Transnational contextualization in intercultural language education

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Abstract

This article argues that the field of intercultural language education should continue to question the traditional national paradigm (in which the dominant focus of sociocultural knowledge is on conditions within the borders of target-language countries) and orient itself still more clearly towards the diverse and interdependent world with a view of educating for global citizenship. The article notes that languages, not least those that are taught as foreign languages, are transnational and global phenomena, which entails that language teaching must be prepared to teach the target language as first, second and foreign language in many different places in the world. It proposes a range of dimensions of transnationality comprising not only language flows but also other kinds of transnational practices, processes and structures – dimensions that may be considered in the planning and analysis of language learning materials. It describes three transnational themes in greater length in order to demonstrate how transnational contextualization can transform existing themes in the direction of making the real interdependent world with its important issues visible for the students, although perhaps only in visuals and simple texts. The three transnational themes dealt with are: *Scotland: The Scandinavian Connection* (for English teaching); *Senegal: The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel* (for French teaching); and *The Thailand Cave Rescue* (for English teaching).

Introduction

Language teaching takes place in an interconnected world characterized by diversity, inequity and power struggles. It is marked by a multitude of intertwined issues, some of which have a global scope: the climate crisis, the biodiversity crisis, racism and sexism, poverty, refugees, diseases and epidemics, geopolitical conflicts, problems of tech power, and many others. This situation, as inventoried in, for example, the UN sustainable development goals from 2015, requires that as many people as possible in the world see themselves as global citizens who are engaged in such issues in their own neighborhood or in places farther away. All school subjects may contribute to the development of global citizens, in different ways according to their disciplinary identities: social studies, geography, languages, history, biology, technology, art, sports etc. Among them, the language subjects have an important part to play, because working with a new language offers possibilities of working with new perspectives, potentially many more people, perhaps less well-known places and life conditions. Even in the very first lessons, where learners may not understand a word of the target language, they can understand and reflect on images representing aspects of the world: photos, videos, drawings.

Language teaching takes place in an interconnected world, but in spite of this, the typical cultural content of language teaching, especially at elementary and intermediate levels, tends to lead learners to see a disconnected world, a world consisting of a mosaic of nations treated in isolation from one another, a world of target-language countries. English most often focuses on English-speaking countries (or, in some cases, the learners' own country), French on French-speaking countries, Spanish on Spanish-speaking countries, etc. Of course, it is justifiable to prioritize cultural and historical contexts in which the target language is widely spoken, perhaps as first language. But on the other hand, the predominant national thinking in the language subjects means that knowledge about the world too often stops at the national border (Risager 2007, Risager 2018). This makes it difficult to contribute to *global* citizenship.

The present chapter considers how intercultural language education can take part in the development of global citizenship by orienting itself more clearly towards the world characterized by a complex interplay of national and transnational processes.

First, there is a section on critiques of the national paradigm and proposals to develop a transnational and global view of intercultural language education. *Second*, there is a section emphasizing that many languages are transnational and global phenomena. *Third*, there is a section in which a number of dimensions of transnationality are described: transnational flows of

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language, transnational mobility, transnational media, etc. *Fourth*, there is a section on national and transnational contextualization as a teaching strategy by which the cultural content of already existing learning materials is integrated in larger contexts. *Fifth*, there is a section that describes and discusses three imagined examples of transnational themes. The themes might function as the general knowledge background for projects, tasks and exercises in the teaching of English/French for young people (age 13+) and adults (in this case in Denmark). The themes are 1. *Scotland: The Scandinavian Connection* (English), 2. *Senegal: The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel* (French), and 3. *The Thailand Cave Rescue* (English)

The national paradigm and transnational developments

Since the 1980s, and especially since 2000, there have been several critical studies arguing for the necessity of transcending the national paradigm in intercultural language education. Besides my own works mentioned above, one may point to Byram 2008, Byram et al. 2017, Byram 2018, Gray 2010, Guilherme 2002, Kramsch & Vinall 2015, Kramsch 2019, Kumaravadivelu 2008, Risager 1989 and Wagner et al. 2018. A number of innovative projects have been carried out, which aim at intercultural or global citizenship, mainly inspired by Byram's work. For example, a project of transnational collaboration between learners of English in Denmark and Argentina, with a focus on environment

education (Porto et al. 2017), and a project involving learners of English in Argentina and learners of Spanish in the UK, with a focus on the Malvinas/Falkland war and peace education (Porto & Yulita 2017). Several other projects, among them Golubeva et al. 2017, Perugini 2017, Silvey & Gräfnitz 2017, Yulita & Porto 2017, are also based on ideals of global citizenship. Many of these projects try to foster active global citizenship by reflecting on, and acting on, differences or conflictual relationships between two or more countries.

