**Striving for literary development in secondary literature students:
A teacher's self-study**

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ABSTRACT: In a self-study the main author examines the difficulties and challenges his students experience in their literary development. The central question is: How can my teaching support students in their literary development? This self-study is supported by a research group, examining together one literature lesson given by the main author, striving towards an in-depth analysis of the lesson, using a theoretical framework that focuses on interaction and literary development. Besides a more in-depth view in literary development of secondary school students, this study creates opportunities to analyse the interaction patterns among students, and between teacher and students.

KEYWORDS: literary development, literature education, self-study, classroom interaction, teacher learning, secondary education.

INTRODUCTION

This article reports on a self-study into literature teaching in a Dutch secondary school. Since the main author's teaching is the subject of this article, specific parts of the article speak in the first person. The study investigates how the main author became increasingly aware of the difficulties and challenges teachers face with students developing their literary understanding and appreciation. These difficulties translate into critical issues in teaching literature. These problems are what lead to the main goal and research question for this article.

In my daily practice as a teacher of literature, I have encountered a number of problems reminiscent of the ones my former classmates experienced. I have noticed that my teaching of literature does not always yield the results I was hoping for. Literature is one of the least favourite things for many of my students, and they frequently express their discontent with reading books. When they do talk about books with each other, their conversations seldom consist of anything more than one-liners.

In my experience, the literary development of students is hard to manage. It is difficult to motivate them to read a book. Moreover, the tools and skills to stimulate students in their literary development are not spelled out in the Dutch National

Curriculum, except for the literary terminology. Although I consider it my task as a literature teacher to help my students in their literary development, in practice I feel that I am not succeeding. This leads to the main goal of this study: to find concrete indications to improve my literary praxis. Therefore, my central question is: How can my teaching help students in their literary development?

We anticipate that addressing this question may lead to new perspectives on teaching and learning literature. To reach this end, we combine the method of self-study with some principles and methods derived from case study research. Firstly, we analyse the subject of the study within the broader contexts in which classroom teaching and learning of literature emerge, more specifically the design of the lesson by the teacher, and the standards of the National Curriculum regarding literature education. At the core of this study, we focus on the interactions among students and between students and teacher during a literature class. Secondly, student-student and teacher-student interactions are explicitly added to the teacher's self-report and self-reflection. Thirdly, we introduce a research group into the research design as a way to strengthen the analysis' reliability, and to create an interdisciplinary scope for the analysis.

In an earlier article from the same research project, we reported about a group of literature teachers and researchers reflecting upon some of the lessons we had been teaching and observing (Groenendijk, Pols & van de Ven, 2011). In this process of reflecting, we focused on discussing theoretical perspectives on literary development and literature teaching in an exploratory way. In the current article, we are making a step forward by adding two aspects to the initial approach: the single case study elements discussed before, and the interdisciplinary character of the research group, which permit us to study literature teaching and learning from a learning-theory perspective, more specifically, a theory on the role of interaction in students' literary development and teaching literature to students.

LITERATURE TEACHING: THE CONTEXT

The Dutch National Curriculum for secondary education in literary education includes three sub-domains: literary history, literary analysis, and literary development (as a reader of literature). Janssen and Rijlaarsdam (2007) describe four "goals" or paradigms in the Dutch Curriculum for literature, which largely correspond with the three subdomains: "cultural literacy" (literary history), "aesthetic awareness" (literary analysis), "social awareness," and "personal development" (together the subdomain literary development). Witte and Sâmihăian (2013) also link the three sub domains of the Dutch National Curriculum to Janssen and Rijlaarsdam's (2007) four paradigms. They place the percentage that each paradigm takes in the classroom in a European context. In grade 12 (17-18 years of age) cultural literacy takes 19%, aesthetic awareness 31%, social awareness 25%, and personal development 25%.

Translating Witte and Sâmihăian's paradigm divisions to the three subdomains, we see clearly that literary development is dominant in the Dutch Curriculum. In fact, if we combine social awareness and personal development, literary development represents half of the curriculum.

LITERATURE TEACHING: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Literary education serves two main goals: (1) it helps students' literary development and, in doing so, it offers new windows to the world and to themselves; (2) it offers historical and analytical tools to interpret a text in a meaningful way.

I suggest that these two goals are strongly related because they facilitate each other. By being able to interpret texts in a meaningful way, students become enabled to open these new windows to the world, and as a consequence, they grow in their literary development, which again enhances their ability to interpret texts in a meaningful way. I consider an interpretation "meaningful" if it helps students to become socially aware and helps them in their personal growth. In this sense, social awareness and personal growth are strongly related; one needs to understand the world in which one lives to know oneself and vice versa.

Literature employs a linguistic construction to create a world. The analysis of this construction, through literary analysis, shows us how that world is constructed. In an extended way, this also holds for literary history, in which historical texts have to be analysed, their literary repertoire as well as their social repertoire, and also their historical context.

This vision is in line with the Dutch National Curriculum for Literature as discussed in the former section. It relates to the goals described by Janssen and Rijlaarsdam (2007). Cultural literacy (literary history) and aesthetic awareness (literary analysis) must help students to become socially aware and help them in their personal growth. This also suits the dominance of literary development in the Dutch Curriculum.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this article consists of two parts: theories on literary development, and theories on the role of interaction in teaching and learning literature. These two perspectives are connected insights derived from the work of Vygotsky (Wertsch, 1985) and Bakhtin (1982).

Theories of literary development

Literary development can be seen as the change in students' skills in reading and their increasing abilities to express their understanding and views. Part of this development is the increasing capability to use tools for interpreting literary texts. Although two decades old, and subject to some criticism, the different phases in the development of reading described by Appleyard (1991) still remain relevant for this discussion. Appleyard's (1991) psychological view on reading is not limited to secondary school teaching; he focuses on reading between the ages of 2 and 24 and defines his well-known five helpful reader roles: (1) The *reader as a player* in pre-school years listens, observes, and participates in imaginative textual experiences leading to increasing knowledge of text and reading; (2) The *reader as a hero* transpires during the school years when the child becomes the central figure of a romance that is constantly revised as reading experiences and knowledge accumulate; (3) In adolescence, the reader begins to function *as thinker* who uses stories to discover insights into the

meaning of life, values, and beliefs worthy of commitment, ideal images, and authentic role models for imitation; (4) The *reader as interpreter* studies literature to develop critical and analytical tools and situates the literature in an historical context; and, finally, (5) the *pragmatic reader* adapts and adopts readings that reflect the earlier roles and selects them more consciously and pragmatically as they determine the uses they make of reading.

