Being German versus doing German: How pre-sojourn learners of German in Jordan construct and subvert ethnic identity through knowledge displays

by

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Abstract

This study examines how knowledge displays reflect the way students of German at a university in Jordan position themselves vis-à-vis German identity in the semester prior to studying abroad. It may be tempting to assume that language learners desire some degree of target culture membership, but that is often neither true nor feasible. I investigate this by examining the strategies students use to express their knowledge of Germany and the German language, when and how they position themselves as novices or experts, and if and how they draw lines between categories such as "German" and "Jordanian". Previous research on learner identities in study abroad contexts has primarily focused on white and typically American learners, or learners in white and Global North contexts. My study therefore contributes to the diversification of perspectives in study abroad research: The Arab student participants expected to face discrimination and prejudices in Germany, and even pre-sojourn they made plans to censor themselves, for example, by not using Arabic in public. They did not expect to play with aspects of German identity the way white sojourners from the Global North may.

Drawing on a constructivist understanding of identity and using an analytic framework that integrates Interactional Sociolinguistics, Membership Categorization Analysis, and Positioning Theory, I examine interviews with five architecture and design students in Jordan who are about to depart to Germany. I show that the participants make a clear "us" versus "them" ethnic distinction and locate themselves outside of the category "German". However, their increasing proficiency in German and their knowledge of Germany allow them to claim expertise regarding Germany, which enables them to subvert the otherwise strict distinction between "us" and "them" in an ethnic sense. In other words, instead of *being* German or seeking

to *become* German, they are *doing* German as part of their identity as well-educated and internationally-minded young Arabs.

The findings have implications for how we prepare students for studying abroad. Refraining from judgement, inviting participation, and acknowledging the students' knowledge may certainly help learners gain confidence in their growing expertise. It is also important to understand the possible identities learners think they can assume and their desires and goals pertaining to language learning. Furthermore, we need to critically examine how language and culture(s), speakerhood and membership criteria are portrayed in the educational material to which we subject learners. Finally, a serious consideration of student fears concerning discriminatory study abroad experiences means providing them with resources and measures for empowerment and resilience.

Preface

This dissertation is an original work by Richard Feddersen. The research project of which this dissertation is a part was approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Meet the Germans? How L2 German Learners Understand and Construct German Identity”, Study #Pro00088217, March 2, 2019.

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Transcription symbols

Symbol	Description	Meaning
[word]	square brackets	overlapping speech
(0.0)	numbers in parentheses	time elapsed
(.)	period in parentheses	brief (approx. a tenth of a second) pause
=	equal sign	no pause
:	colon	lengthening of prior sound
↑↓	arrows up/down	rise/fall in pitch
.	period	falling intonation
,	comma	carrying intonation
?	question mark	rising intonation
WORD	capital letters	higher volume
°word°	degree signs	lower volume
<u>word</u>	underlined	stress
£word£	Pound sign	smiling voice
>word<	right/left carats	faster speed
<word>	left/right carats	slower speed
.hhh	period-hhh	inbreath or (without period) outbreath
word	bold	German
word	italicized	Arabic
((word))	double parentheses	comment
/word/	slashes	International Phonetic Alphabet transcription

Based on Jefferson (2004)

1. Introduction

As researchers in second language acquisition and study abroad, and also as instructors and administrators, we may assume that language learners seek some measure of membership in the communities where the language they are learning is spoken (cf. Duff, 2011). This assumption has pedagogical implications, and whether membership is feasible or wanted needs to be examined more closely. We also need to consider what reasons there might be for learners to *not* seek membership, what obstacles those who do might face, and what other possibilities there might be beyond membership.

In this dissertation, I investigate how German learners in Jordan who did not necessarily choose to learn German nevertheless carved out space for themselves even though they did not seek German membership, how, rather than seeking to *be German*, they were *doing German*. To do so, I examine their knowledge displays regarding German-speaking countries and the German language. I analyze how shifting and varied epistemic stances served to navigate categories such as "German" and how these categories were constructed as definite, but also how the participants found a grey zone between the established categories and used their expertise to subvert them.

This dissertation is a case study of two architecture students and three design students registered in a B1+ German intensive course at the German-Jordanian University (GJU) in Amman, Jordan. The GJU is a university modeled after the German universities of applied sciences with a mandatory German language and study abroad program. The five participants were all about to depart on their sojourn just weeks after the end of their intensive course.

I integrate Interactional Sociolinguistics with methods from Membership Categorization Analysis and Positioning Theory to analyze data from classroom interactions and interviews collected in 2019. I investigate knowledge displays as they relate to the display of confidence,

such as hedging and claiming or deferring authority. I show that "German" and "Jordanian/Kuwaiti/Middle Eastern/Arab" are categories learners draw on as common-sense knowledge, with a clear distinction between "us" and "them". I examine how and where they draw the line and show that there is a grey zone that they establish beyond the strict borders of "us" and "them". This grey zone leaves room for individuals with hybrid identities such as myself, a first language (L1) speaker from Germany who has lived abroad for several years, as well as themselves, non-Germans who nonetheless possess knowledge about the German language and culture. I show that this expertise is a tool that the participants used to subvert the strict membership categories of "German" and "non-German". Although they expressed feeling distinctly different from Germans, their knowledge of Germany and the German language still granted them the ability to participate in German society and fulfill their goals to gain an international education and socialize in Germany.

In this dissertation, I examine the question of identity from several novel or understudied angles. Previous research on learner identities has focused on learners in study abroad or work abroad and immigration contexts, whereas this study focuses on learners who are pre-sojourn, although some of them have had study abroad experience. Learners most often studied in research are white and typically American, or from other white and Global North contexts (see Anya, 2017, Craig, 2010), which is why it is important to include more diverse voices and settings in order to gain a more honest and complete picture of the learning process. Methodologically, learner identities are less often examined turn-by-turn, instead focusing on what people say rather than on what people do with language. Since this has the potential to miss nuance and precision, I will use an Interactional Sociolinguistics approach that takes advantage of such turn-by-turn analysis. Furthermore, learners' ethnic identities have been examined from

different perspectives, such as investment (see Norton Peirce, 1995) and motivation (see Ushioda, 2019), but not yet through knowledge displays, which I show can be a tool for learners to subvert rigid membership categories such as "German" or "Jordanian". This dissertation will further show how a systematic integration of Positioning Theory and Membership Categorization Analysis with Interactional Sociolinguistics can be a powerful tool for examining identities by allowing us to observe the interplay of the available social categories that learners draw on in interaction.

This study has pedagogical implications that may provide language educators and facilitators of study abroad programs with information regarding learners' identities and communicative strategies. I show that the learners participating in this study expected to face discrimination and encounter obstacles to blending into German society, and that they drew firm and clear lines between themselves and German identity. However, they also used their expertise to subvert this rigid categorization and create space for themselves. I will, therefore, discuss how language and study abroad programs may utilize such strategies to subvert rigid membership categories and thus support learners. Instructors may be able to create opportunities for learners to purposefully employ strategies that allow them to navigate and negotiate identities by looking at the linguistic resources learners employ to construct identities and by being mindful of the categories they establish and reproduce.

1.1 Definition of key terms

1.1.1 Identity

I follow the constructivist approach which understands identity as "*the social positioning of self and other*" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010, p. 18, italics in original), that is emergent from interaction on both the macro and micro level. Identity is not static but constructed turn-by-turn,

which means it is shifting, temporary, and specific to individual interactions and utterances. In this dissertation, ethnicity, and, to a lesser extent, race, are relevant. Both are socially constructed and may overlap or be contradictory at times. *Race* refers to collections of hereditary perceived physical traits (Fought, 2006, p. 9) such as skin colour and hair texture, despite lacking a true biological basis (Fuentes et al., 2019, p. 400), as variation within racial groups may be as large or larger than differences between groups. *Ethnicity* refers to group categorization based on social practices such as language and customs, and perceived common heritage. *Imagined communities* (see Anderson, 2006) are likewise socially constructed and refer to theoretical groups of people who are not necessarily all in touch physically but are imagined as a cohesive group. An example of an imagined community is a nation, as its members typically do not know every other member but may still regard themselves as members of the same group.

1.1.2 Knowledge displays

As with previous terms, I consider knowledge to be socially constructed as well. Rather than merely being objective collections of facts, interactants act according to who has rights to knowledge and to what degree of certainty: For example, a witness is generally perceived to have more rights to knowledge about the situation they witnessed, and to a higher degree of certainty, than someone who read about the situation in the newspaper. A scholar of German is generally perceived as knowledgeable based on their presumed education and experience. This education and experience may also lead them to display knowledge with certainty. The combination of both may lead students to accept new and even surprising information from them, but the scholar's expertise may also be questioned and challenged.

The term *knowledge display* (Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2008) refers to the knowledge an interactant reveals in interaction. This term stresses the social and interactional understanding

of the concept, as I do not analyze what knowledge participants may possess in total, but which parts of their knowledge they choose to make salient in interaction. In situations of asymmetrical knowledge displays, that is, situations in which interactants may position themselves as experts or novices, respectively, this orientation may shift turn-by-turn and is inherently dynamic rather than static.

1.1.3 Target language, second language, or additional language

Second language, or L2, is a widely used term also found in the most commonly used name of the field, second language acquisition (SLA) or second language research (SLR). It is sometimes used to differentiate additional languages acquired in a naturalistic and non-formal environment from *foreign languages* acquired primarily through formal education contexts. Technically speaking, the participants of this study speak German as a foreign language. However, this term implies that German is inherently something that they are not, and the German language is something that does not belong to them. Among German textbooks, the equivalent term *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* "German as a foreign language" is ubiquitous, but I decided early on not to use it in this dissertation because it blatantly establishes a line between the learner and the language they are learning. However, as I continued my analysis, I became increasingly aware that L2 is an ill-fitting term as well. First of all, for the participants of this study, German is a third or fourth language, although it would be cumbersome to differentiate between L3 and L4 individually and to name both when speaking of the learners as a group. However, L1 and L2 imply a hierarchical distinction that I would prefer to avoid. Other options such as "native speaker" and "non-native speaker" are also inherently problematic. Similar to "foreign language", the term "native" in this context implies that a native speaker, but not a non-native speaker, has a birthright to the language. The native/non-native distinction is also often a

racialized one (Cheng et al., 2021), and reveals a monolingual bias. (For a succinct summary of the problem, see Dewaele, 2018). I therefore speak of L1 to refer to the first language(s) acquired in early childhood, but instead of L2, I use the term "additional language" to minimize any hierarchical implications and focus on chronology instead. While L2 is meant to imply such a chronological order, the term can also be understood in the sense of a hierarchical order, as ordinal numbers are also used to label hierarchical levels. So, instead of "L2 learners", or "LX learners" as proposed by Dewaele (2018), I will use "language learners". This may be too ambiguous in contexts where L1 acquisition is relevant, but in this context, language learning refers exclusively to the acquisition of additional languages and has the benefit of avoiding acronyms for the sake of better readability. I make exceptions when a term coined by other scholars includes L2, such as "L2 socialization", to avoid confusion.

Also difficult is the notion of "target language" and "target culture", as the terms imply that learners are to leave their current language and culture behind to move towards their target. Occasionally, I still use the term "target culture" when referring to language and culture learning in general. I specifically mean "target" in the sense that it is the goal of a particular program to learn about a certain culture. It is still a problematic term that attaches a language to a culture too firmly and leaves no room for hybridity, that is, there is no room for landing in between source and target, or somewhere else altogether. My dissertation shows how unhelpful such rigid concepts can be.

1.2 Research questions and dissertation outline

My research questions are as follows:

1) What strategies do five German learners at the German Jordanian University in Jordan use to signal their knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of the German language and culture?

2) How do these knowledge displays in relation to the learners' concept of German identity contribute to the construction of their own ethnic identity?

In Chapter 2, I will review the relevant literature. First, I will discuss the concept of identity as a social construct. As part of this discussion, I also define and discuss the terms "race", "ethnicity", and "imagined communities", as they are salient and relevant issues related to identity. I also review the literature specifically on identity in multilingual study abroad contexts. Next, I turn to the construction and display of knowledge in social interaction, with a particular focus on situations with asymmetrical knowledge displays and the concept of "doing being an expert".

I will then outline my methodology in Chapter 3. First, I will give a brief overview of the study design and rationale. Then, I explain and justify my methods and theoretical framework. I discuss how I blend the approaches of Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis, followed by a discussion of Interactional Sociolinguistics which employs aspects of Conversation Analysis, and finally Positioning Theory. Next, I talk about the data collection process, including the research site, the program and course I observed, and the participants. I provide details on the data I collected, namely recorded class observations, interviews, and field notes. Finally, I discuss my data analysis process.

In Chapter 4 and 5, I provide my analysis. Chapter 4 is about the first interview with the students Mona, Dania, and Omar, while Chapter 5 is about the second interview with the students Zaina and Wessam. Both chapters follow the same structure: I provide short summaries of the students' biographical background and experiences with Germany and the German language, then I discuss the linguistic resources or strategies they employ in knowledge displays,

namely the use and role of the German language, pronoun use, hedging, and soliciting information or otherwise signalling knowledge gaps.

In Chapter 6, I discuss my findings. I provide summaries for each student, as well as for me, as I was also a participant in the interaction. I discuss what my analysis revealed, similarities and differences between previous studies and mine, what we now know, and what we still do not know. I discuss pedagogical implications and the limitations of this study, and I end with my conclusion.

2. Literature review

My dissertation examines how German learners in Jordan used knowledge displays to construct and to position themselves in relation to German identity. In this chapter, I review the research literature on each of the key terms identified previously: identity, encompassing the concepts of race, ethnicity, and imagined communities; and knowledge displays.

My understanding of identity is based on the constructivist approach, which I discuss first. As my focus is particularly on ethnic identities, I define the concepts of race and ethnicity and discuss their limitations. I introduce the concept of imagined communities next, as it becomes relevant in my analysis. The participants invoked concepts such as "German" or "Jordanian" as common-sense categories, although their definitions emerged through interaction. My analysis pertains to knowledge displays of Germany and the German language, which is why I then review the literature on knowledge in social interaction, with particular focus on the concept of asymmetrical knowledge displays and "doing being an expert" (Sacks, 1995).

