

Adolescent readers in a multicultural society

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Introduction

The focus of this study is the reading behavior of Dutch and minority pupils, and their experiences with literary education in the Netherlands. The study is part of a PhD thesis on literary education from a multicultural perspective, which is written within the framework of a national research project carried out by researchers of three universities investigating the changes in art and literature education and their effects upon the cultural participation of adolescents, in particular literary education and reading behavior. Especially the relation of these phenomena with the recent development of the Netherlands into a multicultural and multi-form society is taken into consideration. Future plans include experimental research to explore the didactic possibilities of multicultural literature.

Subject of this paper are the reading habits and experiences with literary education of pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds. The aim is to find out whether ethnic minority groups differ from Dutch adolescents, focusing on the amount of reading, the reading level, and the attitudes towards reading and literary education. The central question is: does ethnicity make a difference in the reading habits and the reading preferences of pupils in secondary education? A second question, following from the first one, is: does literary education connect to all pupils, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds?

About 950 pupils in secondary education filled out a questionnaire on their reading behavior and their opinion of literary education with culturally diverse texts. In order to find out whether current literature curricula are 'responsive' to all pupils, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, the reading experiences of the adolescents as well as the role of their parental upbringing were taken into account.

Literary education in the Netherlands

Literary education has since long been subject to innovative forces. In past decades, the focus has shifted from a cosmopolitan or western to a national point of view, historical approaches have been replaced by text analytic approaches, and student-centered methods became more popular than knowledge-centered methods. As a consequence of the latest shift towards imaginative, student-centered approaches, the canon was driven into a marginal position. Factual knowledge of literary traditions and facts about canonical literature have become relatively unimportant. The central objective of today's literary education is development of literary competence by introducing students with a range of contemporary texts which portray experiences that the students can identify with.

Apart from recent reform movements, the modern literature teacher also faces quite some interesting challenges with respect to the basic knowledge of his students. In the sixties, education had become more easily accessible for children from all social-economic classes, resulting in a body of students whose knowledge of classical and historical facts had been less cultivated. Furthermore, the ongoing secularisation brought about an ongoing decline in the biblical knowledge of new generations. As a consequence, today's pupils lack the knowledge that is considered to be essential for intertextual text processing. Besides that, a demographic shift, starting in the eighties,

increased the cultural diversity of many classrooms, since more and more pupils of diverse ethnic origin populate the schools, though mainly in the urban areas.

The Theory of Cultural Capital and the Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Good grades in school, a high performance on standardized tests and higher degrees pave the pathway to social success. Unfortunately, the chances to achieve academic success are not evenly distributed throughout the various social groups. Especially the lower social-economical class often fails to make adequate use of educational means. It appears that the socially privileged (the higher status groups) are somewhat better equipped for academic achievement than their less privileged peers. Bourdieu's reproduction theory gives an explanation for the connection of social privilege and academic success, arguing that schools reflect the values of the dominant class. Children from higher social-economic classes learn the valued cultural orientations at home, which gives them a head start from the outset of their school careers. The kind of so-called cultural capital that they acquire from their parental upbringing, includes certain dispositions towards high culture and certain cognitive skills that are rewarded in school. Notably the acquisition of reading skills is an important predictor of school success that the primary socialisation (at home) can provide a firm basis for. A Dutch study (De Graaf, De Graaf and Kraaykamp, 2000) showed that parents' reading behavior affects educational attainment. Whether it is the transmission of certain cognitive skills that helps the children or the fact that the school culture is similar to the situation at home, it is a fact that cultural resources and especially literary behavior in the parental upbringing do matter.

When children are about age ten or twelve, school takes over the larger part of the reading socialisation. However, somewhere during this secondary literary socialisation, there is a drastic fall in the time the youth spends reading books, usually somewhere between the age of twelve and fifteen. Remarkably, this reading decline coincides with the introduction of literary education aimed at raising competent readers who are willing and able to engage in the national literary heritage. To stimulate this 'engagement', schools introduce the compulsory reading of certain books for the reading list on the final exam.