It is important to note that this model does not express sequential and hierarchical developmental phases. As readers mature and develop, they acquire new reader roles. Every new role cumulatively builds on earlier roles and does not merely replace them (Appleyard, 1991).

Theo Witte (2008) developed a classification model that categorises secondary school readers (aged 12-18) into six different levels: Experiential reading (level 1), identifying reading (2), reflective reading (3), interpretive reading (4), literate reading (5), and academic reading (6). Literary development is then defined as "climbing up the ladder," eventually reaching the highest level (the sixth). The model is not based on an assessment of student readers, but on teachers' pedagogical content knowledge describing readers' levels. These readers' levels are also related to characteristics of literary texts appropriate for readers of a certain level. Witte, Rijlaarsdam & Schram (2012) include some tasks for students according to the different levels.

Witte's (2008) development in a general sense follows the same development Appleyard (1991) describes, and Witte's scope clearly overlaps Appleyard's (age 12-18). However, while Witte bases his research on an empirical study on teacher's practical knowledge, Appleyard's book is based upon empirical studies of readers.

In this study our focus is on Appleyard's (1991) theory concerning the intended reader. In addition, Witte's (2008) taxonomy (for example, Locke, 2011) is expected to support in indicating whether, for example, a chosen text is appropriate for the development of certain students' reading skills. (For Witte's characterisations of texts linked to the reading level, see Witte, 2008, pp. 528-533.)

Our discussion of the Appleyard approach, extended with the Witte taxonomy, is also motivated by the fact that we focus on longitudinal studies in order to cover literary development over time. In a review study, Kubik (2012) shows that between 1985 and 2012 virtually no such studies were published. Since both Appleyard (1991) and Witte (2008) do have this longitudinal perspective, they are two of the few theories relevant to our research.[1]

The literature classroom

Witte (2008) connects the literary development of students with teacher actions and subject matter. This can be illustrated in the classic didactic triangle "Teacher–Subject Matter–Student Triad" (Figure 1). The "Teacher-Teaching Material-Student" triad can be traced back to Comenius' *Didactica Magna* (1657/1989). Hopmann (1997) points out that the triangle unites in its axes three even older traditions: Rhetoric (teacher–subject matter), Catechesis (teacher–student), and Methodology (student–teaching

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[1] We will not go into possible criticism on both Appleyard's and Witte's theoretical approaches. In the

material). In the Twentieth Century, the triad can also be found in communication, speech act, and genre theories (van de Ven, 2002).
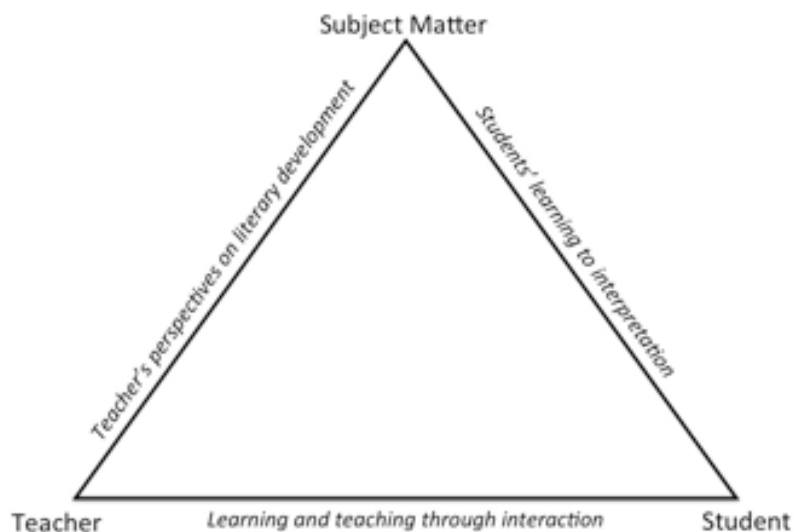
Figure 1: The classic teacher–subject matter–student triad

Applying this triad to literature teaching, the subject matter can be seen as *literary development*, the subdomain of the National Curriculum. This way, the *student–subject* axis represents the way the students learn to interpret literature, whereas the *teacher–subject matter* axis is about the teachers' literary development and above all their perspective on their students' literary development. Both of these abstract entities become visible in the third axis: the interaction during the teaching process, not only in the interaction between teacher and students, but also in student-student interaction. All of the interactions can be studied as reflections of what either teacher or students think. This pedagogical-theoretical view on literary development informs our approach.

The three curricular subdomains, *literary history, literary analysis, and literary development,* represent different perspectives of literature education. Janssen and Rijlaarsdam (2007) investigated the ways teachers position themselves relative to the three orientations and link the teacher's position to the different paradigms: (1) *Literary-aesthetic teachers* focus on literary-theoretical subjects and formal textual characteristics. Lessons consist primarily of structural analyses and literary concepts; (2) *Cultural teachers* focus on literary history and poetry; (3) *Social teachers* position books in their wider, social context to value the book as a social artefact*;* and, (4) *Student-focused teachers* highlight students' reading habits, personal responses, and value judgments on the literature. Sawyer and van de Ven (2007) suggest that these paradigms not only express subject matter aims, but also, at least implicitly, formulate perspectives on teaching and learning, and thus on interaction, which is the focus of our research.

Theories on learning to read literature

Literary education aims to support the development of the reader. Teachers can stimulate learning through exercises and through teaching readers to discuss literature in a meaningful way. Since multiple paradigms on teaching and learning literature

exist, it is important for teachers to be aware of theories on teaching and learning to make their pedagogical choices. So in the following sections, we will take the perspective of learning as a social activity, starting with Vygotsky's view (Wertsch, 1985), and working towards theories on classroom interaction.

According to Vygotsky human actions aim to achieve a goal, and to achieve that goal requires changing behaviour or developing a skill. Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development" describes the space between "actual developmental levels as determined by independent problem solving" and a higher level of "potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Wertsch, 1985, p. 71). From this perspective, effective teaching begins at the point of students' zone of proximal development. Hence, teachers should actively engage with their students to identify what students can already accomplish unaided. When teachers begin from the point where students can no longer act on their own, they stimulate new learning to develop new knowledge and skill in a social context (with teacher and peers, for instance).

In our study, the zone of proximal development pertains to two aspects: the extent to which students have already learned to interact prior to a particular learning activity, and the level of the reading assignment during the activity compared to the students' actual reading level. The former is influenced by previous lessons leading up to this one, as well as by school culture, in which a certain way of interaction may dominate. For example, in school contexts, students may be expected to give "right" answers and avoid "wrong" answers. The latter is to be assessed within the theoretical framework indicated above.

