Language teaching and its contexts

Michael Byram [a], [*]

[a] *Durham University, UK*

A B S T R A C T

The title of this new journal provides opportunity to review the many contexts which need to be taken into account in reflecting upon foreign language teaching. These contexts include the educational, the fact that much language teaching takes place within general educational and often compulsory educational settings and institutions. Learners thus encounter foreign languages alongside other languages – their language of the home, the official language of the country, languages of minorities and others – and this needs to be part of the thinking about learning and teaching. Furthermore, since language is the tool for learning throughout life and especially in educational institutions, where the languages of other subjects are languages in themselves which learners have to learn if they are to be successful in education, teachers of all subjects need to be aware of language as the tool of learning. Yet another issue is the relationship of language teaching with citizenship education and the development of 'intercultural citizenship'. The title of the journal also refers to 'research' and here too there is potential for reflection on the modes and paradigms of research which are relevant to investigating language teaching and learning. Distinctions of quantitative and qualitative research are misleading and need to be reviewed. The higher order distinctions are between research which seeks explanation, that which seeks understanding and that which involves advocacy.

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* Corresponding author: Durham University, UK
Email address: m.s.byram@durham.ac.uk

Introduction: breaking through the separations of language teaching

The name of this new journal – the Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research – refers to 'language teaching' as a general concept and, therefore, has the potential to open many doors and break down separating walls within curricula between different conceptions and traditions of language teaching and between different approaches to research. In this article, my main focus is on locating language teaching within wider curricular contexts; policy, political and other contexts are equally important but would break the limits of a single article. My purpose is to identify the separations and closures which have often been problematic in our field, and to suggest some ways in which these new openings can be used in order to locate language teaching within a broader, holistic vision of curriculum.

The designation of languages taught in formal education systems varies from one country to another. In Britain, for example, the phrase 'modern languages' became 'foreign languages' and then 'modern foreign languages'. Whatever the designation, the focus is usually on languages spoken outside the country in which they were being learnt, and in many countries there is no formal label for the language of the country (e.g., German in Germany, Japanese in Japan). However, as societies have become more complex and new languages are introduced to countries by immigrant groups, or more attention is paid to languages long present but hitherto ignored, the notion of 'modern languages' has extended to all languages present in a country, except those considered to be 'national' languages. In many countries in Europe and the Americas, such languages have often become a component of the panoply of languages taught in schools and universities. Some may be perceived as 'foreign' and others as part of the cultural heritage; distinctions between 'foreign', 'second', 'heritage', 'immigrant', and other languages have become blurred and the separations within curricula need to be challenged.

A second separation which needs to be challenged is that between 'national language' or 'mother tongue' (e.g., Chinese in China, German in Germany, English in the USA etc.) and all others; the fact that there is no general label for these – since some countries have no 'official' language and some have more than one – is itself an indication that they are taken for granted and their complexity is not recognised. The complexity of mobility and migration which has blurred the distinctions in 'modern languages' has also made the separation of 'national' from 'modern/foreign' out-dated. Learners come to classrooms in formal education systems with a multiplicity of experience and, in the same classroom, the language being taught, the 'national language' may be 'first' for some, 'foreign' for others, 'heritage' for others, 'second' – or 'third' or 'fourth' – for yet others. The assumption that all learners in a (national) education system will have the 'national language' as their 'first' language is a myth of nationalism which was seldom if ever true, and certainly no longer true today. The idea of a 'first' language is for many learners meaningless as they grow up in multilingual environments. 'Second' languages can become 'first/dominant' in some domains of life and not in others and, furthermore, that dominance can change over time as individuals' life circumstances change. At the same time, people learn languages not only in formal education but increasingly in informal situations: immersed in multilingual surroundings, in front of their computer screens and the internet, watching films and television in other languages on multiple satellite channels from other countries as well as their own.