Advocates of culturally responsive curricula argue that ignorance of the social world of adolescents in literature classrooms could be an important reason for the dwindling reading interest of many pupils. Most pupils will automatically link literature to compulsory school reading instead of attributing personal value to it. Introducing a culturally responsive curriculum in literary education means that, apart from the basic skills, the emphasis is on the training of higher language skills, such as a personal response to literature and a critical distance towards the literary text. The responsive curriculum makes use of 'hybrid events', i.e. events that represent elements of the own cultural group as well as elements of the dominant culture of the school curriculum. This enables the teacher to relate to the pupil's home culture, the experiences and insights the pupil comes to school with.

A necessary condition for organizing such a curriculum is a classroom atmosphere that is based on trust and equality, in which pupils are provided with appropriate, culturally responsive texts. Multicultural literature serves this purpose very well, as it is written by a range of ethnically diverse authors dealing with other cultures than merely the Dutch culture. In other words: "Multicultural literature is a primary vehicle for generating dialogues. The literary work becomes the shared body of experience, allowing students to respond from the perspectives of their individual cultural backgrounds." (quoted from Dietrich & Ralph, 1995).

Research into the Reading of Minority Students

A Dutch study into the school careers of Turkish and Moroccan students revealed that minority pupils' access to higher educational levels was greatly enhanced by their reading behavior. Most of the successful students could look back on multiple pleasant and fruitful reading moments. Particularly the books of migrant authors functioned as role models for these students, mostly as a reinforcement of their self-image. For example, Moroccan students said they liked to read books of Zohra Zarouali and Hans Sahar, two Moroccan-Dutch writers, because the protagonist was someone of their own group. When Moroccan or Turkish writers were discussed during literature lessons, the interest of the students was excited. Not just because now they were more or less in charge of the lessons for a moment, but mainly because discussion of these authors in class made them equally valuable to Dutch authors.

A study into adolescents' reading habits and attitudes

Demographic shifts, the fact that children of ethnic minorities have not yet caught up with the educational attainments of their Dutch peers, the growing contribution of migrant writers to the literary field, and the recent educational innovations directing to active participation and personal experience of the pupils, justifies the investigation of opportunities and threats in teaching multicultural literature. But before anything can be said about the literature curriculum, the pupils themselves should be heard. Do they actually enjoy reading and literary education, what is their favourite reading matter, and what do they think of multicultural literature in their lessons? And, is it actually true that ethnic minority pupils differ from native Dutch pupils in the importance they attribute to reading, the things they read and the way they experience literary education?

In particular, the following three questions were explored:

1. Do ethnic minority pupils read less books than native Dutch pupils?
2. Do ethnic minority pupils have a predilection for other kinds of texts than native Dutch pupils? (for example: do they read religious texts, do they read books from non-western or migrant writers?)
3. Is it true that ethnic minority pupils share different meanings and attitudes towards reading and literary education than native Dutch pupils?

Data collection

The data collection that took place in the springtime of the year 2000 was part of a larger research project. About 40 schools in 12 big and smaller cities throughout the Netherlands participated in the research. Through written questionnaires data were collected for several studies, one of these being an investigation into the reading behaviour, reading preferences and literary education of circa 950 pupils in vocational, general secondary and pre-university education.

Description of the sample

The pupils, aged 15 to 17, were divided into ethnic groups on the basis of their native country and the native country of their parents. All pupils who were born in the Netherlands and whose parents were born in the Netherlands as well, were labeled 'Dutch'. The remainder were labeled as one of the following ethnic groups: Indonesian, Surinamese or Antillean, Turkish, Moroccan, Other non-western.

The Dutch and the minority groups were even in terms of gender, educational level, linguistic skill (estimated by the pupils themselves). There was but a difference in parental educational level: on average, parents of the group of Dutch pupils had a higher level of education than parents of minority pupils.

