attention by theoreticians of post-colonial literary relations”. Similarly, Weissbrod (2008) presents an analysis of the implications of multiculturalism and multilingualism in the context of translation in Israel.
Afrikaans translators are much more open to source-text oriented, foreignising approaches, and also advocate more flexible, individual decisions about whether a translation should adhere to source-text norms or to target-culture norms. At least in part this may be ascribed to the relatively strong and secure position of Afrikaans in the South African publishing industry and in South African society more broadly, and the fact that Afrikaans, despite its association with the oppressive mechanisms of apartheid, continues to fulfill high-level, high-status functions in South African society. As such, translators seem to consider translation, broadly, in the spirit of appropriation (see Ashcroft et al., 1989:38-77) so that translation is viewed as a way of broadening and enriching the reading experience of Afrikaans children by introducing them to what is new and different while remaining anchored in what is familiar. To some degree, this openness to foreignisation may also be linked to the shared history of Afrikaans with European language and culture, and a generally perceived alignment of Afrikaans with European rather than African languages.

To return to Toury’s ideas of conditionalised laws for translation, it would therefore appear that South African (and especially African-language) translators’ views on whether domestication or foreignisation is the more appropriate strategy for the translation of children’s books are deeply informed by an awareness of postcolonial and neocolonial tensions and difficulties. In a sense, then, these ideological factors affect the system of probabilities that condition Toury’s laws (and the related ideas of Even-Zohar), effectively switching the probability of adherence to source-text or target-culture norms around.

Based on the above generalisations, the remainder of this section considers the issue of domestication and foreignisation in more detail. It should already be apparent that while translators and scholars alike often consider the domestic and the foreign as separate and easily distinguishable categories, this is not necessarily the case. In what follows, it will be argued that, despite the (ideologically founded) preferences for domestication and foreignisation expressed by different groups of South African children’s book translators, the multilingual and multicultural nature of South Africa in fact problematises distinctions between the domestic and the foreign – and between domestication and foreignisation.

As has been pointed out in Chapter 1, the tension between source-text orientation (foreignisation) and target-text orientation (acculturation or domestication) is a central concern in the study of translated children’s literature. Bassnett (2005:120-121), speaking of news translation, simplifies the issue in the following way:

... the issue hinges on whether a translator should seek to eradicate traces of otherness in a text so as to reshape that text for home consumption in accordance with the norms and expectations that prevail in the target system, or whether to opt for a strategy that adheres more closely to the norms of the source system... foreignization ensures that a text is self-consciously other, so that readers can be in no doubt that what they are encountering derives from a completely different system, in short that it contains traces of a foreignness that mark it as distinct from anything produced from within the target culture.

It should be emphasised that at this point the argument is based only on translators’ opinions, as evident from the questionnaires.

Apart from the sources already cited in Chapter 1, see also Naudé (2005). Despite his discussion of trends in South African translation as involving rehabilitation of the target culture, subversion of the source culture, resistance against the target culture, enrichment of the dominated culture and translation for the global culture, he appears to accept the opposition between domestication and foreignisation in relatively unproblematised terms (see specifically the discussion of foreignisation and resistant translation studies in Naudé, 2005:32-33).
The tension between foreignisation and domestication has been a staple of debates in translation studies for centuries (see Bassnett, 2005:120), but remains particularly topical, especially in a postcolonial context like South Africa. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the domestication versus foreignisation debate in the context of children's literature. It should be clear from the overview there that most translators and scholars favour a target-text orientation for the translation of children's literature. However, following the lead of Venuti (1995, 1998), others (see Yamazaki, 2002) argue that domesticating approaches neutralise or reduce cultural difference. Venuti (1995:20) favours foreignising strategies as a way of resisting ethnocentrism, imperialism and racism. However, the survey findings presented in Chapter 2 and discussed in this chapter clearly suggest that a more nuanced, and more critical, approach to the issue is required when considering the translation of children's books in South Africa.