In practice, however, the national thinking is predominant, which can be observed in textbooks and other materials for the elementary and intermediate levels. Risager (2018) contains a comprehensive analysis of representations of the world in language textbooks. It comprises analyses of six textbooks used in Denmark around 2015, for English, German, French, Spanish, Danish and Esperanto respectively. The analyses are further compared to a corpus of 30 articles/monographs containing textbook analyses from all over the world, concerning textbooks for the same languages, used in various countries. This study testifies to great diversity in the representations of the world, but it also shows that representations are almost entirely dominated by the national paradigm as they very rarely deal with relations or links between countries.

For example, the textbook for English (*A Piece of Cake*, Boesen & Rosendal 2011, to be used for three years of

teaching in lower secondary in Denmark), does not mention the British Empire (except in a joke about British politeness), the Commonwealth or the EU. *A Piece of Cake* contains a chapter on 'Global connections', which focuses on connections between individual people by way of traveling, migration and digital communication (Risager 2018: 194), but the analysis also states that

> all the chapters on countries or regions are focused entirely on the national or local The countries or regions are not understood as integrated parts of a larger context. But the other chapters – on witchcraft, food, sport, space, success, music, global connections, love – are different. They do not explicitly refer to countries, but treat their themes as more general phenomena: food in general, etc. However, it is indirectly understood that the general geographic reference is to an English-speaking milieu anyway, and almost all texts and people mentioned are associated with life in, for instance, the United States or the UK. (Risager 2018: 191)

Of course, it should be noted that this is just one (popular) textbook; it cannot represent 'English teaching in Denmark'.

The present chapter can be seen as a continuation of the analyses in Risager 2018, this time with an emphasis on possible supplements or reorientations of existing materials. It should be added that the case about Scotland was already

suggested in Risager 2018, but is further elaborated in the present text.

Languages in a transnational and global perspective

Languages, not least the languages that are taught as foreign languages, are transnational and global phenomena when we look at their use (Risager 2021a, Risager 2021b). English, French, Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, German and a range of other languages are not only spoken in specific countries as first or second language, but also as foreign languages in educational and academic contexts in a great many other countries, and as lingua francas in professional and everyday life in various contexts all over the world, i.e., used as a common medium of communication between people who have no other common language. A language like German, for example, is not only spoken in the German-speaking countries, but also by tourists, students, business people, diplomats, pensioners, German teachers, engineers, doctors, musicians etc. all over the world (of course, in the present corona crisis physical traveling is greatly hampered while video communication is gaining ground). Moreover, German-language media content may be received, and produced, in most parts of the world. German language may be used as a lingua franca in many parts of the world. It should also be noted that there are books and other texts in German on innumerable topics. Thus, one can very well gain insights into Vietnam and its history through texts in, say, German. One may learn about the whole world through any of

the larger national or official languages of the world.

At the same time, it should also be noted that a great advantage of language learning is that it may offer new perspectives on the world, both because it is a new language for the learner, and because the language in question has developed in other parts of Europe or the world, characterised by particular geographical conditions, historical experiences and ideas. Learning English, French, Chinese, Arabic, Spanish or German may lead to the awareness that there are other perspectives on the world (e.g. Vietnam and its history) than that or those of the students themselves. The perspective may be related to discourses circulating in the particular language communities (for example discourses on the historical role of the cultivation of rice in Vietnam), or it may be more clearly related to the semantic structure and use of the languages in question (their linguaculture, Risager 2015) (for example: connotations to 'rice' in English as partly different from its translations into German or Vietnamese).

Thus, when one learns English or French, the languages referred to in this chapter, one learns a language that is a 'world language' in the sense that it *may be used*, in certain contexts, all over the world as first, second or foreign language or as a lingua franca.

The global perspective is also applicable to the cultural dimensions of language teaching. If one only looks at target-language countries as isolated entities,

each with its own national institutions and national culture, one does not get a grasp of the interdependence of all regions and countries in the modern globalized world. France, for example, is deeply integrated in the rest of the world, being a member of the EU, NATO, the UN, OECD, G7 and G20, and countless other international organizations and fora. It is linked to other parts of the world through special relationships with former colonies, by global trade and all other kinds of cooperation, and by being integrated in transnational migration networks. Thus, when one learns about one of the target-language countries (which are, by the way, all multilingual), it should not be forgotten that this country is a player on the world scene.

Dimensions of transnationality

Those who want to describe cultural and social conditions in target-language countries may draw on the long tradition of *Landeskunde*, originally developed in (West) Germany during the 1900s but also referred to in many other contexts. *Landeskunde* ('knowledge of the country') may comprise many aspects of a country – geography and history; social, ethnic and linguistic diversity; education and other institutions; cultural production; politics; economy etc. (Byram 2021, Risager 2007, Risager 2018). Thus, *Landeskunde* may be described as multidisciplinary area studies with a focus on a state or nation.