2.1 Identity

The central concept of my dissertation is the question of identity, which has been theorized many times across many disciplines. Moving away from an essentialist notion of identity categories, social scientists today largely theorize identity as a product of an ongoing interactional process, while earlier approaches to identity have assumed relatively fixed and limited, as well as limiting, roles and categories which an individual may occupy, such as gender, ethnicity, or class. Theorists today consider identity to be communicatively produced (see Bucholtz & Hall, 2010), as are these categories, rather than being static and predetermined. In this dissertation, I understand identity as "*the social positioning of self and other*" (Bucholtz &

Hall, 2010, p. 18, italics in original), based on the five principles postulated by Bucholtz & Hall (2010): emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality, and partialness.

The first principle of emergence understands identity as emerging from interaction as opposed to being its source (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010, p. 19). As the authors pointed out, while the principle of emergence is not limited to subversive situations, research on emergent identities has shown particularly salient results "in cases where speakers' language use does not conform with the social category to which they are normatively assigned" (p. 20), for example, when crossing boundaries of gender or ethnicity. The second principle of positionality encompasses identity on three simultaneously occurring levels. These include "(a) macrolevel demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010, p. 21). The principle of indexicality comes third, describing how identity emerges in interaction. Bucholtz & Hall (2010) described four processes, namely:

> (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups. (p. 22)

Next, the principle of relationality builds on the first three, understanding identity as "intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations" (p. 23). Lastly, the principle of partialness acknowledges that any account of identity construction is necessarily partial, situated, and constantly shifting (p. 25).

In my analysis, these principles become evident: In addition to membership categories such as "German" and "Jordanian"—positioning along those lines is emergent in itself—a grey zone emerges in interaction. This is an example of subversive identities as described by Bucholtz and Hall (2010). I also examine both how and on which levels these identities emerge, and I pay attention in particular to the situated and shifting nature of identity construction.

I draw on this conceptualization of identity as a social construct because assuming identity as non-static and communicatively produced explains and accounts for the complex and nuanced shifts in the participants' positioning. I focus specifically on ethnic and linguistic identities, which I discuss next.

2.1.1 Race and ethnic identity in interaction

As a specific aspect of identity, I examined the participants' ethnic identity. First of all, it is necessary to define key terms, namely *race* and *ethnicity*. I employed definitions that are most practical to work with, but both terms are notoriously difficult to define without resulting in paradoxical confusions (see Fought, 2006). Race is thought to encompass certain sets of heritable characteristics such as physical traits (Fought, 2006, p. 9) like skin colour. However, biologically speaking, there is but one human race, and according to a statement published by the American Association of Biological Anthropologists, the term "race" is socially constructed and does not reflect biological realities (Fuentes et al., 2019, p. 400). That does not negate other realities of the term (e.g., in a social or political sense), and "[r]ace should therefore be seen as a paradigm for sorting individuals and populations into units based on historical contexts and social, cultural, and political motives" (Fuentes et al., 2019, p. 402). The students did identify as Arab, and one of them in particular, Mona, pointed out that she "looks Arab" in the context of being worried about discrimination in Germany (see section 4.4). This indicates her awareness that her physical

features are racialized in Germany and that this does play a role in her identity construction. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that who is or is not white is not based on biological facts but rather is socially and culturally constructed, in particular reflecting power dynamics (Meer, 2014, p. 115). As such, people from the Middle East may be considered to be white or as People of Colour, depending on who is asked. The term *passing* is sometimes used to refer to People of Colour who could be "read" as white and thus possess some privileges of whiteness. The concept is problematic because it relies on how well someone fits ideas of whiteness (see Bucholtz, 1995), but it does have social relevance. Bucholtz (1995) understands passing as "*the active construction of how the self is perceived when one's ethnicity is ambiguous to others*" (p. 352, italics in original), and as it becomes relevant in my data, this is how I will use the term as well.

Another key term is *ethnicity*, which by some is used synonymously with "race" (Fought, 2006, p. 9), but by which I mean a group that identifies through social practices and a perceived common heritage rather than alleged physical characteristics. As such, it is inherently also a category that is socially constructed (Fought, 2006). Fought (2006, 2011) discussed the close relationship between language and ethnicity compared to other social categories, pointing to several scholars describing language as a key, if not the only, factor that may determine ethnic group membership, such as Bucholtz (1995), Bailey (2000), and Sweetland (2002). This essentialist notion of identity considers language to be one of the inherent characteristics of ethnic groups (see Gal & Irvine, 1995). So far, however, studies on language and ethnicity have often focused on heritage language or L1 use in diglossic contexts. A notable exception is Anya (2017) who studied how African American learners of Portuguese in Brazil performed and spoke Blackness in Afro-Brazilian communities.

In this dissertation, I examine the space participants occupy as language learners, if they cross boundaries between ethnic groups, and under what circumstances.

2.1.2 Imagined communities

Identity is constructed not only in everyday social interactions as stated before, but also through alignment with the communities to which one thinks one belongs. First to coin the term *imagined communities* was Benedict Anderson (2006), referring to ties everyone has to communities with which we consider ourselves affiliated, despite not being physically in touch with every member in this group. Similarly, language learners form imagined identities, that is, the person they imagine themselves to be as part of the imagined community. Imagined communities are not necessarily formed through educational material or in the classroom and may even conflict with the roles and identities offered in the classroom. *Identity verification* refers to an individual confirming for themselves that they are the person they think they are, and interference with this identity verification most likely results in upsetting a person (Burke & Stets, 2009, pp. 68-69). For language learners, insufficient validation of their identities may impact their motivation (Dörnyei, 2009), investment (Norton, 2013) and, consequently, their language learning process (Quan, 2019).

2.1.3 Research on identity in multilingual study abroad contexts

My dissertation contributes to the body of research on identity in multilingual study abroad contexts. Previous research has shown how language learners, while studying abroad, may be ascribed identities, but also how they actively construct and (re)negotiate their identities. For example, Anya (2017) studied African American learners of Portuguese in Brazil. In her examination of the role of race in the language learning process and engagement in the study abroad environment, she found the African American participants actively and eagerly sought

out and engaged with Afro-Brazilian culture, exhibiting "a sense of positive racialized identification and self-affirmation" (p. 64) that influenced their investment in the acquisition of Portuguese (p. 87). She found that through making sense of local codes and meaning (p. 94), learners learned, performed, and spoke "Blackness in Brazil" (p. 3).

In France, Kinginger (2011) studied the language and identity development of American students on sojourn in 2003, "at a time when sociopolitical tensions between the United States and France reached a level unprecedented in the students' lifetimes" (p. 153). She found that most students had not kept up with current events prior to their sojourn, and in reaction to local criticism of the politics of their home country, the students withdrew into a fixed national identity. Drawing on themes of national superiority, they perceived this criticism as a challenge to "their patriotism and to their identity" (p. 158), risked estrangement and alienation from their local peers, and limited their perspective as well as their potential for intercultural growth.

Pellegrino Aveni (2005) also looked at American students, this time studying abroad in Russia, by examining "the social and psychological factors that affect language learners' spontaneous use of a second language and the ways in which learners exploit and avoid spontaneous speaking opportunities". She traced how learners protected their self-image, seeking status or control (i.e., social hierarchy) and validation (i.e., social distance) (p. 4). Learners who reported a sense of comfort in regard to their self-image also reported using the additional language more (p. 51), and learners who drew on internal cues for their self-image, such as "positive attitudes towards the self and the ability to predict the consequences of their L2 use" (p. 142), were better able to protect and preserve their self-image.

Quan (2019) investigated experiences pertaining to identity and language learning investment among American students studying abroad in Spain, examining "competing and

fluctuating desires and identities that lead to contradictory behaviors or decisions about their language learning and use" (p. 15). She found that expectations regarding studying abroad (e.g., benefits, experiences with locals and the language) were sometimes met or readjusted, whereas other times, the expectations did not line up with the learners' experiences, "leading students to invest in other aspects of the experience they believe better align with their desired selves and will provide greater capital for the future" (p. 15), thereby influencing available opportunities for language use and interaction.

These works highlight the nuances of identity construction by language learners studying abroad as well as different behavioural patterns based on the learners' backgrounds and circumstances. This highlights the importance of including a variety of perspectives, but as Anya (2017) criticized in the context of her work with African American language learners, the field of additional language acquisition tends to be preoccupied with white learners and learners in mostly white environments (p. 217). Furthermore, research often focuses on learners during or after their sojourn or immigration experiences, or else on heritage learners. However, by then, their perspectives may already have changed. In order to study the identity construction process during study abroad, we need to start earlier. For example, two of the five participants in the current study had spent time in Germany already, and they drew on their first-hand knowledge frequently as they established their expert status, whereas the other participants navigated "doing German" without such first-hand knowledge.

With this dissertation, I contribute to the body of research on the negotiation of ethnic identities of language learners, specifically the exploration of borders between ethnic categories by learners, a topic that has received scant attention. Therefore, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of identity construction in additional language contexts as well as focusing on

learners who are from the Global South and members of a group racialized in the place where they will be studying abroad. In particular, I examine identity construction through knowledge displays. In the following section, I discuss the literature on knowledge construction in social interaction and how this ties in with identity.

2.2 Knowledge in social interaction

Through the analysis of knowledge displays, we can learn how interactants construct their various memberships and their right to possess and represent pieces of knowledge. I draw on the work of Stivers et al. (2011) who understand knowledge as constructed and "viewed as a domain that groups or even individuals can have primary rights over" (p. 6). According to Goffman (1971), interactants possess primary rights over certain territories, including what he calls "information preserves" (p. 38). These may be comprised of "facts about himself to which an individual expects to control access while in the presence of others" (pp. 38-39). Stivers et al. (2011) elaborated that "territorial offenses" may affect knowledge in the same way as material possessions (p. 6). In the context of this dissertation, this might mean that the participants were highly aware of who has the "right" to knowledge about Germany and the German language, and they considered this when expressing such knowledge. This might have affected my displays of certainty, as an L1 German speaker from Germany, as well as the students' displays of certainty. However, I will show that it is by no means as simple as that. Expert status is not granted on L1 status and ethnic origin alone.

This understanding of knowledge as socially constructed has notably resonated within the field of Conversation Analysis (Stivers et al., 2011, p. 6). Of particular interest for linguists is the question of *epistemic stance* (Stivers et al., 2011, p. 7), that is, the interactional orientation towards expressions of knowledge. Typical settings to explore "confrontations between different

epistemic cultures and practices" include courtroom and medical interactions (Stivers et al., 2011, p. 8), but they may also include classroom interactions.

Stivers et al. (2011) identified three dimensions of knowledge in conversation, namely epistemic access, primacy and responsibility. *Epistemic access* means that we can observe interactants evaluating the access to knowledge, for example, first-hand knowledge or second-hand knowledge, as well as degrees of certainty. In my data, I show how both the students and I treated first- and second-hand knowledge about Germany with varying degrees of certainty. Having lived in Germany, for example, seemed to carry particular weight. *Epistemic primacy* refers to the relative authority over knowledge, and in my analysis, I show how both the participants and I actively negotiated this authority and what that means for identity construction. *Epistemic responsibility* refers to how interactants assign and expect accountability for the accuracy of knowledge (Hauser, 2018, p. 93). "Thus, interactants treat knowledge as a moral domain with clear implications for their relationships with co-interactants" (Stivers et al., 2011, p. 9). In Chapter 5 in particular, I show how a participant showed little confidence in my expert status and as a result did not expect accuracy nor accountability from me. This example fits Stivers et al.'s (2011) postulation that interactants pay attention to and keep track of responsibility and accountability regarding knowledge (p. 18).

Within the domain of epistemic responsibility, Stivers et al. (2011) identified two types of knowables. *Type 1 knowables* are those that an interactant (labelled "subject-actor") has both a direct right and an obligation to know, which typically refers to directly personal information such as one's name or one's location. *Type 2 knowables* are those that interactants should have access to based on incidental exposure. If a Type 1 knowable is one's own location, a Type 2 knowable may therefore be someone else's location, something one may or may not have

witnessed. Type 1 knowables, therefore, seem to imply a higher level of accountability. Stivers et al. (2011) noted that "in interaction, question recipients will routinely treat themselves as responsible for being able to answer a question addressed to them, whether regarding a Type 1 or a Type 2 knowable, and generally provide accounts for not knowing" (p. 18). In my data, both types of knowables play a role but are more complicated than the dichotomy described. For example, my intuition regarding how to pronounce a word in German may be classified as Type 1 knowable. Cultural information, however, is more complicated: For a learner, this may be a Type 2 knowable, but for a native member of a culture, this knowledge is about both the member's personal information as well as what they have witnessed. I therefore discuss epistemic responsibility as it relates to participants' expectations of accountability but focus on epistemic access and primacy rather than Type 1 and 2 knowables.

2.2.1 Doing being an expert/novice

Asymmetrical knowledge displays are a particular case of knowledge construction. "Asymmetrical" means that epistemic access or primacy are not evenly distributed among the interactants. Learning environments are a salient setting with such asymmetrical knowledge displays, as they typically involve both experts and novices; other examples include the interaction between medical professionals and patients. In the context of additional language acquisition, several studies have examined expert/novice orientation as examples of asymmetrical knowledge displays. Examples of L1 and additional language speaker interaction include Kasper (2004) and Dings (2012). An overlap of L1 speaker identity and instructor identity can be found in Nao (2015). Studies of language learner peer interaction include Reichert & Liebscher (2012) and Hauser (2018).

Kasper (2004) examined a segment of a dyadic conversation-for-learning between an American learner of German and an L1 German speaker. She used Membership Categorization Analysis and Conversation Analysis and identified “non-native speaker” and “native speaker”, and “novice” and “expert” as complementary and coinciding membership categories. She found that the categories were omnirelevant but predominantly, and only on occasion, “invoked by the novice” (p. 551). Omnirelevant devices may be invoked in interaction at any given time and receive priority if they are appropriate, without “special slot [...], i.e. [they] do not follow any given last occurrence” (Sacks, 1995, Vol. I, pp. 313-314).

