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### Getting off the fence

Bloemert, Jasmijn

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# CHAPTER 1

## General introduction



## 1.1 Introduction

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)<sup>1</sup> has a prominent position in Dutch secondary education and became compulsory for every student in 2013. Although the majority of the EFL curriculum concerns foreign language skills, such as reading and writing, literature also plays an important part. It is, however, noteworthy that ever since the EFL curriculum was formalised in 1863, continuing discussions about the position, relevance, and focus of the literature component have taken place. These discussions have resulted in several theses (such as de Melker, 1970 and Wilhelm, 2005 for EFL) and overview studies, including *Geschiedenis van het talenonderwijs in Nederland: Onderwijs in de moderne talen van 1500 tot heden*<sup>2</sup> (Hulshof, Kwakernaak, & Wilhelm, 2015) and the series of papers published by Kwakernaak in 1997 and 2016. Discussions about the position, relevance, and focus of the foreign language literature curriculum have also been taking place at an international level. Studies and reviews by for example, Sage (1987), Lazar (1993), Paran (2008), and Paesani (2011) come to the same conclusion as the studies that describe the Dutch context, namely: the position of literature in the foreign language curriculum appears to be a *principium tertii exclusi* - law of the excluded middle - shifting between either a focus on the literary text or a focus on foreign language development. In this thesis, we explore the relevance and focus of EFL literature teaching in Dutch secondary education by empirically researching the current situation from different perspectives.

In this Introduction, foreign language literature teaching is first discussed within the Dutch context and then positioned within the international field. Leading from this discussion we provide the objective for this thesis and the research questions. We then introduce an overview of the main theories we used in the empirical chapters (Chapters 2 - 6) and we finish with an overview of the content and the organisation of this thesis. Because the majority of the sources used in Chapter 1 are written in Dutch, we decided to only provide the English translation of direct quotations.

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1 Although we focus on EFL (English as a foreign language) in this thesis, several studies and overviews sometimes describe a particular language and sometimes refer to foreign language teaching in general. In order to be as specific as possible without affecting the readability, we will use EFL when it concerns English and foreign language teaching when it concerns foreign languages in general.

2 In English: History of language teaching in the Netherlands: Education in modern languages from 1500 to the present.

## 1.2 Dutch context

A historic overview of the position, relevance, and focus of foreign language education in the Dutch secondary school context reveals that the shifting focus between the literary text and foreign language development has been the centre of discussion for over 150 years. Based on how both literature and language development were viewed and interpreted, we distinguish three major periods, which will be discussed in more detail below.

### 1.2.1 1863 – 1967 (Period 1)

In order to acquire a respectable position within the school curriculum, the way Greek and Latin were taught was the model for the EFL curriculum in Period 1. Especially Latin, the language of religion, literature, and science, represented a ‘higher culture’ and was seen as exemplary (Kwakernaak, 2014). Traditionally, Greek and Latin education consisted of reading and translating canonical texts where the texts were analysed lexically and grammatically. In other words, literary texts were used to serve a language learning purpose. Achieving this desired respectable position lasted throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which is not surprising, considering the fact that French, German, and English only received an official academic status in 1921 (Kwakernaak, 1997a).

Although the focus was primarily language acquisition, Wilhelm (2005) provides an example of a course book from 1808, where the practical motive of language learning was combined with a cultural motive. This rise in the interest in literary history and the actual literary texts themselves in foreign language teaching was further testified by the publication of several literary histories and anthologies. Foreign language teaching halfway the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a change from a purely utilitarian aim with an emphasis on learning to read English through approved authors to a utilitarian aim complemented with a cultural aim (Wilhelm, 2005). That this shift was supported, is evidenced by a government report, the so-called *Report concerning the State of Higher, Secondary, and Primary Schools* (in Dutch: *Verslagen nopens den Staat der Hoogere, Middelbare en Lagere Scholen*), of the schoolyear 1855 - 1856, which stated that “Education in the foreign languages remained generally sufficient, although the treatment of the grammatical rules could be more scientific and more literature could be used in the practice of languages” (Kwakernaak 1997a, p. 110).