What emerges very distinctly from the discussion of domestication and foreignisation in Chapter 1 and above is that domestication and foreignisation are almost invariably, and inevitably, conceptualised as a mutually exclusive dichotomy, particularly in discussions of the concepts as they relate to children's literature. Furthermore, “domestication” and “foreignisation” (and related terms) are used with variable meanings and foci, and consequently a variety of linguistic, textual and/or cultural dimensions may be implicated in the processes of domestication and foreignisation. This dichotomisation and simultaneous terminological diffusion often has the effect of oversimplifying matters. In what follows I argue that in South Africa, specifically, linguistic and cultural situations are such that seemingly unproblematic oppositions such as domestic/foreign, and by extension, domestication/foreignisation, are, in fact, deeply fraught with complexity and difficulty, to the degree that it is not possible to view domestication and foreignisation as simple and unproblematised concepts or practices. Partly as a consequence of this, I also suggest that, rather than being viewed as mutually exclusive approaches, domestication and foreignisation are more productively regarded as divergent, but complementary, strategies that inevitably coexist in various modulations in every translation, and that both domesticating and foreignising strategies may have value for opening up plural, open, and ethically responsible discourses by means of translation.

So far the translation of children's books in South Africa has been considered from a language perspective. This highlights some important differences between the African languages and Afrikaans in terms of the position of these languages in the South African literary polysystem, as well as some of the issues relating to the differences in status and use between Afrikaans and the African languages, and how these impact the production and translation of children's books. There is, however, another factor to consider in addition to the language perspective, namely the origin of the original text. From this angle, there are two broad scenarios. In the first instance, there is the translation of (mostly) English-language children's books produced in Northern and Western cultures, translated mostly into Afrikaans and sometimes into the other indigenous languages. Venuti (1998:2) describes this type of situation as one which allows transnational corporations to dominate the print and electronic media in developing countries by entrenching established unequal cultural relations between the hegemonic Northern and Western countries and countries in Africa, Asia and South America.

In the second instance, there is the translation of locally produced Afrikaans and English books from one to the other language, and to African languages. Of the publishers
participating in the survey, 87% indicated that the source texts of translated children’s books were mostly of local South African origin, while only 13% indicated that source texts were mostly of international origin (see Chapter 2).

This situation raises questions about what exactly constitutes the “foreign” and what the “domestic”. In the first translation scenario outlined, where books produced internationally (mostly in English) are translated into Afrikaans or the indigenous languages for the South African market, the “foreign” culture seems easy to designate as geographically and culturally distinct from South Africa. However, given that most of these texts are produced in the British or American cultural context, one might well argue that they are not, in actual fact “foreign”, given the globalising dissemination of Anglophone and specifically American popular culture in South Africa by means of music, television and film, and to a lesser extent books and the Internet. In fact, the domestic culture in South Africa may be regarded as a hybrid of various local subcultures and languages (in themselves mixtures of traditional and modern elements) that are sometimes separate, sometimes strongly interwoven – and simultaneously strongly linked to the “foreign” usually American context through both language and cultural elements. Beinart (2001:183), for example, points out that during the 1960s and 1970s American consumer icons and lifestyles provided reference points to what white and black South Africans alike perceived as an international culture distinct from both colonial British and Afrikaner heritage. In 1993, an article in The New York Times (Keller, 1993) described South Africa as “a country awash in American consumer goods, colonized by American pop culture, and obsessed with American celebrities”. With developments in communication and increasing globalisation, the assimilation of American popular culture (and English) into South African culture(s) is becoming more prominent, and also more complex, hybridised and nuanced (see also Campbell, 2000; Nuttall, 2004:738-739; Strelitz, 2004). In this context, the “foreign” becomes increasingly difficult to designate.

In the second translation scenario, where books produced in South Africa in English or Afrikaans are translated into Afrikaans, English or the African languages, similar questions of hybridity complicate an easy, essentialist distinction between the domestic and the foreign. Due to the multicultural and multilingual nature of South African society, the majority of readers in South Africa are, to some degree, caught up in cultural and linguistic multiplicity. For example, in a survey done in 2000 the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) comments on the “considerable multilingualism” (PanSALB, 2000:10) evident in South African society, providing statistics suggesting that multilingualism is prevalent, although its extent varies among different language groups. In some language groups (and for some language combinations), bi- and multilingualism is moderate to high. For example, 30% of home-language speakers of Sesotho understand other African languages, while 24% understand Afrikaans and 28% understand English. A total of 54% of English home-language speakers understand Afrikaans. Among Siswati-speakers, 42% understand other African languages. In other groups, however, bi- and multilingualism is much lower. For instance, only 13% of Tshivenda-speakers understand other African languages, while 4% understand Afrikaans and 0% English (PanSALB, 2000:10).

---

28 See Chapter 2. Translation from languages other than English (regardless of whether from local or international source texts) is very limited.