In a longitudinal study, Dings (2012) analyzed arranged and video-recorded conversations between a U.S. student learning Spanish as an additional language in Spain, and an L1 speaker of Spanish from Spain. She borrowed elements from Conversation Analysis and examined behaviours indexing the speakers’ orientation to the novice/expert paradigm as L1 and additional language speakers of Spanish. She identified corrective repair and discussion of language learning as evidence of the participants’ orientation and found that participants eventually moved away from this paradigm and “towards a full participation in the interaction” (p. 1504). Furthermore, she pointed out that the categories “native speaker” or “non-native speaker” are not always the most salient membership categories but “may be indexed at any moment, often discretely and rapidly” (pp. 1503-1504), in line with Sack’s (1995) concept of omnirelevance.

In her study of the interaction between 51 university-level learners of English as an additional language in Japan and 26 non-Japanese English instructors, Nao (2015) examined the topicalization of the instructors’ non-Japanese country of origin in the context of “conversation lounges” that allowed students to practice general conversation outside of class. The students

were expected to come up with a topic and familiarize themselves with the instructors' publicly available profiles online before approaching them in the conversation lounge, but they were otherwise free to let the conversation flow. For the purpose of this study, the student participants asked the instructors for permission to make 10 to 15-minute-long audio recordings of the sessions. The instructors' place of origin was a salient topic, and Nao (2015) showed the strategies instructors and students employed to orient to expert and novice roles. One such strategy was the inversion of knowledge transmission, that is, when students sought information from the instructor, the instructor first elicited prior knowledge the students already possessed instead of answering. In one example, the instructor also positively evaluated the question he received. This may have taken on "overtly didactic characteristics" (Nao, 2015, p. 205) and invoked "a classroom mode of alignment between him/her as expert and student as learner" (Nao, 2015, p. 208), an asymmetry common in classroom discourse, as the author pointed out, and present in my interview data as well.

Reichert & Liebscher (2012) pointed to interactionist studies in SLA that challenge the concept of experts and novices as fixed and static roles (see Cekaite, 2007; Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2005; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004). Drawing on Sacks (1995), they argued that "'doing being an expert-novice' is locally constructed, which means that speakers position themselves and others as experts with respect to context" (Reichert & Liebscher, 2012, p. 600). They examined the positioning of language learners as experts in word search settings based on the Conversation Analysis understanding of word search as a specific repair mechanism. The study participants were three university students in a required intermediate German course in Canada. One student was originally from Mexico, one of Swiss-Greek descent, and one from Guatemala. All three students had gone to school in an English-speaking part of Canada. Two

spoke L1 Spanish, one L1 English, and they all spoke French and one other additional language each. The authors showed that the "students create opportunities for learning by searching for the target word through negotiating positions of expertise" (Reichert & Liebscher, 2012, p. 607).

Hauser (2018) looked at displays of uncertainty in interaction among Japanese students of English at a university in Japan. Using Conversation Analysis, he analyzed video recordings of these students preparing for an English class. He identified three primary strategies for displaying epistemic uncertainty, which occurred regularly, though not always: producing an item as uncertain, casting doubt on a preceding item or utterance, or explicitly claiming to lack knowledge. In doing so, students could do being-a-*non*-expert. In response, students may align with this epistemic uncertainty or ignore it. Hauser pointed out that they therefore did not position themselves as experts and avoided being positioned in such a way by others. These strategies served to "construct an egalitarian relationship among themselves as being non-experts among other non-experts" (p. 109), which avoids the creation of a hierarchy through asymmetrical epistemic stances.

Like the work of Kasper (2004) and Dings (2012), my data illustrate the omnirelevance of categories such as "L1 speaker/language learner". As in Kasper's (2004) analysis, I show an overlap of the categories "language learner" and "novice", and "L1 speaker" and "expert". However, I also show that this distinction is not set in stone and may be subverted by the learners. As Reichert & Liebscher (2012), for example, have shown, the categories "expert" and "novice" should not be treated as static, as they are negotiated turn-by-turn. An alternative term is "doing being an expert/novice" to underline its interactional and dynamic nature. I use the terms "expert" and "novice" for simplicity in this dissertation, but explicitly with the understanding of the concepts as constructed in interaction as opposed to static roles.

Furthermore, Nao's (2015) and Hauser's (2018) studies serve as examples for how soliciting information and knowledge negotiation are tied to identity. In Nao (2015), students solicited information to emphasize a cultural gap between their interlocutor and themselves. The author also showed some pertinent social functions of questions: The instructor's practice of asking a question to invite learners to share their knowledge rather than to actually request a certain piece of information, for example, is highly relevant in my data. Hauser (2018) demonstrated that the claim to lack knowledge similarly serves to avoid hierarchical structures rather than be indicative of an actual lack of knowledge. Therefore, I will consider such social functions whenever students claimed a gap in their knowledge.

In this dissertation, some of the relationships and circumstances present in the studies cited above become relevant as well. Some of my participants had relevant experience in Germany, having gained first-hand knowledge like Dings's (2012) learners, while others were relying on second-hand knowledge, as in Kasper (2004). All of them had been learning German for years as an additional language along with the other languages they spoke, as in Dings (2012), Hauser (2018), Nao (2015), and Reichert & Liebscher (2012), and all were expected to embark on their sojourn within weeks of the interviews I conducted. I entered this setting as an L1 speaker of German from Germany, similar to Nao's (2015) study, as a former instructor at their university, but also currently as a researcher. My expert status was therefore likely, but not necessarily, to be taken for granted and contended—for example, I had lived abroad for several years and may have been considered changed by this experience. In my analysis, knowledge displays played a role in how students negotiated their expert/novice roles in relation to me and how they displayed their own knowledge in the interview context. Based on this, my research questions are:

1) What strategies do five German learners at the German Jordanian University in Jordan use to signal their knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of the German language and culture?

2) How do these knowledge displays in relation to the learners' concept of German identity contribute to the construction of their own ethnic identity?

3. Methodology

I conducted a qualitative ethnographic case study at a German university in Jordan in the summer of 2019. I observed a B1-level German intensive course for university students in Jordan who were about to embark on their study abroad year in Germany, with a focus on five individual students who I interviewed towards the end of the course. In addition, I interviewed their instructor at the beginning and at the end of the 6-week intensive course. While the instructor's comments inform my understanding of the context, this dissertation focuses only on the students.

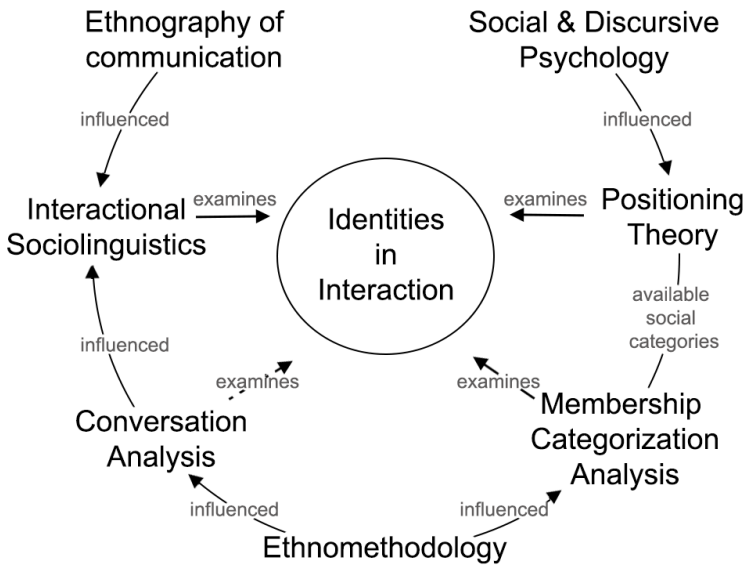
In section 3.1, I elaborate on the methods and theoretical frameworks from Second Language Research and Sociolinguistics that guide my analysis, namely Interactional Sociolinguistics, Membership Categorization Analysis, Conversation Analysis, and Positioning Theory. In section 3.2, I outline the data collection process, and in section 3.3 I describe the data collected. Finally, in section 3.4, I explain my data analysis approach.

3.1 Methods and theoretical framework

My methodological approach is based primarily on Interactional Sociolinguistics. Interactional Sociolinguistics incorporates elements of Conversation Analysis, namely its fine-grained attention to the minutiae of interaction and the concept of turns, but also takes into account contexts beyond the immediate conversation that are not locally produced. As interactants use "acts of positioning and membership categorization [to] draw on categories that are available to them from society, re-evaluating them and establishing relationships between them" (Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2013, p. 38), I employed Membership Categorization Analysis for its focus on the situated use of categories based on common-sense knowledge, and I used Positioning Theory to examine identity through "macro-'discourses' and micro-levels of

interaction" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 43). That is, whereas Membership Categorization Analysis pertains to "the specific kinds of categorical information that are implied by invoking a membership category" (Dailey-O'Cain & Sluchinski, 2023, p. 82), Positioning Theory allows the analysis of contextualization cues that signal to "other interactants which social categories and other kinds of associated information are relevant parts of a person's identity" (Dailey-O'Cain & Sluchinski, 2023, p. 81). This blend of approaches (see Figure 1) gave me the tools to examine not only how interactants in knowledge displays relied on membership categories that were inferred in conversation (Membership Categorization Analysis), but also how they navigated and positioned themselves in relation to these categories turn by turn (Positioning Theory). Interactional Sociolinguistics allowed me the advantage of the detailed analytical insights of Conversation Analysis and its rejection of essentialist notions while considering macro-level discourse that may indirectly inform speakers' identity construction. Conversation Analysis is also used to examine identities in interaction, but since I only used elements of it in my approach, I used a dashed line to represent its potential for analyzing identities.

Figure 1
Examining identities in interaction



Since Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis are linked in some ways, and Interactional Sociolinguistics employs elements of Conversation Analysis, I will start with describing and explaining Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis, followed by Interactional Sociolinguistics and Positioning Theory.

3.1.1 Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis

Conversation Analysis was developed in the 1960s and 1970s by Sacks, Jefferson, and Schegloff (see Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). It allows researchers to study behaviours and patterns of talk through fine-grained transcription of audio and video recordings of naturally occurring language data, capturing the minutiae of interaction such as pitch, speed, and increasingly also body language like gestures and gaze. Conversation Analysis is based on the observation of sequentially organized turns in conversation, that is, an interactant's contribution to a conversation that others can then respond to. It traditionally focuses solely on the data at hand (i.e., the micro level of interaction) and it does not consider broader contexts and discourses beyond the interaction (i.e., the macro level of interaction) for analysis (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). In other words, Conversation Analysis adopts an emic stance (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022, p. 261). Therefore, if the goal is to investigate matters of identity that are interwoven with broader sociocultural matters, using elements of Conversation Analysis can enhance and complement other analytical approaches.

Sacks also developed Membership Categorization Analysis, in which top-down categories are considered to study how interactants evoke and use categories based on common-sense knowledge in conversations (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022, p. 262). Both Membership Categorization Analysis and Conversation Analysis assume an emic stance, as both emerged from ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1964, 1967). Membership Categorization Analysis is built

on Membership Categorization Devices that comprise resources and practices (Schegloff, 2007, p. 467). These Devices include inference-rich collections of categories "that go together" (Schegloff, 2007, p. 467), such as "man/woman/non-binary person", "student/professor/researcher", and "Jordanian/German". These collections may or may not be "Pn-adequate", which means any person would fall into one of the categories in a collection (Schegloff, 2007, pp. 467-468). For example, while everyone has an age and could be categorized by the specific age, age bracket, or categories such as "teenager" or "young adult", not everyone plays Dungeons & Dragons, so not everyone falls into either the category "dungeon master" or "player". Such categories are inference-rich, meaning that they include common-sense knowledge about people. Common-sense knowledge does not mean imposing preconceived notions of what interactants should or should not know, but rather how interactants treat a category. As Schegloff (2007) elaborated:

> Any attributed member of a category (that is, anyone taken to be a member of the category) is a presumptive representative of the category. That is, what is 'known' about the category is presumed to be so about them. I say 'known' rather than 'believed,' and refer to '(common-sense) knowledge' rather than 'stereotype' or 'prejudice' because, for members, this has the working status of 'knowledge'. (p. 469)

This knowledge can be overridden by modifiers to correct what people may assume based on category knowledge (Schegloff, 2007, p. 469). The categories themselves, however, are "protected against induction" (Schegloff, 2007, p. 469), meaning that category members who do not fit the common-sense knowledge of that category are considered to be exceptions "or even a defective member of the category" (Schegloff, 2007, p. 469). An example from my dissertation that illustrates this is Excerpt 23 in Chapter 5. "Germans don't smile" was the common-sense

knowledge Zaina attributed to the category “Germans”. My habit to smile a lot was not a reason to revise her knowledge of the category and was used instead to label me an exception, and when I stated that I did not perceive Germans to smile infrequently, this was met with skepticism. Not smiling, therefore, also seemed to be an example for a category-bound activity, that is, those actions typical for a category member (Schegloff, 2007, p. 470).

In addition to collections of categories, Membership Categorization Devices include rules for application (Schegloff, 2007, p. 467). These rules include: a) the economy rule, where one membership category suffices for reference, such that a participant can invoke their belonging to the category “German learner” without simultaneously having to highlight every other category they belong to, and b) the consistency rule, where invoking a category for one participant determines the other participant’s thematic categories, so that if one participant is an instructor, the other participants will be categorized within the same Membership Categorization Device (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022, p. 264), that is, they may be identified as students or learners, but not as people with allergies or fast runners, even if they are both. As I will show in my analysis, the selection of a category as well as the coordination of categories among participants became important (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022, p. 264).

Combining Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis is common despite their distinct goals (Reddington, 2013), and both approaches complement each other (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022, p. 264). Topics such as gender and ethnicity (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022, p. 265), as well as topics relevant to both sociolinguistics and second language research, such as language ideologies or the native speaker/non-native speaker dichotomy (p. 267), have been investigated with the use of Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis. In the context of my dissertation, the fundamental basis of Membership Categorization

Analysis was relevant as I could use it to examine how learners constructed and oriented to German identity and how they related their individual and collective identities. As Jenkins (2014) put it: “To define the criteria for membership of any set of objects is, at the same time, also to create a boundary, everything beyond which does not belong” (p. 79). This means that by constructing German identity, the participants, who did not identify as German, also constructed their own identity and vice versa.