A teacher's objectives can be identified in the interaction with students. The mutual interaction between students and teacher offers insights into the actual pedagogical activities students engage in and into their prior knowledge. Moreover, it is in this interaction that we may detect actual learning taking place. Interaction plays an essential role in learning, perhaps particularly with respect to literature. The communication between teacher and students can be characterised as *guidance*, and the communication among students as *collaboration*. Both types of interaction can be analysed with the different models briefly discussed below.

Teacher-student interaction

Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur and Prendergast (1997) distinguish two types of interaction: *recitation* and *discussion*, the former being a monological, one-way interaction (talking *to)*, the latter being dialogical (two interaction, talking *with)*. The first is teacher-driven and characterised by the classic I-R-E pattern of Initiation, Response, and Evaluation. The discourse is teacher-led and directed.

The recitation model works from the premise that teachers engage in what Nystrand et al. call *transmission of knowledge*. The student does not make vital contributions and the sources of information are limited to the teacher and the book. The discussion model shifts significantly to interaction and dialogue among teachers and students. Talk becomes multidirectional, moving easily among class members. In this way, knowledge is constructed and shared by the class and the teacher collaboratively. The

discourse is positioned horizontally; that is, unlike the recitation model, all class members have a share in the discourse.

A critical feature of this lies in the essence of student talk as critical to knowledge construction and discourse development. Moreover, the talk leads to learning and therefore often demonstrates uncertainty, questions and challenges that are absent in a view of knowledge as fixed and controlled. The underlying view on learning associated with discussion is *transformation of understandings*. Great value is attributed to the students and their experiences and their prior knowledge. Nystrand et al. (1997) argue that understanding and knowledge develop with dialogical and active learning.

Student-student interaction

In discussion models, student-to-student exchanges emerge. Mercer (1995) distinguishes three forms of interaction between students: (a) Disputational talk is characterised by disagreement and individualised decision-making, and it has some characteristic discourse features; namely, short exchanges consisting of assertions and challenges or counter-assertions; (b) Cumulative talk builds positively but uncritically on what others contribute as a way to construct a "common knowledge" characterised by repetitions, confirmations and elaborations; and, (c) Exploratory talk is characterised by critical and constructive engagement with ideas (p. 104). The talk is often uncertain, and questions are common. The dialogue is collaborative and cumulative in building new knowledge.

Relevant to our research is Mercer's assertion that exploratory talk is most suitable for learning, since it cumulatively and more transparently leads to understanding. Applied to literary development, exploratory talk is suppose to trigger students to think about a text, opening the way for questioning and challenging each other to interpret a literary text through meaningful and constructive interaction. This is what we are looking for.

Interaction with literature

The Bakthin (1982) conception of the dialogic nature of language asserts that every speech act is intrinsically multi-vocal; it is mainly the context that defines the meaning of an utterance. Applied to our subject matter, this means that each literary work is in dialogue with other literary works; they are intertextual. Intertextual dialogue is continuous and multifaceted. This view of literature as multifaceted interaction resists the singular meaning of a literary text. The context in which a book is read, moreover, is at least as influential to meaning as the context and the time in which it was written. This suggests that meaning is dependent on the reader. In the setting of our literary classroom, this means that we should engage our students in a constructive discussion on their meaning of the text.

Locke (2011) does precisely this by suggesting that teachers should invite students to a dialogue with the voices in the text (author and characters), voices implicit in the text, and voices responding to texts, thus implying that teachers should create an atmosphere to construct meaning for a book in a collaboration between all members of the class in order to operationalise and do justice to the dialogic nature of the literary work.

Nystrand et al.'s (1997) *dialogical interaction* and Mercer's (1995) *exploratory talk*, we feel, are key elements in creating Locke's (2011) constructive atmosphere. In combination with an inquisitive attitude among the students, a dialogic interaction and exploratory talk lead to a true collective construction of meaning.

Now, returning to the classic didactic triangle in Figure 1, Appleyard (1991) focuses mostly on development, Witte (2008) on texts, tasks and teachers, Nystrand et al. (1997) on teachers and students, and Mercer (1995) on students. Projecting this on the didactical triad (Figure 1), the connection between Appleyard and Witte lies in the point "subject matter" and the line "literary development", Witte and Nystrand et al. meet in the point "teacher" and Appleyard and Mercer in the point "student". Mercer and Nystrand et al. focus on the line "interaction" and the points "teacher" and "student". In this way, our theoretical framework covers all aspects of the didactic triangle of teaching and learning literary development.

METHODS

Design

The main question of this study is: How does the teaching of literature help students in their literary development? The main question is divided in four sub-questions relating to the self-study on teaching:

1. What are my goals in this lesson?
2. What am I doing in this lesson?
3. What are the students doing in this lesson?
4. What is achieved in this lesson?

To investigate these questions, we analyse in depth one literature lesson taught by the first author within the theoretical framework discussed in the previous section.

This study is a specific form of self-study because it is a systematic study of and reflection on a teacher's own teaching practice in order to improve practice and contribute to the knowledge base of, in this case, literary education (Lunenburg & Korthagen, 2004; Loughran, 2004). The focus of a self-study is on the teacher and his or her actions. For example, teachers might systematically evaluate whether and how their aspirations are realised in practice. The self-learning process of a teacher is the focus here. In the self-study, that process is reflected upon and linked to a theoretical framework.