29 Of course, the mere fact that translation takes place in the same (domestic) environment already destabilises the conventional distinction between the domestic and the foreign in translation studies.
Despite this variance, it is clear that a degree of multilingualism is the rule in South African society. Even at home, an average of 36% of South African families are at least bilingual, making use of code-switching and code-mixing in their use of language in the home, among family members including children (PanSALB, 2000:2). In some language groups the degree of bi- and multilingualism in the home is very high. The PanSALB report cites Siswati-speakers as one such group, where 62% of respondents mix Siswati with isiZulu, English and/or Xitsonga at home (PanSALB, 2000:2). The South African situation is thus illustrative of Tymoczko’s (1999b:295) comment that the linguistic realities of postcolonial societies often destabilise the assumptions of dominant models of translation, which proceed from the assumption that translation links two separate, monolingual communities. Instead, she argues, “postcolonial translation typically proceeds in a multilingual environment, often in environments where a large number or even the majority of readers know both the source language and the target language” (Tymoczko, 1999b:295).

In more general terms, the cultural plurality and hybridity of various dimensions of South African society (as a reality and also as a political ideal and discourse) are widely acknowledged (and also, of course, contested), and have been investigated by researchers in various disciplines, particularly in cultural studies (see, for example, Barnard, 2006; Martin, 2006; Nuttall & Michael, 2000; Strelitz, 2004). Tymoczko (1999b:165-166), referring to the Irish context as an example, suggests one way of viewing the cultural dynamics of particularly postcolonial environments:

Strictly speaking, of course, there is no single world view in any culture, but a family of related views that can be correlated with such factors as class, religion, gender, generation, and life experience; this is particularly the case in a nation that has a long history involving heterogeneous populations with linguistic diversity and an agonistic military and political heritage... In such a situation there is a family of world views characterized by multiplicity rather than homogeneity, within which certain values, beliefs, and understandings achieve dominance and others remain contested.

The above comments on multilingualism and multiculturalism in South Africa are not intended to suggest that all South African readers (be they adults or children) are fully immersed in other languages or cultures: naturally cultural and linguistic divides do remain, in various configurations and to various extents. The intent here is not to sketch “tidy visions of pluralist national identity” (Taylor, 2006:102) that mask the cultural and linguistic tensions characteristic of South African society. However, I would suggest that in the second translation scenario outlined above, the fact that both source and target text are produced in the same geographical and cultural space (a space that is characterized by multiplicity, diversity and hybridity, or what Baker (2001:15) describes as “messy rather than orderly or straightforward speech situations”) destabilises easy distinctions between the foreign and the domestic. The degree of linguistic and cultural permeability evident in the situation outlined above is much greater than is usually assumed in discussions of domestication and foreignisation in translation, where cultures are often approached in essentialist terms as if they were distinct and definable entities.31 Viewing “the domestic” as a singular entity does

---

30 These examples necessarily provide a very limited view of the situation. For complete statistics, see PanSALB (2000:10). This document also suggests some of the reasons for the particular patterns of bi- and multilingualism among particular language groups, which have to do with geographical location, language relationships and contact with other languages.

31 See also Simon (1997) for a critique of the tendency of translation theorists to consider culture as a unified field, and Blommaert and Verschueren (1998:192-193) for similar criticism.
not take cognisance of the fact that the target culture in South Africa itself consists of a multiplicity of linguistic and cultural forms and expectations (often with one or more subculture and language dominating). And within this target culture, the various subcultures may be experienced as more or less familiar or foreign, depending on the position and background of the individual reader. In South Africa, multiple possible sets of “domestics” and “foreign”, experienced as familiar and strange to various degrees, therefore exist, depending on the subject position of the reader.

Simon (1999:58) explains this type of situation in particularly useful terms. Following Pratt (1992) she speaks of the contact zone, a place where previously separated cultures come together and establish relations. These spaces are the result of colonialism, and have therefore been characterised by conflict and inequality. However, she also points out that Western society as a whole has grown into one large contact zone. She continues:

The idea of culture as an envelope which securely binds all the members of a national community within the same coherence of meaning today belongs to the realm of myth. The great migrations of post-colonialism have produced a new socio-demographic situation: all Western nations now have increasingly mixed populations. The ease and rapidity of global communication have created an international mass culture, which competes and interacts with local forms... Every culture speaks a language traversed by two kinds of codes, the complicit idioms of the vernacular and the vehicular codes of international communication (Simon, 1999:58).