Stemming from the 18<sup>th</sup> century tradition of Enlightenment, education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was primarily concerned with a moral and social purpose. According to Wilhelm (2005), “young people were expected to make their acquaintance with accepted and respected authors, as it was believed that reading their literature would educate youngsters to become valued citizens and morally good people” (p. 72). Importantly, “the written language of the great writers was seen as the actual language and the everyday spoken language as degenerate” (Kwakernaak 1997b, p. 137). The importance of the integration of language acquisition through literary texts was emphasized during a meeting held in 1879: “The school - whichever it is - must educate civilized but also useful people for life, that is to say for our purpose: the student must learn to understand and enjoy the works of excellent writers and poets, but must also be able to express intelligibly his thoughts to strangers (whose language he has learnt) as well as understand them” (de Melker, 1970, p. 19). Although it was believed that studying literary texts had a formative effect, explicit instruction consisted of the study of literary history where students were offered overviews, names and titles of works of important authors, and extracts of texts that they were required to translate.

In this period, the study of literary texts was connected to an oral examination. The focus of these oral examinations was the major literary periods which were exemplified by several important literary texts. Because the exam programme stated that the candidate “was able to properly account for the application of the language rules”, besides literary knowledge, fluency was examined as well (Kwakernaak, 2014). That these requirements were too demanding is evidenced by criticism at the time. The leading education inspector Dr. Parvé, for example, had his reservations about examining literary history in the oral exams, because this often degenerated into a superficial recitation of dates and other facts (Kwakernaak 1997a, p. 111). Multiple complaints about the dominant position of literary history led to a reduction in the requirements: in 1901, students were examined on only one or two major literary periods and more emphasis was put on the texts themselves.

Another criticism concerned the dual focus of these exams, i.e. literary knowledge and fluency. The *Messages and Announcements report* of 1899 - 1902 states that “Discussion of works read by students can only be properly conducted in Dutch: Only in the mother tongue do feelings and thoughts immediately evoke similar words” (de Melker, 1970, p. 21). Issues with combining the oral exam and literary knowledge remained throughout this period. In 1963 for example, Verhoeff

objected to linking literary knowledge to the oral exam. If a disconnection is not possible, he disputed that “we will have to reconcile that we are actually teaching skills with a work of art as a direct object” (de Melker, 1970, p. 32). In other words, Verhoeff argued that combining the oral exam and literary knowledge was in fact disregarding the literary works.

### 1.2.2 1968 – 1997 (Period 2)

After the introduction of the *Mammoetwet*<sup>3</sup> in 1968, the position of EFL literature education changed. Teachers now had complete freedom regarding the content and form of the exam. The only prescription included that “the literature read by the candidate ... must include a number of works from the last half century and a number from the time before that”. (Kwakernaak, 1997a, p. 112). Unsurprisingly, this situation led to “non-commitment, lack of clarity, and confusion about goals, scope, and content” (Kwakernaak, 1997b, p. 136). Nevertheless, the examining of literary knowledge remained connected to the oral exam. Interestingly, when Thijssen (1985) asked teachers of German why literature should be a part of their subject, only an average of 8% of the teachers ticked the “it is important for language development” box (p. 108).

After years of discussion and critique, 1992 saw a clear break between language proficiency and literature teaching. The designated committee of 1992 declared that in the process of selecting and formulating the literature objectives, it was decided that the aspect of language acquisition through literary education was intentionally left out. This resulted in the following guidelines for the literature exam: “Mixing of literary skills and productive skills must be prevented. When testing knowledge of and insight into literature and reporting on learning and reading experiences, the candidate can determine the language in which the testing takes place. Integrated testing of literature and another language proficiency is excluded in the examination programme” (Kwakernaak, 1997b, p. 138). At the end of this period, there was even an attempt to separate literature and language completely by granting students two separate marks.

