Schooling, Languages and Identities in Nordschleswig in the 1980s

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In a seminar in 1982 for "leading members" of the German minority in Nordschleswig, one of the statements which "crystallised" was that "the spiritual basis of the German minority is the *declaration of allegiance to German-ness*"[1] (emphasis added) and, it was said in the seminar report, "The declaration must be clearly and self-confidently made visible vis à vis the surrounding society"[2]. The need to review the contemporaneous situation behind closed doors perhaps betrays a fear that all was not well, that some people, mainly in the youngest generation, were losing interest in or commitment to their (social) identity[3] as members of the minority, and needed to be encouraged to maintain their "German-ness". One of my purposes here is to capture the experience and views of the young people about whose commitment there was some doubt and who were the carriers of identity and German-ness into the future. They were pupils in one of the minority's schools and I shall show that schooling and language learning were crucial in facilitating the process of socialisation into and identification with the minority. My focus on schooling and schools is a consequence both of the visibility and strength of the minority's school system in the life of the minority and of the scholarship which has demonstrated the power of schools in any society to create social identities, not least identification with a national or ethnic group, in this case the Norschleswiger[4].

Schools, language and "national" identity

Like many other minorities in Europe and elsewhere, the German minority can be seen as a "linguistic minority"[5] and this is reinforced by the statement on the minority's website that "the German language is the foundation of the identity of the German minority. Language is simultaneously a tool for communication and a key to cultural understanding"[6]. In any society, schools are the location where the "official"[7] language is learnt, especially in its written form. For some children, moreover, school may be the place where they meet and learn the official language for the first time, having spoken, but not written, another language in their home. This is obviously the case for many children of today's migrations, in Denmark as elsewhere, but can also be the case for the children of "established" or "indigenous" minorities such as the German minority in Nordschleswig, some of whom speak Sønderjysk[8] - and not German, nor standard Danish - at home and everywhere else, except school.

The significance of schooling and language learning in the creation of national identity has been recognised and theorised for decades[9] (Kedourie, 1966; Gellner, 1987; Hobsbawm, 1992). Hobsbawm makes a striking point about language:

> The crucial moment in the creation of language as a potential asset is not its admission as a medium of primary education (though this automatically creates a large body of primary teachers and language indoctrinators) but its admission as a medium of secondary education, (.....) for it is this which (.....) linked social mobility to the vernacular, and in turn to linguistic nationalism.[10]

In Denmark children go to one school which is both primary and lower secondary, from the age of 6/7 to 15/16, which means that Hobsbawm's point is weakened by the absence of an institutional separation of primary and secondary but still holds insofar as, even in a unitary school, there are marked changes in organisation after 4/5 years. Furthermore, in the German minority in the 1980s, because of the relatively small numbers of children involved, some children went to village schools during the early years and then transferred to a town school as they reached "secondary" age, thus experiencing a divide. The presence of an upper secondary school in the minority's system was all the more important as a reinforcement of the status of German as a medium of instruction and for certificated examinations, as we shall see below.

In addition to language, schools have other socialisation functions. In a stark and extreme theoretical formulation of nationalist theory, Kedourie states:

> in nationalist theory (…) the purpose of education is not to transmit knowledge, traditional wisdom (…) its purpose rather is wholly political, to bend the will of the young to the will of the nation. Schools are instruments of state policy, like the army, the police, and the exchequer.[11]

On the other hand, more recent empirical research has shown that the role of the school has to be contextualised. In his meta-analysis of the substantial amount of empirical data now available, Barrett[12] prefers the term "enculturation" of the child, and shows that it is a result of many influences in early childhood, one of which is the choice of school by parents for their children. Choice may be motivated by a range of reasons: a faith-based school, a single-sex school, a school in a particular location with a middle-class population, a bilingual school, or a minority school. Choice is often based on parents' beliefs about what they want their children to become in social identity terms as much as on what they want their children to learn.

In Nordschleswig, schools and school-choice are crucial. On the front page of the minority's current website, after a short paragraph stating that the minority has existed since 1920, and comprises approximately 15,000 members in a population of 250,000 in Nordschleswig/ Sønderjylland, the second paragraph gives the first place to schools together with libraries:

> The German minority maintains its own kindergartens, schools and libraries, carries out church and social work, publishes its own daily newspaper and offers sport and cultural activities in many clubs/associations.[13]

In 1975, Schulte-Umberg's analysis of a questionnaire sent to parents suggests that their decision to send their child to a German Kindergarten or school was "above all an expression of ethnic

identity"[14]. There is also evidence from the 1980s to attest the key position of the school system in ensuring the maintenance and survival of the minority[15]. And if one asked in a village which people belonged to the German minority, the first criterion used - if the person asked could give an answer at all - would be whether the children of the family went to a German school. Furthermore, the history of the minority rests for a large part on the history of its schools. [To editor: Add reference here to other articles in the book?]

Historical sketch - schools from 1945 to the 1980s

The history of the schools and the minority as experienced in the 1980s can be schematically represented as embodied in three generations. The oldest generation had gone to school in the time of the German Empire and then, suddenly after the Treaty of Versailles and the referendum of 1920, they found themselves in Denmark and completed their schooling in a Danish school or perhaps in a German branch of the Danish public school (Biehl, 1960; Haimin Wung-Sung, 2017). The German language was however strongly present for them through schooling before and after 1920 and, in many cases, at home. In addition, they learnt Sønderjysk in the environment, since even during the German Empire, Sønderjysk was widely spoken (Søndergaard, 1980). The next generation went to school after the changes in 1945, when the first act of the Danish state at the end of World War 2 was to close and confiscate German schools and to imprison many teachers on the accusation of collaboration. One reaction to this was to reverse of a tendency in the immediate aftermath of the war to abjure German-ness and to strengthen a feeling that the group must resist pressure from the majority. The foundation of the Bund deutscher Nordschleswiger (League of German Nordschleswiger) which stated that they wished to be loyal Danish citizens and yet maintain a German cultural identity, captured the mood of the time. Attending school in these post-war years was difficult, some children initially finding themselves in Danish public schools, others in German branches of such schools. The situation could have led to assimilation of minority into majority and it was deemed important to open German schools as soon as possible. This began to happen in the early 1950s (Haimin Wung-Sung, 2017), not least because the Danish state allowed the re-purchase of confiscated school buildings. At this point, Haimin Wung-Sung argues (2017: 156), a new locus of identification began to appear. He quotes the following statement in 1952 by Fr. Christensen the head of the body which organised the school system, Deutscher Schul- und Sprachverein (German School and Language Association):

> The children must achieve a clear awareness of the fact that our homeland (Heimat) is not Danish land and never has been. For one thousand years, it was neither German nor Danish and here we have something to preserve.[16]

Nordschleswig was, from this viewpoint, neither purely Danish nor a part of Germany, and Christensen called for a history of the region to be written. Schools were the *sine qua non* of the minority because it was acknowledged that few children spoke German at home and

> Without knowledge of German, there is no German life …) Without German schools, no German daily (newspaper), no German library, no German (church) service, and no German society.[17]

Both the oldest and the middle generations thus shared a past and an educational experience which was often turbulent. Unlike the oldest generation, the middle generation had a less firmly established upbringing in the German language, and many families switched to Sønderjysk in a permanent change, German being the "Sunday language" for special occasions and public events. Both generations also experienced a difficult decade after 1945 when feelings ran high and for the older generation this was in many ways a repeat of the experiences of the pre-war decades.