If we want to transcend the national paradigm and orient it more clearly towards a world that is characterized by a complex interplay of national and

transnational processes, we can see this endeavor as a reorientation of the *Landeskunde*-tradition. It tries to foreground the world as an interconnected entity, without disregarding that there are states, borders and (debates about) national identities. Just as *Landeskunde* is multidisciplinary, a transnational reorientation would also be multidisciplinary.

There are many different theories on the transnational, as large parts of the social sciences and the humanities are beginning to direct their focus away from the traditional, national view of the world. My own primary inspiration is the Swedish anthropologist Hannerz (1992), and I have explained in Risager (2006) how his theory of cultural flows can be used to develop a view of transnational flows of languages (and languaculture/linguaculture) across cultural contexts. These flows are driven by transborder migrations and other kinds of mobility resulting in the formation of local complexity (e.g., in cities) characterized by interethnic communication, hierarchization and other forms of power struggles among speakers of different languages. The flows are also driven by language learning in different contexts all over the world, where the languages in question spread to new learners as foreign or second languages. Modern digital communication makes it easy to maintain worldwide linguistic networks, both for speaking and for reading/writing. So, learning a language may give access to many places and spaces across the world, not only in the target-language countries. This goes for

many languages of the world, not only English.

In the following, I will list some dimensions of the transnational that may be relevant to include in learning materials and teaching for global citizenship in intercultural language education (Risager & Svarstad 2020). What is important to note here, is that – as in the *Landeskunde* tradition – it is not supposed that all these dimensions should be included or learned as such. But at least some of them should be present because they can *make transnational connections visible* for the learners and help them construct a realistic image of the interconnected world.

'International relations' are included in the transnational below because they go beyond the borders of particular nations. But actually, international relations are relations between nations (state actors), and this is just a continuation of the national thinking.

It is also important to note that international relations and transnational connections develop in a world of inequity and power struggles, as is said in the Introduction. A transnational lens should be attentive to conflict and, for example, instances of imperialism and neocolonialism.

International relations – contributions from sociology, political science and economy: This could be exemplified with international organizations like the UN, WHO, ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), AU (the African Union), the Commonwealth of

Nations, OIF (*Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*), the EU (which also has supranational traits). It can also be import-export relations considered at the national level, and many other kinds of relations between state actors.

Transnational mobility – contributions from sociology and anthropology: People move around in the world for many reasons and with different purposes (tourism, family visits, discovery, sport, labor migration, pensioner migration, flight from war and environmental destruction, human trafficking); transnational networks and diasporas which are the results of migration, e.g. the Turkish diaspora in Europe, especially in Germany, and the Chinese diaspora in most countries, not least in Southeast Asia.

Transnational flows of ideas, discourses and practices – contributions from Cultural studies and sociology: Youth culture and music spreading all over the world; ideas and ideologies about democracy or capitalism; news and conspiracy theories spreading in the (social) media; various forms of activism in relation to climate change.

Transnational flows of languages – contributions from the sociology of language and sociolinguistics: The spread of languages (not only English) across the world and the formation of multilingual settings, where several languages are used and perhaps mixed (translanguaging, García & Li 2014), and where people may use the particular languages as first language, or second or

foreign language (as intercultural speakers).

Transnational organizations (which are not strictly inter-national, see above) – contributions from sociology and political science: Transnational companies like LEGO, Coca-Cola or the Tech Giants; NGOs like Greenpeace, Doctors Without Borders or Extinction Rebellion; world organizations like the Roman Catholic Church; transnational networks of sustainable cities; transnational green movements.

Transnational infrastructure and communication – contributions from technology and geography: The technologies that make transnational processes possible, like railways, roads and ports, e.g., the Chinese *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI); communication lines across borders via ocean cables and satellites; more or less global communication and collaboration via mass media, the internet and social media.

Global/regional natural conditions – contributions from the natural sciences and others: Landscapes, animal and plant life, epidemics, weather, climate and natural disasters, and the complex interplay of nature with society and culture.

This list of transnational dimensions may be used in the planning and analysis of learning materials and language teaching in general. A similar list was used in Risager 2018 and Risager & Svarstad 2020, in which a number of analytical questions are asked, such as:

Is transnational mobility or migration represented? (Risager 2018: 190)

National and transnational contextualization: three examples

Contextualization is here seen as a teaching and learning strategy in relation to knowledge about culture, society and the world, including knowledge about languages (multilingual awareness) (Risager & Svarstad 2020). Both the textbook writer, the teacher and the student may contribute to contextualization. The teacher may show how one can contextualize a text, a video, an image, a simulated conversation, a country, a topic, etc. The students may learn to try to imagine a probable context, and perhaps search for knowledge in order to make a more well-founded contextualization. Contextualizations are discursive constructions and can go in many directions, but they should be based on facts as much as possible.

Sometimes there is a need for national contextualization. If a textbook for Spanish, for example, only represents 'Mexico' with a reference to the celebration of the Day of the Dead in Mexico City, this could be contextualized by some information on ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious diversity in Mexico, and on some important social and political issues. Probably some teachers would provide their students with this kind of contextualization on the country in question.