Despite its more anchored position in the curriculum, literature teaching was now also in competition with language proficiency. Especially with the rise of communicative language teaching since the second half of the 1980s, foreign

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3 The main idea behind the ‘Mammoetwet’ (officially the Secondary Education Act) was that every student should follow both general and vocational education. Because this Act brought forth a plethora of changes, it was labelled the ‘Mammoetwet’.

language teaching became more and more utilitarian, aiming at being able to properly function in society (Kwakernaak, 2012). The 19<sup>th</sup> century academic views that literature education served a higher moral purpose was regarded more and more as elitist. This change in views could have been inspired by a number of radical changes in literary theory. Before the 1960s, the historical approach to literature, where literary works are studied in the light of the context in which the work was written, was dominant (Kwakernaak, 1997a). This means that facts about the author's life as well as historical, social, and cultural circumstances were considered important in interpreting a literary text. In the 1960s, foreign language literature teaching in the Netherlands saw the rise of the text-immanent approach which had its roots in, for example, New Criticism, Formalism, and Structuralism (Kwakernaak, 1997a). All of these approaches to literary criticism share the notion that a literary text is an independent entity and insist on the intrinsic value of a text. In other words, the method of close reading is embraced and 'external' aspects such as the life of the author or contextual information is considered a distraction. The 1970s focused on socio-economic approaches, also called sociological criticism (Kwakernaak, 1997a). This type of literary criticism focuses on the relationship between the author and their society, thereby emphasising societal elements within the literary text as well as within the life of the author. The most common form of this approach is Marxist criticism which approaches the literary text itself as a social institution with a specific ideological function. Studying a literary text through this approach means that especially the political and economic aspects will be highlighted. And finally, from the 1980s, the reader became the centre of attention in foreign language literature teaching in Dutch secondary education (Kwakernaak, 1997a). This approach was based on the ideas of Reader-Response critics such as Rosenblatt (1969) and Iser (1978) who believed that the literary text is not an independent artefact but creates meaning only when it is read and interpreted. According to this approach, our interpretation of a literary text is affected by our personal cultural, social, and religious values and therefore, different interpretations of a literary work are possible. "Literature education had to promote reading pleasure, and the student had to become a competent literature consumer" (Kwakernaak 1997a, p. 112). Because the different approaches were all valuable contributions to literature teaching, all of them were adopted and translated in the following four perspectives: the 'literary-historical perspective, the literary-theoretical perspective, the person-oriented perspective, and the perspective aimed at developing a personal reading taste" (Kwakernaak, 1997c).



Despite all these changes in the EFL curriculum, the traditional link between literary knowledge and language proficiency remained, although it changed its focus to practicing reading skills with literary texts. Literary knowledge was also still primarily tested in an oral exam, even though the literature lessons were increasingly taught in Dutch (Kwakernaak, 1997b).

### 1.2.3 1998 – 2019 (Period 3)

In line with the developments up until 1997, the new exam programme that was introduced in 1998 (in Dutch: *Wet op het Voortgezet Onderwijs*) introduced even more specific curriculum standards for the literature curriculum as well as a further reduction in lesson time, based on the so-called ‘study load hours’ (in Dutch: *Studiebelastinguren*) (Hulshof, Kwakernaak, & Wilhelm, 2015). The new prescriptive requirements included that the number of literary works students had to study was reduced to a minimum of three (Kwakernaak, 2014), there were requirements for the division of the percentages between the different proficiency components and literature, and several learning objectives were introduced, covering the following three subdomains: literary development, literary terminology, and literary history.

Taking together the reduction in time, the more diverse goals, the unclear content, and the separation from language proficiency, literature within foreign language education was no longer taken for granted (Kwakernaak, 2016b). The break between language and literature was further emphasised by the option to exclude all literature teaching from the foreign language curriculum and merge the literature component with the then new subject ‘Culture and Art’ (in Dutch: *Culturele en Kunstzinnige Vorming*, in short, *CKV*), so-called ‘Integrated Literature Education’ (in Dutch: *Geïntegreerd Literatuur Onderwijs*) (Kwakernaak, 2017). However, many foreign language teachers did not experience this as an opportunity for joint improvement of literature teaching, but as an attack on their own subject (Kwakernaak, 2017).