The strength of the growing school system was consolidated in 1955 when, as part of the negotiations to bring (West) Germany into the NATO alliance, simultaneous political declarations were made in Bonn and Copenhagen concerning the futures of the German minority in Denmark and the Danish minority in Germany respectively. A major element of this process was permission to establish an upper secondary school (*Gymnasium*) in Nordschleswig with the right to issue qualifications allowing access to higher education.

In 1962, the first graduates from the upper secondary school celebrated graduation by wearing the "student cap" traditional in Denmark. In the ensuing newspaper debate, it became evident that, despite the view of those who wanted to keep minority and majority clearly separate, young people were no longer affected by the national dichotomy and the "national struggle"[18]. They were the first members of the third generation. They experienced schooling in the post-1955 era and began to seek other ways of expressing their identifications than through the dichotomy of "German or Danish" which the call for a visible declaration of and commitment to German-ness of 1982 appeared to want to re-instate.

Though a schematic representation which necessarily misses nuances within each generation, this picture of three generations represents both the differences and the similarities of experience before 1945, between 1945 and 1955 and after 1955. It was clear by the 19080s, if one listened to people in the minority, that there was a shared folk history, a recognizable difference from one generation to the next, and that the inter-war and post-1945 experiences of older people (the "grandparents" and the "parents") coloured the sense of belonging to the minority for everyone, whatever their age.

In fine, schooling was by the 1980s in an ambivalent position. On the one hand, it was a location of reinforcement of minority identity, especially through language learning. On the other hand, young people, particularly of upper secondary school age, had in the 1960s begun to resist being forced into an either/or choice between "German" and "Danish". The call of minority "leaders" twenty years later

to have courage to declare allegiance was not entirely new. It was, rather, a repeated expression of an anxiety which traversed the post-1945 period, an anxiety created by the paradox of being German and Danish simultaneously.

An educational paradox

The declaration of 1982 with which I began this chapter had a second paragraph. Like the early declaration from the German School and Language Association mentioned above, it emphasised that:

> German Nordschleswiger attach importance to playing their part, loyally and equally as citizens of the state of Denmark, in socio-political tasks.[19]

The crucial term here is "citizens of the state of Denmark" which contrasts with "German Nordschleswiger" and an allusion to German nation (*Volk*). It is a contrast and a tension because, in the background, there exists the myth of the nation-state - strongly expressed in German Romanticism - that "nation" and "state" are synonyms. The same tension can be seen in the school system itself. We saw above that one proposed resolution of the tension was made already in the 1950s: identification not with one country or the other but with the region, with "Nordschleswig", importantly using the German word rather than the Danish "Sønderjylland". However, in the 1980s, the declaration of the aims of schooling did not find roots in this regional locus of identification but still worked with the contrast between countries or nations.

The contrast between nation and nation is also implicit in the documents of the school system. The first two paragraphs of the aims of schooling need to be quoted in full:

> 1 Our school is a German school. It intends to introduce its pupils in the German language to the German cultural world and reinforce the German sense of community.
>
> 2 Our school is a German school in the Danish state. It intends therefore to introduce its pupils to the Danish cultural and language world and to prepare them for life as citizens of this state. (Deutscher Schul- und Sprachverein für Nordschleswig, 1983)[20]

There are, first, the two contrasting concepts of German and Danish (national) cultural worlds, each with its own language. Second, standing alone, without a contrasting concept, there is the notion of the Danish state. Although the phrases "German cultural world" and "German community" could be interpreted as referring to Nordschleswig, the introduction to the curricular documents said that they had been revised in the light of reforms in Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein[21]. The referential meaning of "the German cultural world" and "the German community" thus lies south of the border, and the referential meaning of "Danish cultural world" is to the "nation-state" of Denmark. The school system was trying to give pupils both an identity as citizens of a state, and two cultural

identities as members of two national, cultural groups. By not using the term "Nation", this text and the accompanying discourse avoid the confusion of national identity with citizenship identity, created by the myth of the nation-state. On the other hand, the discourse of nation-states, with the implicit either/or choice, still weighs on the juxtaposition of German and Danish cultural worlds and was present as we shall see in the minds of students as they talked about their identities and "declaration of allegiance".

"Cultural worlds" include educational worlds, and children's experience of cultural worlds is to a large extent through their experience of school. The juxtaposition of "Danish" and "German" is present in the lives of the minority schools through curricula and pedagogy. The schools were, and are still today, part of the Danish education system because they operate under the "Free School" law and are within the long-standing tradition in Denmark that parents can found their own schools and, in the 1980s, could obtain about 80% of funding from the state (https://www.friskolerne.dk/english/the-history-of-the-free-schools accessed July 2020); "free" is understood as "freedom" from traditions and controls. Education is very much a partnership between parents and state. In the 1980s, the law required free schools to "give instruction within the first to ninth classes (i.e. obligatory schooling - author) which is equal to what is normally required in the (public) folkeskole" (Ministry of Education 1977). The emphasis on the "German cultural world" might appear contradictory to this but the "free school" system allowed for special interests of parent and teacher groups to be reflected in the curriculum, provided the equivalence with public schools was also maintained.

On the other hand, connections to the German pedagogical culture were also strong. The overwhelming majority of teachers had been trained in Schleswig-Holstein and had the status of German *Beamte* (civil servants). They were seconded from the Schleswig-Holstein education system without pay but remained within the civil service with respect to such matters as pension rights. Many teachers were also natives of Schleswig-Holstein, particularly the northern part, and could enjoy a career in the minority system while living not far from their place of origin. They were "German teachers" trained in German pedagogical traditions and this had an effect on their teaching methods, their views on an practices of teacher-pupil relations and their educational philosophy.

