

Key Arguments & Theoretical Frameworks  
in  
the Introduction of  
Studying texts and contexts in translated  
children's literature  
by  
Jan Van Coillie & Jack McMartin:

# 1. Statement of the problem (main issue/ challenge)

- 1.1 Conceptualizing “**Context**” in Translation Studies
- Van Coillie & McMartin begin by **problematizing the notion of context**. They note that while context is universally acknowledged as important in translation studies, there is **no single, agreed-upon definition of it**. They draw on Rodica Dimitriu’s idea that context is “a key notion ... that allows for complex **analyses** of the translator’s activities ... of translation processes, and, ultimately, of what accounts for the meaning(s) of a translated text.”
- Thus, the editors set the stage for exploring how **context influences translation decisions**, and equally, how **texts are shaped by (and shape) their context**: social, cultural, economic, and political environments.

## 1.2. Why Children's Literature Is Especially Suitable to Explore Text–Context Dynamics

- Van Coillie & McMartin argue that children's literature is a particularly revealing domain to study translation because of **its distinctive features**:
  - **2.1 Asymmetric Relationship**: There is an inherent asymmetry between authors/translators (usually adult) and the readers (children). This affects how translators make decisions.
  - **2.2 High Stake Cultural, Economic & Political Dimensions**: When children's books travel across cultures, there are often strong cultural, political, or economic motivations and pressures.
  - **2.3. Multimodality**: Many children's books are not just linguistic texts; they include illustrations, layout design, and other semiotic elements. Translation, then, often involves not just translating words, but also **dealing with visual and multimodal features**.
- Because of these characteristics, translation of children's literature is not just a linguistic act, but a cultural mediation.

# 1. 3. Interdisciplinary Lens

- The editors explicitly position the book at the intersection of **Children's Literature Studies** and **Translation Studies**. This is important because it allows for cross-fertilization: scholars can combine **close readings** of texts with **empirical investigations** (e.g., of how readers receive a translated book).
- They also **expand the notion of translation** to include wider transfer practices (not just interlingual translation but also adaptation, localization, transcreation, and even intersemiotic translation).
- This reflects their commitment to a broad conceptualization of translation: translation is not just about rendering text from one language to another, but about how **meaning, form, and function shift in new cultural and semiotic environments**.

## 4. Analytical & Empirical Goals

- The introduction outlines clear goals for the volume:
  - **To showcase analytical richness:** by considering how **texts change through translation**, how **translators intervene**, and how **context shapes those changes**.
  - **To highlight empirical research:** the book contains case studies that examine real-world translation practices, publication history, reception, and editorial decisions.
  - **To cover a wide geographic scope:** The editors deliberately include contributions from many different cultural contexts (UK, US, Brazil, Poland, China, former Yugoslavia, etc.) to show how context-dependent translation practices are.
  - **To identify trajectories for future research:** by bringing together different perspectives, they hope to map out where the field could go — which understudied areas to explore, which methods to develop, and how both text-based and context-based analyses can be deepened.
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## 5. Significance and Implications

- By situating translators' decisions in their broader socio-cultural contexts, the introduction argues, we gain better insight **into power, ideology, and agency** in translation.
- Understanding how translated children's books are received (by child readers, parents, educational systems, publishers) helps us see how translation contributes to **cultural transmission and identity formation** in young readers.