3.1.2 Interactional Sociolinguistics

Whereas Conversation Analysis focuses on conversation as separate from sociocultural background and context (e.g., Goffman, 1981), Interactional Sociolinguistics, developed by Gumperz (2018), is influenced by Hymes’s ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1968/1961) and combines the fine-grained, detailed analysis of turns with conversational inference, that is, “the interpretive procedure by means of which interactants assess what is communicatively intended at any one point in an exchange, and on which they rely to plan and produce their responses” (Gumperz, 2018, p. 313). A major difference between Conversation Analysis and Interactional Sociolinguistics is the assumption that communication is inherently “grounded in inferences” (Gumperz, 2018, p. 310), which in turn are “rooted in discourse as well as in the local circumstances in which they are produced” (Gumperz, 2018, p. 311).

Gumperz (2018) outlined procedures for empirical research that have been developed for Interactional Sociolinguistics, starting with ethnographic data collection in order to understand the local context and communicative practices. Based on these insights, relevant and representative interactions are selected for recording. The collected data then undergoes a preliminary analysis based on content, pronunciation, and prosodic organization to identify relevant speech events. These events then undergo sociolinguistic transcription that reflects all

signs that are meaningful for communication (Gumperz, 2018, pp. 317-318). When these procedures are followed, they allow us "not only to gain insights into situated understandings, but also to isolate recurrent form-context relationships and show how they contribute to interpretation" (Gumperz, 2018, p. 318).

3.1.3 Positioning Theory

Based on a constructivist approach to identity, a sociolinguistic framework was well-suited for analysis, as it provided the tools to examine how participants were using their linguistic repertoires to establish, negotiate, and order relationships and themselves. There are several approaches that agree on the notion of identity as outlined above and its usefulness for analysis (see De Fina, 2006, p. 354-355). Due to the common ground they share, they may even be used in a complementary fashion to shine light on different aspects of the matter: Ribeiro (2009) has shown that footing (Goffman, 1981), voice (Bakhtin, 1986) and positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1991) are approaches that are related yet different and therefore may complement each other in analysis. Which approach to choose depends on the research focus, as "one may examine participants' subtle shifts of alignment (footings), or their strategic interactional moves (positioning), or how they make their agency (voice) salient in conversation" (Ribeiro, 2009, pp. 49-50).

Positioning Theory is influenced by discursive and social psychology (Green et al., 2020). It is particularly useful to answer my research questions of how interactants strategically use knowledge displays to negotiate identities. In Positioning Theory, selves are conversationally located (or positioned) as participants in storylines that are interactionally produced (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991, p. 396). Its advantage lies in its flexibility and dynamic nature, and the combination with Membership Categorization Analysis will allow me to examine where and how

participants locate themselves and their interlocutors in relation to common-sense membership categories.

I used the sociolinguistic framework of positioning as outlined in Harré & van Langenhove (1991), defining how parties in a conversation may position themselves and thereby order and negotiate relationships and identity. As mentioned above, people are located as participants in interactions producing storylines, drawing on a linguistic repertoire to show who they are, to take on, accept or reject ideas about them, and to ascribe them to others (Block, 2017, p. 27). Harré & van Langenhove (1991) have established the following ways positioning can manifest itself in discourse:

a) First, second, and third order positioning: First order positioning locates the speaker and others through utterances. In response, a second speaker can confirm the first order positioning, aligning themselves with the relationship established in the first utterance, or they can reject it and thereby initiate second order positioning. For example, in Chapter 5, Excerpt 23, Zaina asked me why Germans did not smile. She thereby positioned me as a German or at least as an expert who would be able to answer her query. While I rejected her premise, saying that I had never perceived Germans as people who did not smile, I did not reject her positioning. If I had, I might have said something like “How should I know?”. In Excerpt 20 in the same chapter, Zaina indicated a lack of knowledge that I interpreted as a question directed at me, similar to the previous example. Here, I did reject the first-order positioning, saying I had not lived in Germany for a long time and was not able to give her an answer. Third order positioning occurs when the challenge occurs outside of the initial conversation, for example when participants complain about the assumptions Germans made about them (see section 5.3).

b) Performative and accountive positioning: Performative positioning is perlocutionary. First order positioning falls under this category. If the first order positioning is challenged within the ongoing conversation (second order positioning) or outside of the initial conversation (third order positioning), this is an act of accountive positioning. In the classroom context, Menard-Warwick (2007) analyzed a class situation leading to an instructor of English as an additional language positioning her learners as homemakers, which was subsequently contested by the learners.

c) Moral and personal positioning: An act can either be understood as positioned morally, for example, within a broad moral order in which one is entitled to give orders based on their occupation, or as a result of individual properties and circumstances. In Chapter 4, Excerpt 3, I did personal positioning as an instructor: The question I asked Omar regarding whether he had been to Germany was only reasonably polite in this constellation. If the roles had been reversed and Omar had asked an instructor the same question, it would have been odd and may have come across as a challenge to the instructor's qualifications. In my positioning, I based my entitlement to my question on my occupation (instructor/researcher) or on individual properties and circumstances (L1 German speaker, born in Germany).

d) Self and other positioning: Conversation participants always position both themselves and others, typically the latter by implication through positioning of the former. In the previous example, I self-positioned as instructor or expert, and other-positioned the participants as novices or non-Germans.

e) Tacit and intentional positioning: Whereas second order positioning is necessarily intentional, first order positioning may occur both intentionally or tacitly, that is, unconsciously or unintentionally. The previous example was an instance of tacit positioning, as I did not intend

to position myself or the participants but did so unconsciously. On the other hand, when Zaina equated people in the Mashreq region with "we", she intentionally positioned herself.

Furthermore, Harré & van Langenhove (1991) established four forms of intentional positioning that can "be understood as products of the performative/accountive and self/other dimensions" (p. 399) as outlined above:

a) Deliberate self-positioning: This is a way for conversation participants to express their identity and seems to overlap with intentional positioning. In my analysis, I use the terms "deliberate positioning" and "intentional positioning" interchangeably.

b) Forced self-positioning: In this case, participants do not volunteer a self-positioning but instead are prompted to do so. In my interviews with the students, this did not occur. However, in my interview with their instructor, I once asked him to clarify whether he identified as Austrian, which would be an example of forced self-positioning.

c) Deliberate positioning of others: A person can be absent or present when they are deliberately positioned by someone else. According to Harré & van Langenhove (1991, p. 403), gossip can be an example of deliberately positioning others in their absence. This occurred in my data. For example, in Chapter 5, Excerpt 25, Wessam was positioning his professor, who was not present, as an expert in dealing with international students and invoked her as an authority.

d) Forced positioning of others: When someone else asks a person to position a third person, this would be referred to as forced positioning of others. In my analysis, there were no examples of this type of positioning.

Harré & van Langenhove (1991) stress the dynamic nature of positioning, as positioning happens all the time throughout conversation and does not remain static, but interactants constantly renegotiate the conversation structure and stances taken within (p. 404). In my data

analysis, I pay attention to the particular dynamic of me as an instructor/researcher/L1 German speaker interacting with students who are German learners. Menard-Warwick (2007) showed that even though learners may challenge a particular positioning of them by their instructors, it is harder for them to resist positioning by an instructor than by a classmate. Positioning Theory has revealed the ways learners exercise agency and negotiate identities of power, authority, and knowledge (p. 285). Through her analysis of positioning, Menard-Warwick was able to take into account language proficiency, participation, and conformance to expectations, as "the interactive positioning observed in this classroom tended to reinforce the competence of students who met the teacher's discursive expectations" (Menard-Warwick, 2007, p. 286).

Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain (2008) examined Western and eastern German identities through positioning and knowledge displays. Instead of German learners constructing Jordanian and German identities, they investigated how western German migrants to eastern Germany used their linguistic resources to modify claims to epistemic primacy and access. The researchers examined the participants' strategic positioning while also taking into account their own positioning, as one of them was from eastern Germany originally, and the other had lived experience in eastern Germany. My role in the interviews I conducted is similar, as I am an L1 German speaker from Germany with extensive experience living abroad, interacting with German learners about to embark on their study abroad program.

3.2 Data collection process

From 2012 to 2015 I lived in Jordan, and I moved back there in May, 2019. The course I observed started in July and ended in August of the same year. From my arrival to the start of the course, I visited the campus about once every two weeks and interacted with the instructors of

the German department. In the following subsections, I describe the process of data collection and describe my study participants.

3.2.1 Research site

Germany is a popular study abroad destination for international students, ranking third behind the U.S. and the U.K. in 2014 (OECD 2014). Interest in learning German is high around the world. Although most people who are learning German as an additional language are school children, 1.3 million German speakers are university students (ICEF Monitor, 2015). This interest in learning German is reflected in the number of German language programs and courses offered in Jordan at institutions such as the University of Jordan, the German Jordanian University, the Goethe-Institut, and several language institutes in the capital, Amman. Learners at these institutions usually study or work abroad in Germany.

Jordanians, for the most part, will be a visible minority in Germany where the majority is both white and non-Muslim, whereas the majority of Jordanians are Muslim, with a Christian minority. In the United Kingdom, Hunter & McCallum Guiney (2022) examined how Middle Eastern heritage and Muslim identities are racialized, and Christians are misrecognized as Muslims. Comparable processes may apply in the German context where people from the Middle East are othered and intersectionally racialized (see Shaker et al., 2022). Following the Syrian Civil War that started in 2011, millions of Syrian people were displaced as refugees and were met with rising levels of Islamophobia, racism and discrimination in Europe. Jordanian students are a distinctly different group historically, culturally, and ethnically, but due to racialization and religion, they may be lumped together with refugees from Syria and even from other countries that are not ethnically Arab, such as Afghanistan. Students sometimes complained to me about this overgeneralization which is even held by former German chancellor Angela Merkel in the

interview cited below. Students about to embark on their study abroad experience may be aware of these potential challenges and feel anxious about how they would be received in Germany. Some draw conclusions for their study abroad location, such as a female student who said, “I was fearful because I heard there were many Neo-Nazis in my city, so I will go to a different city” (field notes, July 16, 2019). One of the questions I encountered several times during my own time in Jordan as an instructor (and one that came up again during my 2019 stay in Jordan) was also a question that former German Chancellor Angela Merkel was asked by a female student during her visit to the German Jordanian University in 2018: Should they be afraid to go to Germany (“Muss ich Angst haben, nach Deutschland zu kommen?”, 2018)? Merkel said that while she could not guarantee that there would be no verbal attacks (“I can’t rule out the possibility that someone makes a bad remark”, translation by me from the cited video), there would be no need to be afraid. She further said (translation by me): “Germany continues to be a safe country, even though there have been incidents during which foreign citizens have been subject to attacks. But unfortunately, there have also been incidents where refugees have murdered, for example, young girls, so such things have occurred from both sides”. Apart from the appalling “both sides” argument, she blatantly categorizes people living in Germany into Germans and foreigners. The latter group encompasses refugees as well as exchange students, such as the person she was addressing. I would argue that bringing up refugees here is not a coincidence. In part, it may be because refugees from the Middle East were still very present in the political discourse at the time of this event, but given the long history of immigration before that, it does seem as though her visit to a Middle Eastern country and her speaking to students there prompted that particular example.

Jordan, as an example of a Middle Eastern country, is an interesting site of study because students experience a conflict between their social, economic, or educational motivation to learn German and their apparent awareness and apprehension of possible challenges and discrimination. Additionally, study abroad research often focuses on the experiences of white American students or white western European students and rarely includes student voices from countries of the so-called Global South. I chose Jordan specifically due to its role as a safe country with good diplomatic ties to Germany.

The German Jordanian University (GJU) where the students were registered is a public university founded in 2005 by royal decree in Jordan and is based on the model of the German university of applied sciences. This model greatly emphasizes practical experience and application as well as an explicit orientation towards the demands of the job, fostering relations with partners in the industry, employing professors with several years of industry experience, and typically involving mandatory internships (DAAD, n.d.). The GJU is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the German Academic Exchange Service. Due to its strong ties to both Jordan and Germany, it combines expertise from both countries, with an emphasis on practical knowledge.

Unique in Jordan is the GJU's requirement for all students to learn German regardless of their major and to spend a year in Germany. Half of their stay is spent studying at a German university, the other half doing an internship. Learning German, therefore, has immediate practical relevance for them. Not all students necessarily choose this university because they wish to learn German; other factors such as the available majors or family opinions contribute to their decision as well. This can lead to tension between the students' own desires and goals on the one hand and the requirements of their programs on the other. I chose this university as a

research site because of the complicated reasons and motivations students have to learn German that may lead them to position themselves differently in relation to German identity than students who deliberately chose German as their major.

The courses at the GJU adhere to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), starting with the A1 level for beginners without previous knowledge of German. The CEFR ends at the C2 level for highly advanced learners, although at the time I was there, the highest possible level GJU students could take was B1, the early intermediate level. In addition to general language knowledge, they were taught specific language for their major as well as getting training in intercultural communication and the job application process to enable them to find internships and to prepare them for their year abroad. They finished the program with the Goethe-Zertifikat B1, a widely accepted standardized proficiency exam for German, in cooperation with the local Goethe-Institut.

The GJU students finish their German language education in their sixth term before going abroad. I chose a German 6 course to observe, corresponding to level B1.2. I was especially interested in learners who had feasible and concrete intentions to go to Germany because I expected them to have or to be developing thoughts about what that meant for them, what place German had in their sense of self, and what place they might have in Germany. Apart from their parents' influence or program availability, that choice might have been informed by a particular idea about what "German" is and what Germany does well, such as medical education and engineering (according to the students I spoke to).