The *Improved Educational Reforms* of 2007, which saw several changes in the requirements for literature teaching, are still in use today: how the percentages for the different components in the curriculum are divided is up to the teachers themselves, the required minimum of literary works remained three literary works, and the number of learning objectives was reduced to the following three for pre-university level students:

- (1) the student can recognize and distinguish literary text types and can use literary terms when interpreting literary texts;
- (2) the student can give an overview of the main events of literary history and can place the studied works in this historic perspective; and
- (3) the student can report about their reading experiences of at least three literary works with clear arguments (Meijer & Fasoglio, 2007).

These three subdomains, i.e. literary development, literary terminology, and literary history which were introduced in 1998, remained.

The most recent national development is Curriculum.nu (which started in 2018) where development teams of teachers and school leaders, under the supervision of *Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling*, have formulated nine learning areas including what primary and secondary school students should be able to know and do within each learning area. The primary objective of Curriculum.nu is to design a proposal for revising the current core curriculum standards (in Dutch: *kerndoelen en eindtermen*). One of the nine learning areas is *English/Modern Foreign Languages* and one of the innovative proposals is a more holistic approach to foreign language learning where language learning is more than training language skills. The position of literature within this more holistic approach is seen as integrated within learning how to communicate in a foreign language. This proposal, however, does not coincide with reality: the decision to make EFL, together with Dutch and Mathematics, a core subject in 2013 has resulted in excessive exam training in the reading of expository texts and a dwindling position of the literature component. This development is in line with the curricular changes in the language curriculum towards a utilitarian proficiency-centred programme ever since 1968.

To summarise, after decades of discussions, disagreements, and policy changes, the position, relevance, and focus of literature within the EFL curriculum remains the centre of attention for researchers and policy makers. It could even be argued that, similar to the Dutch literature curriculum, the foreign language literature curriculum can be defined as ill-structured. Witte (2008) used the term 'ill-structured domain', introduced by Spiro, Feltovich, Jacobson, and Coulson (1991), in order to characterise the curriculum for Dutch literature. Witte (2008) argued that the literature domain in secondary education is ill-structured because of a lack of theory, a multitude of visions, and an inadequate connection between education and the learning needs of students (see also van der Knaap, 2014 regarding literature teaching in German as a foreign language).

### 1.3 International context

Reviews by, for example, Carter (2007), Hall (2015), Kramersch and Kramersch (2000), Paesani (2011), Paran (2006), and Paran (2008) all discuss the converging and diverging movements between literature and language throughout the decades. To summarise, in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century literature was the primary object of study, holding a “place of prestige in the academic community and served as a source of moral and ideational inspiration and content” (Paesani, 2011, p. 161). Between 1940 and 1960, this academic prestige was regarded as an elitist pursuit, superfluous to everyday communication. The period between the 1970s and 1990s, with the growth of communicative language teaching, however, reconsidered the role of literature. In the United States this period was labelled the ‘proficiency movement’, perceiving literature as “an opportunity to develop vocabulary acquisition, the development of reading strategies, and the training of critical thinking, that is, reasoning skills” (Kramersch & Kramersch, 2000, p. 567). The most recent development in this field of research includes literature in the language curriculum as a way to address intercultural awareness and intercultural competence (Kramersch & Kramersch, 2000; Paesani, 2011). Or, as Paran (2008) summarizes: “more holistic perspectives which take different aspects of the learner and the context of learning into account, looking at the whole person and the whole culture, in which literature is part of developing the whole person, and in which affective development and affective factors are taken into account” (Paran, 2008, p. 469). Paesani (2011) labelled the search for a balance between a language learning focus and a literary focus “language-literature instruction” and defined it as “the deliberate integration of language development and literary study at all levels of the curriculum” (p. 162).