The distinctions are blurred but, for language educators whatever language they are teaching, the fundamental purpose remains the same. Language teaching is a matter of extending learners' repertoire of languages and language varieties – their 'plurilingual competence' – and giving them the potential to continue to extend their repertoire throughout life, autonomously or under instruction. The notion of plurilingualism and a plurilingual repertoire was developed at the Council of Europe and is best known through the *Common European Framework of Reference* (Council of

Europe, 2001). It locates 'foreign' language teaching alongside teaching of any other language – whether designated 'national' or 'minority' or 'majority, or 'heritage' or by some other term – and makes more explicit than ever that 'foreign' language teaching is part of general education, having features in common with the teaching of other languages of education, and with a potential for cooperation as a principle of curriculum design, breaking through the traditional separations.

Within the general purpose of extending learners' plurilingual repertoire, teachers of all languages intend that learners should become able to *use* their languages and also that they should become conscious of their languages through study and *analysis*. The relationship between use and analysis is an issue on which consensus has not been reached, but the value of each is emphasised in curriculum documents and much language teaching discourse. The results of *study and analysis* of a specific language are expected to be transferable, as learners apply their knowledge and skills to new languages they encounter throughout life. This is the contribution of language teachers to the promotion of lifelong learning and plurilingual competence.

Study and analysis of languages has a second purpose. It is a means to understanding the nature of language itself and of people as language beings. Often referred to as teaching for 'language awareness'/'awareness of language', this is a contribution to humanistic education. It leads to an understanding of other people as language people, with their own repertoires of languages and language varieties and the values and behaviours they incorporate. It also leads to learners understanding themselves as language people and the significance of language and languages in their life and being.

Language teaching, thirdly, focuses on cultures associated with the language in question in order to achieve other humanistic goals, namely, understanding people of other societies and their cultures, and in order to improve the efficiency of communication and dialogue. 'Culture' is a difficult term but for present purposes it

suffices to say that it is the shared beliefs, values and behaviours of a group of people, whether large or small. Understanding of cultures, combined with opportunities for communication, is expected to lead to a reduction of prejudiced views of others and prejudiced actions towards them. Again, in part due to the effects of mobility and societal complexity, this dimension of all language teaching – and especially of 'foreign' language teaching – has become the focus of policy and teaching encapsulated in the concept of 'intercultural (communicative) competence' (ICC). ICC involves the willingness and ability to engage with people of other languages in common pursuits and has both practical and humanistic consequences, the former in rendering communication more effective, and the latter in the form of reflection on one's own cultures and identities and on the nature of human beings as cultural beings.

Teachers of English as an international language or a lingua franca may not easily recognise the account I have given so far because of the way in which the practical often marginalises the humanistic in the teaching of English for communicative purposes. Furthermore, the notion of ICC may, for them, not be linked to a specific culture of a specific group of people but rather to the acquisition of skills and knowledge to avoid mis-communication and offence when using a lingua franca. The focus on functional goals in English as in other foreign language teaching has also led to changes in methods of teaching and learning which put more emphasis on language *use* and less on the *analysis* of language and, as a consequence, on the humanistic values of language analysis. New methods – collectively labelled as a 'communicative language teaching' approach – are related to a change in the ways of analysing language for teaching and learning syllabi. There is a greater emphasis on the 'functions' which language can be used for and the 'notions' which it can be used to express, although this does not exclude attention to syntax and phonology as part of a syllabus for learning and teaching.

One of the challenges in the development of English language teaching is to ensure that the link with what I have called the humanistic– or that can also be described as the 'educational' – purposes, both in language awareness and in cultural understanding, is not lost entirely to the demands of the practical.

Languages, language curricula and the context of educational success

The holistic vision of languages education has become the focus in recent years of the Council of Europe. Best known on a world-wide scale for its *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) (Byram & Parmenter, 2012) which developed out of a concern for the teaching of 'foreign' and 'second' languages, not least but not only in the context of migration and mobility, the language work of the Council of Europe is now concerned with *all* languages under the title 'Plurilingual and Intercultural Education'

(http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/LangEduc/LE_PlatformIntro_en.asp)

The starting point is already present in the CEFR, in the concept of 'plurilingual competence':

> The plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. In different situations, a person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4)