The language proficiency level B1 was suitable for my study with respect to content as well. The beginners' levels focus on daily life and practical tasks, such as ordering in a restaurant, with a stronger focus on the learner executing these tasks and navigating situations in

Germany, with a less explicit examination of who is German and what that means. At the B1 level, learners start discussing more complex and abstract ideas, are introduced to historical events and more controversial topics, and typically will also study a chapter on migration and multiculturalism with explicit stances towards target culture identity.

The regular second half of the university year in Jordan runs from February to June. After this, six-week intensive courses may be offered for those who failed in the previous term or who wish to skip ahead. In this case, the summer intensive course ended just two weeks before the students planned to go abroad. Because of how close most students had scheduled their date of departure to the end of the course, and because the exchange year is one of their program requirements, the pressure to succeed in this course was quite high. The class had 22 students in total and met for four hours a day, five days a week, over the course of six weeks. The textbook used was *Menschen B1.2*, with additional materials on job application and intercultural communication.

3.2.2 Participants

Of the 15 students who signed the consent form, two groups early on showed interest in my research: the trio Omar, Dania, and Mona, and the duo Zaina and Wessam (all names are pseudonyms). They approached me during the breaks to ask questions and signalled their interest in participating in the interviews. The two groups did not seem to interact much in class or outside of class. Due to my first impression that they had different motivations, I asked them to be the focus of my study.

My own role is meaningful as well since I was also an interactant in the interviews, and students clearly positioned themselves in relation to me as well as to each other in conversation. I am white, male, a L1 German speaker from Germany, and, at the time of my data collection in

2019, I was 33 years old. I had previously worked at the GJU for three years as a language instructor—and the students' language instructor had been my colleague back then—before moving to Canada to pursue my PhD, which the students were aware of. I had been living in Canada for four years before returning to Jordan to collect my data. The students also knew that I had minored in Japanese and had studied abroad in Japan for a year in 2008. At the beginning of the interview, they knew I spoke L1 German and English as an additional language.

All the student participants were fluent in Arabic and English. Class interactions were a mix of all three languages, mostly German. I chose to conduct the interviews in English. First, the university's official languages are English and German, and many students attended international schools in English prior to going to university. In daily life on campus, Arabic plays a larger role than English. However, as a white person and therefore an obvious foreigner on campus, I was typically approached in English by students (and also non-German-speaking staff). In class, I interacted with students and their instructor in German, but in the interviews with the students, I used English, given that those were the languages most expected from me in each context. There was no expectation for me to speak Arabic. My Arabic proficiency is limited to a handful of set phrases to satisfy immediate needs in daily life, and I am able to read words in Arabic that I am already familiar with. The students were not explicitly aware of the extent or the lack of my Arabic proficiency. They occasionally spoke Arabic during the interviews, but never to address me, only each other, or to mutter to themselves.

3.3 Data collected

Based on the procedures for Interactional Sociolinguistics, my immersion in the local context was the first step. I moved to Jordan in May, 2019 and spent several months to re-acquaint myself with the place and the university prior to the start of the course in July. I

recorded representative classroom interactions based on this personal knowledge and my research questions. In addition, I conducted sociolinguistic interviews that ended up as my main source of data for analysis. In the following subsections, I describe further the data collected.

3.3.1 Class observations

The data I collected includes video and audio recordings of 25 different class situations in which German culture and knowledge about Germany were discussed. I considered relevant sections of learning about German culture and/or Jordanian culture. The equipment I used was a Panasonic HC-V180 camcorder on a simple tripod as well as a ZooM H2 Next microphone. I positioned the camcorder on a tripod in front of the class, turned it towards the students, and placed the microphone in the middle. The seating arrangement in class was always U-shaped, and the students almost always sat in the same spots, which enabled me to focus on the same students most of the time. From conferring with the instructor before class, I knew when sections of cultural instruction would start and switched on the camera and microphone for those only. If relevant situations outside of those sections occurred, I switched on the recording equipment if I was able to do so discreetly without interfering with the instructor.

3.3.2 Interviews

Although naturalistic data may seem preferable to examine positioning, Block (2017) argued that an interview is a situation in which the participants are engaging in positioning as well. Acknowledging that would provide the means to analyze the interview, moving beyond the desire to obtain "a veridical account of past events" (Block 2017, p. 36) and recognizing the complexity of the situation. After identifying the two groups of students as possible interview groups, I invited them to an interview in the last third of the course. I conducted the first interview with the three-student group after class in their classroom and the second interview

with the two-student group in a café closer to where both they and I lived. Both locations were based on the students' own suggestions. Since the location was public in one of the interviews, I only made audio recordings for both groups. In order to make the atmosphere more relaxed and informal for the first group, I provided snacks. In both interviews, I started with small talk and chatted informally with the students, much as I had done throughout their course during the breaks. I had a loose interview guide with questions I wanted to ask (see Appendix A), but I conducted the interview as a casual conversation rather than as a strict question-answer sequence. Topics covered included their ideas about identity, how identity was presented in their textbook and in media in general, their expectations regarding their sojourn, how they expected to make friends, whether they thought Germany was multicultural, what difficulties they expected, and how they thought they might overcome them. Interview 1 had a length of 1.37 hrs, while Interview 2 had a length of 2.48 hrs.

I also conducted two one-hour interviews with the instructor, one at the beginning of the course and another at the end. We met in his office and started off chatting about various topics before I started asking questions from my interview guide (see Appendix B), such as whether he had thought about the topic of identity, what his own national and ethnic identity was, what image of Germany he thought the textbook conveyed, and his reasons for selecting or omitting certain topics from the textbook or bringing in additional material. In the second interview, I asked whether he thought the material allowed the students to see a place for themselves in Germany, whether they were represented in the book, if they "owned" German (and if not, who did), what problems they might encounter and how he sought to help them, what his goal in teaching them about German culture was, and whether he was satisfied with how it turned out in

class. His answers are not directly part of my analysis, but they do inform my interpretation of the students' interactions.

3.3.3 Field notes

In addition to class recordings and interviews, I took about 50 pages of field notes in class, right after or before class, and during breaks. The notes mainly described short episodes regarding German culture or identity where I was not able to switch on the recording equipment, or situations occurring during the breaks or after class that I considered relevant. Most often, I recorded direct quotes or paraphrased conversations, with added context, such as videos or other material being presented in class that prompted a particular utterance. I also recorded context beyond the immediate classroom situation, such as the first day of class after the holiday of Eid al Adha (one of the main Islamic holidays).

3.4 Data analysis process

I followed the procedures for Interactional Sociolinguistics as described above. First, I conducted a preliminary analysis of the student interviews to identify relevant speech events. While this is different from the recommended procedure in Conversation Analysis, where data are first transcribed and then examined, I did an approximation of "unmotivated looking", where the researcher regards data from the participants' point of view and selects parts of the data with apparent relevance for the participants (Sacks, 1985, in Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022, p. 263). In doing so, I first built a collection of categories, membership categorization devices, and category-resonant descriptions (see Stokoe, 2012) relevant to German identity or other cultural identities, and I also identified events that included implicit or explicit knowledge displays. The students sometimes deliberately and explicitly claimed current or previous gaps in knowledge in regards to German identity categories. I decided to include these instances in my analysis and

narrow my research questions, which originally encompassed identity construction in general, not just through knowledge displays. I selected the speech events that included knowledge displays as well as references and orientations to German identity. I then did a sociolinguistic transcription of these speech events based on the Jefferson transcription conventions (Jefferson, 2004). Following that, I chose representative examples based on a) their relevance to my research questions and how well they captured the specific strategies I am examining, b) the diversity of participants and contexts, and c) the representativeness of the participants' behaviour. I conducted in-depth analyses of these examples: I identified patterns in the linguistic resources or strategies the participants employed to position themselves and me and to signal epistemic access and primacy, such as hedging and pronoun use, and I grouped the selected speech events based on the use of these strategies.

4. "Us" and "them": Drawing borders between membership categories

In this chapter, I analyze the end-of-term interview with the student participants Mona, Dania, and Omar. I examine the strategies pertaining to knowledge displays that the students used to construct their cultural and personal identities, for instance, as German learners, students, and Jordanians, and the categories they construct in doing so. First, I examine how the students used the German language as a knowledge display and how they did so without necessarily positioning themselves as experts. In the second section, I show how the students used pronouns to draw up categories for themselves and others, in particular a literal and explicit "us/them" division, and how this is part of knowledge displays. Third, I look at hedging behaviour as a strategy to signal either knowledge or gaps in knowledge and how participants thereby negotiated where they located themselves in relation to German identity. In the fourth and final section, I examine how questions, as a way to solicit information, similarly serve as strategies to display (gaps in) knowledge and positioning relative to German identity. This chapter shows how different strategies of knowledge displays serve to create a border area between German identity and the participants' identity, but also how these same strategies allow the students to explore and negotiate this border.

4.1 Participant profiles

All three students in this first interview group studied design. They were in their early twenties, sat next to each other in class, and socialized outside of the classroom. At the time of data collection, they were scheduled to start their year abroad in Germany within a few weeks. They were moving to the same city, although they were not attending the same university. Two of them had already lived abroad, one in Germany and one in the United States. During class, the three students were sometimes disengaged, but they were attentive when topics of interest to

them were covered in class, such as art. They generally expressed disenchantment or disinterest in learning German formally, even outright annoyance at having to do so as part of their program, although they regarded their current instructor favourably. None of the three students originally enrolled at the university with the intention to learn German, but they valued learning languages and expressed curiosity about other countries and the wish to spend time abroad to study and travel. In the following paragraphs, I introduce them individually.

4.1.1 Omar

Omar learned English starting in kindergarten. He had been accepted by a university in the United Kingdom, but his parents wanted him to study in Jordan, so he enrolled at the GJU instead. Omar had previously spent one month taking a German language class in a western German city. By his own account, he rarely attended class and instead used the time to travel, but he still passed the course.

4.1.2 Dania

Dania also learned English starting in kindergarten. She applied to a university in Italy but did not hear back from them. She had taken Italian courses at least to the B1 level. Her parents finally decided she had waited long enough and should study in Jordan instead.

4.1.3 Mona

Mona was born in the U.S. and lived there as a child. She grew up speaking Arabic and English, although she considered Arabic her first language. Her family moved back to Jordan because they wished for her to improve her Arabic. At the time of the interview, her father and several members of her extended family were living in the U.S. Mona had gone back to the U.S. for a year and wished to study there, closer to her father, but her mother wanted her to stay in Jordan with her. The weight of parental opinions regarding university choices is not out of the

ordinary in Jordan, although all three students explicitly pointed out that they perceived their parents to be respectful of their lives and their choices, for example, their choice to study design instead of more traditionally desired subjects such as medicine, engineering, or law.

4.2 Using German but unclaiming authority

In this section, I discuss how students used German as a type of knowledge display. In the interview, this occurred only three times in total. The following excerpt features the use of both Arabic (*italicized*) and German (**bolded**), each serving distinct purposes. The students were talking about how living in Germany would affect them (Excerpt 1 is the continuation of Excerpt 8). Mona said everything would be different, and Omar elaborated on that, saying it would be a life without curfews. When I asked him to explain, he said that they would have their own space and be independent. Jordanian people typically are expected to live with their parents until married, he further explained, and Mona chimed in by saying they had to abide by their parents' rules. Studying abroad, Omar said, would drastically change this situation and force them to be more independent.

Excerpt 1

01 Omar:	e:h you know you're <u>hav</u>ing your own <u>space</u> now. (.) [you're] *ya'ni* fully u:h	
		mean.1SG?
		'like'
02 Me:		[mhm]
03 Omar:	/ˌɪntɪˈpɛn/ hh £((*unintelligible*))£	
04 Mona:	independent	
05 Omar:	[independ-]	
06 Dania:	[**selbstständig**]	
	independent.ADJ	
	'independent'	
07 Omar:	ah (.) **selbstständig** ((laughs))	
08 Dania:	((laughs))	
09 Me:	mhm £yeah£	

First, I will address the use of Arabic in this excerpt. The Arabic word *ya'ni* 'like' is used by some Arabic speakers in both Arabic and English, as Omar was doing here. It is a hesitation marker to signal a speaker does not intend to relinquish their turn and has not finished speaking. It is an automatism and, in this context, says more about habit than knowledge displays. When Omar tried to find the English word "independent", his first false-start attempt was preceded by a lengthened hesitation marker in English in line 01. Right after his false start, he exhaled audibly and said something in Arabic that is unintelligible on the audio recording. In switching to Arabic, he turned to his fellow students. At the time he did not know whether I understood Arabic but may have been indexing social distance to me and closeness to his peer group.

The other students' responses to Omar's word-searching behaviour constituted knowledge displays. First, Mona offered him the correct pronunciation of the word. Mona thereby tacitly self-positioned as proficient in English and on at least equal footing with Omar in this particular context, as someone who was allowed to offer linguistic assistance. Omar accepted her positioning by trying to repeat after her. Dania interrupted and offered the German word for "independent", *selbstständig*, even though the language of this interview was English. By using the German word, she demonstrated knowledge of the German language. Omar aborted his attempt to pronounce "independent" and accepted Dania's suggestion: His exclamation of "ah" followed by a brief pause expressed understanding and agreement, as did his repetition of the word. He started to laugh, and Dania joined in. Their shared laughter established that this word was part of the common knowledge of the group. By suggesting the word, Dania did not only display her own knowledge but also implied that everyone in this group would be familiar with it.

The students' laughter itself is worth highlighting. Laughter does not necessarily have to indicate a humorous situation (Attardo, 2018), as it can function to soften delicate moments (Jefferson, 1985). In order to discuss this possibility, I will first examine the delicate moment in question. Omar may have been embarrassed by his inability to produce the English word "independent", and the first correction by Mona was potentially face-threatening. By "face", I mean "the negotiated public image, mutually granted each other by participants in a communicative event" (Scollon & Scollon, 2011/2001, p. 65). A face-threatening act is an act that attacks this public image, in this case, Omar's identity as a proficient English speaker. Dania's use of German also seems like a face-saving strategy in addition to a knowledge display. Since there was no expectation to use German in this interview, this suggestion circumvented the problematic English word entirely. Her cutting the English correction short with a different suggestion was another piece of evidence for this, since a German alternative as a face-saving strategy would only have worked if she inserted it before the initial problem in English had either been resolved or dragged on for too long. Thus, Omar's laughter can be seen as a self-deprecating way to soften this potentially embarrassing moment.