Lambert (2006) has made a similar point, criticising, among other things, the reductionist association of national cultures and literatures with monolingualism. I would argue that the alternative conception of cultures as “bonded spaces characterised by a plurality of codes and languages” (Simon, 1999:58) also holds true for the South African context, and that straightforward, essentialist distinctions between the domestic and the foreign (and therefore between domesticating and foreignising translation approaches) are therefore not tenable.

This creation of a false polarity is one of the hazards of a theoretical framework based on pairs of oppositions, as Boyden (2006:121) points out in his discussion of Venuti’s concepts of domestication and foreignisation.32 Venuti’s (1995, 1998) discussion of domestication and foreignisation does hinge on the opposition between the two approaches, but domesticating and foreignising approaches do not necessarily need to be mutually exclusive. Venuti clearly favours foreignisation (or minoritising translation), but he also suggests the impossibility of avoiding domestication (Venuti, 1998:5). However, while accepting that domestication is inevitable, it is also crucial to acknowledge that such domestication cannot simply be uncritically accepted as an innocent act committed purely in aid of the pragmatic ideal of effective communication, or, in the case of children’s literature, effective identification of the child reader with the book. But if domestication needs to be accompanied by a critical awareness, so must foreignisation. The point made by Boyden (2006:122) in this regard is

---

32 Boyden (2006:122) outlines other criticism that may be levelled against Venuti’s argument, such as Venuti’s tendency to draw broad, universalising conclusions based on narrow, contestable assumptions, and his failure to outline specific criteria to differentiate foreignising and domesticating strategies. See also Tymoczko (2000), Pym (1996) and Robinson (1997b:97-112) for criticism of Venuti’s theories, including his less-than-rigorous style of argumentation, his failure to define concepts in specific terms, the cultural specificity of his conceptual framework, and the implicit normativity of his theories, all of which make it “difficult to use his concepts or to extend his arguments” (Tymoczko, 2000:35).
A theoretical framework: the cultural and ideological dimension

crucial: “In general, there seems to be no self-evident link between domesticating strategies and a ‘transparent’ view on translation, or vice versa, between foreignisation and a more ‘resistant’ attitude.” Neither domestication nor foreignisation is intrinsically and naturally in the service of any “ideal” of translation or is necessarily linked to any pre-defined outcome (see also Robinson, 1997a:108-113). Domestication and foreignisation, both, may be appropriated for various ends, and may serve various functions. For example, Rendall (1996:362) points out that in postcolonial cultures “bending the foreign text to domestic norms might itself be a form of resistance”, while Tymoczko (2000:35) reiterates that any translation procedure can be appropriated for the ends of cultural colonisation, including foreignising translation procedures. This ties in with the observation made above: that in South Africa, African-language translators appear to regard domesticating translation strategies as essentially resistant strategies – contrary to the commonly held view.\footnote{Tymoczko (1999b:21) makes an even broader point, referring to translation in Ireland: “Translation in the Irish context, thus, is not simply a locus of imperialism, but a site of resistance and nation building as well.” The same, I would contend, is the case as far as the translation of children’s books in South Africa is concerned – translation is not in the service of one thing or the other, but fulfils many and shifting functions. See also Tymoczko (1999b:34-35) for examples of research that have explored the varied roles and functions of translation in different postcolonial contexts.}

In addition, a translated text cannot be regarded as a monolithic “domesticated” or “foreignised” entity (an idea that also emerged from some responses to the questionnaire for translators; see Chapter 2). Such a reified view of the translated text denies the complex, multivalent, textured interplay of textual effects – some domesticating, some foreignising; some familiar, some strange – that are created by the collaborative process of meaning-making in which the writer, translator and reader are involved. Tymoczko (1999b:49-51) offers one way of looking at this. Arguing that all literary texts are metonymic, in the sense that they evoke larger literary traditions as well as cultures, she posits that translators continually select specific dimensions of metonymic relationships “to realize and to privilege” (Tymoczko, 1999b:50). This is true for metonymic relationships that pertain to the source text and source culture (e.g. will the translation be primarily metonymic of the source language, of a specific genre in the source culture, of specific cultural aspects or patterns in the source culture) as much as similar metonymic relationships that pertain to the target culture. This results in a kind of pluralised text that contains within it both the domestic and the foreign, because “the source text gets assimilated to existing structures in the receptor literary and cultural system; it is presented as a ‘rewriting’ of elements of the receptor literary system, even as it brings with it some aspects that challenge the receiving system and that remain eccentric” (Tymoczko, 1999b:51).