Transnational contextualization implies seeing Mexico as integrated in the world, cf. expressions like 'Mexico in the world and the world in Mexico'. For practitioners in the language subjects, this may be difficult because of the strong national tradition in language teaching. Transnational contextualization requires looking for connections, relations, exchange, conflict. In the case of Mexico, it might be connections to the rest of Latin America, or the United States, or Europe, or other continents. The transnational lens would probably make visible many kinds of links between Mexico and the rest of the world, and in this way offer new perspectives on what in the national lens would be seen as internal to Mexico.

The three examples of themes discussed below refer to different parts of the world. They are imagined cases, and they have been construed primarily on the basis of the above-mentioned analysis of representations of the world in Danish textbooks for English, French, German, Spanish, Danish (for immigrants) and Esperanto (Risager 2018, Risager 2021a).

It should be stressed that the themes are thought of as *pools of inspiration* for transnational thinking among teachers, student teachers, teacher educators, producers of learning materials etc. It is not the intention to suggest that all aspects of the themes should be included. In actual language teaching, some aspects might be included as projects if this is at all possible within the rules and regulations of the school and curriculum, and taking the age and maturity of the students into consideration. Some aspects might be

taken up in the production of teaching materials or supplements to already existing materials. Some aspects might be represented entirely by way of visual materials. Some aspects might be apt for assessment, others not.

The (imagined) learning context is Denmark. This is the place in the world *from where the themes are contextualized.* In the global perspective, Denmark may be described as a country in Scandinavia in Northern Europe. It was one of the European colonial powers, and it took part in the Atlantic slave trade. It had colonies on the east coast of India, on the Gold Coast of Africa (contemporary Ghana) and in the Caribbean, as well as in the North Atlantic: Greenland, Iceland and the Faroes. Greenland and the Faroes are still parts of the strangely ambivalent state construction 'the Danish Realm', and they have some autonomy. Many Greenlanders living in Denmark experience racism, and ignorance about modern Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat).

It should be added that the outlines of the examples build upon my general (European-perspective) knowledge supplemented with critical use of the Internet and Wikipedia, the English, French, Danish and Norwegian (*bokmål*) editions. If these, or similar, transnational examples are developed for actual use in learning materials, they should ideally be worked out in collaboration with experts with, for example, anthropological or journalistic background.

Scotland: the Scandinavian connection

In *A Piece of Cake*, the textbook for English analysed in Risager 2018, Scotland is not mentioned at all in the printed material. It is only mentioned in passing on the website associated with the textbook, so I will start in a different place as far as Scotland is concerned:

Some time ago, two student teachers in the field of English teaching in Denmark produced a teaching module about Scotland on the web. The introductory text says: "…Through this course, you will learn about Scotland and what Scotland is famous for…". The module starts with a small map of the UK and small YouTube videos explaining the Danish flag, the Union flag and Scotland's flag. After that, there are a number of very nice tourist videos, some of them produced by VisitScotland, presenting beautiful landscapes and castles, bagpipes and tartan kilts, male highland sword dance, rafting, golf, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, military tattoo, whisky and distilleries, and the Loch Ness Monster.

All this is very fascinating, and Scotland is a popular tourist destination for Danes. But the module is almost exclusively focused on the local heritage from the past, on specifically 'Scottish' cultural practices and products – an orientation towards national branding typical of the tourist industry (Gray 2010). The module does not introduce students to the life and concerns of young people and adults today and tomorrow in Scotland (or in Denmark). The module needs both national and transnational contextualization.

National contextualization

The module should contain more comprehensive inputs about Scotland's geography – the mainland and the various groups of islands. This geography has some similarities to that of Denmark, which also comprises a mainland part and lots of islands (including the Faroes and Greenland, if we extend to the Danish Realm). Denmark has a short border to Germany in Southern Jutland, comparable to the border between Scotland and England (and in both border regions there are remnants of ancient defense walls). The module should also contain some inputs about social, racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity in Scotland today, and perhaps inputs about, for example, the fishing industry, the oil industry, nuclear weapons and submarines, and football and religious conflicts. The inputs could be various genres of text and/or images.

As regards linguistic diversity, it should be pointed out that besides (Scottish) English, both immigrant and indigenous languages are spoken in Scotland. Immigrant languages are e.g. Polish or Urdu, and the indigenous languages are Scottish Gaelic (related to Irish) and Scots (similar to English in a way that resembles the similarity/continuity between Danish and Norwegian – a comparison that most Danish students would be able to relate to).

These examples of national contextualization of typical tourist sights in Scotland show that it is important to consider in what perspective and for what purpose the contextualization is made. In this case, contextualizations are made in order to point out similarities and differences in relation to Denmark, the context of learning.