There is an additional possible layer to this exchange. For some learners, using the language they are still learning is inherently risky, especially so with proficient speakers present. Throughout the course, these learners tended to avoid using German with me, which makes this event stand out, and the laughter that immediately followed was noticeable. This laughter may have functioned as a disclaimer, as if to signal that they did not claim full authority over the German language nor ownership of it, turning the use of German into a joke rather than a legitimate code. This would indicate that the students self-positioned personally as "somewhat

knowledgeable", as opposed to full novices or full experts, and thereby did not risk drawing criticism from me.

The deliberate use of German to alleviate a face-threatening event supports the interpretation of this situation as a knowledge display by multilingual speakers and as an instance of code-switching. By "code-switching" I mean the practice of speakers drawing on lexical or structural elements of two different codes within the same exchange or utterance (e.g. Gumperz, 1982), and I understand this practice as a resource to perform multicultural/multilingual identities (Hall & Nilep, 2015). Gumperz (1982) described a distinction between a "we code" and a "they code", where the former tends to be comprised of the "ethnically specific, minority language [...] associated with in-group and informal activities" (p. 66), and the latter as the majority language "associated with the more formal, stiffer and less personal out-group relations" (p. 66). However, as he emphasizes, this distinction lacks predictive power except in few interactions: "Elsewhere a variety of options occur, and as with conversations in general, interpretation of messages is in large part a matter of discourse context, social presuppositions and speakers' background knowledge" (p. 66).

With this caveat, a closer look at the relationship between the two codes used may be helpful. Certainly, the situation here differs drastically from Gumperz' description, and his concept of a "we code" and a "they code" cannot apply here. German in Jordan is not the majority language, but neither is English. The switch does not index a more formal and a less formal situation. However, another "us" versus "them" distinction seems appropriate here. English serves not as a neutral code but as a comfortable one that belongs to all participants in this interaction, that is, both the students and myself, to a similar degree; it was not our first language, but we were all bilingual speakers who shared English as a common language. In

private settings without me, the participants still used English, although to a lesser degree (by their own estimation, about 30% English, 70% Arabic). I would therefore consider English as a "we code" for the participants, albeit to a lesser degree than Arabic. The setting has both informal and formal characteristics, as we were sitting in a university classroom and the conversation was being recorded, but the participants spoke more freely and seemed to censor themselves less than when speaking in class. German, however, is still used primarily in formal classroom settings at this point in their learning. They were, after all, still pre-sojourn and have not had extensive experience with German in a variety of settings. Since I was an L1 speaker of German and a German instructor, I may have been regarded as having ownership of the language. Again, the laughter in lines 07 and 08 seems to have functioned as a disclaimer to avoid taking full ownership or claiming authority in my presence. In this instance, the participants positioned themselves on the "we" side, which is distinct from the "they" side, or the German side. This would also explain the low frequency of switches to German during the interview, with only three instances occurring, which highlights how marked this switch was.

Also noteworthy is my role, as I signalled understanding while smiling in line 09 but did not join in laughing myself and therefore did not join the in-group they constructed. I may have not considered myself included, but my turn was based on the idea of encouraging the use of German, an act of positioning myself specifically as a German instructor. It seems that my self-positioning as a German instructor emerged beyond self-positioning as merely an L1 speaker of German. As an instructor, I had an inherent interest in encouraging their German use. If I had laughed in this situation as someone else might have, I would have confirmed their self-positioning as non-experts and confined them to that role, so I refrained from any commentary except backchanneling.

A similar event occurred in Excerpt 2. In this excerpt, the students were talking about how they saw themselves as open-minded and egalitarian in contrast to many people in Jordan, according to them. I had asked a clarifying question about whether they would be looking to befriend international students. Excerpt 2 came chronologically after Excerpt 10, in which they were speculating that Erasmus exchange students would be open to befriend them. In the current excerpt, Omar was telling me that he and the other two participants were happy to socialize with and befriend anyone who was "nice, kind and friendly", no matter their background.

Excerpt 2

01 Omar:	as long as you're ↑nice (.) [and ↑kind] and f f
02 Me:	[uh-huh uh-huh]
03 Omar:	uh frien **freundlich** ((*unintelligible*)) ((laughs))
	friendly.ADJ
	'friendly'
04 Dania:	£**freundlich**£
05 Omar:	[£((*unintelligible*))£]
06 Me:	[yeah yeah]
07 Mona:	£**freundlich**£

Here, Omar was displaying word searching behaviour for the English word "friendly". In line 01, he had two false starts, then in line 03, he used a hesitation marker while continuing to search for the word. He started it in the same line, then interrupted himself and instead chose the German equivalent *freundlich*, which is semantically and phonetically similar to the etymologically related English word. Upon ending his turn, he started laughing. Since he was directly addressing me at this time, he did not explicitly include Dania and Mona as peers who shared a common knowledge of this word, but Dania and Mona self-positioned as such, as they both repeated the word while smiling. This excerpt mirrors the previous one: Their laughter indicated that despite displaying knowledge of German, they did not claim full authority and ownership. I, on the other hand, again did not join their laughter and only exhibited

backchanneling behaviour. In both instances, the students used a German word after Omar gave up on word searching behaviour in English. His switch to German appeared conscious and deliberate, using the German word to fill a gap left by an unfinished word in English and circumventing the problematic English word entirely.

The following example is an interesting contrast to the previous two instances of German language use. The students in Excerpts 1 and 2 used German words unambiguously with purpose, pointedly demonstrating their knowledge of German but simultaneously not indicating that they considered German a legitimate code for them to switch to. In Excerpt 3, I asked the students about their prior experiences in Germany. In doing so, my question clearly positioned the participants and me as students and instructor/expert/researcher, respectively. Omar's use of German was less declarative and not softened by laughter, more akin to a response to an instructor's question in class.

Excerpt 3

01 Me:	but I ha-have you been ↑to Germany by the way
02 Omar:	[I went to Germany]
03 Mona:	[no] I haven't t [been there]
04 Me:	[okay] okay where where did you go
05 Omar:	to: /ˈ**dʏsldɔrf**/ ((Düsseldorf))
06 Me:	uh-huh
07 Omar:	**u:nd /kœln**/? ((Köln))
08 Me:	[uh-huh]
09 Omar:	[u::h] (.) uh /ˌ**amstɐrˈdam**/ ((Amsterdam))
10 Me:	mh-hm
11 Omar:	**u:nd**
12 Dania:	Amsterdam
13 Mona:	[Amsterdam] is not Germany
14 Omar:	[**und /brʏ:l**/? ((Brühl))]
15 Me:	and and
16 Omar:	↑*la barif ismha* no know.1SG name.ACC.FEM 'No, I know the name'
17 Mona:	I mean you mean
18 Dania:	[Europe]

19 Mona:	[in general]	
20 Omar:	ah [Europe yeah]	
21 Me:	[yeah I I]	I get that don't worry

My question in line 01 already other-positioned the participants (see Nao, 2015) as students or novices: I would not ask the same question of a fellow German instructor whose L1 is not German, unless they had more first-hand experience with other German-speaking countries and I could position them as experts of those countries. If I asked such a question, it would establish a hierarchy, with me as an L1 German speaker from Germany as more legitimate or knowledgeable. This was, indeed, the effect here. With this question, I self-positioned as an expert who was trying to gauge the extent of the students' knowledge about my field of expertise from a position of knowledge and confidence. A student asking their instructor the same question would risk questioning or challenging their expertise, as first-hand knowledge of the target culture(s) would be expected from the instructor.

My role in this context was complex: I was a German instructor who had taught at this institution, even though I was not doing so at the time of the interview, where my role was that of a researcher. In addition, I was an L1 speaker of German and from Germany, which also granted me legitimacy and authority as an expert. My follow-up question in line 04 to Omar's positive response continued this pattern. I invited him to share his first-hand knowledge, which would have been odd if done in reverse as I, as a German, was expected to be familiar with places in Germany. This is evidenced by Omar not explaining or clarifying the places he visited. He did not say, for example, "I went to Cologne; that is a place in West Germany, in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia". Instead, he assumed I knew these locations and listed them as evidence of his knowledge, without adding any personal details or impressions.

The way Omar listed the cities he had been to is further noteworthy because he switched to German. His answer to my follow-up question was elliptical and started with the English preposition “to”. The first city he then named contained an umlaut that does not exist in the English alphabet, and he produced it as /ʏ/ like a German speaker instead of /ʊ/ as English or Arabic speakers typically would. Then he continued listing German cities, connecting them with the German conjunction *und* ‘and’, using the German name of Cologne (*Köln*) and even the German pronunciation of the Dutch city of Amsterdam. Likely due to phonetic influence from Arabic, he inserted /ɾ/ where the city names are spelled with an r following a vowel, whereas speakers of German Standard German would produce a vowel instead. Nevertheless, his pronunciation was clearly recognizable as German. During the interview, he spoke about Düsseldorf several times and used the German pronunciation, but unlike here, he did not insert additional words in German.

This use of German, including the pronunciation, might constitute a conscious knowledge display. Omar’s first use of German pronunciation might have been to demonstrate his geographical and linguistic knowledge, to lend authority and legitimacy to his personal experience. At the same time, the lengthening of the conjunctions could have been markers of uncertainty while recalling (see Smith & Clark, 1993). Another possible interpretation is that this switch to German was an automatic reflex triggered by the German phonetics of the first city. The context in which he typically would have talked about these cities would likely be in German class or in Germany, that is, in German and not in English. Therefore, his reason for switching to German might have been because we were sitting in an empty room used for German classes at his university and he was answering a question from me, an L1 German speaker. This would make German a legitimate code in this context after all. The use of German

here was noticeably different from the use of German in the previous excerpts: There was no word searching behaviour, he did not switch to Arabic to cover up embarrassment, and more importantly, no one was laughing, and there was no attempt to disclaim authority and ownership of German. The notable difference between Excerpts 1 and 2 on the one hand, and Excerpt 3 on the other, was my topical question. As I had asked a direct question with a clear answer, I positioned myself as an expert who was allowing him, a potential novice, to share his experience. He responded by accepting this positioning, and used this interaction to demonstrate his knowledge within the boundaries of our assigned roles. In contrast, the use of German in Excerpts 1 and 2 constituted bolder, more independent moves by the students and apparently the need to self-position as non-experts. In Excerpt 3, the use of German was less risky and had less potential to be face-threatening.

However, as the conversation continued in line 12, such a face-threatening event occurred after all: Omar's authority was challenged by the other two students who had no first-hand experience of Germany yet, when they interjected to point out that Amsterdam was not, in fact, in Germany but in the Netherlands. Dania repeated the name of the city, puzzled, and Mona picked up this utterance and elaborated in a complete sentence why she thought it did not belong in the list. This, too, was a knowledge display as well as a display of confidence. Mona demonstrated without hedging or hesitation that she knew the geographical location of the cities mentioned. Her confidence display was especially striking as I simply accepted Omar's mention of a Dutch city without commenting, and she was willing to protest not only what she perceived as Omar's mistake but also my acceptance of the mistake as expressed through my backchanneling. This open challenge prompted Omar to switch to Arabic to explain himself and assert his knowledge without offering further evidence of it. In doing so, he again addressed

Dania and Mona specifically to save face and reassert his knowledgeable status. He did not need to do the same with me because I had not challenged his knowledge; only his peers had. Therefore, he used Arabic to state that he knew that Amsterdam was not in Germany, defending his expertise. In response, Mona started hedging and backtracking ("I mean") and offered alternate explanations about why Omar included Amsterdam in an attempt to help him regain face. Dania, likewise, offered "Europe" as the category Omar was accessing instead of Germany, and in a short instance of overlapping speech, Mona completed this explanation by saying "in general". Both Omar and I accepted the explanation, and in response to the face-threatening event where Mona and Dania challenged Omar's knowledge—and possibly as an explanation for my acceptance of his utterance, as Mona's correction also indirectly challenged my own knowledge—I expressed that I understood he used "Europe" as a category rather than "Germany".

In this section, I have shown how the students displayed knowledge while also positioning themselves as not-quite-experts or learners. In the instances described above, they signalled that their knowledge was incomplete. They did not claim absolute authority but rather signalled that they were somewhat knowledgeable. Excerpt 3 illustrates how the lower risk of a face-threatening situation may have positively affected the participants' willingness to display their linguistic knowledge without disclaimers in the presence of an L1 speaker. My identity as such a speaker and my self-positioning as an expert were accepted in these excerpts without challenge. In Excerpts 1 and 2, the students' use of German was unsolicited and therefore inherently more risky, as not only the content but also the situational appropriateness may have been in question. Because of this risk, the participants added laughter as disclaimers and only offered single words in German. In Excerpt 3, I positioned the participants as students but invited

Omar explicitly to share his knowledge. In response, he switched to German for a longer utterance. German was, in this case, not a code that only belonged to the "native" speaker, and Omar took this invitation to own German, in contrast to Excerpts 1 and 2 where the participants signalled their non-ownership. In other words, the participants drew a line between "us" and "them" in their language choices, and although German seemed to be on the "them" side, the participants were willing to cross this line when invited.

4.3 "Us" versus "them": Establishing boundaries between ethnic groups

This section discusses the more explicit distinction between "us" and "them". By using pronouns such as "we" or "us", we evoke and explicitly draw lines between membership categories, in particular defining who we view as the Other. In this interview, the students drew on categories such as "German" and "Jordanian", with overlapping additional options (e.g., German/European/Western, Jordanian/Arab/Middle Eastern). These categories are inference-rich, which means that speakers need to have an idea of what categories exist, who belongs where, and what collections of characteristics are associated with these categories. In interaction, participants display such knowledge and typically treat it as common-sense knowledge. How this works in practice can be observed in this section. For clarity, I do not shift the meaning of "us" and "them" based on individual perspectives and instead refer to the German Other as "them" and the Jordanian/Arab in-group as "us" throughout.