The above, of course, also has wide-ranging implications for the system of oppositions summarised in Figure 4. Tymoczko (1999b:55) points out specifically that Toury’s opposition between adequate and acceptable translations is problematised by the often “messy” situation evident in actual translations (particularly translations of texts from marginalised cultures), which often involves a mixture of source- and target-text orientations. This destabilisation of polarities, she argues, affects all other binary categorisations often used in translation studies, such as literal/free, or formal/dynamic equivalence, or, indeed, domesticating/foreignising. She arrives at the conclusion that there can be “no single
polarity that describes the orientation of a translation, no simple positioning along a linear continuum” (Tymoczko, 1999b:56).34

Translations may therefore be regarded as hybrids, as complex, polyphonic blends of the domestic and the foreign, of the familiar and the strange, of other-ness and self-ness, created by the multiple writers and readers involved in the continual reshaping of the translation as discourse among other discourses (see also Tymoczko, 1999b:289).35 Simon (1997:463) similarly argues that translation is a kind of in-between space of negotiation, which is representative of the tensions of hybridity that postcolonial subjects and, as a matter of fact, all national citizens experience. Translation, in this sense, “destabilizes culture” and “enacts cultural identity”.

There is a broader perspective, here, too, which involves the need (briefly discussed in the earlier part of this section) to resist the reification created by dichotomous constructions in the domain of postcolonial thought, by restoring diversity, multiplicity and plurality. In this broader sense, Bhabha’s (1994:56) idea of the Third Space resonates strongly: “… it is the ‘inter’ – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the inbetween space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture… And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves”. Viswanatha and Simon (1999:176), following Said (1994) and Hall (1996), argue that recent postcolonial theory sensitises us to “the need to restore complexity to our understanding of relations of alterity, of oppositional identities created through struggle”.

This sense of hybridisation is, to a noticeable degree, evident in the translated texts analysed in Chapter 4; despite translators’ comments favouring one approach rather than the other, actual translations of children’s books (in other words the operational norms as evinced in the translated texts) do not evidence an either/or-approach to domestication or foreignisation, but rather constitute a flexible and constantly mutating mixture of domesticating strategies (to ensure that the translation is accessible for the child reader and promotes identification) and foreignising strategies (to introduce the child reader to cultures that he/she may not be familiar with, to broaden horizons, to foster intercultural awareness and tolerance, to ensure that the otherness of the translated text is respected). I would suggest, therefore, that the tensions between domestication and foreignisation remain salient and relevant, but possibly need to be re-approached with a different modulation: not as mutually exclusive approaches, but rather as strategies to be used in hybrid ways to reflect, contemplate and engage with cultural and linguistic diversity in various ways.

It is essential to continue interrogating the assumptions underpinning the use of concepts such as “domestication” and “foreignisation”, especially in postcolonial contexts such as South Africa. The development of theoretical constructs such as these (as set out, for example, in the work of Venuti) is rooted in a particular cultural and historical specificity, and the functional transfer or applicability of such concepts to other, very different contexts, cannot be assumed as a given (see also Tymoczko, 1999b:295; Tymoczko, 2000).

34 Hermans (1999:119) levels the same kind of criticism at the polysystem approach generally, explaining that the approach remains blind to anything that cannot be conceived of in binary terms.
35 This idea of the translation as hybrid is nothing new. For example, Hermans (1999:21), discussing the work of Jiří Levý, explains the latter’s concept of a translation as follows: “A translation is then a hybrid product, a conglomerate, part of which refers back to the original text while other parts reveal the translator’s input.” In the argument here, however, the hybridity is cast in specifically postcolonial terms.
Furthermore, considering the myriad complex language- and education-related difficulties that South Africa faces, philosophical and theoretical generalisation cannot be sufficient. In Chapter 4, specific attention is given to particular strategies resulting in domesticating and foreignising effects in particular texts and contexts (also indicating how the same strategy may have domesticating or foreignising effects, depending on the specific text and context as interactive site where author, reader and translator meet). It is therefore essential to investigate in practical terms how translators’ decisions and readers’ responses interact in the process of creating domesticating or foreignising textual effects – an undertaking that is reflected particularly in the microtextual analyses presented in the following chapter.