A second major reference point and connection with Schleswig-Holstein education was the curriculum. The curriculum documents stated explicitly that they were based on both the Schleswig-Holstein curriculum (*Lehrplanwerk*) and the Danish national guidelines (*det vejledende forslag til læseplaner i Folkeskolen*). Three subject areas of particular interest, as always in analysing the role of schools in enculturation and forming national/cultural identities, are language, History and Social Studies.

The subject German was presented first in the curriculum document, and then came Danish. German was described as a "a force which moulds a culture" ('eine kulturprägende Kraft') and took "a central

place" in the curriculum. The aim was to educate pupils so that they "feel at home in the German language" ('sich in der deutschen Sprache heimisch fühlen'), become able to "reinforce and expand their language competence" and through working with texts, "live into" German culture ('Einleben in den deutschen Kulturbereich'). It was stated that, though based on the Schleswig-Holstein curriculum, allowances were made for bilingualism, for example with respect to spelling interferences. However, there was in fact no other reference to the bilingualism factor in the rest of the description of the German curriculum, and constant reference to the Schleswig-Holstein curriculum gave the strong impression that pupils should be taught as if German were their "mother tongue". Although the term "mother tongue" was not used, and is a vague term, I introduce it here because it was used by the authors of the curriculum for Danish. Pupils too used the term and said, as we shall see below, that their "mother tongue" was Sønderjysk. The phrase "feel at home in the German language" is perhaps an attempt to span the difference between pupils' feelings about German and their actual competence on the one hand, and the wish on the part of the curriculum authors to teach German as if pupils were native speakers, comparable to their peers in Schleswig-Holstein, on the other.

The curriculum for Danish was more explicit about influences. The document quoted directly from the Danish national guidelines and stated that Danish teaching "must be viewed as mother tongue teaching" since pupils will be expected to take the same examination for Danish language as other pupils in Denmark. The practice was however different from Danish schools. Children first learnt to read and write in German during the first two years of schooling and the process was assumed to be complete by the time they entered the third year. Only in the third year was Danish taught formally and literacy skills were assumed to transfer from German to Danish. During the first two years, pupils had had a weekly "play lesson" in Danish where there was only oral work.

Bilingualism, in short, was implicitly conceived as meaning two mother tongues, and competences in each comparable to those of monolinguals. Such "balanced bilingualism" is however extremely rare, and recognised as such in the academic literature[22].

A German character in the curriculum is also evident in History and Gegenwartskunde (literally: "knowledge about the present" - translatable as Social Studies). It was stated very clearly that, in a border region, "history teaching has a particular significance". History should be taught "as scientifically correctly and, in the selection, as free of tendentiousness as possible" and it should lead young people to "being able to cope with life in Denmark and the Federal Republic of Germany". The wish to ensure balance is again evident. The syllabus for the 8th and 9th years, the last two years of compulsory education, focused on the 19th and 20th centuries:

> Year 8: 1 The emergence of the USA; 2 the French Revolution; 3 Napoleon; 4 Technical and social changes in the 19th century; 5 the awakening of national feeling; 7 Denmark's path to democracy; 8 The age of imperialism; 10 Nordschleswig as a part of the German Empire

> Year 9: 1The minorities in the German-Daish borderland; 2 Germany and Denmark and the world between the wars; 3 National Socialism in Germany; 4 The Second World War; 5 Germany and Scandinavia after the Second World War.

Sometimes the balance was explicit, as in "Germany and Denmark and the world between the wars", and this is important as the 9th year syllabus dealt with events within the memories and experiences of pupils, their parents and their grandparents. Yet there was evidence, in the school taken as a case study below, that pupils could come away with the feeling that they had learnt (only) German history. The reasons may not be a deliberate ideological bias. Teachers were trained in Germany, used German textbooks and of course used German as the medium of instruction. Nonetheless the possible effects on pupils must be noted.

History was complemented by Gegenwartskunde which was strongly influenced by Danish curricular documents for Samtidsorientering (literally: orientation to the present). Nonetheless, it was stated that it had "a special significance" for the minority schools and the minority, and four themes were suggested in this respect: 1 New beginning of the work of the German minority after 1945; 2 Normalization of political relationships; 3 Structure of the minority and operations of its organisations; 4 The German minority within the minorities of Europe. These were just part of the syllabus and curriculum which also dealt with contemporary issues in Denmark and, though taught in German, used both Danish and German teaching materials. Gegenwartskunde was for older pupils. It was complemented by Heimat- und Sachkunde (literally: knowledge of homeland and factual knowledge) for the first two years of school. In a document explaining the curriculum to parents, Heimat- und Sachkunde was described as transposed from Schleswig-Holstein and dealing with subject matter which in Danish schools was part of the subject Danish in the first two years, when in minority schools pupils had only the "play lesson" in Danish. Finally, in Music, it was stated that "promotion and maintenance of the German folksong is particularly here in Nordschleswig of special importance".

The two key statements at the beginning of this section - Our school is a German school and Our school is a German school in the Danish state, - were thus reflected in the curriculum for the whole school system. In the 1980s there were 14 schools and 25 kindergartens

