

profession, increased parental say in schooling, local management of schools and a tightening of the curriculum. The analysis of recent political change and its impact on education in Wales will engage the most reluctant of students. For example, the teaching of English within the National Curriculum brought much behind-the-scenes wrangling over the relative place for standard English and creativity. Devolution in 1999 brought new challenges and the authors provide an excellent account of the Welsh Assembly's educational agenda. The policy document *The Learning Country* (2001) marked the end of tests for seven-year-olds, a proposed new foundation stage for three- to seven-year-olds with due emphasis on learning through play, and a movement away from the restrictive natures of the national numeracy and literacy strategies.

This highly readable book is a must-have purchase for students who want a reliable reference to hand. It is an excellent starting point that provides a balanced and authoritative account of how education in Wales has developed over the centuries.

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**English in the Netherlands: A History of Foreign Language Teaching 1800–1920**, with a Bibliography of Textbooks, by F.A. Wilhelm, Utrecht, Gopher Publishers, 2005, 743 pp., €57.51 (hbk), ISBN 90-5179-263-8

On the first page of his introduction, the author of this voluminous dissertation states that 'one can have no proper understanding of FLT at a particular moment if one does not have access to its history' (p. 21). If that is so, then understanding the nature of English-language teaching (ELT) in the Netherlands at this particular moment in time should from now on no longer pose any problems at all. Frans Wilhelm's book is an exhaustive factual account both of what was taught between 1800 and 1920, and of how it was done. Taking ELT course books as the main object of research, his aim has been to collect 'the titles of nearly all ELT textbooks in the period concerned', which have been laid down in an extensive appendix. The book also provides an analysis of the themes and methods that were covered between 1800 and 1920, and sketches the context, both sociocultural and educational, in which this took place.

In spite of the fact that in the last few decades scholarly attention to the historiography of foreign language teaching has grown, the number of monographs aimed exclusively at describing the history of educational practice for a specific foreign language remains low. For the case of English learning in Netherlands, Pieter Loonen described the period 1500–1800 (*For to learne to buye and sell. Learning English in the Low Dutch Area between 1500 and 1800. A Critical Survey*. Amsterdam & Maarssen, 1991), to which the present book can be regarded as a sequel. The beginning of the nineteenth century is a natural starting point as it saw the start of a national school system in the Netherlands, after which the number of textbooks for English language learning (ELL) took off and their nature became more diverse. After 1800, also, the

number of English-language learners and teachers grew substantially, and the first inklings of a theoretical framework for FLL emerged. The year 1920 was taken as a point of closure for this research on the basis of arguments concerning the methodology of foreign-language teaching: by that time, English as a Foreign Language had consolidated itself in Dutch educational practice.

From an early twenty-first-century perspective it is remarkable that until the end of the eighteenth century English was virtually an unknown language in the Netherlands. The main foreign language, of course, was French—a situation that continued to exist well into the twentieth century—and in the early years some Dutch learners even learnt English through textbooks written in French. The title of Loonen's book is indicative of the role that the language played for those few people who did need it: if learnt at all, English was learnt for commercial purposes. In the first half of the nineteenth century, however, more and more people became interested in reading English literature and mastering the language. Wilhelm traces this development by pointing out such facts as the foundation in 1825 of the first English language periodical (*The English Adventurer*), the foundation of English literary societies, and the growing occurrence of English teaching in schools. Before 1800, the teaching of English had predominantly been in the hands of private tutors, usually immigrants or their children. From the 1820s the number of learners in schools was to grow steadily, and by 1920 there were nearly ten times as many as a century earlier. Around 1840, says Wilhelm, ELT appears to have become a common thing, and in 1863 English became a compulsory school subject. It became more usual to have Dutch teachers of English; the chief difficulty for these teachers as well as their pupils, or so it appears from contemporary mutterings, was grappling with an English pronunciation—not surprisingly, perhaps, given the scarcity of real-life native examples. At university level, meanwhile, it took far longer for English to be taken seriously. Whereas in Germany it had been a university subject from the mid-eighteenth century, in the Netherlands foreign languages at this level, too, were taught on a private basis and formed no part of the official curriculum. The first professor of English was appointed in 1886, but it was to take until 1921 before it became possible to take an academic degree in English or qualify as a teacher of the languages.

A quantitative analysis of ELT textbook production, which in the nineteenth century was closely linked with trade contacts (in periods when economic trade slowed down, the production declined), shows that there were basically eight types of materials: the author distinguishes course books (25%), practice books (44%), grammars, pronunciation manuals, idiom books, dictionaries, teachers' guides, and exam papers. More interesting than such classifications, perhaps, are the in-depth descriptions of a number of selected course books which follow and which help to clarify the methodological development of ELT through the years. Dutch ELT in the nineteenth century was dominated by what the author calls the 'grammar-translation' method on the one hand, and the 'direct method' on the other. Both, of course, are collective terms for a number of different approaches; moreover, it appears that Dutch ELT was far from dogmatic in character, and textbooks happily mixed and matched elements from both methods.

'Grammar-translation' involved students being presented with a (not necessarily authentic) text which they were asked to 'translate into good Dutch', a way of setting exam papers that continued to exist until the mid-twentieth century. In the pendulum movement that characterizes the way fashions and methods follow and react to each other in FLT, the grammar-translation method was a reaction to the more natural, communicative ways of language teaching that were practised in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which students were meant to learn mainly through direct contact with tutors who were native speakers of the target language. Although the grammar-translation method lacks a unifying theory, it is based on the assumption that acquiring structural knowledge of a language leads to acquiring skills in that language. Thus vocabulary was offered in bilingual lists, reading skills were considered most important, and exercises took the form of translations from and into English. The other movement in this period was the direct method, which gained momentum at the end of the nineteenth century and in which language is regarded first and foremost as a means of communication and used both as language of instruction and as target language, resulting in an emphasis on oral skills, and a non-contrastive approach. The echoes of the way eighteenth-century tutors immersed their pupils in a new language are clear—yet the direct method is also a precursor of the 'communicative' methods that have been in vogue in secondary schools since the 1970s.

Indeed, as the author puts it elsewhere in his book: 'A good understanding of the history of FLT may prevent us from regarding as new or unique what may have existed before and from overrating the importance of current ideas' (pp. 21–22).

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**Chartism after 1848: The Working Class and the Politics of Radical Education**, by Keith Flett, Monmouth, Merlin Press, 2005, 221 pp., £45.00 (hbk), ISBN 978-0-85036-544-3, £15.95 (pbk), ISBN 978-0-85036-539-9

This book makes a unique contribution to the Merlin Press's Chartist Studies series that is of direct relevance to education today. As well as addressing the 'big questions' of English working-class historiography—whether the class was made concomitantly with industrial revolution or only came to its maturity with empire—Flett examines Chartism after 1848 through the lens of 'what happened to the provision of radical independent working-class education in the period between 1848 and the 1870 Education Act'. 'To tie together changes in these two areas', he produces evidence, not previously published, for radical schools in London after 1848, focusing also on Newcastle, Bradford, Manchester and elsewhere.

Contrary to his starting point and inspiration in Richard Johnson's seminal two articles on 'really useful knowledge' in *Radical Education* in the early 1970s, Flett's contention is 'that radical ideas and radical working-class education and schools', far