We add three case study elements to this self-study design. Firstly, we situate literature teaching – instructional practice and types of interaction in the classroom – in two critical contexts: the design of the lesson, and presumptions of the teacher underlying the design, as illustrated in Figure 2. Secondly, the teacher approaches his or her teaching from a critical point of reference based on the learning activities and results of the students. The focus of a classical self-study is on the main author's actions in the classroom. The addition of student activities distinguishes this study from traditional self-studies, as illustrated in Figure 3.
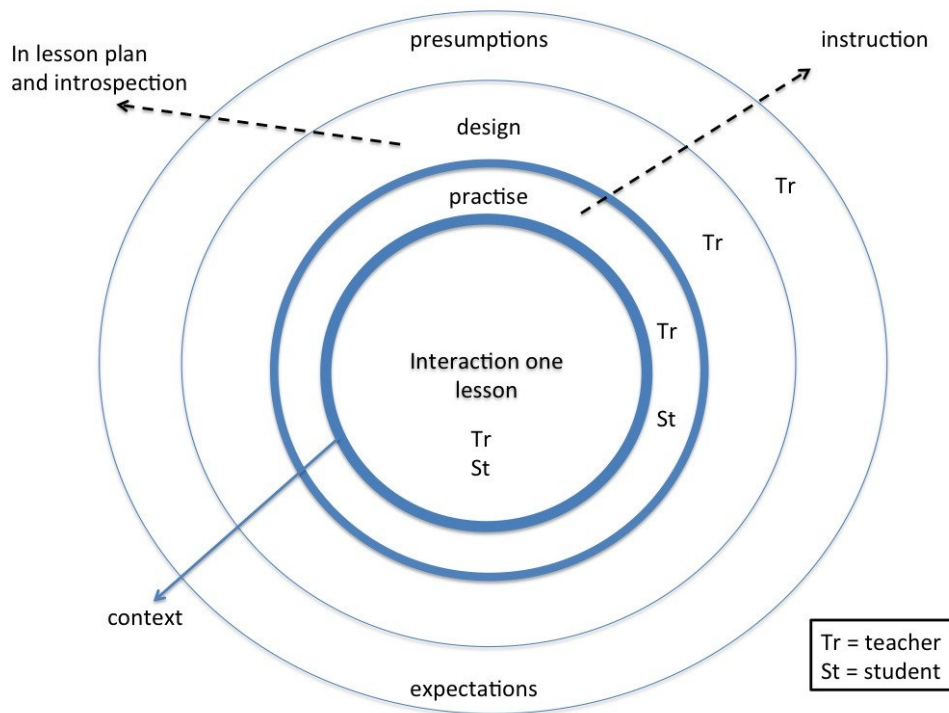
Figure 1. The layered structure of the data
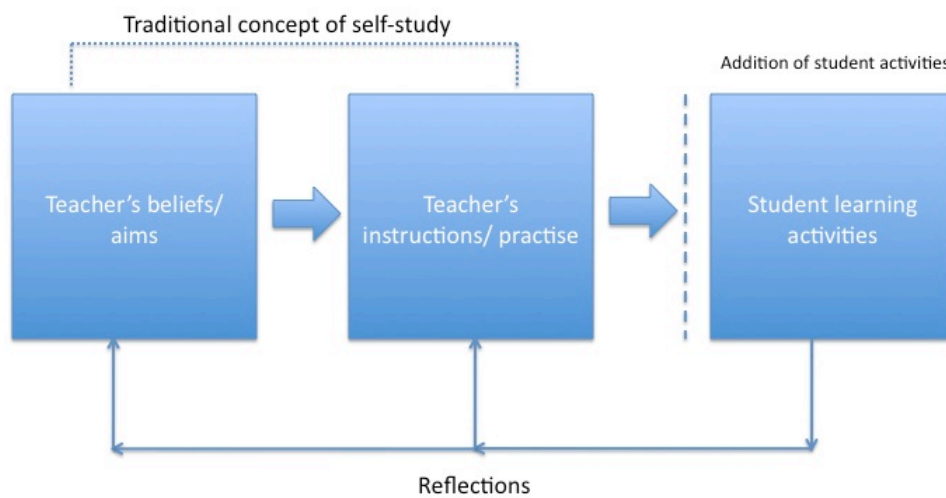
Figure 2. Extended concept of self-study (see Imants, 2010)

Thirdly, an interdisciplinary research group functioned to strengthen reliability of the analysis and to combine the theoretical perspectives of literary development and learning theory, more specifically theory on the role of interaction in learning. We describe the functioning of this research group in the data analysis section.

Data collection

This study's data consisted of a lesson taught by the main author at a secondary school in the southern part of the Netherlands. This lesson was selected because it clearly was intended by the teacher to contribute to the students' learning to read literature. The teacher identified this lesson as a clear example of his typical teaching style. Data were collected on all levels of Model 2. Regarding the inner circles, the selected lesson was videotaped and all discourses were transcribed. The design context was described by the lesson plan and the teacher's reflections were in the lesson plan (see also: Groenendijk et al., 2011).

Data analysis

The two main lines of analysis are literary development didactics and interaction. Both were approached from interdisciplinary perspectives, aiming to arrive at a point of consensus.

The analysis of the lesson plan was a form of document analysis. According to Kroon and Sturm (2007), the analysis of the lesson itself is based on key events. Kroon and Sturm (2007) discuss key events in ethnographic research citing Erickson (1986), among others, to explain the exact nature of a key event:

> A key event is key in that the researcher assumes intuitively that the event chosen has the potential to make explicit a theoretical "loading". A key event is key in that it brings to awareness latent, intuitive judgments the analyst has already made about salient patterns in the data. Once brought to awareness these judgments can be reflected upon critically. (Erickson, 1986)

A key event must always be accompanied by other key events.

The two key events selected from the lesson focus on interaction analysis: student-student interaction and teacher-student interaction. The first event involved student-student interaction. We selected this interaction to provide insight into the students' learning through rich conversation. The event began the moment the students started talking and ended when no new interaction patterns developed. The second event involved teacher-student interaction as the teacher discussed a text with his students. This event concluded the discussion as well, as it illustrated how the teacher responded to his class and to the literary text at hand. Thus it illuminates his beliefs about teaching and learning to read literary texts.

We then analyse the key fragments using Mercer (1995) and Nystrand et al. (1997) and focusing on the interaction to gain insight into student learning. Further, we analyse the lesson focusing on the context, involving assumptions, expectations (from the lesson plan), instructions, and the actual lesson practice, using the transcriptions.

Within the research group, we conducted the data analysis using triangulation to develop strong correlation among of the coding of events and documents, such as the lesson plan. Loughran (2004) considers this type of researcher triangulation as belonging to a self-study:

> It actually requires the involvement of others so that the learning outcomes are more than just personal constructions of meaning from particular situations. Clearly then, despite the implicit meaning carried by the term self, self-study must go beyond personal reflections of practice so that the possibility of a knowledge base...might resonate with others.

The research group worked in three steps: (1) Each fragment was first analysed individually from the perspective of the researcher's expertise; (2) These different interpretations where then discussed in the research groups in several sessions; and (3) These discussions were exploratory by nature: together we tried to explore how to approach the fragments, to come to a joint, tenable interpretation eventually. The two main lines of analysis were literature (development) didactics and interaction, and both were approached from different perspectives, in an exploratory way aiming at arriving at a consensus.

FINDINGS

Lesson plan

The lesson was constructed following the Jigsaw Method (Aronson, 2013) and consisted of five core phases (instruction, reading, group work, expert groups, class discussion). In an earlier lesson, the students were already familiarised with work forms of this method.

The earlier lesson

A week earlier, students read Jan Wolkers' short story *Gevederde vrienden* (*Feathered Friends*) in groups, each group focusing on one structural-analytical process. For example, one group talked about the time and space of the text ("Where and when does the story take place?"), another group talked about the protagonist ("What are the characteristics of the person the story is about?"), and so on. Subsequently, after about ten minutes of discussion, students regrouped to share their knowledge.