	<i>Dutch</i>	<i>Minority</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
N	732	215		
Gender				
male	52%	51%		
female	48%	49%		
Educational level (%)				
vocational	23%	23%		
general sec.	38%	43%		
pre-university	39%	34%		
Average pupils education (1-3)	2.16	2.12	.714	.476
Average parents education (1-9)	5.66	4.68	5.827	<.001

Reading in Dutch and foreign languages

One of the questions concerned the frequency of reading certain genres such as thrillers, comic books, children's literature, newspapers, magazines and poetry. The answers were rated on a 5-point scale.

Newspapers and magazines were the most popular reading matter, followed by comic books, non-fiction and required reading (i.e. literature for school). There was a relatively high score for non-fiction as well (i.e. informative books), which is most probably due to the interpretation of this category as textbooks. Required reading probably leaves little time and desire for reading literature as a leisure activity, an assumption that is supported by the relatively low frequency of reading literature outside the school context.

Comparison of ethnic groups

Compared to Dutch pupils, minority pupils read more thrillers, romance novels, fairy tales, travel stories, poetry and religious literature. Comics were read less frequently by minority pupils. Looking at the separate ethnic groups, some outcomes catch the eye. Whereas in general religious books were hardly read, the Turkish and Moroccan children read religious texts rather frequently. The Turkish and Moroccan, as well as the other non-western pupils also read relatively few comics.

The items were combined into a scale for average total reading matter. Comics, journals and magazines were by far the most popular genres for most pupils. Because of a strong mutual correlation of these items, they were eliminated in order to compute a new scale, a scale for 'serious reading matter'. The item 'religious books' was omitted as well, because factor analyses revealed that this item would distort an adequate interpretation of the results.

After the omission of these genres the pupils scored lower on average reading matter. Comparison of the average scores of minority and Dutch pupils demonstrated

that the amount of serious reading matter read by minority pupils slightly exceeded that of Dutch pupils:

		Dutch	Minority	t	p
total read.matter	(1-5)	2.19	2.24	-1.097	.274
serious read.matter	(1-5)	1.89	2.01	-2.387	<.05

Reading in foreign languages and about foreign cultures

In most ethnic minority families a different language is spoken besides Dutch. Reading in a different language was practised by more than half of the minority pupils every now and then. Minority pupils quite often read papers, poetry, romantic novels, magazines, and, not surprisingly, religious texts that are written in a foreign language.

The pupils were asked what foreign countries they liked to read about. Not surprisingly, minority pupils most frequently mentioned their countries of (parental) origin. Western-European countries and exotic, far away countries were deemed interesting by Dutch as well as minority pupils. The motives pupils mentioned to read about other countries are: interest in the subject, eagerness to learn about foreign countries and foreign cultures, and the exotic ambiance. Minority pupils had stronger motivations, and for them the information aspect of learning more about a culture prevailed over the exotic ambiance. Also, familiarity with the story setting was an important motive for minority pupils.

Empathy with and sympathy for culturally related characters and topics

It is assumed that relatively unexperienced readers, such as pupils in vocational or secondary education, are likely to be strongly absorbed in their reading activities. Empathic understanding of a story character can enhance reading pleasure and reading motivation. Identification is enhanced as the reader perceives more similarities between the protagonist and his own lived experiences.

If communalities between reader and protagonist cause empathy, the question arises what the character's features such as sex, age, and ethnicity mean to the reader. One of the underlying assumptions of promoting multicultural literature is the potential for identification, especially to students of minority groups. So far, this is just an assumption. To test assumptions, experimental research should be carried out with carefully manipulated characters and story settings. That, however, lies not in the range of this presentation. Yet, some questions were asked concerning the liking or disliking of certain features of texts, protagonists and topics in classroom literature.

Character features

Story characters of a different cultural origine than the reader's can arouse irritation as well as enthusiasm. It is thinkable that a Dutch pupil appreciates a protagonist of Turkish origine because it is beyond his own way of living, whereas a Turkish pupil is irritated by an inaccurate, stereotypical description of the story character. On the other hand, it is also conceivable that for example a Moroccan pupil likes to read about a person he feels affinity with because of their common cultural background, while for his fellow pupils the cultural setting does not matter much.