In Excerpt 4, we were talking about Omar's previous experience in Germany. I asked him to elaborate on those, and as examples of positive experiences, he mentioned punctuality and environmentally friendly practices in Germany. He continuously referred to Germans in Germany as "they" while often using the nonspecific "you" to generalize from his own experiences.

Excerpt 4

01 Me:	>and so< what were <u>your</u> experiences like u:m (.)
02 Me:	anything <u>po</u>sitive [or negative] that
03 Omar:	[yeah uh] e:h it was more positive than [negatives?]
04 Me:	[mhm]
05 Omar:	because I <u>like</u> the: (.) the how punctual they <u>are</u>?
06 Me:	((laughs))
07 Omar:	so: eh by default you get your life uh
08 Dania:	((unintelligible))
09 Omar:	o-o-organized. yeah I would wake up at u:h <u>six</u> thirty?
10 Me:	uh-huh
11 Omar:	and go by the bus at seven?
12 Me:	uh-huh
13 Omar:	and then by seven thirty I would reach my: (.) >institute that I take classes in.<
14 Me:	mhm
15 Omar:	so by default it makes you a little bit uh ↑organized and *innu* your time, and
16 Omar:	u:h (.) an:d it's u:h (.) >and I love how they are< u:h
17 Omar:	>so environmentally friendly.<
18 Me:	¿okay
19 Omar:	it's (.) extremely *innu* <u>help</u>ful for the environment
20 Me:	mhm
21 Omar:	like you have to take your ba:g and if you: d-£don't bring£ your bag
22 Omar:	they look you
23 Me:	mhm
24 Omar:	you know
25 Me:	mhm
26 Omar:	£<u>why</u>£ ((laughs))
27 Dania:	they judge ((laughs))
28 Omar:	£YEAH THEY JUDGE£ yeah if I feel *innu* a little bad <u>inside</u>
29 Omar:	>but the next time< you come you bring your bag
30 Me:	mhm
31 Omar:	but I <u>love</u> this environment
32 Me:	¿okay
33 Dania:	you love this judging £environment£
34 Omar:	£this judging environment£ [((chuckles))] ah £that will <u>improve</u> you£
35 Mona:	[((laughs))]

In line 03, Omar said his experience was mostly positive. His use of "they" in line 05 drew up the category "Germans". It seems this category did not necessarily include me, as he did not say "you" or "Germans" and instead opted for the third-person pronoun despite me being present. His category might have meant "Germans in Germany", that is, a combination of being

ethnic German and living in Germany. This seems to be in contrast to immigrants or people such as myself, an ethnic German with extensive international experience, who did not seem to match this stereotypical idea. The use of "they", therefore, may have excluded me for not being a stereotypical German living in Germany, which would support the idea that membership categories are "protected against induction" (Schegloff, 2007, p. 469). Rather than adjusting knowledge about a category when presented with a member exhibiting different characteristics, the member is considered an exception or "defective". However, the pronoun use may have also been a strategy to not unilaterally impose characteristics on me and therefore deliberately other-position me. I was clearly not included in "us", either. This is an example of what Scollon and Scollon (2011/2001) refer to as a strategy of "independence" (also known as "negative face"), meaning the use of linguistic resources to give others as many options as possible to self-identify without speaking for them. I observed this pattern of positioning me in a grey zone between, or beyond, "us" and "them" throughout the interview, and that is reflected in the following excerpts, such as Excerpt 6.

Omar then generalized his own personal experiences and the effects the German habits and behaviours had on him by using the nonspecific "you", which seemed to refer to people with similar experiences, namely "foreigners" moving to Germany for the first time and starting to assimilate to some degree. This appeared to be distinct from specifically Jordanians doing so, as he likely would have expressed that through the use of "we". Instead, he aligned with immigrants to Germany in a more general sense and assumed the identity of such a person through self-positioning while still representing the German influence as an external factor that he was not part of. Rather, he was merely sharing the same space with Germans and thus was affected by their behaviour and habits. Omar also used the first-person pronoun "I" to elaborate on the

specific effects that German punctuality had on him personally. By moving from the general "you" to the specific "I", he first outlined the overall effects and then used himself as one example.

In line 16, he started talking about a second impression he had while in Germany, as he considered Germans to be environmentally friendly. He followed the same pattern as before, drawing on the category of Germans in Germany and positioning himself outside of this category. He then mostly generalized, using the second-person pronoun as before. (In Jordan, the cashiers bag your groceries in thin plastic bags, whereas in Germany, you bag your own groceries and either bring your own bag to do so or get a bag from underneath the conveyor belt and add it to your groceries. Many, if not most, people indeed bring their own bags.) Omar said he felt that people looked at him in a certain way that he did not explain in detail in line 22. Only in line 26 did he describe the message behind the look as a question about why he did not bring a bag. Dania labelled this look—one she had never seen herself—as "judgmental" in line 27, and Omar repeated and thereby accepted this label but framed it in a positive way in line 31, stating that he loved this. Dania, smiling, summarized this seemingly paradoxical view in line 32, where she explicitly juxtaposed "love" and "judging environment", and Omar agreed. This juxtaposition combined with a smile may have signalled doubt, expressed gently to avoid offending me by criticizing the "judging environment" they considered to be a fact. In doing so, Dania positioned me closer to the border between "us" and "them", if not on the other side of it . At the same time, she avoided the pronouns "us" and "them", leaving the possibility of the grey zone between them intact.

Following this excerpt, Omar continued talking about theft as an example of a negative experience in Germany. He expressed surprise at how quickly theft could occur, and Dania

continued talking about how her German acquaintances had warned her about the prevalence of such crimes and taught her how to ensure her safety. This part of the conversation is reproduced partially in Excerpt 5, in which pronoun use played a role as well.

Excerpt 5

01 Dania:	I-I-I never thought about it until (.) ↓like (.) other German: people told me
02 Me:	mhm [mhm]
03 Dania:	[to like] be safe °not do this not do that=I'm like whoa°
04 Me:	£yea:h£ ((laughs))
05 Dania:	it's very <u>dif</u>ferent for us

In line 01, Dania revealed not a current but a previous gap in her knowledge of Germany that German acquaintances had filled in for her. This previous gap in her knowledge exceeded common-sense knowledge, and it may be useful to consider common-sense characteristics of membership categories as not final, especially in the context of intercultural development. The students here started with a set of what they treated as common-sense facts about membership categories, and during their studies and first-hand experiences, they have added more nuance and depth to these categories without dissolving them. In Dania's case, addressing this knowledge gap after it had been filled did not serve to establish her status as someone who transitioned from novice to expert or almost-expert, but rather it created and highlighted the distance between her Jordanian community and life in Germany. She framed the gap in her knowledge as well as the explanation she received in the past tense, indicating that she now possessed sufficient cultural knowledge on this topic. It was not the category that had changed, but her knowledge of it. Fittingly, she firmly maintained the use of "us" and them", either signalling that she had not fully reached expert status yet or that knowledge was not sufficient for adopting a German identity. The plural "other German people" in line 01 allowed her to be vague about her sources but also to give the cited knowledge more weight, as it was not merely the opinion of one person. Dania

then used the present tense for her reaction to the cultural knowledge and her evaluation of it, thereby establishing a cultural distance between what she currently considered normal and what Germany was like. Her current possession of knowledge did not serve to bridge the difference between Germany and Jordan. Instead, she expressed her surprise and concern at the difference and in doing so, remained firmly on one of the two sides she constructed.

The categories Dania constructed and contrasted are Germany and Jordan. This is evidenced in line 01 when she cited German people as her source of knowledge, and the use of "us" in line 05. She continued to talk about safety in Jordan, which suggests that by "us", she meant either her peer group of Jordanian students and friends, or Jordanian people in general. She distanced herself from the Jordanian situation in the conversation that followed and criticized behaviour towards non-Jordanian people, especially women. Still, her judgement was that regardless of whether she was a prototypical member of the category "Jordanian", the category "German" was different, and she belonged to the former rather than to the latter. The combination of emphasizing a gap in knowledge about German culture and drawing lines by using the pronoun "us" served to create a distance between her Jordanian in-group and Germany.

This behaviour can be observed in Excerpt 6 as well. I asked the students if they had ever thought about what their textbooks taught them beyond language. They first listed unspecific examples of topics in German textbooks but later became more specific about a cultural event that they wished to experience themselves.

Excerpt 6

01 Omar:	they show us a a little bit of: (.) their culture:
02 Mona:	yeah
03 Omar:	Germany [Germanian culture]
04 Dania:	[and wo:rk cultu:re] in [Germany]
05 Mona:	[traditional foo:ds]
06 Omar:	[yeah]

07 Me:	[mhm]
08 Dania:	traditional foods
09 Omar:	and <u>how</u> they: they celebrate uh: Christmas and (.) [uh yeah]
10 Dania:	[Easter yeah]
11 Me:	[mhm]
12 Omar:	[an:d] we didn't know that there's Christmas <u>mar</u>kets (.)
13 Omar:	now we're excited to go to the [Christmas markets]
14 Dania:	[yes]
15 Me:	[.hhh] you <u>have</u> to do that
16 Omar:	wh which [WHICH CHRISTmas] market [is the best market]
17 Mona:	[where]
18 Me:	[ALL of them] <u>all</u> of them

The use of pronouns again draws a very sharp line between them and German people. Throughout the excerpt, they used first-person pronouns to refer to themselves and third-person pronouns to refer to German people. There is no question that they considered German culture distinct from theirs. In addition, students conflated the textbook and Germans in general in line 01: Omar reported on the information he got from the textbook without differentiating between the book and the people, that is, the textbook was considered a direct expression of the German people. The students did not indicate a desire to become members of an imagined community, either. They maintained a firm separation between them and German culture, continuously referring to German people as "they". Omar's focus was on experiencing cultural events in Germany, much like tourists would, without establishing stronger bonds with German culture.

As in Excerpt 4, the students did not directly impose an identity on me. As they were talking to me directly, the use of the third-person pronoun excluded me in their consideration of what is German and who practices German things. This shifted in line 16 when they asked my advice about the best markets, which I will discuss in section 4.5.

Excerpt 7 below chronologically took place after Excerpt 12, in which Dania spoke about the discrimination she faced and the rejection of her political views while searching for

apartments in Germany. In the current excerpt, Dania continued to speak about discrimination against people from the Middle East in Europe, and she started by explaining how finding acceptance in Germany might be difficult, especially for her, Mona and Omar, due to what she described as a difference between cultures.

Excerpt 7

01 Dania:	especially for <u>us</u> because we're very: <u>diff</u>ere-
02 Dania:	we come from a very different culture
03 Me:	mhm
04 Dania:	<u>than</u> (.) the European people. so (.) yeah
05 Me:	[¿okay]
06 Omar:	[yea:h]
07 Mona:	and I feel ↑like (.) um. people-foreigners in general
08 Mona	they don't really kno:w (.) Middle Easterns that much
09 Me:	mhm
10 Mona:	I mean [they always] (.) think that (.)
11 Dania:	[yeah] the
12 Mona:	um (.) there's wa::r
13 Omar:	[h we ride on camels]
14 Mona:	[twenty-four seven]
15 Omar:	[hh]
16 Dania:	[yeah] they hold a lot of /ˈpɛd͡ʒəˌdɪsəs/-/ˈpɛd͡ʒ/-okay.
17 Dania:	£they <u>hold</u> a <u>lot</u> of stereotypes£
18 Me:	mhm
19 Dania:	[u:h] on us
20 Mona:	[yeah]
21 Dania:	and it's it's <u>ve:</u>ry:: (.) <u>un</u>fair. (.) for us

Dania started by pointing out the difference between European people and a group she referred to with the first-person plural pronoun. It is not entirely clear who she meant by that, whether she meant Middle Eastern people, Jordanian people, or their group of three present in the interview. The lack of clarification suggests that she was talking about their present group, as their presence constituted a contextual clue, and since they were about to leave for Germany, the topic would be of relevance for them very soon. In line 02, she interrupted herself and self-corrected to say that the culture they came from was different, rather than that they themselves

possessed inherently different traits. The point of comparison here were European people rather than just Germans, again conflating the two categories. Dania displayed certainty about her knowledge by using no hedging devices and, in contrast, she used “very” as an adverb of degree that modified the adjective “different”.

In lines 07 and 08, Mona initially displayed a careful independence strategy, that is, face-saving behaviour. She started with “I” statements, framing her experience with people as a feeling rather than knowledge. She used qualifying words to further downplay and soften her statement, such as “really” in line 07 and “that much” in line 08. The broad category “foreigners in general” in line 07 similarly served to avoid a specific accusation. This seemed to have been for my benefit to avoid offending me, because once I signalled for her to go on without criticizing or correcting her, she used “I mean” to signal clarification or even self-repair. Immediately afterward, she dropped all hedging behaviour and made a definitive statement that she did not frame as her own perception but a general fact in line 10, emphasized by the absolute use of “always”. Dania signalled agreement, as did Omar who added his own example in line 13 of how people from other countries (in particular from Europe) saw them. His example was phrased so that it fit the sentence Mona started, piggybacking on that display of confidence and knowledge. Dania, in line 16, added her own complaint and similarly did not use any qualifiers or hedging devices, instead phrasing it like a factual statement first, then adding subjective evaluation in line 21.

This excerpt was primarily about cultural identities, conflating Germany and Europe, and possibly other countries, as evidenced in line 07 when Mona clarified that she meant foreigners, that is, non-Arab people in general, in direct contrast to Middle Eastern people. The students created a definitive divide, and through the use of pronouns (“we” versus “they”) they positioned

themselves on one side of the divide and Germans on the other. The way they dropped the hedging behaviour once they realized I was not offended indicates that they located me more on the "they" side, so as members of the "us" side, they needed permission to speak freely about a group that they perceived me to be a member of. Throughout the interview, the line between them and German identity remained clear and definite.