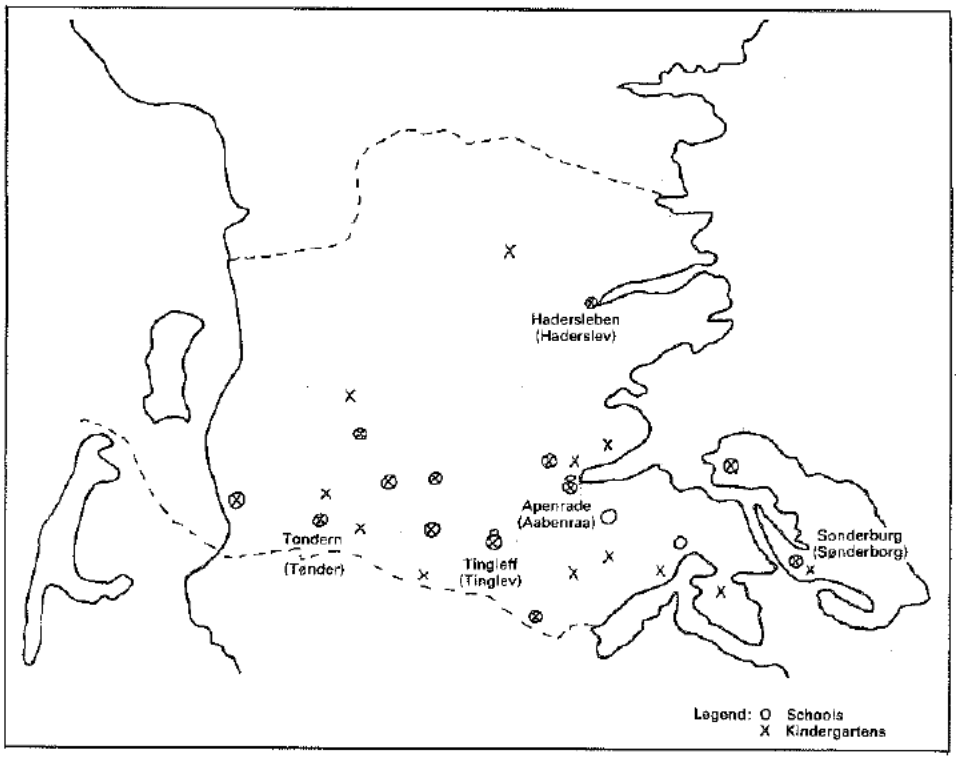

Figure 1: The Minority Education System

To understand how the educational paradox worked in practice we turn to an ethnographic study of one school located in the heart of the region, often called the 'Hochburg des Deutschtums' (the stronghold of German-ness), in the town of Tingleff[23].

The German School in Tingleff

My fieldwork took place over a period of six months from March 1983 but the preparation had taken much longer. I had known the area since 1965 and had written a short monograph in 1969 during my undergraduate studies and a year as a language assistant in a secondary school (*Gymnasium*) in Flensburg. I returned to the topic of bilingualism and minority education from 1980 when I took a post in a university and mad it my research focus. I also made contact with other researchers in the region and elsewhere and it was through one of these that I gained access. I was introduced to the Education Officer (*Schulrat*) for the minority school system and he provided support and contact to Tingleff school.

During the fieldwork period I was a participant-observer, initially with emphasis on observation, getting to know teachers in the staffroom and then asking to observe their classes. Towards the end of the fieldwork the emphasis shifted to participating as a teacher of English in the school when one teacher was absent for several weeks. With a interest in the question of identity, I had hypothesized that identity issues would arise at the moment of transition from the minority school to majority

institutions, whether in the workplace or further education. I therefore asked to interview students in their final year. Having met the group of 29 final year students at a meeting organised by the headteacher, I first interviewed groups of 3-5 volunteers and asked them to keep a language diary for a week where they noted which languages they spoken when, where and with whom. I then interviewed all 29 individually at the end of the year and again after the summer holidays during the first weeks of their lives after leaving the school. These interviews were recorded on a cassette recorder and analysed thematically, the first ones during the summer holidays and the later ones after my return to England[24].

Readers will search in vain on most maps for the town Tingleff, the German name for Tinglev, but I write from the minority perspective, and shall use the German name. Today it is possible to visit the school virtually (www.de-tingleff.dk) but in the 1980s, one had to visit in person, and although today there is a very visible name on the building, at that time one could easily overlook the school. Despite being a large building - with approximately 200 pupils and 20 teachers it was the largest school in the minority education system - it did not have its name on the external wall as today.

The school was part of a network of local institutions: a kindergarten across the road, a "continuation school" (an institution for 14-18 years old particular to Denmark; Danish 'efterskole, German 'Nachschule'), the only one of its kind in the minority, and a sports hall which was used by both schools and for general community purposes. There was a successful youth club - run by one of the teachers and using school rooms - and strong sporting activities, in which teachers were again heavily involved. There was also a German priest who shared the use of the church with his Danish colleague. It was thus possible to live a full cultural life within minority institutions, within a relatively closed network, as was shown in an earlier study[25] of the minority in Tondern, a town with a similar network. Economic activity, however, was part of Danish society. The farmers, for example, were integrated into the Danish agricultural system, although there was also a network of minority farmers with their own meetings and advisers. Most of the young people who left Tingleff school would find their careers in commercial life within Danish society, but some would go to the minority's upper secondary school in Aabenraa/Apenrade to pursue academic studies which would eventually give them the choice between university study in Germany or in Denmark.

The Tingleff school was not "typical" nor "atypical". It was chosen for my ethnographic study because of the homogeneity of the pupil population. The overwhelming majority were from rural and small town families who comprised the mainstay of the minority. This meant, in 1982, that most of them (62.2%) spoke Sønderjysk as their home language, 14.8% spoke German at home, 1.6% (i.e. one child) spoke standard Danish (Rigsdansk) and 17.5% said they spoke a mixture of Sønderjysk and German[26]. This latter statement could mean that they spoke German with some family members and

Sønderjysk with others, or that they switched between the two languages, or that they combined the two, or that they spoke German with relations from Germany, or some other pattern of use. (One family also spoke another language, because the mother was from Greenland.) Sønderjysk was therefore the most important language variety for most pupils in their lives outside school.

The teachers were different. Due to the general arrangement for recruiting teachers from the Schleswig Holstein system described above, 13 of the 21 teachers were German nationals, 7 were Danish citizens from the minority, and 1 was from elsewhere in Denmark. Of these, 20 had had their teacher training in Germany, all but 3 at the Pädagogische Hochschule (Teacher Training College) in Flensburg, just 30 minutes' drive away, and 8 were brought up in the northern part of Schleswig-Holstein, Landesteil Schleswig. Almost all were "seconded for service in Nordschleswig" as civil servants of the Land Schleswig-Holstein. The teachers had thus been predominantly brought up as native speakers of German in Germany or, if from Nordschleswig, speaking both German and Sønderjysk. The shared language was German (Hochdeutsch), spoken with a Schleswig or Nordschleswig accent. The teachers from Germany also spoke Danish to some degree, depending on how long they had lived in Nordschleswig. German was thus strongly embodied by the teachers in the school, both formally in the classroom and informally in the staffroom and other spaces in the school. They also (re)presented German in the extra-curricular and extra-school activities they led, such as the youth group and sports teams. The contrast with the children and young people who spoke almost exclusively Sønderjysk, was strong.

The formal and informal curriculum

Although, as we saw above, a formal curriculum was established for the minority school system drawing on curricula in Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark, the realisation of any curriculum is always influenced by teachers and pupils, and this was no less the case in the Tingleff school. Furthermore the curriculum experienced by pupils - and its influence on their identification with the minority - was a combination of overt and hidden curriculum, the whole school ethos, of which teacher-pupil relations was a significant element.