Transnational contextualization

Scotland is also a country with relations and links to many other countries and places across the world. It is situated between the North Atlantic and the North Sea. The distance to the Faroe Islands, Norway and Iceland is not very long, and Denmark is also a close neighbor. Indeed, there have been very strong economic and cultural relations between Scotland and the Nordic countries for long periods of time in the past. From the 8th to the 15th centuries, Scotland (large parts of mainland Scotland and the island groups around it) was Scandinavian, i.e. colonized by people from Norway and other parts of Scandinavia (Vikings and others). A Nordic language, Norn, which resembled the Faroese language, was spoken in Orkney and Shetland. It was gradually replaced by Scots and later English, and finally became extinct around 1850.

Today, Scotland is revitalizing these links to the north and the east, for example, via the general interest in the Nordic social welfare models and by the formulation of the Nordic Baltic Policy Statement from 2014. One can also get an impression of this revitalization by studying the flags of Shetland (made official in 2005) and Orkney (made official in 2007), which both contain the Nordic cross. (There is also another kind of link between Scotland and Denmark: One of the richest individuals in Denmark, the owner of Bestseller,

Anders Holch Povlsen, is one of the largest land owners in Scotland.)

These minor or major changes in Scottish national identity are related to the discussions about possible independence from the UK. As is known, there was a referendum in Scotland in 2014 about Scottish national independence, where 55% voted 'No' and 44% voted 'Yes' (among the last mentioned, groups like 'Scots Asians for Yes' and 'Africans for an independent Scotland'). Of course, the Brexit situation, and questions concerning the future relationship of Scotland to the EU, influences this whole issue. This is a situation that is also very interesting from a Danish perspective, including questions of the meaning of 'nation' and 'nationalism'. In Denmark there are debates about national identity in relation to the EU. But, as already said, Denmark is also the dominant part in 'The Danish Realm', consisting of three nations: Denmark, Greenland and the Faroes. In both Greenland and the Faroes (which are not members of the EU) there are national independence movements.

It should be noted that before Scotland became part of Great Britain in 1707, it was a separate colonial power establishing colonies particularly on the east coast of North America, e.g. Nova Scotia (Latin for New Scotland). Both before and after 1707, Scotland took part in the Atlantic slave trade.

The Scottish diaspora, consisting of Scottish people who emigrated from Scotland and their descendants (or those who claim to be their descendants), is very large, perhaps 30 million, and is dispersed all over the world, especially in the USA, Canada (where there is also a Gaelic-speaking community, mainly in Nova Scotia), Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, as well as Argentina, Chile and Brazil. In Denmark too there have been Scottish people since the 16th century, especially in Copenhagen and Elsinore.

Many other examples of transnational contextualization of 'Scotland' might be formulated, and in this case, contextualizations are made in order to indicate the contemporary and historical role of Scotland in the global context, including transnational links to Denmark, the context of learning.

Potential contributions to global citizenship

The outline above cannot be taught as such, it needs selections and simplifications. But the most important potential contribution is that it becomes apparent for the student that Scotland is not an isolated territory but a place that is interconnected with other places around the world. Scotland shares many issues with other places, e.g., colonialism and different kinds of nationalism, and the geopolitical situation of Scotland illustrates that nations in the world are not equal; there are power relations and hierarchies between them. Students become aware of (national) perspectives: Danish, Scottish, British etc. perspectives. And, specifically concerning language awareness: they become aware of the multilingual situation in Scotland with

(Scottish) English, Scots, Gaelic and a large number of immigrant languages.

The central goal of English teaching is that students (young people or adults) further develop their communicative (productive and receptive) skills in English. This may – in a translanguaging perspective – be supported by words, phrases etc. from other languages known by the students (Canagarajah 2013, García & Li Wei 2014). Communicative skills may be developed by way of theme-related activities like the following. They are mentioned in random order and presuppose various levels of competence:

- Listening to/understanding people speaking Scottish English, e.g. in a video or film series.
- Observing photos of road signs with English and Gaelic place names or announcements.
- Presenting selected aspects of Scotland found on the Internet, using power point or similar tools.
- Formulating constructive and curious questions to presentations.
- Studying flags containing the Nordic Cross: Shetland, Orkney, Faroes, Iceland, Norway, Denmark etc. Training color terms and prepositions, accomplishing information gap tasks, reflecting on symbolic colors and the cross symbol.
- On a map, counting islands in Scotland, and in Denmark (plus the Faroes and Greenland?). Training numbers, comparing numbers.
- Describing and discussing Scottish (and Danish?) landscapes and climates, from photos and videos or own experience.

- Offering examples of 'Scottish identity' from different perspectives (English, Danish, etc.)
- Playing and explaining different kinds of music relating to Scotland.
- Using language characteristic of political mobilization; writing banners, devising chants, creating memes, composing letters of support or opposition, organizing discussion panels, etc.
- Talking (perhaps online) with people in Denmark who are of Scottish heritage or know Scotland – about Scotland or about other people in the worldwide Scottish diaspora.
- Examining whether there is a Danish diaspora, cf. the organizations 'Danes Worldwide' and 'The Danish-Scottish society'.