The pupils in my study were asked whether it would make any difference to them whether the protagonist were a boy, a girl, a person of non-western origine, a person of their own culture or a person of a foreign cultural origine. The answers indicated that empathy with a story character was enhanced if the character was of the same age

as the reader. Sex appeared to be of minor importance. As for the ethnicity of the protagonist Dutch pupils' answers deviated somewhat from minority pupils'. Whereas for Dutch pupils the ethnicity of the protagonist did not seem to matter much, minority pupils showed a positive inclination towards protagonists of their culture of origin. Striking was the fact that Dutch pupils were less charmed with a protagonist of Dutch origine than minority pupils were with a character of *their* own origine. A possible explanation may be found in the commonness of Dutch persons in Dutch literature, which does not trigger Dutch pupils to look beyond. They know no better than that characters are Dutch or western, so the ethnicity of the character will not easily affect their personal norms or beliefs.

Appreciation of character ethnicity

	Dutch	Minority	p
% of pupils who appreciate if the protagonist is.....			
...of their own culture	28%	54%	<.01
...of a foreign culture	32%	38%	<.01
...of non-western descent	22%	36%	<.05

Empathy is one step ahead of liking a story character. Minority pupils show a distinct predisposition towards a protagonist of their own group. They seem to empathize more easily with a non-Dutch story character than with a Dutch one. For Dutch pupils the situation is the other way round: as expected, they are inclined to empathize more easily with a Dutch than with a non-Dutch protagonist.

Difficulties empathizing with protagonist

	Dutch	Minority	p
min=1 (never), max=3 (often)			
Dutch protagonist	1.47	1.69	<.001
Non-Dutch protagonist	1.88	1.61	<.001

Preferred reading topics

Common topics in Dutch literature are the World War II, the colonial and postcolonial relations with the Dutch East Indies, and a christian upbringing in the post-war era. Can we still expect those topics to appeal to todays pupils, who are predominantly non-churchgoing, who have but little sense of colonial history, who grow up in a multicultural environment? Is it possible that certain controversial topics, like homosexuality, provoke negative reactions among pupils with other values and beliefs due to their own culture?

The pupils attributed scores to a list of topics that could be read about in literature class. The scores indicated whether they liked or disliked to read about a certain topic, or whether it didn't make any difference to them.

The most popular topic was World War II. Furthermore, the pupils showed a predilection for drugs, sex and violence, which may well be due to the influence of television. These were the most popular reading topics:

-% of pupils who like to discuss the following topics in literature class

World war II	52%
Drugs	46%
Sex / Violence	42%
2 Cultures	39%
Foreign culture	35%

Most pupils could not appreciate stories about a severe christian upbringing, the topic that received the lowest appreciation scores. Contrary to what was expected, homosexuality did not provoke any strongly negative reactions, not even from non-western pupils. Literature that deals with multicultural or migrant subjects was appreciated by most pupils, although reading about living in-between cultures most clearly appealed to pupils who can relate this subject to their own experiences. Dutch pupils more frequently answered that they did not like the subject or that they were indifferent about it.

As was expected, all pupils preferred to read about their own culture. The low preference of other than the Turkish and Moroccan pupils for reading about Turkey or Morocco was quite remarkable.

-% of pupils who like to discuss the following topics in literature class:

	Minority	Dutch	p
2 Cultures	56%	34%	<.01
Foreign cultures	40%	33%	<.01
Marry off	35%	27%	<.01
Migrant experience	31%	23%	<.01

Attitudes towards Reading, Literature Lessons and Culturally Diverse Texts

Reading attitude

The pupils were asked to what extent they agreed with 14 statements about reading, statements like "reading books is an excellent way to kill the time" or "reading books is an important means for personal development". A mean score for reading attitude was computed on the basis of these 14 items. The Dutch' score on the average reading attitude scale was significantly lower as compared to the group of minority pupils.