If this approach is to be realised in education systems, there is a need to change the way we look at language teaching so that *all* languages are considered together. In a European perspective, languages are usually separated: regional, minority and

migration languages; 'official' or 'national' languages; and 'foreign' languages. Since some countries do not have an officially designated language or a 'national' language – even if the actual practice is to have one or more national/official language – the expression used at the Council of Europe is 'the language(s) of schooling', since it is at school that such languages are learnt as forms of oral and written communication. It is in the education system too, that these languages are the media of learning of all subjects[1]. The significance of 'language(s) of schooling' is therefore crucial not only as a means of developing a shared means of communication and identification within a country but also – and this is not sufficiently recognised – as the key to learning and success throughout education. Learners with inadequate competence in the language of schooling fail to learn other subjects, from mathematics (even learning mathematics is dependent on language competence (Linneweber-Lammerskitten, in press) to history, from geography to chemistry and everything in between.

A holistic vision of language education has therefore to start with the learner and shape a curriculum to support the development of plurilingual and intercultural competences. This involves the use of methods and designs which are not new but need to be implemented within this vision, and the Council of Europe has published a *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education* (Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Egli Cuenat, Goullier, & Panthier, 2010) for doing so. This will be a gradual process as education systems have to change in ways which do not disadvantage learners already within them. The relationships, both conceptual and empirical, need to be explored in research, as I shall suggest below. What is crucial here is that the axioms of language education are made explicit and by doing this, the Council of Europe reminds us that we all work on the basis of our axiomatic beliefs and values but seldom make them explicit or even bring them to our consciousness.

The crucial statement is made as follows:

> Plurilingual and intercultural education is above all distinctive with respect to its
> purposes, which are the fundamental rights of each learner, based on values which
> guarantee his/her education as an individual and as a citizen. These values are
> constituted as a consequence of the activities of the Council of Europe: social
> cohesion and solidarity, participatory democracy, reciprocal understanding, and
> the respect for and valorisation of linguistic and cultural diversity. (Cavalli et al.,
> 2009, p. 8)

The purposes are then to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged in their
achievement of educational success by their lack of access to the language of
learning. The reference to social inclusion and solidarity is particularly important. It
points to the need to maintain cohesion and solidarity in the face of the complexity
created by globalisation and mobility. In many cases, those who become mobile in
search of new economic opportunities and a better standard of living are from
sections of society which have little cultural capital and in particular little linguistic
capital of the kind which will help their children in schools. One of the major
motivations behind the Council of Europe's work is to ensure that the children of
migration are not disadvantaged because their linguistic repertoire does not include
the language of schooling and, in parallel, that children who are sedentary but whose
social position, and that of their parents, leaves them too with little or no appropriate
cultural and linguistic capital are equally helped to achieve success.

In short, language teaching, the Council of Europe project tells us, is not simply a
matter of finding the best methods, motivations and processes of learning and
acquisition. There are major social problems involved and, though they have to be
addressed by technical solutions to analysing and teaching the languages and
language varieties learners need, the social significance makes this all the more
important and the successes of teaching all the more valuable.

Language teaching and education for citizenship

The holistic vision of language teaching I have attempted to take here has so far developed the idea that a language education curriculum should not create divisions among languages which for learners and users of those languages are simply part of their plurilingual competence. In particular, this affects the way we think about foreign languages, which will no doubt be one of the main foci of the journal, and in the second part of this article I want to focus on how 'foreign' language teaching should be linked to non-language subjects, in particular citizenship education. For language learners are not simply individuals but members of social groups and have identities which embody their relationships with social groups, and language teachers should not ignore this aspect of their learners' lives and identifications. In order to explain what this means, I will first focus on the role of 'foreign' languages – simplifying the complexity above for the sake of clarity – and then discuss how this curricular context should be considered as a further extension of the holistic view of language education.