Being German teachers trained in Germany, Tingleff teachers were different from their peers in the Danish schools. This was noticed by pupils, who had friends in Danish schools where, for example, pupils would use the first names of their teachers and the 'du' form in Danish (the formal De having almost completely disappeared) in contrast to the more formal use of Herr und Frau and the formal Sie in German. Nonetheless, many teachers worked for most of their careers in the minority system and were familiar with and influenced by Danish pedagogical traditions too, creating a blend of practices. One striking example of this was the use of the German marking system for assessment for the first seven years of schooling, an official equivalence being established with the Danish system.

The German system could be used in the first seven years because Danish schools did not give marks until pupils were in Year 8, when the minority schools also switched to the Danish system, as required by law. The use of a mark system in the first seven years "because the parents wanted it", as the Headteacher said, was an indication of the more formal educational philosophy imported from Germany.

Other features peculiar to the school, and to the minority education system as a whole, included:

- recognition of the school leaving certificate in Germany as a consequence of taking an additional written examination in German
- use of teaching materials from Germany as well as those in Danish used in Danish schools
- partnerships and sponsorships with Germany at different levels, including a link to a partner village
- strong sporting links with Germany, through taking part in competitions in Schleswig-Holstein, with pupils receiving German rewards and qualifications.

As one pupil put it:

> The school is German in its whole make-up, I think, the Danes they are, it is much bigger, much looser there (…) I believe this school follows much more the German pattern (in its atmosphere)[27]

He then went on to focus, not surprisingly in view of the analysis above, on the teachers:

> Yes I believe that also the way in which the teachers are here, some still wearing a tie and such like, whilst the Danes, well really with long hair, (…)[28]

It is noticeable that, though the question was not put in these terms, the answer includes comparison with the Danish system as the best way of noticing what otherwise remains taken for granted and invisible. The question had been what, apart from the language, made the school German, and yet this and other pupils always came back to the presence of the German language.

Language and culture in the school

A visitor to the school from, say, Copenhagen would notice immediately the presence of German and might conclude that "this is a German school because everyone speaks German". The pupils or teachers might say this too, as a quick and succinct way of describing the school, and the minority as a whole. Both would be however superficial and initial impressions, and a closer analysis revealed a much more complex situation.

First it is important to distinguish between the school and other institutions and locations in the minority. Schools were places regulated by rules of behaviour of varying degrees of explicitness and the maintenance of rules was ensured by one group of people in the school, the teachers, over another group, the pupils. One striking example of this imbalance of power was the use of Sie to teachers and

Du to pupils. The tacit expectation was that a pupil used German when speaking to a teacher, even if both also spoke Sønderjysk where only 'du' would be used. In the past, there was also a rule that pupils should speak German to each other and breaking the rule was censured or even punished. This is still remembered by some people of the older generation[29], but had by the 1980s disappeared, probably in the face of the reality that most pupils had Sønderjysk as their home and, chronologically, first language.

Teachers were different because most had German as their first language. In their position as regulators of behaviour, they provided a language model of standard German (Hochdeutsch). It was evident from observations in classrooms that teachers sometimes corrected deviations from this model. They did not do so when attention was being paid to the content of a discussion or presentation, but where attention could be paid to form as well as content - when children were reading aloud for example as part of their acquisition of literacy - teachers corrected semantics and syntax but not phonetics. Most pupils spoke German with a regional Nordschleswig accent. The exceptions were those whose parents were from Germany, usually meaning that their parents were teachers. The absence of a Nordschleswig accent - and less proficient Sønderjysk - made these identifiable to other pupils as "German-speaking" ('deutschsprechend').

In the absence of the rule that pupils should speak German together, they mostly spoke Sønderjysk when outside the classroom, unless they were talking to a "German-speaking" friend. If he or she spoke Sønderjysk well, then Sønderjysk was the choice, but if not, then German was used.

Inside the classroom the situation was more complex. Imagine two Sønderjysk speakers sitting in a classroom, and quietly talking about something which had happened outside the classroom, even while the lesson is proceeding and the teacher is talking. They would be speaking Sønderjysk. If they were asked to say something publicly to the teacher - to answer a question for example - then in the overwhelming number of cases they spoke German although it was possible to observe Sønderjysk being used here too, especially as the result of some emotion and spontaneity. A teacher who spoke Sønderjysk accepted this without comment. When a pupil interacted with a teacher in some other way, they would usually speak German but again sometimes Sønderjysk was heard. When pupils spoke to each other about the lesson, three scenarios occurred. First, when a pupil might say something about the "content" of the lesson - to say it is easy or difficult for example - loud enough for others and the teacher to hear, but allowing the teacher to respond or not, then usually but not always it would be in German. A second situation would be where a pupil talked to another - re-phrasing or repeating the teacher's instruction for example - and it was loud enough for other pupils and also the teacher to hear. This happened in Sønderjysk. Third, when pupils were working together on a task and the teacher was excluded from the interaction, then the combination of topic and interlocutor determined language choice. The topic would bring German lexical items into the Sønderjysk, but if the other

pupil was “German-speaking” then a switch to German could take place. Observation revealed in fact different degrees of what pupils thought of as “mixing” languages but if asked, pupils perceived that they were speaking either Sønderjysk or German and that this depended on the interlocutor rather than the topic. Both pupils and teachers perceived the norm to be that all pupils were essentially Sønderjysk speakers, the few exceptions being those who had German as the language of the home, from a “teacher family”.

In short, the German school was not a German-speaking institution, and one pupil with Sønderjysk as his home language who had kept a diary of his language use for a week, summarised the situation well:

> I thought that I would speak much more German here in the school, but it was not much at all; Danish, standard Danish, we only speak that in the Danish lessons, well not even then so much, but partly; otherwise a lot of Sønderjysk and then a little German with friends; (and with the teachers? - interviewer) always German; and with the Danish teacher, it varies, German and also standard Danish; (and in the lessons, with another pupil? - interviewer), always Sønderjysk. We speak German and Sønderjysk with each other, also with those who speak German at home; mixed with almost everybody.[30] [31]

“Our school is a German school” and “The school is German in its whole make-up, I think” are therefore to be understood as more than statements about language, and there are other important features to take into consideration. An etic analysis shows that the school was German because of the teachers, the curriculum, the pupil-teacher relationships, the links with Schleswig-Holstein, and these factors impinged on young people’s identities as much as the languages they used and were taught. An etic analysis needs to be complemented by an emic one.