Phase 1: Instruction

In introducing the lesson, I recapitulated the work forms of the earlier literary lesson. Then I explained the assignment for the Van Aalten reading and provided reading instructions on each group's table. Whereas the assignments in the earlier lesson focused on the lower-level structural characteristics of the text, in these assignments I tried to introduce a higher-level focus on literary approaches (5 minutes):

- *Group 1:* While reading the story, pay attention to the way in which the author wrote the story. From what perspective is it written? Which characters are in the story?

- *Group 2:* While reading the story, pay attention to the way the author presents the world to you. What moral values can you distill from the way the characters act? Are there certain values that are attached to certain types of behavior?
- *Group 3:* While reading the story, try to write down what the story does to you as a reader. How do you feel about the actions of the protagonist? How do you feel about what he thinks? Could you compare yourself to the protagonist?
- *Group 4:* Below you find some information about the author of the story. While reading the story, pay attention to the elements you could connect with the information about the author's life. Could you explain why van Aalten decided to write this story?
- *Group 5:* While reading the story, pay attention to the time and space in the story. Try to find out how these elements contribute to what you think the writer is trying to say.

Phase 2: Reading

Students were to read a short story entitled *Fam* by Thomas van Aalten (1999). In this story, the protagonist, about thirty years old, describes how he and his homosexual brother must empty the home they grew up in because their mother is being placed in a mental hospital. The story consists primarily of flashbacks to the protagonist's youth. It turns out that from an early age, he has been left to fend for himself and been emotionally neglected. The story displays an existential outlook on life. The protagonist is confused about the direction of his life.

I briefly introduced this story and began reading aloud briefly, followed by the students taking turns reading aloud. (10 minutes)

Phase 3: Group work

After briefly discussing group expectations, students discussed their findings within their groups (formed in phase 1). (10 minutes)

Phase 4: Expert groups

Following the Jigsaw Method, students were now regrouped into "expert" groups consisting of one member from every previous group. I briefly explained that expert groups were to discuss their findings together to interpret the story, a work method students were already familiar with on the basis of the earlier lesson. (10 minutes)

Phase 5: Class discussion

Before the groups discussed their findings, I provided a brief lecture on the different ways of interpreting literature that should arise in the discussion, and then I stated the goal of my lesson: to demonstrate that approaching a story from different angles gives a richer interpretation of the story. (10 minutes)

Reflection on the lesson plan: A personal perspective

My main goal for this lesson was to teach different literary approaches to a text, thereby allowing students to develop deeper and richer interpretations. Hence, I expected my students to talk in an open discussion about a text with each other, with each student approaching the text from a different, a literary, angle. Firstly, I directed them to work with different literary concepts. Secondly, I expected them to talk about a text in a specific way, that is, in an open discussion. In hindsight, my aim here was to have the students talk about the story in an exploratory way (see Mercer, 1995). Students were to form hypotheses, elaborate on them, and critically question each other. This is how I interpret, in hindsight, what I meant with an open discussion. At the end of the lesson, I wanted the different groups to have a well-argued, joint interpretation of the story that could be seen as a conclusion to their discussion.

I expected students to be able to approach a text in different ways, depending on their reading objective. This was in line with Appleyard's (1991) characterisation of an adult reader:

> The (adult) reader may read in several ways, which mimic, though with appropriate differences, the characteristic responses of each of the previous roles: to escape, to judge the truth of experience, to gratify a sense of beauty, to challenge oneself with new experiences, to comfort oneself with images of wisdom. What seems to be common to these responses is that adult readers much more consciously and pragmatically choose the uses they make of reading. (p. 15)

In reflection, I recognise that what I aim for as a teacher of upper grade secondary school students is, as Appleyard suggests, something expected of adult readers. So I want to prepare my students to consciously and pragmatically decide to what end they read a text and adjust their reader role accordingly.

In this lesson plan, I clearly point out that the last phase in the main interaction between teacher and students should be a class discussion. Different approaches should come forward in this discussion. Upon reflection, I interpret that in teacher-student interaction, I want the students to take the initiative reflected in Nystrand et al.'s (1997) approach with the teacher structuring questions that encourage students to speak openly. The focus should be on the student text (that is, the interpretation of the student, cf. Malmgren & van de Ven 1994). Hence, I should leave room for the students to exchange ideas in order to transform understandings. My questions are not meant to extract correct answers but as an invitation, a prompt for students to explain or illustrate understanding.

The lesson plan and the assignment reveal my vision and purpose concerning students' literary development. For example, I explicitly finish my explanation and instructions by stating the goal of the lesson: to experience a variety of approaches and perspectives to enhance and enrich interpretations of the story (Phase 5). From this, I conclude that I want my students to be like Appleyard's (1991) pragmatic readers. In applying Janssen's (1998) model for literary development, I seem to emphasise a literary-aesthetic approach that focuses on a text-based approach. The text's literary repertoire and the accompanying meta-concepts seem to dominate my lesson, at least my lesson plan (McCormick, 1994).

During the small-group discussions, it became apparent to me that students struggled with the text, particularly with the protagonist's behaviour in the short story. They focused exclusively on the protagonist and did not follow instructions to apply the different approaches. I also worry that how I finished the lesson didn't reach my aims. So below we will describe the events that highlight my experienced problems through our detailed analyses of these events in order to come to a better understanding of the literary experiences that developed in the lesson.

Key event analyses

We followed a two-step approach to the analysis of the key fragments: First, we explored the interaction with respect to the goals of the teacher, and second, we analysed the interaction in the light of literary development.

Key Event 1: Student-student interaction
This is the literal transcript of Key Event 1. It took place during Phase 4 of the lesson, in which students from the "expert groups" enter new groups.

> 1.1 Anne Wil: I was told to look at how he acts and thinks, and so on…And if, eh, if one could identify with that person. We concluded that he really had strange thoughts about smells and sounds. He was very passionless, nevertheless. And we could identify with the main character on some level. But on most levels, we couldn't.

> 2.1 Aike: We talked about the main character too. He was very reluctant. At first he, that father, he wanted to make up with his son. But in the end he's like, "No, thank you."

> 1.2 Anne Wil: Yes, that is a bit weird indeed.

> 2.2 Aike: He doesn't seem to care about anything. Like at that party. They seem to notice that he is a bit eccentric, a bit of a maverick.

> 1.3 Anne Wil: Yes, and he wants to stand still and just let the future pass by…

> 3.1 Renske: We were asked to pay attention to the world that the writer is showing us, or something like that. And, eh, we clearly agreed that he had a really terrible childhood. And that's maybe the reason why he remembers so many details of the past. Like that neighbourhood, that it was really smelly and the sirens, that they were heard on Mondays or Tuesdays. Just because it had such great impact. He acts really carelessly. Should I really worry about that? Throughout the story, he really seems a bit depressed. He describes the world and his surroundings a bit depressively.