Foreign language education in compulsory schooling

The place of foreign language education within national education is paradoxical. In Europe and North America, and in education systems influenced by them, it has traditionally been introduced in secondary education, and therefore was, in the past, not accessible to everyone when secondary education was limited to a proportion of the population, or if secondary education was offered to all, it did not include all subjects, and it did not include foreign languages. In the 1960s, again in Europe and North America, there seemed to be strong psychological arguments for introducing foreign languages into the primary school because it was argued that after a 'critical age' children do not learn languages well. This argument has since been much criticised in scientific circles but nonetheless seems to fit with common sense and there is strong parental pressure to introduce languages ever earlier. Behind parental

pressure is the assumption that foreign language learning is part of the acquisition of the cultural capital necessary for success in a post-industrial age and a globalised economy. This is reinforced in policy-making circles by the belief that foreign language learning is relevant to the creation of human capital.

This kind of thinking has the strongest face validity where the foreign language in question is English, since this has become the world language not least in the world of work, but similar arguments are made – albeit less effectively – in anglophone countries too. In many countries, English as a foreign language is now introduced into compulsory schooling in parallel with the national language and, in some cases, it is introduced into pre-school education. Foreign languages – particularly English – are gaining ever higher status and rivalling the position of national languages.

The result in some cases is a reaction: a fear that the foreign language will dominate over the national language in the process of identification with the society in which a child is growing up. Such fears can be heard in Japan, in China but also in some smaller European countries where English is widely spoken, although the fact that this is a recent phenomenon means that there is little systematic survey and analysis available.

Foreign language education is thus a potential threat to nationalism and the national functions of schooling, but foreign language teaching can also be used to reinforce nationalism. Most notoriously in the history of language teaching, the German education system used language teaching in the 1920s and onwards, to compare Britain and Germany, to the greater glory of the latter (Risager, 2007, p. 31). More recently language teaching in the USA has been constantly linked to national defence policy as much as to education policy, first as a consequence of the 'Sputnik shock' and more recently as a consequence of the terrorist attacks of September 2001, to the consternation as Kramsch says of some scholars:

> The proposal to create an International Education Advisory Board to oversee the various area studies departments in universities funded by Title VI legislation is raising the concerns of scholars. Such a Board, that would be comprised of members of the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defence and the National Security Agency, would oversee the course materials assigned, curricula taught, faculty hired, and textbooks used in teaching the language and culture of the various areas of the world, to make sure that international education is consonant with American foreign policy. (Kramsch, 2005, p. 557)

Despite these examples, the purpose of foreign language teaching for most teachers includes the notion that it should 'extend horizons' and indeed should challenge the taken for granted world view bounded by nation state frontiers (Byram & Risager, 1999; Han, 2011; Larzén, 2005; Larzén-Östermark, 2005, 2008, 2009; Lázár, 2007; Lázár, 2011; Sercu, Bandura, Castro, Davcheva, Laskaridou, Lundgren, Mendez Garcia & Ryan, 2005). This view is also evident in policy statements for example from the website of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the body in charge of the English National Curriculum, is representative of many contemporary policy statements[2]:

> Languages are part of the cultural richness of our society and the world in which we live and work. Learning languages contributes to mutual understanding, *a sense of global citizenship* and personal fulfillment. Pupils learn to appreciate different countries, cultures, communities and people. *By making comparisons, they gain insight into their own culture and society*.
>
> (www.qca.org.uk - my emphasis - accessed June 08)

There is further reference to 'exploring national identities' and 'different ways of seeing the world', including 'religious beliefs, social customs, traditions, values, attitudes towards different countries and reactions to world events'. This is the discourse of internationalisation and of development or education of the individual.

The same ideas are present in China too, in the 2001 curriculum for English:

> The language contains abundant cultural contents. In foreign language teaching, culture teaching means to teach students history, geography, local customs, traditional custom, life style, literature art, norms of behaviour, concepts of values, and many other aspects of a target language. Getting in touch with and understanding cultures of English speaking countries are beneficial to the comprehension and usages of English; this is also *helpful in acquiring a deeper understanding of our own cultures, and good for the development of learners' world view.* (*China's English Curriculum Standards* (CECS), 2001, p. 21, translation by Dr Han Hui – my emphasis)