Appreciation of literature lessons

Three questions were asked about pupils' appreciation of literature classes, which are:

1. Would you say literature classes are interesting?
2. Did you develop your literary taste as a consequence literature classes?
3. Did you start to enjoy reading due to literature classes?

The pupils rated these items on a 5-point scale. The outcomes do not give much ground for optimism, since the average scores are rather low. Again, the Dutch pupils showed less appreciation of all three items than the minority pupils. Minority pupils like literature lessons significantly better than Dutch pupils do.

Appreciation of literary education (1-5)

	Dutch	Minority	t	p
-lessons are interesting	2.17	2.38	2.283	<.05
-developed literary taste	2.09	2.40	3.282	<.001
-like reading because of lessons	1.89	2.19	3.581	<.001
mean: atti. twrds literary education	2.05	2.32	3.530	<.001

Attitude towards Literature Classes with Culturally Diverse Texts.

The pupils also answered three questions about a multicultural design of literary education. These were:

1. Would you like to read translated literature from non-western cultures for your reading list? [reading list]
2. Would you like your teacher to discuss literature from other cultures in Dutch literature lessons every now and then? [lessons]
3. Would you like to learn about the cultural background of ethnic minority groups in Holland? [ethnic gr.]

The mean of these three items comprised the attitude towards literature classes with culturally diverse texts. The scores give some hope for the integration of literary and intercultural education:

	Dutch	Minority	t	p
min = 1, max = 5				
on reading list	3.60	3.91	1.672	.095
in literature lessons	3.41	4.02	3.724	<.001
about ethnic groups	3.45	3.99	4.411	<.001
mean: attitude cult.div.lit	3.48	3.97	5.924	<.001

Further questions about culturally diverse literature and ethnic minority cultures revealed that minority pupils tend to like discussion of a story of their own culture better than Dutch pupils do, which stands to reason as most of the time it is the Dutch culture that is reflected in Dutch literature lessons. About half of the minority pupils think it reasonable that pupils learn about ethnic minority cultures. Of the Dutch pupils, about one third considered the Dutch culture a relevant subject to inform fellow pupils about.

	Dutch	Minority	t	p
important to inform classmates (yes)	34%	47%	-3.430	<.01

Although more than 50 percent of the pupils did not mind the implementation of culturally diverse literature in the curriculum, and although most pupils did not mind or who liked being asked about their cultural backgrounds, it remains important to reckon with the small group of pupils who do care or even dislike discussion of their cultural backgrounds in the classroom.

If we take a closer look at the opinions of the separate ethnic groups, the reaction of Turkish and Morrocon pupils stands out. Quite a lot of these pupils are of the opinion that their classmates should learn more about their culture, an outcome that is rather unlike the rest of the pupils, and which is at odds with the outcomes of the appreciated topics-question, while most of the other pupils showed little interest in reading about Turkey and Morocco.

Literary socialization

So far, the investigation explained some of the differences and similarities in the reading behavior of adolescents of various ethnic descent. Because of their importance for the development of reading skills and attitudes, the home reading environment in the families of the Dutch and minority pupils was considered next. This included the languages that are spoken at home, the parents' fluency of the Dutch language, the reading behavior of the parents, and the presence or absence of books at home.

Languages at home and Dutch linguistic fluency

In most of the ethnic minority families, some other languages besides Dutch were spoken, for example Turkish, Papiamentu, Chinese, etcetera. Compulsory school left out of consideration, reading in a foreign language turned out to be quite a common practice in minority families. The minority pupils also thought of themselves as competent in the Dutch language. Yet for their parents, estimations of minority pupils were more negative and differed considerably from Dutch pupils' parents.