Identities and languages - the pupils’ views

People usually first notice their sense of belonging to a group, a social identity, in comparison with other people’s similar identifications with parallel groups, in this case the minority “German” group identity and the majority “Danish” group identity. As long as they were of school age pupils could, if they wished, spend all their time in school and outside school within the “German” group, with little or no contact with “Danish” peers. Those who did so had limited awareness of being “German”. It was when they moved to another place where there were fewer “Germans” and more “Danes” that identity became salient, and courage to declare one’s commitment became necessary. One young person, having left Tingleff school to go to a commercial school (handelsskole) in Apenrade/ Aabenraa, a town with fewer “Germans”, described this well:

> You have to assert yourself, that's why the feeling for the German minority gets stronger. I think it is also because you, here you are accustomed to speaking German, when you go like us to another school, to a Danish school, and there it's somehow "I'm from a German school. I must assert myself" and I think that's fairly decisive, that you, if you can assert yourself, that you feel afterwards, "I've, I've proved myself".[32]

The phrase "I'm from a German school" where "you are accustomed to speak German" is a strong indication that identification with "the German minority" comes attending school where speaking German is a visible part, but only a part.

The question is then what was meant by young people in the minority when they said "German", what role they thought "speaking German" played, and what relationship there was between language and identity. I described above how pupils used their languages. It is now important to analyse their own perceptions of their languages. The variation was considerable and generalisations need to be made with care; trends can nevertheless be established.

Pupils were aware of what they called "mixing" and "interference" between languages, and they were also aware of the social pressure to keep languages separate and have good competence in both standard German ('Hochdeutsch') and standard Danish ('Rigsdansk'). Those, the majority, whose chronologically first language was Sønderjysk, had a nuanced and sensitive understanding of what is usually called a dialect. Pupils interviewed in the final year of schooling made distinctions between the Sønderjysk they spoke and that of their peers from the majority, and attributed the differences to schooling:

> The people from the Danish school have, they have a Sønderjysk with a bit of Rigsdansk, that is standard Danish. You hear it immediately. They have a finer language. We have a language which is old-fashioned, and they have a finer way of expressing themselves than we do.[33]

> You can always hear it already from the language, I think because if Danes - even if they speak Sønderjysk at home - there is always a Danish accent built in, and my Sønderjysk, there is always more German in it, I mean with German words.[34]

They were also aware of attitudes to Sønderjysk in Denmark in general, but this pupil interestingly asserts it is a language rather than a dialect:

> (Sønderjysk) is a language in itself, which the Danes don't properly respect, or they don't want to respect it because they can't understand it. And then there is the contest about who speaks the proper language, the proper Danish language.[35]

They also felt that their competence in the two standard languages was lower than that of monolingual speakers and suffered under the assumption that one can be a "balanced" bilingual equally competent in two languages, two monolinguals in one person. For one pupil, standard Danish was a foreign language although this was probably more an expression of attitude than competence:

> I feel really stupid when I have to speak standard Danish, it's a quite foreign language for me.[36]

Speaking standard German, another said, is also problematic when in the presence of Germans in Germany:

> You don't feel so sure as…, here, you know, you don't need to be as sure, here you can …, over there they can speak perfect German, and here perhaps not quite so perfect, so you feel a bit unsure. But it's OK (…) I can understand everything and can express myself, well if … then reformulate or somehow. It's always possible.[37]

One pupil juxtaposed all three languages and spoke for many others in his explanation:

> I prefer speaking German to standard Danish. I think that German is my more mother tongue than standard Danish, but my proper mother tongue, that's Sønderjysk.[38]

One pupil also raised a question which has deeper implications than can be pursued here, and which could not be pursued at the time: whether bilingualism might have educational disadvantages:

> It is of course difficult to say (…) many can either, or they can't speak Danish properly or German properly, that is with regard to grammar, and I think then it would have been easier for them if they had just (learnt) with one language, and would cope better in the subjects.[39]

If the formula "language is identity" were true, as many nationalist ideologues would like to believe, then the pupils quoted here, and their peers, would have had to say that their situation contradicted the "ideal". Sønderjysk, their "mother tongue", was not an indication of their Danish identity, of their legal status as Danish citizens. Nor did it coincide with their "German" identity if "German" were understood as being a member of the social and cultural group of people living in Germany (or Schleswig-Holstein which often served as a proxy for the Federal Republic of Germany), for they did not feel they spoke German like people in Germany.

It is in fact difficult to discern any single pattern in the interrelationships among language, commitment to or identification with the minority, social status or other demographic characteristics. Schulte-Umberg's attempt (1975) to analyse the influence of family and school on ethnic identity remains unsatisfactory. He suggests that the family has a key position in the formation of a child's ethnic identity, but cannot be more precise. With respect to schooling, he considers only the reasons for parents' decision to send their children to a German school, which is undoubtedly important, but not the influence which the school might have on identity. Toft (1982: 47) asked parents in his sample whether their children were members of the minority and compared this with school attendance. 88.5% of those attending the German school were thought by parents to be members of the minority but this tells us nothing about the nature of the membership or identification, nor the influence of the

school itself. The remaining 11.5% may for example have been turned away from the minority by their very experience of the school, as a few of my interviewees said.

Nevertheless, the pupils I interviewed were very articulate about their identity, perhaps as a consequence of their maturity, at the age of 15/16, of their awareness of being about to leave school and enter more closely into the majority society, of their feeling that they had to assert their identity, or a combination of these and other factors. They were not directly asked to analyze the complex relationships among language, schools, family upbringing and a "German" identity or identification with the minority, but they did articulate well their sense of belonging and, as in all processes of social identification, the use of contrast is evident. The first example parallels the statement above about languages i.e. that German is preferred to Danish but "my proper mother tongue" is Sønderjysk: "I feel more German than Danish or so, I feel I'm a Nordschleswiger."[40]

The second links identity more directly to geographical location and though pupils knew that they could not always find a career in Nordschleswig, that is what they preferred:

> (In Denmark) you feel more German (in Nordschleswig? - interviewer) also really more German or .. (in West Germany? - interviewer) as a Danish German … I would like to make my career here in Denmark, preferably in Nordschleswig.[41]

The third reveals the influence of the nationalist myth that one must belong to a "fatherland" and that one has to have an undiluted identification with it. To resist this obligation, one seeks an alternative, and that is the third place offered by Nordschleswig:

> For me the feeling of being tied is really so, because I really have no fatherland or whatever … because in Germany, I feel always still a little Danish, and in Denmark, I feel quite clearly German, and here is simply the only place where we really belong.[42]

The identification with Nordschleswig as a place to be and belong is clear. The identification with the minority and its institutions other than the school is not exactly the same issue. Here family upbringing played a part, and again the relationship with language is complex.