Up to this point, I have described the educational context in which language teaching takes place: its relationship to national education, to national human economic capital (and in some cases to national defense and foreign policy) and its potential to contribute to the individual's growth through education and to the state's multilingual human capital. Foreign language education has, in short, the potential to be 'international education', to take learners beyond the confines of their national frontiers, to engage and empathise with people of other countries, to cast a critical eye on what their national education through 'banal nationalism' (Billig, 1995) has led them to take for granted, as well as to give them practical skills and knowledge for international work and living. However, although the rhetoric is pervasive, the reality is disappointing. This is not the fault of teachers, who have been shown in research studies (see Göbel, 2009 for a study in Germany; Han, 2011 for a study in China, Sercu et al., 2005 for a comparative study; and Young, in press for a study in France, the USA and the UK) to be eager to pursue the development of intercultural competence. The problem is that they do not do so systematically because there is a lack of clarity of objectives for teaching and assessment, as for example Liddicoate (2004) has shown for Australia, and an absence of good practice and teacher training (Byram & Risager, 1999) from which to learn.

Objectives in intercultural competence in foreign language education

Although the use of defined objectives and outcomes as a basis for teaching can be criticised, as can the associated concept of 'competence' which is used in defining a curriculum in terms of the expected outcomes, this is a dominant mode of curriculum planning. It has the advantage of focusing on learning and the learner rather than on the subject matter to be taught. This means that curricula and teaching methods are designed to lead to observable behaviours – often formulated as what learners 'can do' at the end of a course – and are evaluated accordingly. This contrast between what learners know and can do can be ultimately traced to the distinction made by Ryle (1949) between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that', and is parallel to the distinction between 'use' and 'analysis' mentioned above. In language teaching and learning there has been much debate on the relationship between the two kinds of knowledge, a debate which is unresolved. It is encapsulated in the contrast between 'knowing about language' and *analysis*, with the emphasis on knowledge, and 'communicative competence' and *use*, with the emphasis on skills. Assessment of learners has, therefore, shifted from exercises which purport to show the knowledge learners have of grammar to activities which show what tasks they can carry out using a language.

An illustration of this change can be taken from the cultural dimension of foreign language education. Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, this was exclusively a matter of 'knowing about'; there was an (unsystematic) syllabus of what learners should know about a country. Often this was trivial. For example, in examinations pupils might have to give an answer to the question 'What is the 'grüne Welle' in a German city' and be expected to know that this is a string of coordinated traffic lights which ensures a good flow of traffic. The term used for this kind of knowing in English was 'background knowledge' and in German 'Landeskunde' meaning 'knowledge about a country'.

More recently in Germany, *Bildungsstandards* (education standards) have been formulated for the first foreign language which include intercultural competences and which, as in other countries, are formulated as outcomes. In this case, there is no shying away from notions of 'knowing that' but this is combined with skills and affective dispositions or attitudes. The specifications refer to pupils at the end of lower secondary education:

Pupils:

- *know* elementary specific rules of communication and interaction of selected English-speaking/French-speaking countries and have a corresponding linguistic register which they can *use* in familiar situations

- *are curious* about the foreign, open to other cultures and accept cultural variation

- *are prepared* to adapt to foreign situations and to behave appropriately in situations of daily life

- are *able to accept* unusual experiences, to deal with them in a meaningful and appropriate way and not to see the foreign as something which causes fear

- can *think themselves into* the sensitivities and ways of thinking of their foreign culture partner

- *know* conventional modes of seeing and perceiving, prejudices and stereotypes of their own and the foreign country and deal with them; and

- *can consciously take account* of differences, misunderstandings, and conflict situations, *come to an understanding* about them and where appropriate *act together* with others

(KMK, 2003, p. 20 – my translation and emphasis)

It is noticeable that the verbs do not only include those where an activity can be observed ('use … come to an understanding … act together'). They also include attitudes or dispositions ('are curious', 'are prepared', etc) as well as knowledge ('know elementary rules/ conventional modes').