Indeed, the questions that have been addressed for over 150 years in the Dutch context were also at the heart of the discussion internationally, evidenced for example by the two overarching concerns of *Literature and Language Teaching* (Brumfit & Carter, 1986): “What is literature, and what therefore should be selected as a basis for teaching literature, and why? How should it be taught, and what is its overall place, internationally, in language education?” (Carter, 2007, p. 4). Carter (2007) quite right concludes that the question that had been raised 20 years previous in the papers in Brumfit and Carter (1986) were still being asked, in many cases with greater sharpness and relevance for the design of curricula” (Carter, 2007, p. 7). Moreover, although the “resurgence in the use of literature

in language teaching” (Paran, 2008, p. 465) has seen a growth in the corpus of empirical and classroom practice articles on language-literature instruction, Carter (2007), Paran (2008), and Paesani (2011) all conclude their surveys with a call for more empirical research into the use of literature in foreign language classrooms as well as “systematic enquiries into the views of the learners” (Paran, 2008, p. 490).

This resurgence is in response to or at least in line with two major developments internationally. First of all, the 2007 report *Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World* authored by the Modern Language Association. In this report, the committee recommends replacing the traditional two-tiered structure of foreign language programmes in higher education in the United States with a more coherent structure where literature and language are merged. The myriad responses this report received (e.g. Bernhardt, 2010; Gala, 2008; Grabe, 2010; Rarick, 2010; Rifkin, 2012) shows the impact this message had on the foreign language teaching and researching community.

The second major development concerns the changes regarding literature in the recent companion volume to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2018). Whereas the 2001 edition referred to literature or literary texts sporadically, the second edition includes the following three aspects relevant to creative text and literature: reading as a leisure activity; expressing a personal response to creative texts; and analysis and criticism of creative texts (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 50).

## 1.4 The focus of this thesis

The position of literature in the foreign language curriculum has seen a circular movement where it started as the core of foreign language teaching then became marginalised and separated from language development and now is moving towards an integrated and more holistic and integrated model. These recent movements appear to break with the *principium tertii exclusi*, leaving the ‘either-or’ situation behind. Interestingly though, as Carter (2007) already observed, we keep asking the same questions which focus on the justification for the inclusion of literature in the foreign language programme, the use of the target language in foreign language lessons and exams, and the position of foreign language literature as integrated or separate. Repeating these questions without finding consensus

in the answers and repeatedly justifying the role, position, and relevance of literature in foreign language teaching has prevented us from moving forward, from developing a coherent foreign language literature methodology, and from systematically investigating this area of research. In our view, if we want to get off the fence, break this justification habit, and take steps in building a well-structured and content rich foreign language curriculum, we need to: (1) systematically investigate the current situation of literature teaching within the foreign language curriculum, (2) understand how the relevance and usefulness of a desired situation where literature and language teaching go hand-in-hand (Paran, 2008; Paesani, 2011) is experienced by teachers and (3) emphasize the perspective of students (Paran, 2008).

## 1.5 Theoretical approach

In this thesis the issues presented in sections 1.2 – 1.4 are addressed through the framework of pedagogical content knowledge research (in Dutch: *vakdidactisch onderzoek*) because of its dual focus on content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and its dual focus on teacher and student perspectives.

The term pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) was introduced by Shulman in his 1985 seminal address to the American Educational Research Association and defined as a type of content knowledge “which goes beyond knowledge of subject matter per se to the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching” (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). Also, “it is the particular form of content knowledge that embodies the aspects of content most germane to teaching” (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). In other words, because pedagogical content knowledge represents an amalgam of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, research in this area focuses on both knowledge of a particular subject and suitable pedagogical approaches to transfer this knowledge thereby considering the diverse abilities and interests of students. PCK research has mainly gained ground in the teaching of science subjects, especially mathematics (Blömeke & Delaney, 2012; Depaepe, Verschaffel, & Kelchtermans, 2013). Although PCK research is taking place in the field of foreign language teaching in an explicit way (e.g. Evens, Tielemans, Elen, & Depaepe, 2019; König, Tachtsoglou, Lammerding, Strauß, Nold, & Rihde, 2017), more often it is included implicitly and therefore very hard to identify in database searches. Isaac (2002), for example, examined the perceptions of students of

English as a second language regarding the role a literary cloze activity played in the development of their language and literary awareness. Although she does not explicitly refer to PCK research, studying how students perceive and/or experience specific content knowledge is, in fact, part of PCK research.