Senegal: The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel

In *Français Formidable*, which is a textbook used in Denmark for the teaching of French in lower secondary (students about 14 years of age), several francophone countries in the world are briefly described, among them Senegal (Brandelius et al. Vol. 2, 2011, analysed in Risager 2018). There is one page with a green map of Africa without any names except Sénégal and Dakar, and with two photos: one showing a fishing boat on a beach with fishermen, and one showing a smiling boy called Abdoulaye. Abdoulaye explains (in a short text in French) that he is from Senegal in West Africa, that Senegal was colonized by the French at the end of the 19th century and became independent in 1960. He tells us that he helps his father with the fishing, and that his mother goes to the island of Gorée,

near Dakar, every day in order to sell nuts at the museum about the history of African slaves: La Maison des Esclaves. He says that it is difficult to get a job in Senegal, so his brother lives in Marseille, and as for himself, he is dreaming of playing football in Europe.

This is not a touristic image of Senegal like that of Scotland discussed above (except the information about the museum on Gorée). It is more oriented towards people's lives as personified by Abdoulaye. It also includes some international/transnational knowledge as it mentions the French colonization and contemporary migration from Senegal to France. In the teacher's guide, there is a longer text in Danish (about 230 words) offering some more information about Senegal: Its poverty with respect to GDP per capita (the very first piece of information), its area, its geographical position in West Africa (Gambia is mentioned), the triangular trade, St. Louis on UN's World Heritage List, Senegal influenced by the North African countries with Arab background, the Paris-Dakar rally, and the export of fish. Concerning languages, it is said that the official language is French, and that several 'local languages' are recognized and widely used, including Wolof as the most common.

These very short glimpses and (in the teacher's guide) encyclopedic notes focus on the nation, but there are also some references to neighboring countries and to France. What could further national and transnational contextualization look like?

National contextualization

In contrast to Scotland, Senegal is a country that is unknown to most Danes. Very few Danes travel to Senegal, and there is next to nothing about real, contemporary Senegal in the common Danish media. The dominant image of Africa as a whole is characterized by ideas of poverty, unemployment, emigration (e.g. to Europe/Denmark) and conflict. So, there are innumerable aspects of Senegal that would be new and interesting to focus on in the teaching.

One aspect could be the great ethnic and linguistic diversity of the country, a situation that is much more prominent than the situation in Denmark, where the question of national identity is somewhat easier. Apart from immigrants from Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Europe and China, there are a number of (indigenous) ethnic groups, among them the Wolof, the Fula (Peuls), the Toucouleur, the Serer, the Mandinka (Malinkés) and the Jola (Diolas). They are associated with different regions, have different histories in the past (most of them formed kingdoms and empires at various times), have different modes of living (various types of agriculture, degrees of nomadism), different social and political structures, different religions (mostly Sunni Islam) and different languages (over 30). It should be noted that essentialization of the ethnic groups should be avoided as the country is also culturally complex and dynamic.

Most of the ethnic groups are represented in several neighboring

countries. This is not least the case with the Fula, which is a very widely dispersed ethnic group in the Sahel region (i.e. the belt between Sahara and the tropical rain forests) stretching from Senegal in the west to regions near the Red Sea in the east. Some of the Fula are pastoralists and lead a more or less nomadic life with grazing herds (cattle, goats, sheep).

Transnational contextualization

The mentioning of the Fula people constitutes a transnational contextualization, of course, and it may form a bridge to issues concerning 'the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel' (la Grande muraille verte pour le Sahara et le Sahel). This is a grand project of rural development involving Senegal and 10 other states in the Sahel region: Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti. The initial idea was to plant a belt of trees, from west to east, bordering the Saharan Desert in order to combat increasing desertification and climate change, a belt about 15 kilometers deep and 7,600 kilometers long. This idea developed into a broader project aiming to create a mosaic of green and productive landscapes in the whole region. The project started in 2005 and is one of the most important collaboration projects of the African Union (AU). (There is also a Green Wall of China, south of the Gobi Desert, which started in 1978). The project is already advancing; in Senegal, for example, over 11 million trees have been planted. There are, however, many kinds of difficulties in implementing the project. Populations have to be relocated, and conflicts may arise between sedentary farmers and pastoralists (e.g., the Fula) concerning grazing areas. There are also serious problems of security in politically unstable areas, e.g., Mauritania, Niger, Chad and Sudan, including terrorist activities.

This grand project is hardly known at all by the Danish public – which tells something about the priorities of the dominant Danish media. With respect to comparison with Denmark, the idea of planting trees in order to fight ecological deterioration is not unknown in Denmark. There are several tree-planting campaigns today, and for more than a hundred years people in Denmark have planted trees in order to stop sand drift from western and northern shores.