In order to operationalise this list of outcomes, a group of French specialists in Germany has produced a further publication which discusses how teaching and testing tasks can be produced to introduce them into the classroom, giving examples of appropriate tasks (Hu & Leupold, 2008). This is done with reference to a proposal I made (Byram, 1997) which has also been taken up elsewhere (e.g., New Zealand) and this gives me some confidence in pursuing this as a basis for further proposals. The model I suggested is a representation of competences and sub-competences which are susceptible of teaching within an ordinary school classroom. It is not an exhaustive description of intercultural competence because this could not be taught in classrooms. There are five competences, or 'savoirs' to use a French term which cover both skills, knowledge and attitudes. They include competences of decentring from one's own world view to take that of others, of discovering knowledge about others, of interpreting and comparing phenomena from one's own cultures and those of others and of critical engagement. It is the latter which I wish to focus on in this context, the concept of 'savoir s'engager' with its deliberate connotations of political *engagement*. It is defined as follows:

> Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager): an ability to evaluate, critically and
> on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own
> and other cultures and countries. (Byram, 1997, p. 63)

Here the term 'awareness' is used to link with work on 'critical language awareness' where the purpose is to describe the competence to analyse and critique the use of language for ideological and political purposes (Fairclough, 1992) and it is also linked

to the notion of 'politische Bildung' as developed in the Federal Republic of Germany in the post-1945 decades.

There are examples of teachers using this proposal, including 'savoir s'engager' in planning their teaching and a particularly good example is presented from a curriculum development project in Bulgaria (Topuzova, 2001). In this example, learners start with a simple exercise in comparing Christmas cards in their own country and Britain and end up – in a way not anticipated by the teacher – by analysing the need for charities in a post-communist state where the kind of poverty has appeared which is present in capitalist societies.

What makes this example telling and particularly rich is that it illustrates all the elements of intercultural competence – skills of discovery, data-collection and analysis, stimulation of curiosity, presentation of new knowledge about another country and critical reflection on learners' own society. What makes it a special example is that, because of the historical circumstances, the lessons became more than the teacher had anticipated. From a focus on change in Christmas in Bulgaria, it moved to critical analysis of fundamental aspects of post-communist society. Of course, not every lesson on intercultural competence does this nor should it.

Education for citizenship

There are some striking similarities in the work just described with education for citizenship, an element of curriculum which has received much attention in recent years in the Council of Europe and the USA (see for example: www.coe.int/edc ; www.civiced.org). European countries have also developed their own approaches and in England a national curriculum for citizenship education defined the nature of citizenship as follows:

- Social and moral responsibility:

  Pupils learning – from the very beginning – self-confidence and socially and **morally responsible behaviour** both in and beyond the classroom, towards those in authority and towards each other.

- Community involvement:

  Pupils learning about becoming helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their neighbourhood and communities, including **learning through community involvement and service** to the community.

- Political literacy:

  Pupils learning about the institutions, problems and practices of our democracy and how to make themselves **effective in the life of the nation, locally, regionally and nationally** through skills and values as well as knowledge – a concept wider than political knowledge alone (my emphasis)

(www.dfes.gov.uk/citizenship/section.cfm?sectionId=3&hierachy=1.3 -Accessed 2006)

What is different here from the aims of foreign language education is the emphasis on 'involvement and service' to the community in the second paragraph, but what is disappointing is that the community has limits: it stops at the national borders in the third paragraph.

On the one hand, the learners in the Bulgarian example analyse critically, but do not consider or act upon the implications of their analysis in the environment outside the classroom. Neither does the teacher encourage them to do so. It would no doubt be a difficult decision for a teacher to actively urge their learners to take action in the world[3]. Perhaps the teacher could have encouraged the students to become involved

in charity work in Bulgaria, but this is a language and literature teacher not a citizenship teacher and a new dimension needs to be added to her thinking and practice, and to that of all language teaching professionals, namely the notion that classroom teaching should lead to 'critique in action' (Barnett, 1997). This is what has been clearly stated in 'education for democratic citizenship' at the Council of Europe, well supported by a long tradition of 'politische Bildung' in Germany. It is in the German tradition that we can find clarity in defining objectives of what action in the world as a realisation of commitment to community should look like in practice. Yet there is the weakness that citizenship education shows us how to practice education for action but does so only with reference to a national community.