Although several researchers have identified underlying components of PCK, Grossman's (1990) clarification of these components is most widely referred to. According to Grossman (1990), PCK consists of four central components which are all included in this thesis: (1) conceptions of purpose for teaching subject matter (Chapters 2 and 6); (2) knowledge of student understanding (Chapters 3, 4 and 5); (3) curricular knowledge (Chapters 2 and 6); and (4) knowledge of instructional strategies (Chapter 6). In line with Grossman's (1990) interpretation, Grossman, Schoenfeld, and Lee (2005) formulated a set of questions that provide a framework for PCK, including the following four: "What are the different purposes for teaching the subject matter in public schools?" (teacher focus); "Why is the subject important for students to study?" (student focus); "What do understanding or performance look like with regard to this subject matter?" (teacher focus); and "What are students likely to understand about the subject matter at different developmental stages?" (student perspective) (p. 208). As we have indicated between brackets, and analysis of these questions shows that PCK does not only focus on the teacher, but also includes the student. Because the perspectives of students and teachers are equally valued within PCK research we will discuss these in more detail below as well as how both perspectives are included in this thesis.

### 1.5.1 Focus on student perspective

An analysis of the previously discussed historic overviews regarding foreign language literature teaching shows that the students' perspective appears to be excluded. This is however not surprising. Research in the field of foreign language teaching shows that this perspective is, more often than not, absent from the research radar (Pinter, 2014; Pinter & Zandian, 2014). This routine exclusion is a problem, because the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the teaching and learning context need to be more or less similar in order to obtain optimal functioning and effectiveness (Entwistle & Tait, 1990). However, the way students and teachers perceive the teaching and learning context does not always align (Brown, 2009). According to Vermunt and Verloop (1999), whenever a teacher's teaching approach is compatible with a student's learning approach, it creates a situation of congruence (Vermunt & Verloop, 1999, p. 270): a situation preferred by

students (Vermetten, Vermunt, & Lodewijks, 2002). On the other hand, when these teaching and learning approaches are not compatible, frictions may occur. In some cases, these are constructive frictions, which “may be necessary to make students willing to change and to stimulate them to develop skills in the use of learning and thinking activities they are not inclined to use on their own” (Vermunt & Verloop, 1999, p. 270). and which “represent a challenge for students to increase their skill in a learning or thinking strategy” (Vermunt & Verloop, 1999, p. 270). A third possibility is that of destructive frictions, which can occur when discrepancies between students’ and teachers’ perceptions are too large. Destructive frictions may, for example, occur when students perceive the teaching and learning as irrelevant and experience the gap between their own perception and their teacher’s as unbridgeable (Hattie & Yates, 2014). As a result, destructive frictions “may cause a decrease in learning or thinking skills” (Vermunt & Verloop, 1999, p. 270). In other words, ignoring the student perspective in educational research could have a negative impact on the quality of learning. To summarise, based on the theories of Shulman (1986), Grossman (1990) and Grossman, Schoenfeld, and Lee (2005), the students’ perspective is regarded as indispensable in PCK research and will therefore take a prominent position in this thesis.

In this thesis, we operationalize the students’ perspective in several ways: (1) as co-constructors of knowledge with a unique perspective on EFL literature education (Chapter 3); (2) the students’ level of engagement (an external manifestation of motivation) (Chapter 5) and (3) how students view the importance of foreign language literature lessons (an internal manifestation of motivation) (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) (Chapters 4 and 5).

### **1.5.2 Focus on teacher perspective**

The teacher perspective is included in this thesis in two different ways: as a source of information regarding how the teacher approaches literature in their EFL lessons (Chapters 2 and 6) and as a co-constructor of knowledge regarding how they experienced working with a desired EFL literature teaching model (Chapter 6). Regarding the latter, one way to establish an active role for teachers in PCK research is via an intervention study that includes professional development opportunities for teachers. According to Desimone and Stuckey (2014), professional development opportunities are sustainable when both the Theory of Change (does the new knowledge improve teacher knowledge and instruction?) and the Theory of instruction (does the new knowledge improve student learning?) work. When

putting these two theories in line with Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework for studying the effects of professional development on teachers and students, a certain sequentiality arises because, according to Desimone (2009), professional development includes four interactive critical features: (1) a teacher takes part in a professional development programme and (2) experiences changes in knowledge, skills, and attitude; (3) these changes lead to changes in instruction, which ultimately (4) lead to increased student learning. This means that the Theory of Instruction, focusing on increased student learning, follows the Theory of Change, focusing on changes in knowledge, skills, attitude, and consequently instruction. This thesis focuses on the Theory of Change.