The Senegalese diaspora is large, especially in Europe, and plays an important part in Senegal's economy and general development. It should also be noted that Chinese immigration and Chinese investments contribute to the transformation of the country, e.g., with respect to Dakar's large port, as well as a new international airport and a new city near Dakar.

Potential contributions to global citizenship

This theme is intended to be an input to the teaching of French. But it might of course also be relevant for the teaching of English (starting from an 'English-speaking' country) or other big languages in the area such as Wolof, Fula, Hausa or Arabic. It should be added that the theme might be

introduced in a collaboration between the language subject and another subject such as geography, biology or environment studies.

The students may become aware that Senegal is not an isolated country but is deeply integrated in the whole region because of its ethnic composition, and because its national border cuts across a number of ethnic areas each with their separate identity and history. They may become aware of transnational collaboration in the Sahel region, including the role of the AU – an institution based on ideas somewhat similar to those of the EU. They also get an impression of linguistic diversity in Senegal and neighboring countries, and learn that French is (only) the official language, whereas there are several national languages, among them Wolof as the most common.

The only activity suggested in the section on Senegal in the above-mentioned textbook *Français Formidable* is: writing a postcard from Senegal. But if there is time for it, other activities could be introduced, for example (mentioned in random order and presupposing various levels of competence):

• Listening to/understanding French spoken by various people in Senegal/Dakar, e.g. in videos.
• Studying a map of Africa, situating Senegal and noting the names of neighboring countries.
• Searching for information about Dakar and its large port, and presenting some facts and images.

• Training phrases related to climate and weather: sun, rain, season, dry season, hot, cold etc.
• Describing Senegal in terms of climate and comparing with Denmark.
• Exploring the language of emotions in relation to climate change: fear, hope, anxiety etc.
• Reflecting on the concept of 'wall'. Why do people build walls?
• Listening to music related to Senegal/various ethnic groups (immigrants in France?)
• Describing the flag of Senegal, its colors and symbolism.
• Searching for information on the African Union (Union africaine).
• Formulating questions and talking with people in Denmark who know something more about Senegal/The Sahel (in French or in Danish).

The Thailand Cave Rescue

In the textbook *A Piece of Cake* (analysed in Risager 2018), Thailand is briefly mentioned. A 'global teenager', Nicola, tells us that: "I travelled for nine months around North America, Vancouver, Fiji, Australia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Nepal. It was a wonderful adventure, a year of discovery and it has opened my eyes to the world and all its infinite opportunities." (Boesen & Rosendal 2011: 18). Thus, Thailand is mentioned in passing as a country popular among backpackers and other tourists.

The theme chosen by me in the present chapter is not primarily intended to offer any knowledge about Thailand as a country. What is called 'the Thailand Cave Rescue' is the well-known story of a junior football team of 12 boys (11-17

years old) and their young coach who were rescued from a very deep cave complex in northern Thailand in June and July 2018. The story might of course be used as an opportunity to acquire some knowledge about Thailand as a country. Many Danes are in fact interested in (the sunny side of) Thailand as it is a very popular tourist destination for Danes. However, as the transnational dimensions of the story are much more prominent, we will go directly to them.

Transnational contextualization

The Tham Luang cave is situated in a mountainous area in northern Thailand, near the border with Myanmar. The whole border area between Thailand, Myanmar and Laos is more or less inaccessible, underdeveloped and poor, and it is not always clear where the border is. The area is also known as 'the Golden Triangle', one of the world's most important opium cultivation areas (today particularly in Myanmar). In this area, there are many different ethnic groups, and people from these groups are generally stateless as they cannot obtain Thai citizenship and nationality. This means that they lack a number of rights such as being allowed to leave the province. Three of the boys and their coach were stateless, but after they had been rescued and become heroes, they were granted Thai citizenship.

The rescue operation quickly developed into a broad transnational collaboration between many different groups from more than 20 countries (from Denmark too), including engineers, divers, volunteers, technical and medical

experts, reporters. It also became a global media event on Facebook and various other media.   The boys probably spoke (Northern) Thai together. Thai is the official language used in e.g. education and interethnic communication. Many other languages are spoken in Thailand, over 60. Chinese and English are used as lingua francas in transnational communication in e.g. business and tourism.

The site of the event, called 'Tham Luang Forest Park', has been nominated to be an ASEAN heritage park. ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is a kind of counterpart to the EU (and the AU) and comprises 10 member states: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Potential contributions to global citizenship

This theme is described with respect to the teaching of English. But it could easily be chosen in the teaching of many other languages, as the cave rescue was followed and discussed by media all over the world.