On the other hand, foreign language teaching might encourage teachers and learners to engage with transnational communities and to take action in a transnational environment, where there is a potential for action in a 'transnational civil society' or a 'transnational community' as Castles defines it:

> Transnational communities are groups whose identity is not primarily based on attachment to a specific territory. They therefore present a powerful challenge to traditional ideas of nation-state belonging (....). The notion of a transnational community puts the emphasis on human agency; such groups are the result of cross-border activities which link individuals, families, and local groups. (Castles, 2004, p. 27)

What is increasingly evident to teachers of *all* languages is that their learners of all ages are already members of transnational networks as a consequence of globalisation and communications technology. They notice for example that some children are absent from school because they are visiting their grandparents in the country of origin. They see how computer technology and the internet allow constant interaction across large distances with internet friends. The question is whether these networks are the forerunner of transnational communities which will have a political purpose and status as Castles says.

Intercultural citizenship

In order to clarify, initially for foreign language teachers and perhaps also for others, what all this means in practice, I have coined the phrase 'intercultural citizenship'. This means an extension of the objectives of language learning by drawing on those of education for democratic citizenship to define what competences learners need – and teachers, therefore, can introduce into their curriculum planning – if they are to engage and interact effectively in a transnational community. Those competences can be defined in detail and therefore form the basis for planning by objectives for teaching (Byram, 2008).

In practice, this would mean that the Bulgarian teacher would include objectives leading to activity in the world outside the classroom and – together with colleagues from other disciplines – would encourage her learners to meet virtually or in reality with young people from the target language country, Britain, or to use the advantage of English being an international language to engage with young people of other countries. Learners would set themselves a task, something connected with international charity work for example and report to each other with comparisons and contrasts of what can be done in different locations. They would thereby create and become part of a transnational civil society, however temporary it might be.

In short, I am suggesting that education systems – and citizenship education in particular – have to extend identification with the (nation) state to commitment and activity in other communities. This is not to suggest that national identification should be replaced by transnational identification. Intercultural citizenship is, indeed, not a matter of identification; it is a matter of competences – skills, attitudes, knowledge and taking action – but those competences are not only an element of human capital and indeed not only related to citizenship. They are the competences of the educated person, the person who has wider horizons than those of the state,

has a critical understanding of self and other, and a willingness to participate in transnational civil society.

Research

The new journal has explicit reference to research in its title. It will be clear from everything, I have said above, that language teaching is language education and it follows that research into language teaching is research into language education. There are many aspects of research which deal with empirical investigations of the social and psychological processes of language teaching and learning, with the causes of success and failure. There are equally important dimensions of research which deal with the societal value of language teaching, with the social purposes and the humanistic education of the individual.

Research in education can be broadly categorised under three headings: research which seeks to establish explanations in terms of cause and effect (e.g., the research on motivations in language learning), research which seeks to understand the experience of people involved in education (e.g., the views of teachers and learners on the languages they prefer to learn and why), and research which attempts to create change (e.g., the introduction of new methods of language teaching). The distinction between explanation and understanding was made by von Wright (1971) for the social sciences in general, but additionally the sciences of education also often attempt to intervene and to change the phenomena which educationists study, for example modes of teaching and learning or the development and implementation of education policy.

Furthermore, educationists who wish to intervene and change do so from a particular standpoint, and with a particular outcome in mind. They have a view on what ought to be, and not just on what is. They may attempt to intervene in 'what is', and find ways of developing from 'what is' towards what they think 'ought to be'[4], or they may be content to let others undertake this task.

These various distinctions apply to research on the teaching of *all* languages whether they are called 'national', 'second', 'foreign' or whatever. To illustrate this let me focus on the cultural dimensions of language learning. There is, for example, work which attempts to investigate the causal relationships assumed to exist between language learning and attitudes towards other people and cultural groups (Morgan, 1993), work which is looking for *explanations*. One can also establish hypotheses about causal relationships between perceptions of other cultures and motivations for learning, and much research has been carried out on motivation. Or one can look at possible causal relationships between teaching techniques/ methodologies and knowledge about other cultures, or between learning about other cultures and understanding of one's own, or between vocabulary acquisition and culture learning. There is other work which attempts to *understand*, from the perspective of the learners, their experience of other cultures and groups in their own country or in residence abroad, or of the teaching and learning process inside and beyond the classroom. The focus in all of this is on 'what is'. The two need not be mutually exclusive. Research which looks for cause and effect can also seek to interpret and understand how those involved, whether teachers or learners, experience the process and how they themselves theorise about it.