## 1.6 Objective of this thesis

The objective of this thesis, then, is threefold. The first objective concerns the design of a literature-teaching model that is in line with the recent holistic perspectives as described by Paran (2008), which include various aspects of the learner, the context, and the literary text. The second objective concerns a systematic enquiry into the current position of EFL literature education through the eyes of teachers as well as students. And the third objective concerns an in-depth analysis of how teachers experience the relevance and usefulness of a literature-teaching model as described in the first objective. By doing this, we aim to contribute to the growing field of research into foreign language literature teaching, motivated by several gaps in the international knowledge base: empirical research into EFL literature classroom practices in secondary education and an investigation into the views of secondary school students regarding EFL literature education.

Central, therefore, in this thesis is the development of a foreign language literature teaching model that is in line with the recent holistic perspective, which include various aspects of the learner, the context, and the literary text. Important for us in the design of this model, was to take a multi-perspective, including the teacher's and student's perspective. We then used this model to describe current EFL literature teaching practice as well as how students experience EFL literature lessons. The final step involved an intervention where we researched how eight EFL teachers experienced the relevance and usefulness of the model after working with it for one year.



The following five research questions are guiding this thesis:

1. What does a foreign language literature teaching model look like that includes various aspects of the learner, the context, and the literary text?
2. What can the contribution of students to the collaborative and co-constructive process of validating such a foreign language literature teaching model be?
3. How do students perceive EFL literature lessons?
4. How is EFL literature currently approached in Dutch secondary education?
5. How do teachers experience the relevance and usefulness of a foreign language literature teaching model that includes various aspects of the learner, the context, and the literary text, when applied in a naturalistic setting?

## 1.7 Methodological approach

This thesis contains two educational design studies, which emphasise the involvement of teachers and students in a natural teaching context (McKenney & Reeves, 2019). The first is described in Chapters 2 and 3 and follows the original process of consecutive prototypes through cycles of analysis, design, development, and evaluation. The second is described in Chapter 6 and follows an adaptation of the process whereby multiple prototypes (cases) were developed simultaneously by several teachers. Both studies were theoretically oriented, iterative, highly collaborative, interventionist, and responsively grounded (McKenney & Reeves, 2019).

Considering the three-fold objective and research questions of this thesis, a mixed method approach was applied, including surveys, interviews, and video-recorded lesson observations. In the editorial of the first volume of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, Tashakkori and Cresswell (2007) define mixed method research as research “in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry” (p. 4). The fundamental principle of mixed methods research is the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods, thereby building on their complementary

strengths and different weaknesses (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). We selected a mixed method approach for this thesis because, according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), mixed methods are appropriate in long-term projects where the research questions are geared towards understanding initial research findings in greater detail. Methodological decisions will be accounted for in more detail in each of the subsequent chapters.

## **1.8 Outline of the thesis**

In order to answer the main research questions, the five empirical studies in this thesis are organised in three parts.

### **1.8.1 Part 1**

Central to Part 1 of this thesis was the development of a model of foreign language literature teaching. In the first study (Chapter 2), an initial model was developed based on a literature review, formal curriculum documentation, and the researcher's professional experience as an EFL teacher and teacher educator. This initial model, the Comprehensive Approach to foreign language teaching and learning, which consists of four different approaches to EFL literature teaching, was validated through several consecutive Thinking Aloud Protocols with foreign language teachers and teacher educators. Because this initial model was part of a survey ( $n = 106$  EFL teachers), we were able to run a confirmatory factor analysis to determine whether, and the extent to which, the four approaches were linked to the underlying latent trait. By using descriptive statistics,  $t$ -tests, and correlation analyses, we explored how Dutch EFL teachers approach literature and whether teacher demographics and/or curricular factors are related to this.