Four individuals from those interviewed can illustrate the range of identifications. They appear to be all female but this was part of the strategy of ensuring anonymity particularly in this sensitive topic. The first had German as her home language and preferred to speak German although she had spoken Sønderjysk since early childhood. She read almost exclusively German books and watched only German television, which was easily available. She estimated that she spoke 90% German in the course of an ordinary day, and although such estimates are perhaps not accurate, they indicate the feelings about the place of language in daily life. Otherwise she had little contact with the minority networks and organizations outside school life, with the exception of an occasional visit to the youth

club. Her parents were probably members of the *Bund deutscher Nordschleswiger* but she did not really know or seem to care. Language was in this case no indicator of identification.

The second person was involved in the minority's networks, playing sports in the minority clubs, being a regular visitor to the youth club and scarcely speaking to anyone from the majority in the course of an ordinary day. Yet she estimated that she spoke less than 50% German on most days - which included her time at school - and that Sønderjysk and a small amount of standard Danish dominated her talk. It was clear that her commitment to the minority was very real but she did not feel a sense of "duty" to maintain the minority. Her commitment, in terms of taking an active role in the organisation of clubs, was out of interest in the activity. Again there is no clear relationship between language and identification with the minority itself.

The third example is of a much stronger identification. Her father was an active member of the *Bund deutscher Nordschleswiger* and she was herself already a member and also thinking if becoming a member of a new "political youth forum". Sønderjysk was the home language and German spoken only on important occasions such as a birthday. She thought that the minority would continue to exist but that it would become smaller as many people married into Danish society.

Finally, there was one person who had occasional contact with the youth group but was otherwise little involved in the minority and had negative attitudes. She said that the school should teach Danish before the third year and that she would send her own children to a Danish school provided it was small, unlike the Danish school in Tingleff. If she were living in Tingleff, she would send her children to the German school; the question was determined by finding a good quality school which was equated with being a small school. The question of membership of the minority was of no importance to her.

Conclusion

I began with the question: What was it like to be at a minority school in the 1980s? In many respects, pupils simply took for granted what they had experienced from the age of kindergarten and did not think about being in a "German" school. On the other hand, some were aware that they had a different experience from some of their "Danish" friends and others knew that their whole life was wrapped in the German-ness of the school and the minority. An analysis of the school system and of the daily life of one school in particular demonstrated that the German school was indeed "German" but not in the obvious way of being like a school in Germany. The minority's education system helped to create a sense of belonging 'here', in Nordschleswig. The fact that the school used German as the medium of instruction was important but not as important as might first appear. It was not the fact of having been in a German-speaking school which was important but of having experienced a Nordschleswig

German education. In a sense the schools were “Nordschleswig-German” rather than “German” schools.

The consequences were varied. There was a wide range of competence and confidence in speaking German and it was symbolically important but not the main indicator of belonging. Some pupils felt strongly Nordschleswiger as they reached the end of their schooling. Others had weaker affiliation or even none at all. To end with an anecdote, I was told that when two people in Nordschleswig /Sønderjylland first meet, there comes appoint in the conversation when common acquaintances are mentioned and childhood friends. At that point the question of which school they attended becomes evident and then they know if they both belong to the German minority. If they do, they will rarely switch to speaking German for that is not the marker of identity. It was the school which marked identity and ensured the minority’s survival. The courage to make a declaration of commitment was not a matter of declaring membership of the minority but declaring that one had been to *die deutsche Schule*.

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[1] Die geistige Grundlage der deutschen Volksgruppe ist das *Bekenntnis zum Deutschtum.* Bund deutscher Nordschleswiger. *Grenzland „82“* (Apenrade: Bund deutscher Nordschleswiger, 1982) 5.
[2] das Bekenntnis muss deutlich and selbstbewusst der Umgebung gegenüber sichtbar gemacht werden. Bund deutscher Nordschleswiger *Grenzland „82“* , 5
[3] Henri Tajfel. *“Social identity and intergroup behavior.” Social Science Information* 13 (1974): 65–93 ; Naomi Ellemers. “The Group Self” *Science* 336 (2012): 848-852.
[4] Note that here ‘Nordschleswiger’ is a plural but it seems odd to anglicize it to ‘the Nordschleswigers’.
[5] Alain Viaut. “An approach to the notion of "linguistic minority" in the light of the identificatory relation between a group and its minority language.” *Multilingua*, 38 (2019): 169-185.
[6] die deutsche Sprache ist Grundlage der Identität der deutschen Volksgruppe. Sprache ist gleichzeitig Kommunikationswerkzeug und Schlüssel zum kulturellen Verständnis. („Nordschleswig.dk Wegweiser zu den Vereinen Verbänden und Organisationen der deutschen Minderheit in Dänemark“ www.nordschleswig.dk - accessed: 7 July 2020).
[7] Some countries, such as France, declare a language to be the national or official language. In others, such as Denmark, it is a matter of custom and tradition and a language is *de facto* official. The term “official” has therefore to be in ‘scare quotes’.
[8] “Sønderjysk is the designation for both the traditional local dialects with their own language forms and a modern regional dialect with only a few language forms from the traditional dialects.” (https://graenseforeningen.dk/om-graenselandet/leksikon/soenderjysk - accessed July 2020)
[9] Elie Kedourie. *Nationalism*. (London, 1966); Ernst Gellner. *Culture, Identity and Politics*. (Cambridge, 1987); Eric J. Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1992.)
[10] Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 118.
[11] Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 84
[12] Martyn Barrett. *Children’s Knowledge, Beliefs and Feelings about Nations and National Groups.* (Hove and New York, 2007) 97.
[13] Die deutsche Volksgruppe unterhält eigene Kindergärten, Schulen und Büchereien, betreibt kirchliche und soziale Arbeit, gibt eine eigene Tageszeitung heraus und bietet in vielen Vereinen