> 4.1 Danique: We had time and space. And the whole story took place in a couple of days. He used lots of flashbacks about his youth and things like that. And that he really suffered from his terrible youth. We could gather that from his brother, who's gay, and the divorce of his parents that seemed to play in the here and now. And where he lived and where he played soccer really reflects how miserable his life was. He also lived near an airport, with lots of noisy airplanes. He seemed to live in some kind of industrial zone. So his apartment isn't all that great! And there were lots of different smells in the story. And it was winter. That's what it comes down to.

5.1 Daan: We read a text about the writer and we had to pay attention to the connection with the story. The main character's year of birth matched the writer's year of birth. The text about the writer told us that he also had an older brother, just like the main character. You are inclined to think he wrote the story based on personal experience, or at least for a big part. He obviously made up some parts; it didn't really happen like he wrote it. And the way he experiences the world he lives in, well, he likes to tell us something, well, not in a way that everything is beautiful, but the things that go wrong. He doesn't write a beautiful tale, everybody happy, lovely events. On the contrary, he also tells us about the bad things – the things that went wrong.

4.2 Danique: Realistic.

1.4 Anne Wil: Exactly, and negative…But also realistic, that's exactly what we thought.

2.3 Aike: Everything was very negative, in my opinion.

4.3 Danique: He just has a very low self-esteem, if you ask me.

2.4 Aike: Yes, hardly anything is positive. Nothing, really.

3.2 Renske: I think he's extremely negative about his family.

4.4 Danique: Yes, he graduated, and they didn't even know about it!

2.5 Aike: His brother didn't even know. And that teddy bear, but he had already lost that bear and he did not like that, so to speak.

4.5 Danique: Yes, because his brother was drunk and stoned! *[sarcastically]* Very nice…

2.6 Aike: So, nothing was really positive.

The conversation started with a dialogue between Aike and Anne Wil. Anne Wil's group discussed reading experience (Group 3). However, she provided little information on her experience (1.1). Instead, Anne Wil provided characteristics of the structural element *space* (scent, taste). It is unclear what her comparison with the protagonist was based on. She reproduced what her previous group discovered; she did not provide any counter arguments herself. On the other hand, Aike (2.1) from the group assigned to perspective and characters (Group 1) elaborated on his own previous group's findings.

Anne Wil, realising that Aike also presented a negative image of the main character, responded with recognition (1.2). To illustrate, Aike gave an example showing that what he felt proved that "they," presumably other characters in the story, also thought the protagonist was an outcast (2.2). What he based this on and who "they" were, remains unclear. At this point, Renske (3.1) joined in and added her group's framework (world representation, social approach, Group 2) to Anne Wil and Aike's. She was clearly examining the way the protagonist lived his life, and how he felt. Although a "world view" concept arose from the first question about what moral values could be deducted from the characters' actions, Renske ignored that, and instead, linked to Aike and Anne Wil's explanations of the protagonist's feelings. Danique (4.1) was also mainly focusing on the protagonist's feelings triggered by her ideas on "time and space". Daan (5.1) provided the final reaction. Expected to concentrate on the author's autobiographical data, he explained that in reading the

biographical material provided, he learned that the author has a brother himself, and tried to create a direct link to the main character's worldview.

As the discussion proceeded, I was struck by the fact that that these students were far less concerned with forming a conception of the story's possible meaning described in the lesson plan. From a linguistic perspective, we observed that in the beginning, students often used the pronoun "we", suggesting that they carried over the findings articulated by their previous group peers. It appeared they did not construct personal hypotheses; they simply added declarative statements. Moreover, they did not challenge or criticise – a feature that would be evident in exploratory discourse. Instead, students seemed to focus on approval and correctness. They seemed to be looking for a common ground, a shared understanding of the protagonist. This reflects Mercer's (1995) *cumulative talk* where students elaborate on each other's assumptions without question or challenge.

After Daan's reaction, the interaction pattern changed. Group members tried to reach a final definition of their view on the main character. Cryptic remarks followed in rapid succession and "we" changed to "I". Danique (4.2) interpreted Daan's remark: "He doesn't write a beautiful tale, everybody happy, lovely events. On the contrary, he also tells us about the bad things" as "like real life", since her response included the word "realistic". Anne Wil (1.4) and Aike (2.3) partly agreed but repeated their negative view on the character.

Danique (4.3) steered the discussion back to the character by saying "he" had a negative self-image and Aike (2.4) agreed. Renske (3.2) then connected to the protagonist's image of his family. She focused on one aspect of the reading instruction addressed by her group: "How are family bonds looked at?" Danique (4.4) agreed and provided an example from the text to support Renske's findings. Aike (2.5) also agreed and put forward the example of the relationship with the brother. Danique (4.5) responded with a sarcastic remark on the relationship that prompted Aike (2.6) to conclude that nothing was positive.

The five students actively looked for connections with each other's findings that could be regarded as being exploratory. The protagonist was clearly the focus, and this group was trying to outline his personality from different angles and perspectives. The students, while holding on to their previous groups' conclusions, tried to situate them into a broader perspective and context.

Key Event 2: Teacher-student interaction
This is the literal transcript of Key Event 2. It took place during Phase 5 of the lesson:

1.1 Teacher: All right, I am going to ask you a few questions. Tosee, how we can strengthen the connections between the different approaches to the story even more? We noticed the main character has a certain outlook on life. Who could tell me how he sees the world?

2.1 Aike: Bad.

1.2 Teacher: Bad, explain.

2.2 Aike: He's completely negative. Nothing's fun really. The holidays, that party, it was all equally boring.

1.3 Teacher: Everything is stupid and it doesn't amount to anything?…If we look at time and space. Where is this story situated?

3.1 Deniece: In the city.

1.4 Teacher: In the city. What city?

4.1 Danique: I think a big city or at the outskirts of a big city because he is near an airport and an industrial area.

1.5 Teacher: Very good. There is even mention of a prison tower nearby.

5.1 Paul: The Bijlmer[2]! *[Laughter]*

1.6 Teacher: Well, that's an excellent remark, Paul! Airplanes, prison towers, lots of apartment buildings; it might just be the Bijlmer. That gives us a chance to make a connection with the author, Thomas van Aalten, since he also lives in Amsterdam. So we have this big city, airplanes, apartment buildings, but the author also talks about this small room in the attic.