Then there is work which focuses on 'what ought to be', on the development of curricula and methods of teaching and assessment or on policies of teaching and assessment. This is undertaken in order to move contemporary practices towards new objectives which are deemed by those involved to be better than what already exists. It requires researchers to give reasons for their judgment and reveal their underlying beliefs about language teaching and education more generally. Some researchers will focus their efforts on establishing the reasoning for and the nature of potential changes. Others will also attempt to implement and evaluate their ideas.

The distinctions I am making are not focused on research methods or designs. I am not following the usual distinction made between quantitative and qualitative

research, because this is a second-order distinction. Work which is explanatory in purpose can draw on quantitative and qualitative data and the appropriate methods of collecting and analysing both kinds of data. Work which is searching for understanding or attempting to introduce new practices can equally use both types of data and methods of collecting and analysing.

As a first-order distinction, then, we can distinguish between 'analytical research' and 'advocacy research', the former seeking for explanation or understanding of 'what is', the latter attempting to establish, and then to implement and evaluate 'what ought to be'.

This distinction between analysis and advocacy corresponds *approximately* to empirical and conceptual work; advocacy involves reflection on theory, analysis of values and ideologies, and determining purposes. This kind of conceptual research is just as important as empirical research.

When advocates become involved in implementing change – in curriculum or policy development, for example – they also become empiricists. So the distinction, though conceptually clear, may be blurred in practice. For it is frequently the case that those who carry out research, do so with an advocacy purpose, that is, they have a stand-point which they hope to see vindicated. For example, an advocate might take the view that all language learning should be integrated in its aims and methods – as is the view taken under the Council of Europe's concept of 'Plurilingual and Intercultural Education' – in order to develop plurilingual competence. The advocate who posits this as a purpose, might undertake research to investigate if, in existing classrooms, language learning which is integrated leads to transfer of skills of learning, to consciousness of relations among languages of identifications with different languages for different purposes. If the advocate finds that there is no causal relationship, they might then get involved in producing, testing and evaluating new methods and materials which try to ensure a causal relationship. This is often in

the form of action research, but it can be experimental with control groups. The advocate would in this case have moved from an 'armchair discussion' of purposes to empirical investigation of 'what is', and then to pro-active intervention to create 'what ought to be'.

Unfortunately advocates and analysts are sometimes not clear about their role and their work, precisely because advocacy and analysis can be merged in a specific project. It is equally unfortunate that the second-order distinction of 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' causes confusion by being presented as two research 'paradigms' which implies two ways of thinking, whereas they are just two ways of collecting and analysing data.

What is more important than the so-called shift from quantitative to qualitative research is the need for conceptual research and empirical research which complement each other. Only with good conceptual research has language teaching made progress over its history, and there is no reason to think future language teaching research and development will be different.

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Michael Byram is Professor Emeritus in the School of Education at Durham University, England. He studied French, German and Danish at King's College Cambridge, and wrote a PhD on Danish literature. He then taught French and German at secondary school level and in adult education in an English comprehensive school. In Durham since 1980, he has carried out research into the education of linguistic minorities, foreign language education and student residence abroad.

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[1] I leave aside here the increasing use of 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' where some subjects at school and higher education levels are taught through a 'foreign' language.

[2] For analysis of Japan and France, in comparison with England, see Byram (2008, pp. 32-39)

[3] At a conference in Istanbul several years ago, a paper given by a teacher of English in Egypt recounted how her work in the classroom resulted in students becoming politically active. She had not deliberately promoted this and was reluctant to admit that her teaching had the kind of political consequences which are called for in education for democratic citizenship, as we shall see below. The political environment in Egypt made her anxious and she did not respond to my request for further details.

[4] There is a useful distinction in German between 'ein Ist-Zustand' and 'ein Soll-Zustand'