1 = absolutely disagree , 5 = absolutely agree

	Dutch	Minority	t	p
Father's Dutch linguistic skill	4.78	3.87	10.940	<.001
Mother's Dutch linguistic skill	4.81	3.70	13.160	<.001

Parental reading behavior and books in the home

The pupils were asked how frequently (never, sometimes, often) their fathers and mothers read papers, magazines and books. These six items were combined into an indicator of parental reading. The comparison of minority and Dutch pupils revealed that minority pupils see their parents read less often than Dutch pupils.

min = 1, max = 3	Dutch	Minority	t	p
parental reading	2.42	2.07	10.039	<.001

Having a substantial amount of books in the home is an important cultural resource. Minority pupils do not appear to own many books, nor do their parents possess many books. Thus it is a bit peculiar that about half of the minority pupils say they buy books every now and then, which is more than the Dutch pupils do. (53% vs 41% that buys books 'sometimes' of 'often').

min = 1, max = 5	Dutch	Minority	t	p
parents' books	4.03	3.39	7.051	<.001
own books	3.43	3.07	4.351	<.001

Reading to children and discussing books

Research into reading to children and story-telling in Dutch and ethnic minority families showed that reading to children is a rare practice among minorities, but is possibly compensated for by a strong story-telling tradition. In the present study,

questions were asked about whether the pupils were read to in their childhood and whether books are discussed with family and friends. It turns out that reading to was a common practice when the children were young. However, the Dutch pupils were read to far more often than the minority pupils. Most frequently the mother read to her children, in fewer cases the father as well. In minority families often someone other than the parents read to the children, such as a sister, aunt or niece, or the grandparents. Books are recommended mostly by the teacher, or sometimes the mother. For Dutch pupils, peers are quite a common resource as well for recommended books, whereas minority pupils rather frequently mention their fathers.

The items about reading to and discussing books in the family were used to compute a variable for the reading practices in the family.

	Dutch	Minority	t	p
Family reading practices (1-5)	3.79	3.53	2.031	<.05

To summarize: some differences were found between Dutch and ethnic minority pupils concerning the reading frequency, reading amount and total reading matter. In case the reading matter is restricted to serious genres, omitting papers, comics and magazines, the total reading matter of minority pupils exceeds that of Dutch pupils ($t=-2.387$, $p<.05$). There is an obvious distinction in attitudes between Dutch and minority pupils. Minority pupils have a more positive attitude towards reading, literature lessons and culturally diverse literature in the classroom.

As for the independent variables, individual features such as educational level and language skills were equally distributed for minority and Dutch pupils. The parent's educational level and reading behavior, the amount of books in the home and the reading environment were items on which the scores of the Dutch pupils revealed a more optimistic picture than that of minority pupils.

Correlation analysis was used to find out whether reading amount, reading attitude and attitudes towards literary education and culturally diverse texts were mutually related, and whether these variables correlated positively with ethnicity, gender, educational level and educational level of the parents, reading behavior of the parents and home reading practices (reading to and recommending books).

Correlation of reading amount with attitudes towards reading, literary education and culturally diverse texts (* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$).

Pearson cc's	serious read	atti read	atti. lit.educ.	atti.cult.texts
ethnicity	.08*	.24**	.09**	.20**
gender	.22**	.23**	.27**	.32**
educ. level	.14**	.02	.09**	.15**
parent.educ	.16**	.03	.07	.05
parent. reading.	.22**	.04	.09**	.02
home read. practices	.22**	.14**	.17**	.13**

Reading behavior, attitude towards reading and attitude toward literary education turned out to correlate positively with attitudes towards literary education and culturally diverse texts. Ethnicity correlates negatively with factors that determine home reading (parents' educational level, reading practices at home, books at home),

but positively with reading amount, attitude towards reading and attitudes towards literary education and culturally diverse texts. Other items that influence the reading amount are gender, parental reading behavior, home reading practices, and, to a lesser extent, educational level and parents' educational level. The attitude towards reading correlates with ethnicity, gender, and to a lesser extent with home reading practices. Of no importance are educational level, and parental educational level and reading behavior.