4.2 Danique: He had bad memories about that.

1.7 Teacher: It's dusty, everything is crooked; it is a very desolate place. All very discomforting. You could say that this room in the attic represents his youth, more or less.…So what am I trying to say? When you read a book, at some point you notice that your reading objective requires a certain reading strategy. And being the smart people you are, you have to gradually develop in order to be able to apply these different ways of reading, different ways of approaching literature. Basically you already do a lot of these things automatically; when reading books for school, you pay attention to certain things. And realising that can give you a lot of advantages. And actually, that is what I wanted to share with you today.

Key Event 2 interactions differed substantially from Event 1 above. In this event, the teacher spoke most of the time, as revealed in lines 21 of 30. In reflection, I see that the teacher's role deviated from his goals of asking questions and facilitating the conversation. He should not have gotten this involved in content discussion. However, in this key event, the teacher dominated the conversation.

In 1.1, the teacher told the students to expect a question-and-answer conversation: "All right, I'm going to ask you a few questions." This opening may have influenced and shaped the course of the discussion. Students were led with certain expectations of the interaction at hand when a teacher started asking questions. School culture and schooling experiences have taught them to provide "the right answer" to teacher questions. Indeed, the opening sentence may have led the students to prepare for an IRE discourse pattern: the teacher inquires, the student responds, and the teacher then evaluates the answer. As is evident in the transcript, this pattern clearly surfaced in the course of the discussion and thus it appeared that the setting and staging of the discussion influenced the pattern of discourse development.

When Aike (2.1) responded to a teacher question with a one-word reply ("Bad"), the teacher asked him to elaborate. This illustrates how the teacher attempted to apply the teacher in a "discussion model" (Nystrand et al., 1997) by giving the students a chance to substantiate their views. When Aike (2.2) illustrated his point, however, it

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[2]The Bijlmer is a notorious neighbourhood in Amsterdam.

conflicted with the teacher's expected answer (1.3) and thereby effectively disrupted his quest for discussion.

At this point, it became more obvious that the teacher started to guide the students to the "correct" answer. The last part of the answer, however, introduced new information. Aike (2.2) used the expressions "boring", "nothing's fun", and "bad". The teacher rephrased Aike's answer by saying, "It doesn't amount to anything," meaning that the protagonist had reached a "dead end" – a term Aike did not articulate himself.

The teacher (1.3) then attempted to redirect the conversation by introducing a new approach linking to the meta-concepts of structural narrative analysis (which was part of Group 5's reading instructions). Deniece (1.3) responded with a one-word answer. The teacher (1.4) persisted in asking questions. Danique (4.1), apparently satisfactorily, although she did not directly answer the question "What city?" Instead, she described a city type and the teacher (5.1) responded positively. Nevertheless, he (1.5) decided to complete her answer that led to an impulsive response from Paul (5.1), who seemed to provide the answer the teacher was looking for. The teacher (1.6) continued, substantiating Paul's answer with additional biographical data on the author. Danique (4.2) then offered information on the main character's experiences in the small attic. The teacher (1.7) elaborated and subsequently offered his conclusion. It remained unclear why he chose to focus on the meta-concept of "space" in this instructional dialogue. It had no bearing on the protagonist's worldview or mental state and was not linked to an interpretation of the story.

The interaction above followed the classic and traditional IRE pattern: the teacher asks a question, the students answer, and the teacher in turn evaluates. A check for correctness led to a student changing his or her answer to fit one of the teacher's own interpretations (1.3) or prompted a new question. Students were not given the opportunity to think more deeply about the story freely, but instead, answer teacher-directed questions. Then, a change in teacher roles began again (1.7). He conducted a question-and-answer session, but changed into what could be characterised as *school representative,* that is, he spoke of a greater good – that students must read books for school and to do that effectively, they must employ a variety of approaches. The teacher abandoned his focus on literary development in favour of the skills required by the school regarding particular literary reading skills that he had been focusing on during this class. At the lesson's conclusion (1.7), the teacher took over the discourse completely and ruled out all student participation at any level. He seemed to assume responsibility for interpreting the story and, in effect, discounted the students' need to contribute to the process. Eventually, he (1.7) specified the goal of this lesson to the students.

What are the students doing in this instructional dialogue? Their role within this interaction was obviously different from the presumptions and expectations the teacher had. The students' answers were brief; they only responded to the teacher's questions and hardly expounded on their remarks. This fits the interaction pattern described above: the IRE pattern leaves barely any room for students to contribute. However, the question is whether the students' way of interacting is caused by the IRE pattern that was initiated by the teacher or whether the teacher lapsed into the

IRE pattern because of the students' initial lack of interaction; again, no transformation of understandings, only transmission of knowledge.

Such teacher-directed questioning and call for "correctness" contradicts the pedagogical and learning implications of dialogic learning theory and does not provide a productive or critical learning environment. The clearly dominant-teacher text reflects Ehlich & Rehbein's (1986) characterisation of a "teacher's argument with a division of roles", that allows a type of interaction leading to transmission of knowledge rather than transformation of understandings.

Interaction as a medium for literary development: A personal perspective

But it is not only my interaction with my students and the dominance of the teacher's text that I have to reflect on. My explicit and implicit focus on a literary-aesthetic approach of literature had implications for the way students discussed the text. That is, they were mostly concerned with the structural-analytical procedure of "the character". During the researchers' triangulation sessions with the data, I, as the teacher, expressed an interest in equipping students and preparing them for deeper understanding of literary texts. The structural analysis, in my view, is the best tool to provide that. This also corresponds with the function literary theory has in the end for literature in The Dutch Curriculum: literary theory must help students in their interpretations of a text. Still, in their oral interactions, students remained fixed on the structural-analytical approach. This may be related to the context of my lesson. In previous lessons, students discussed a story by Jan Wolkers and were then required to focus on specific structural-analytical elements in groups. This may have demonstrated and influenced the way the students discussed the story during the analysed lesson. So in practice, my focus on literary theory does not support the students' interpretation of the text. It rather seems to become the goal for the students. Because of this, I did not reach my goals for the lesson nor assist them in seeing the function "literary theory" should have had.

In fact, in that lesson, students did not apply a diverse range of approaches and perspectives to discuss the social repertoire of the reader and the text. Explaining my aims during a data triangulation session, I pointed out that I expected my students to probe a possible message from the author and suggested not necessarily a singular message but a message that could be explained and justified. The multiform approach to literature I aim for as a teacher ought to have given students the necessary tools to penetrate a story by supporting their interpretations with solid examples and arguments. While students can draw both from a text's literary and from its social repertoire, in my lesson I focused too narrowly and exclusively on the literary repertoire that, after careful reflection and consideration, led me to conclude that my approach, and thus also my instruction, needs to be substantiated and supported with a diverse range of approaches and perspectives. This is particularly apparent when I consider that while the concepts of the approach based on the literary repertoire were familiar to the students (they were used in a prior assignment), they were unable to transfer the knowledge and skills to the current, more complex, literary text under study.