### **1.8.2 Part 2**

Part 2 of this thesis consists of three studies which all concentrate on the student perspective. Because it is our understanding that the student voice is essential in curriculum development, the objective of the second study was to empirically validate the Comprehensive Approach through learner oriented discourses. In Chapter 3 we extend the discussion of the inclusion of student voice in research in two ways. We first argue that the leading hierarchical ideas about the inclusion of student voice should be considered dated, because it results in a mono-dimensional

and therefore limited view. We then propose that including the student voice from different perspectives and through a consecutive dialogical procedure will enhance research. This proposal is exemplified by a detailed report on how 268 Dutch secondary school students cooperated in the further development of the foreign language literature teaching model that was the results of Chapter 2.

In the third study (Chapter 4) we wanted to unearth the genuine views of a large group of students regarding their ideas about the benefits of EFL literature education. A second question we were interested in was whether we could find any differences between the perception of students from different schools. We designed a single open question survey which allowed for spontaneity in the student answer as well as avoided bias because the students were not provided with answer categories. A total of 635 pre-university level students (aged between 15 - 17) from 15 different secondary schools provided 2361 answers which were first analysed qualitatively and were then quantified.

Because student perception can have an impact on their achievement (Brown, 2009), it is not only important to find out what they find important, but also how this is related to their level of motivation in the EFL literature lessons. In the fourth study of this thesis (Chapter 5), we draw on the work of Skinner, Kindermann, and Furrer (2009) and Wigfield and Eccles (2000) and operationalise external motivation as student level of engagement and internal motivation as how students value the EFL literature lessons. To this end, a survey was developed based on the Comprehensive Approach and the Engagement versus Disaffection survey (Skinner et al., 2009). The survey was administered to 365 year 5 pre-university level students and their answers allowed us to investigate to what extent students are engaged during EFL literature lessons, how they value EFL literature lessons, and possible relationships between these two. The data were analysed by means of an exploratory factor analysis and correlation analyses.

### **1.8.3 Part 3**

The fifth and final study (Chapter 6) describes an intervention from a teacher perspective through an instrumental multisite multiple case study. This chapter explores how eight EFL teachers experienced the relevance and usefulness of the Comprehensive Approach when implementing this in their own teaching contexts. Whereas in Chapters 2 and 3 we followed the original educational design research process, in this chapter we changed the consecutive process to a simultaneous one, believing to do justice this way to the diverse naturalistic teaching contexts. To this

end, 276 EFL literature lessons from eight different teachers were video-recorded over a period of two years and the eight participating teachers were interviewed.

All data collection instruments for studies 4 and 5, as well as the data analyses, were piloted between April and June 2015 (Bloemert & van Veen, accepted). An evaluation of this pilot led to several minor changes in the instruments as well as in the analyses.

## 1.9 Organisation of the thesis

Because it was decided that this thesis would follow the thesis-by-publications format, Chapters 2 to 5 were submitted for publication in international peer-reviewed journals and can therefore be read independently. Chapter 2 was published in *Language, Culture and Curriculum* as Bloemert, Jansen, and van de Grift (2016). Chapter 4 was published in *The Language Learning Journal* as Bloemert, Paran, Jansen, and van de Grift (2019). Chapter 3 has recently been accepted by *Cambridge Journal of Education* and Chapter 5 has recently been accepted by *Applied Linguistic Review*. Because of this format some overlap in the introduction, theoretical background, and context sections may be encountered.

Due to the wide scope and the fact that we wanted to do justice to the data we collected, it was decided that the fifth empirical study (Chapter 6) followed the format of a chapter. This also means that this chapter is extensive in size.

In the final chapter, Chapter 7, the findings of the five empirical studies are briefly summarized followed by a general discussion of the overall conclusions. This is followed by directions for future research and practical implications for teachers and other educational professionals.