The students are introduced to a large border area in a distant part of the world in relation to Denmark. It is an area characterized by a difficult terrain (mountains, forests) and big economic, social and political problems. They become aware of the significance of the monsoon rain season, and they get an insight in caves and cave diving (which may be seen as an extreme sport) – conditions and experiences that they are

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not familiar with in Denmark. They learn that the teaching of English may comprise issues linked to countries and areas in which English is neither the first language of the majority nor the official language. They also become aware of linguistic diversity in Thailand, and the fact that the Thai language is written with a specific script.

Communicative skills may be developed by way of theme-related activities like the following. They are mentioned in random order and presuppose various levels of competence:

- Training dates in the whole event from start to end.
- Describing and discussing distances in the cave (it took about 6 hours to swim/crawl/walk in and 5 hours out).
- Imagining and playing scenarios in which persons are in danger and are rescued.
- Studying a map of Southeast Asia and describing the border area in question.
- Asking a person who can speak Thai, what 'Tham Luang' means (if it is not just a proper name).
- Finding a small text of Thai written in the Thai script (preferably related to the event studied) and ask the person to translate it (orally) into English or Danish. Is it difficult/easy?
- Expressing in English some of the feelings of the families waiting outside the cave.
- Elaborating a small news report (written text/podcast/video) of what has happened lately in the drama.

The diversity of transnational contextualization

The three themes illustrate the potential diversity of transnational contextualization and the different contributions to the intercultural communicative competence, including the critical cultural awareness (Byram 1997, Byram 2021), of the global citizen.

They are differently situated geographically in relation to Denmark, one in Europe, one in Africa and one in Asia (note the order, which is a reflection of the Danish/European perspective). They are also very differently situated in history: Scotland was among the colonial powers and has lived, and lives, with the unequal relationship (hierarchy) between Scotland and England. Senegal was part of a larger colonized area: French West Africa, and was the scene of a series of kingdoms, empires and caliphates before the colonial period. Thailand is the only southeast Asian country which was never formally colonized by European powers, situated as it was, between British India (including Burma/Myanmar) and French Indochina (Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam). The three countries are also different as regards majority religion: Christianity, Islam and Buddhism respectively.

The Scotland example is primarily a political issue, the Senegal and Sahel example is primarily a climate change issue, and the Cave rescue example is primarily a technical issue, demanding a transnational search and rescue operation. The examples take up transnational dimensions like border regions, migrations and diasporas,

climate/weather and climate change, and information flows in the global media. They also touch on issues of national identity: In Scotland there is the issue of potential national independence, in Senegal an issue of ethnic differences and conflict within the nation, and in Thailand an issue of exclusion of ethnic and linguistic groups/peoples from the nation ('hill tribes').

The intercultural communicative competence of the global citizen develops in a learning context which in this case is Denmark. All the themes discussed above would have had a different character if the learning context, and hence the dominant perspective, had been, e.g., China, Nigeria, Iran, Mexico or Belgium. Therefore, learning materials should ideally be produced by teams including people who know the learning context well (Canagarajah 1993, Gray 2010).

The themes may advance language awareness, in particular critical multilingual awareness. Students are introduced to the multilingual situation of the country or region in question, including hierarchies between the languages and concepts like 'official language', 'national language', 'minority language'. They may also become aware of their own translanguaging practices when (traits from) several languages are exploited in the learning process.

Critical language/multilingual awareness is a part of the broader dimension of critical cultural awareness (Byram 1997, Byram 2021). All the

themes are devised to further critical cultural awareness. They encourage students to look at the role of power relations in various domains. In studying transnational connections (e.g., collaboration in the Great Green Wall project) students may get opportunities to observe or use the target language in lingua franca communication, where several perspectives are at play. This also goes for reading about different social and cultural topics in the target language, including topics that are not specifically related to target-language countries.

Conclusion

The present chapter is an argument for the position that the field of intercultural language education could gain from orienting itself more towards the real, diverse and interdependent world, already from the elementary level.

The chapter notes that languages, not least those that are taught as foreign languages, are transnational and global phenomena, which entails that language teaching must be prepared to teach the target language as first, second and foreign language in many different places in the world. It proposes a range of dimensions of transnationality comprising not only language flows but also other kinds of transnational practices, processes and structures – dimensions that may be considered in the planning and analysis of language learning materials. It describes three transnational themes in greater length in order to demonstrate how transnational contextualization can transform existing themes in the direction of making the

real interdependent world with its important issues visible for the students, although perhaps only in visuals and simple texts.

The chapter, then, raises the question of the goal and identity of language subjects today and tomorrow. The primary goal is to develop communicative competences in the target language – in the variety or varieties selected as norm(s). But most language use, spoken or written, is about something. This 'something' is a very important factor in the identity of the particular language subject. What texts and images do we analyze? What topics and issues do we take up? Where are we in the world? What people do we meet? What kinds of intercultural encounters are illustrated? What actions are proposed? The answers to these questions constitute *the identity of the particular language study* and is the basis for language teaching policies and student motivation.

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