sportliche und kulturelle Aktivitäten an. (Nordschleswig.dk Wegweiser . www.nordschleswig.dk - accessed: 7 July 2020)
[14] in erster Linie Ausdruck einer ethnischen Identität
[15] This is the main argument of my *Minority Education and Ethnic Survival* (Byram, 1986) from which much of this chapter derives.
[16] Quoted in Tobias Haimin Wung-Sung " 'We Remain What We Are' 'Wir bleiben was wir sind?' North Schleswig German Identities in Children's Education after 1945" in *Borderland Studies Meets Child Studies. A European Encounter* ed. Machteld Venken (Frankfurt a. M., 2017) 156.
[17] Haimin Wung-Sung „We remain", 158.
[18] (Haimin Wung-Sung, "We remain", 100-101).
[19] Die deutschen Nordschleswiger legen Wert darauf, als Bürger des Staates Dänemark an den gesellschaftspolitischen Aufgaben im Lande loyal und gleichberechtigt mitzuwirken. (Bund deutscher Nordschleswiger *Grenzland „82"*, 5.)
[20] 1. Unsere Schule ist eine deutsche Schule. Sie will ihre Schüler in deutsche Sprache in die deutsche Kulturwelt hineinführen und die deutsche Gemeinschaft festigen.
2. Unsere Schule ist eine deutsche Schule im dänischen Staat. Sie will daher ihre Schüler in die dänische Kultur- und Sprachwelt einführen und auf das Leben als Bürger dieses Staates vorbereiten.
[21] Since there is no national German education system or curriculum, each federal state having its own education system, Schleswig-Holstein takes the role of the national contrast with Denmark in educational matters.
[22] Colin Baker and Sylvia Prys Jones. *Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education* (Clevedon UK, 1998) 12.
[23] The study is reported in my book and was based on fieldwork during 6 months in the school in 1983. The fieldwork and methodology are described in detail in an appendix (Byram, *Minority Education*, 164-171).
[24] Michael Byram. *Minority Education and Ethnic Survival*. (Clevedon, 1986)
[25] Kaare Svalastoga and Preben Wolf. *En By ved Grænsen*. (Copenhagen, 1963.
[26] In principle, official statistics were not available because the Bonn/Copenhagen declarations expressly stated that people could not be asked about their minority affiliation, about their home language or about other private matters. The statistics here had been collected within the school.
[27] Die Schule ist deutsch in der ganzen Aufmachung, finde ich. Die Dänen, die sind da, das ist alles viel grösser, viel gelockerter da (…) ich glaube diese Schule geht doch mehr nach dem deutschen Muster.
[28] Ja, das glaube ich, auch die Art wie die Lehrer hier noch so gehen, einige immer noch im Schlips und so, während die Dänen ja nun wirklich mit langen Haaren und (…)
[29] Broder Ratenburg and Helga Bachetti - personal communications, July 2020.
[30] Ich habe also gedacht, dass ich hier in der Schule viel mehr Deutsch sprechen würde, aber das war gar nicht so viel, also Dänisch, Hochdänisch, das sprechen wir nur in den Stunden (d.h. Dänischstunden) ah, nicht mal so. zum Teil aber sonst viel Sønderjysk und dann auch ein bisschen Deutsch mit den Klassenkameraden (und mit dem Dänischlehrer - Interviewer), das ist auch so verschieden, auch Deutsch, dann Hochdänisch; (und in den Stunden mit einem Nachbar? - Interviewer) Sønderjysk immer. Wir reden Deutsch und Sønderjysk so miteinander, auch mit denen, die zu Hause Deutsch sprechen; gemischt mit allen praktisch.
[31] In research methodological terms this is an example of how participants in research learn from their participation, realise things they had not noticed before, but this is not an issue to pursue here.
[32] Man muss sich behaupten deshalb wird das Gefühl für die deutsche Minderheit stärker. Ich glaube, das ist auch weil man, hier ist man gewohnt Deutsch zu sprechen, dann kommt man wie wir auf eine andere Schule auf eine dänische Schule, und das ist irgendwie „ich bin aus einer deutschen Schule, jetzt muss ich mich behaupten", und ich glaube, das ist ziemlich ausschlaggebend, dass man, wenn man sich behaupten kann, dass man sich danach fühlt, „ich habe mich, ich habe mich bewährt".
[33] Die von der dänischen Schule haben, die haben ein Sønderjysk mit einem bisschen Rigsdansk, also Hochdänisch. Das hört man sofort, Die haben eine feinere Sprache. Wir haben ja so eine Sprache die eine Altmodische ist, und die haben eine feinere Art, sich auszudrücken als wir haben.

[34] Man kann das immer auch schon hören von der Sprache her, finde ich also denn wenn die Dänen, auch wenn die Sønderjysk zu Hause sprechen, da ist immer dann wieder eine dänisches Dialekt eingebaut, und mein Sønderjysk, da ist wieder mehr Deutsch drin, also mit deutschen Wörtern.
[35] (Sønderjysk) ist eine Sprache für sich selbst, die die Dänen nicht richtig respektieren, oder sie wollen es nicht respektieren, weil sie es nicht verstehen, und da wird dann Kampf gemacht, wer wohl die richtige Sprache spricht, die richtige dänische Sprache.
[36] Ich komme mir wirklich blöd vor, wenn ich da Hochdänisch sprechen soll. Das ist eine ganze Fremdsprache für mich.
[37] Man ist nicht so sicher wir … hier weiß man da, da braucht man nicht so sicher zu sein, da kann man … Da drüben, da kann man … da drüben da können sie es perfekt Deutsch und hier vielleicht nicht ganz so perfekt. Da ist man ein bisschen unsicher aber das geht (…) ich kann alles verstehen und kann mich auch ausdrücken. Ja wenn es .. dann umformulieren oder irgendwie. Das geht immer
[38] Ich spreche lieber Deutsch als Hochdänisch. Ich finde, dass Deutsch mehr meine Muttersprache ist als Hochdänisch, aber meine richtige Muttersprache, das ist Sønderjysk
[39] Es ist natürlich schwer zu sagen oder (…) manche können ja entweder, oder die können nicht richtig Dänisch und nicht richtig Deutsch, also von der Grammatik her, und ich glaube dann wäre das einfacher für die gewesen, wenn die nur mit einer Sprache also, und würden in den Fächern besser zurecht kommen.
[40] Ich fühle mich mehr Deutsch ans Dänisch, oder so. Als Nordschleswiger fühle ich mich.
[41] (in Dänemark) dann fühlt man sich mehr Deutsch (in Nordschleswig? - Interviewer) eigentlich auch mehr Deutsch also (in der Bundesrepublik? - Interviewer) als dänischer Deutsche; ich werde wohl gern hier in Dänemark (meinen Beruf treiben) lieber in Nordschleswig.
[42] Für mich ist das Gebundensein eigentlich so, weil ich eigentlich kein Vaterland habe oder so … weil in Deutschland da fühle ich mich da noch so ein bisschen Dänisch, und in Dänemark da fühle ich mich wieder ganz klar Deutsch, und das ist einfach die einzige Stelle, wo man wirklich hingehört.