During the lesson, I became aware of another problem. I observed that students experienced difficulty with the story, limiting their attention to exploring the main

character and disregarding other important and related knowledge. This may have to do with the reading level of Thomas van Aalten's story, which may be too far removed from the students' zone of proximal development. Hence, I hypothesise that, while my explanation may have been unclear, and the story may have been too far removed from my students' experience, I speculate that the assignment exceeded the students' abilities and, ultimately, their zone of proximal development.

Witte's (2008; see also Witte et al., 2012) model of literary reading provides a hierarchical view of literary text selection that takes into account reading levels and competence in six specific stages, moving from literal, elementary characters (Level 1) to content and characters exhibiting increasing ambiguity and complexity (Level 6). In the lesson we analysed, the students functioned at a relatively elementary level (Level 2). In using van Aalten's story as the model to examine, the qualities and characters of the text represent the highest levels and therefore, proved too complex for my students. Van Aalten uses many abstract images, time leaps, flashbacks and an existential worldview. The story's main character is better suited for Witte's Level 4, featuring characteristics not necessarily connected to the adolescent world. This level is also characterised by more time leaps (flashbacks and flash-forwards) and a slightly metaphorical style (Level 4). In addition, van Aalten's story used musical and artistic references from 1990s pop culture, a world unfamiliar to the adolescents in the class and which would require a sophistication and awareness of intertextuality. Witte would assign this narrative as a Level 5 reading. So also the choice of text is something I have to reconsider.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The study led to an in-depth analysis of a single lesson in a Grade 10 literature class. We assessed the teacher's goals for the lesson and carefully examined his pedagogical moves and oral interactions during two critical, selected key events. The main author's question for the study – How can my teaching help students in their literary development? – was further divided into four sub-questions. We address these questions below.

1.   What are my goals in this lesson?

The analysis of the lesson plan shows that the main aim of the lesson is to teach students different literary approaches to support students' interpretative skills as part of their literary development. But in the analysis we discovered that what the main author aimed for was something at the level of Appleyard's adult reader and thus doubtlessly a too distant aim for his students. We also saw that the main author had a rather dominant perspective on the literary analysis instead of supporting a broader way of interpreting the text.

2.   What am I doing in this lesson?

The teacher–student interaction followed the traditional IRE-pattern in which the teacher's text became dominant. We found this latter phenomenon to be woven into the reading level of the selected story that seemed to exceed the grasp of the students

combined with the teacher's inability to achieve his goals for meaningful and sustained interaction with and among the students.

3.   What are the students doing in this lesson?

From the analysis, we saw clearly that students struggled with their assignment and experienced difficulty in arriving at a meaningful interpretation of the complex literary text. In the student–student interaction, however, the students seem to have arrived at a rudimentary form of exploratory talk (Event 1). However, this way of interaction was not supported by the teacher-student interaction, which was more directed towards transmission of the teachers' text than on students' understanding.

4.   What is achieved in this lesson?

We do not think that the teacher reached all his goals for this lesson. Although the students experienced some moments of exploratory talk in the group session, the lesson as a whole did not support the students' interpretation of the story. How do we interpret this analysis with respect to the main research question? How can the teacher's teaching help students in their literary development?

Text selection remains a critical issue in teaching literature in secondary schools. What informs the choices teachers make? Certainly one aspect of that would be the literary texts available, funding for new texts, department requirements in a given school, and the skills that need to be developed over the course of secondary schooling. What would it mean, for instance, if students chose from two or three available options for reading? How would their investment in selection inform their reading and open them up to deeper critical analyses, stimulating them to more exploratory ways of discussing texts? In the instance we analysed, the selected text may have been too complex (according to Witte's classification) and even removed from student experiences, but this does not necessarily suggest that literature teaching should be restricted to texts that students like or find personally relevant. Aase (2011) maintains that teachers should offer students "encounters with the unknown" (p. 130). She refers to Ziehe (1995) who claims that school must offer students "good enough strangeness". Pieper (2011) suggests that the expert teacher becomes more important when the text is more complex (p. 194). Aase and Pieper emphasise the mutual relationship between the core aspects of the didactic triangle. Where Aase pays attention to the choice of texts, the subject matter of a lesson, Pieper formulates the important role of the teacher related to the chosen texts. Both relate teacher activities and text to the literary development of students. Negotiating how to make that possible is a recurring and important feature of effective literature teaching and learning. In our view the key element here is teacher awareness. Teachers should be aware of possible problems related to the complexity of the literary texts in relation to the literary development of their studies. Classification theories like Appleyard and Witte may offer valuable and practical indications, but they do not count as absolute truths.

Besides this more in-depth view in literary development of secondary school students, the specific approach of this study created opportunities to analyse the interaction patterns among students, and between teacher and students. The results show that the actual interaction patterns strongly differed from the aspired interaction patterns.

Exploratory talk between students and dialogical interaction were hardly observed. Besides the misfit between the complexity of the text and the actual level of the students to read and discuss literary texts in a meaningful way, students and teacher seemed to fall short in skills for advanced types of interaction with a high learning potential. This means that explicit attention for the introduction and training of these interaction types might be a necessary component of literary development classes.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework provided us with a means to carefully analyse a specific lesson, establish the complex network of actions, teaching and learning, and more importantly, pointed to an increased awareness and knowledge of seeking new ways to develop critical engagement with increasingly complex literary texts. This is a major step in comparison with the global analysis in Groenendijk et al. (2011): The research group came to a theoretically more solid interpretation of the lesson events. Some of the conclusions drawn in the pilot phase were confirmed, others appeared less important. In Groenendijk et al. (2011), I reflected a lot on what I labelled as the students' struggle for identification with the main protagonist. But in this more detailed reflection, this struggle is much less prominent. The use of the theoretical frames and the exploratory discussion in search of a joint interpretation gave us a broader and much clearer view on what was happening in the lesson of the main author. Thus this theoretical framework will be used in the next research steps that will focus on developing new lessons in literary development. Teachers can benefit from knowing, understanding, expressing and sharing the goals for literary development (reader roles) with colleagues and their students. What is more, lessons should provide opportunities for the students to develop and work with the tools and strategies for critical and meaningful learning in their literary development. In our next study, we will address these demands in order to arrive at better literature teaching, pedagogies, and active learning that stimulates students to a deeper and broader literary development.

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