Stepwise regression analyses were conducted to sort out the effect of ethnicity, gender, educational level, parental education and parental reading behavior on the reading amount and the attitude towards reading.

Serious reading matter

	F	% explained variance
-ethnicity	6.66	.6% *
-sex	25.62	5.0% ***
-educ. level	22.53	6.5% ***
-reading environm.	26.26	9.7% ***
-parent.educ.	22.56	11.2% ***
-parent.reading	23.46	13.7% ***

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

The analyses show that being a member of an ethnic minority group hardly makes any difference for the total reading matter. As previous research has shown as well, girls obviously read more than boys (addition of the variable for sex raises the explained variance with almost 5 percent). Educational level slightly matters, implicating that pupils at higher educational levels do a little bit more reading in their spare time than pupils at vocational or technical training. Being read to, and discussing books with others (reading environment) explain a small part of the total serious reading matter, and finally, the parent's reading behavior and the parent's educational level have some influence. All together, these variables explain about 14 % of the variance in total serious reading matter.

Attitude towards reading

	F	% explained variance
-ethnicity	53.87	5.5%
-gender	53.60	10.5%
-educ. level	35.51	10.5%
-reading environm.	31.27	11.9%
-parent.educ.	24.47	12.5%
-parent. reading	21.07	12.8%

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Ethnicity seems to do more for the attitude towards reading than for the reading amount. Ethnicity accounts for 5.5% of the explained variance. This was already indicated by the higher attitude scores of minority pupils. Again, girls have a more positive attitude towards reading than boys: adding 'gender' to the model makes the explained variance 10%. Educational level has no influence. Other relevant factors are

the reading environment at home, the parents' educational level and their reading behavior. Together these variables explain about 13 % of the variance in the attitude towards reading.

To conclude

It is a common belief that minority pupils are have more difficulties obtaining higher levels of academic achievement. Advocates of the cultural capital theory impute this to the lack of cultural resources in the home environment of these children. The results of the study show that minority pupils can indeed benefit less from cultural practices at home, like discussing books, exemplary behavior of reading parents, or the presence of books in the home. However, in spite of these deprivations, the minority children showed a more positive attitude towards reading and literature lessons, and actually read more books than their Dutch peers.

The minority pupils were more wiling to accept the use of culturally diverse literature, which is not surprising. At first sight, their reading behavior and disposition to reading may seem somewhat unexpectedly positive, unexpected because of the lack of cultural capital in comparison with their Dutch peers. A possible explanation for this discrepancy between unfavourable reading circumstances and positive outcomes for reading amount and attitudes towards reading and literary education could be that minority pupils have a strong intrinsic motivation for reading. Reading improves their Dutch language skills, and reading in a foreign language enables them to maintain their home culture and language. A typical example of living between cultures, one could say. Especially the difference between minority and Dutch pupils' attitudes towards reading and literary education is striking. Putting this attitude into practice is a somewhat different story, that deserves more attention in follow-up research.

From the present study one may conclude that ethnicity is only a small factor in the explanation of reading behavior, but it is certainly not an irrelevant factor. Minority pupils are busy catching up with their Dutch peers: although they are not optimally equipped with cultural resources from their home environments, they compensate this by being highly motivated.

Also, it can be concluded that a so-called culturally responsive literature curriculum could indeed be a succesful means for training reading skills and reading for pleasure. However, one should be carefull that an appropriate didactic approach is chosen, for every school class has its own attitudes, preferences, and difficulties. From a culturally responsive point of view the implementation of culturally diverse texts could certainly yield a profit. To most of the pupils a culturally diverse literature curriculum is an attractive alternative for current literature classes. The suggestion that culturally diverse literature is suitable for other objectives as well, such as cultural awareness or book promotion, yields interesting questions for future research.

It remains to be seen to what extent the reading behavior matters for minority pupils' academic succes, although the general importance of reading as a succes factor in education has repeatedly been reported on. Presumably, the role of (literary) reading in achieving academic succes is even more important for minority pupils. If that is true, their upward motivation is certainly justified.

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