3.5 Conclusion

The theoretical framework presented in this chapter has focused on pertinent aspects of the relationship between the textual and the contextual in a study of the translation of children’s literature in the South African context. In this, the main aim has been to account for the particular features of the South African situation evident from the surveys for publishers and translators discussed in Chapter 2. The integration of approaches from polysystem theory, descriptive translation studies and postcolonial translation studies has, in summary, yielded the following:

1. In South Africa, translated children’s literature in Afrikaans and in the African languages clearly 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 or weak, and is characterised by a vacuum that requires urgent filling.

2. In line with the arguments of Even-Zohar and Toury, it is argued that the position in the polysystem plays a significant role in determining the norms that govern translation. However, both Even-Zohar and Toury see a peripheral position for translation as linked to a greater emphasis on target-culture orientation (e.g. domestication, acceptability, law of standardisation), whereas translation in a central position is linked to a more pronounced source-text orientation (e.g. foreignisation, adequacy, law of interference). The situation evident from translators’ responses to the questionnaire, however, is practically the inverse: African-language translators (where translation is in a central position) were strongly in favour of domestication, whereas Afrikaans translators (where translation is in a peripheral position) were much more open to foreignisation or more flexible decision-making about translation approaches.

3. In order to account for this apparent conflict between existing theory and the South African situation, it is argued that the polysystem and descriptive approach needs to be mediated by perspectives from postcolonial translation studies. From this perspective, historical and continued power imbalances between various sociolinguistic groups may account for translators’ opinions about the appropriateness of foreignisation and domestication in the context of translated children’s literature in South Africa, or, in other words, translators’ expression of the basic initial norm at work in their translation practice.

4. Moreover, however, an investigation of the postcolonial and neocolonial linguistic and cultural situation in South Africa destabilises the very system of binaries upon which much of translation studies depends, suggesting both a multiplicity of foreig...
domestics in South Africa, as well as questioning 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 
partial societies. In this sense, at this point this study confirms Tymoczko’s 
(1999b:296) finding, based on her research on postcolonial translation in Ireland, that in 
postcolonial, political and contested contexts “the orientation of translations... is not 
either/or (source language or target language, source culture codes or target culture 
codes) but typically both/and. Tactical and shifting, opportunistic and improvising, like 
the modes of guerrilla warfare, translation choices are context-bound and governed by 
larger movements of cultural appropriation and resistance”.36 It is thus hypothesised (an 
hyposis which is explored in Chapter 4) that an analysis of translated texts (in other 
words, of the operational norms as expressed in the texts) will demonstrate a complex 
interplay of domesticating and foreignising strategies and effects.

This theoretical framework, based as it is on the particular situation in South Africa, 
therefore lays bare the particular cultural assumptions of some parts of conventional 
translation theory, and suggests the importance of adapting and adjusting theoretical 
constructs to particular contexts.

The one major point to be kept in mind as far as the above is concerned is that to a large 
extent it has concerned itself with translators’ and publishers’ opinions about translation, 
and particularly preferred translation strategies, cast in terms of domestication and 
foreignisation. This, as Toury (1995:65) points out, may well create a skewed representation 
of the norms governing translation, since translators may be biased. Indeed, the above 
argument has pointed out that it is very likely that Afrikaans and African-language 
translators are biased by the complex effects of post- and neocolonial ideology prevalent in 
their society; however, in the context of this study this bias in itself is significant, since it 
provides more information about the perceptions and beliefs that fuel the translation of 
children’s books in South Africa. But it is of course also necessary to supplement this 
information with textual analyses. This textual investigation, presented in the following 
chapter, focuses on a macrotextual and microtextual investigation of various textual features 
that are particularly strongly linked to cultural representation, and the ways in which they 
are handled in translation in order to further elaborate and support the argument presented 
in this chapter. The analysis also presents a more nuanced investigation of (some of) the 
aspects discussed in this chapter.

36 Tymoczko (1999b:283) formulates this resistance to binaries in terms of an opposition between 
metaphoric and metonymic constructions of translation: “... translation-as-substitution breeds a 
discourse about translation that is dualistic, polarized, either/or, right/wrong. A metonymic approach 
to translation is more flexible, resulting in a discourse of both/and which recognizes varying 
hierarchies of privilege, overlapping and partially corresponding elements, coexisting values, and the 
like”.