However, when it came to negotiating their Jordanian identities, there was more fluidity, and the three students frequently distanced themselves from what they labelled the "traditional Jordanian" in acts of personal positioning. This fluidity contrasts with how they constructed German identity and is a sign of Othering, as in-groups are typically well-known and seen in great and differentiated detail, but the Other is painted with a broad brush. This Othering is further evidence for the distinction they made between their own and German identity. In order to illustrate the difference between the rigidity with which they position themselves outside of German identity and the flexibility of their Jordanian identity, I have included the following excerpt, when Dania exhibited some ambiguity regarding Jordanian identity. In this excerpt, we were talking about different attitudes towards dogs in Germany and Jordan (chronologically, this excerpt followed Excerpt 15). I shared my observation that I was seeing a lot more dogs in Jordan in 2019 than when I left in 2015, and not even small dogs, but fairly large ones. Dania responded by saying that the purpose of many dogs in Jordan was to be a guard dog, which was why they were often big. Here, she switched from the first-person pronoun to the third-person pronoun.

Excerpt 8

01 Dania:	in Jordan we->I don't know if<-they <u>have</u> this thing like they only get dogs:-
02 Dania:	↑<u>not</u> only like traditionally [Jordanians] stereotypical Jordanians
03 Me:	[mhm]
04 Dania:	like to get big dogs for: (.)

05 Me:	mhm
06 Mona:	protection

In line 01, she started saying “we”, referring to Jordanians and including herself, but then self-repaired, switching to “they” to exclude herself from this group. In line 02, she corrected the absolute statement she made at the end of line 01, when she started by saying that dogs only served a certain purpose, and turned the absolute “only” to something not true for every Jordanian but only for some who she identified by conflating “traditional” and “stereotypical”. For her, the stereotypical Jordanian was traditional, and she did not include herself in this category. As before, the category “Jordanian” remained intact, while she positioned herself as an exception or a non-prototypical member rather than adjusting the category itself.

In sum, the students drew on the known membership categories “German” and “Jordanian” and demonstrated that their common-sense knowledge of these may be supplemented and added to through their studies, contacts, and first-hand knowledge. They integrated new knowledge about Germany into these categories, but the category as such remained intact. This is also illustrated through their alignment with the “Jordanian” category: Even though they may not have been prototypical members of the “Jordanian” category, their use of pronouns explicitly distinguished between “German” and “Jordanian” and located them firmly on one side of this divide. The students demonstrated how they saw Germans and Jordanians as well as who they considered to be German or Jordanian. On the other hand, I occupied a grey zone. By not including me in either “us” or “them” (which would then be a “you” instead), they often avoided explicitly locating me on either side of the divide, either because I was not prototypical enough or out of politeness. I was more “them” than “us”, however. In the next section, I further explore the dynamics and the conditions that influenced how the students positioned themselves and me.

4.4 Hedging behaviour in knowledge displays

Hedging is a "discourse strategy that reduces the force or truth of an utterance and thus reduces the risk a speaker runs when uttering a strong or firm assertion or other speech act" (Kaltenböck et al., 2010, p. 1). As such, it plays an important role in knowledge displays to navigate epistemic access and epistemic primacy, in particular in this context of language learners talking to an L1 speaker about their thoughts on the target culture. Students may use hedging devices to allow for more ambiguity, especially when saying something potentially negative about Germany in my presence, so as not to risk offending me. They may also use hedging in moments of uncertainty about their knowledge of German and Germany to avoid being criticized or corrected by me as an expert, an L1 speaker from Germany, a German instructor, and a researcher.

In the following excerpt, the students were talking about the potential discrimination they expected to face in Germany by Germans.

Excerpt 9

01 Mona:	I (.) honestly feel nervous. because (.)
02 Mona:	I've heard from so many people that they are a bit [racist] towards Arabs?
03 Me:	[mhm] mhm
04 Mona:	so (.) yeah.
05 Me:	you can you can you can say your opinions=
06 Me:	I'm not going to be offended or anything [so you know] ((laughs))
07 Mona:	[yeah yeah I know]
08 Dania:	okay. [((laughs))]
09 Mona:	[I mean] this is the only
10 Dania:	yup
11 Mona:	thing that is making [me a] a bit nervous
12 Me:	[mhm]
13 Dania:	well
14 Me:	[mhm]
15 Mona:	[yeah] [because we're]
16 Omar:	[it is]
17 Mona:	[since I] look so much [(.) Arabic]
18 Dania:	[((laughs))]

19 Me:	[((laughs))]
20 Dania:	yeah because we're going to the (.) ↑eastern area of [Germany] and
21 Me:	[mhm]
22 Dania:	I know it's rumours but still rumours [(.) get] to you
23 Me:	[mhm] mhm
24 Dania:	and if they say that it's very like um (.) ((clicks tongue)) °racist uh
25 Dania:	populated with racists then it's° not very good hhh to hear
26 Me:	mhm
27 Dania:	and because there's um: the °political party that uh:°
28 Me:	mhm
29 Dania:	°*aish ismha*? /di:/ ((En. d)) **/dɛ:/** ((Germ. d)) /ɛf/° ((En./Germ. f))
	what name.SGL.FEM
	'What's the name'
30 Me:	**A-f-[D]** ((German))
31 Dania:	**[A]-f-D** ((German)) [yeah]
32 Me:	[yeah] m-hm
33 Dania:	and it's a very ba:d (.) party
34 Me:	mhm
35 Dania:	and it's mostly in that area where we are? [going?]
36 Me:	[mhm]
37 Dania:	so >it's very nerve-wracking honestly it's<
38 Mona:	[yeah]
39 Me:	[mhm] mhm
40 Mona:	and
41 Dania:	so we have to be like careful: meeting people saying some words
42 Omar:	talking in [Arabic in the public spaces]
43 Dania:	[yeah because] because Arabs are very blunt (.)
44 Dania:	like we c-like we speak whatever we-
45 Dania:	one thought gets in and then *khalas* we say it?
	salvation.NOUN
	'enough'/'whatever'
46 Me:	mhm
47 Dania:	so we are gonna have to be very careful about what we say in front of someone
48 Dania:	we don't know (.) who: they are or
49 Dania:	what they hate or what they love or whatever so yeah

In lines 01 and 02, Mona offered her knowledge with several hedging devices. First, she started with *I* statements and put her feelings in the foreground. The use of "honestly" in line 01 implied a type of confession of something she would, under other circumstances, have kept for herself. In line 02, there are conflicting elements, possibly indicating an internal conflict: She did not claim knowledge of racism towards Arabs and instead put that responsibility on an

anonymous source she did not cite by name. However, she then also sought to strengthen the credibility of that anonymous source by saying that it was not merely one person who told her so, but many. Continuing on, she softened this statement again with “a bit”. This softening and the rising intonation at the end of the sentence indicate uncertainty. The seemingly contradictory elements here could mean that she was confident in this knowledge but did not wish to offend me or claim authority and therefore was careful in her phrasing.

At this point, I had the impression that some of the students were walking on eggshells when it came to potentially critical views about Germany, so I encouraged them in lines 05 and 06 to speak their mind. By giving them license to speak freely, I simultaneously positioned myself as someone with the authority to do so as well as someone who might have been affected by their words. This means that I was tacitly self-positioning as German through my attempt to show support and a lack of judgement, and other-positioning the students as non-German. In particular, my insistence that I would not feel offended marked this difference. My attempt to put them at ease thus unintentionally served to reinforce the distinction between “us” and “them”. That might have been the reason for Mona agreeing with me but nonetheless continuing to minimize her worries in lines 09 and 11. She not only said this was the only thing that worried her but went further and said it worried her only “a bit”. Dania responded to my encouragement with a decisive “okay” (line 08), joining in laughing with me. My laughter was another attempt to relax the situation, whereas she may have laughed in deference to me. In line 16, Omar tried to take the turn, but Mona continued to give a personal reason for her worries as a possible justification of her indirect accusation, thereby softening it. She looked very Arabic, she said, and implied that she might get targeted in Germany based solely on her physical features (which may indeed be the case).

By this point, I had not disagreed with anyone and instead simply indicated for them to keep going. Mona did not elaborate further, but Dania jumped in and identified the region where they were going to study abroad as eastern Germany in line 20. At this point, her utterance was building on the assumption of shared knowledge, that eastern Germany had a particular problem with racism. She offered new information in line 22 pertaining to her feelings about eastern Germany's population. She also used two impactful devices to soften her statement. First, she claimed her knowledge of right-wing tendencies being prevalent in eastern Germany were rumours (line 22). She emphasized her awareness of the hearsay nature of her knowledge, although her euphemistic turn of phrase when she said it was "not very good" to hear such things was clearly an understatement and served to emphasize rather than minimize her feelings. She also corrected herself: She started by saying that the region was racist but then changed that to saying the region was populated with racists (lines 24 and 25). By making less of a sweeping statement and no claims to the inherent nature of eastern Germany, this statement became more polite; this correction was likely done for my benefit. Her voice also became more quiet in lines 24 and 25, further indicating not necessarily a lack of confidence in her knowledge, but possibly discomfort at saying something I might potentially find offensive. However, I was still not contradicting anyone and merely indicating that I was listening—and I happened to be from western Germany, not eastern Germany, which they knew.

In line 27, there was a shift in Dania's display of confidence in her knowledge when she started talking about a political party in Germany. At first, she was searching for the party's name, and her more quiet tone indicated a lack of confidence. In line 29, she switched to Arabic to say, "what's the name", likely directed towards her student peers. Interestingly, her grammatical choices in Arabic reflected her knowledge of German: The Arabic word for

"political party" is masculine, whereas the German word is feminine. The way she phrased her question in Arabic revealed that she was looking for a word with feminine gender. She then switched from spelling the letters in English to spelling in German. Despite not being able to recall the full name, this was still a display of confidence and partial knowledge. In line 30, I jumped in and offered the full name of the party, AfD. Although her question was in Arabic, I understood her, and the context was clear enough for me to help. I also used the German pronunciation of the acronym. (For context, the German party AfD stands for *Alternative für Deutschland* 'Alternative for Germany' and is a right-wing party with an extremist wing and voter base that gained popularity especially during the first years of the Syrian Civil War, when many refugees fled to Europe. The party had the most gains in eastern Germany and frequently made the news for their blatantly racist statements. Due to its particular connection with the Syrian Civil War, this party was frequently a topic of discussion in class when I was an instructor at the GJU, based on student interests and questions and Syria's cultural, linguistic, and geographical proximity to Jordan. These discussions were likely ongoing due to students' concerns about their own safety when studying abroad, as evidenced here.)

Before I finished my turn, Dania repeated the party name, as it appeared she was only missing the letter A and the order of the letters. Possibly encouraged by me supplying the party name when she was talking about racism, she continued with a strong, unambiguous statement in line 33. Curiously, she also phrased it without building on common knowledge or shared opinion. This could have been a statement to someone who did not know the German political landscape. I interpret this here as a display of confidence, as Dania did not seek or require my approval of her opinion regarding this party and displayed confidence in sharing this knowledge. She was also aware of the spread of this party and its spheres of influence. However, when she

shared this knowledge in line 35, she softened her statement with a rising intonation at the end of the sentence. She continued in line 37 by saying how this affects her emotionally. Unlike Mona, Dania did not hedge but instead used the intensifier “very” as well as the strong expression “nerve-wrecking”.

Dania also demonstrated that she was building on her knowledge of Germany by making plans and preparing strategies for dealing with the new environment in line 41, when she said how this political climate would affect her behaviour. Again, this illustrates the line between her identity and Germans, as she clearly anticipated being Othered and targeted for who she was. Omar, in line 42, confirmed that he agreed with this view by offering a concern he shared, that they considered speaking Arabic as something that would make them stand out and possibly make them a target of discrimination. Omar did not add anything to these concerns, but later in the interview he said that he did not experience discrimination personally when he was in Germany. Despite reporting no first-hand experience of discrimination, Excerpt 07 showed his awareness of the stereotypes regarding Arab people.

In summary, the students started hedging less throughout this excerpt, whether the reason was growing assurance that they were not offending me or because I accepted their knowledge and did not correct them. They demonstrated knowledge of the political discourse in Germany and clearly had done some research on the region they were moving to, and they began to reveal the depth of their knowledge a little more. The first utterances were vague and based on subjective sources, but as the conversation progressed, the students displayed more confidence and less hedging behaviour, and contributed more specific information along with firmer stances towards this information.

Later in the interview, I asked students more about their expectations of fitting in in German society—an act of tacit other-positioning, as I thereby declared them not yet part of German society. In Excerpt 10, they explained their feelings of unease and the steps they had taken to alleviate some of their potential difficulties. Again, they displayed hedging behaviour when they said something negative about German people.

Excerpt 10

01 Mona:	I don't know I don't feel like £Germans£ are very (.) £friendly£
02 Me:	£okay [mhm]£
03 Mona:	[so it's] not going to be ea:sy
04 Me:	mhm
05 Mona:	however .hhh (.) we did our (.) our re:search and (.) u:m (.) [we found out]
06 Omar:	[u:m]
07 Mona:	that Magdeburg is actually a: stu:dent city
08 Omar:	stu:dent city [a:nd] uh
09 Me:	[mhm]
10 Mona:	[and]
11 Omar:	[it has uh] >one of the biggest Erasmus?<
12 Me:	[mhm]
13 Mona:	[yea:h]
14 Omar:	and there are other universities?
15 Me:	mhm
16 Omar:	so: I think Erasmus students are always uh (.) looking for new friends ne:w
17 Me:	mhm
18 Mona:	yeah
19 Omar:	friendships and (.) stuff like that
20 Me:	¿okay ¿okay

Mona started her turn by using hedging expressions. First, she said, "I don't know", then she continued to soften her statement by saying "I don't feel like". The qualifier "very" preceding the adjective "friendly" that she ascribed to Germans further softened it, and her brief pause indicated hesitation. She also said the word "friendly" with a smiling voice, making it sound less forceful. When I did not seem to judge her, indicating that I was listening through backchanneling and smiling, she dropped the hedging behaviour in line 03 to plainly state the

consequence of this perceived lack of friendliness. She stressed both the negation and the content, making this a forceful statement.

Then, in line 05, she described their group's efforts to close their gaps in knowledge about Germany. Although she stressed the verb and the noun in this utterance, her pauses still indicated hesitance and uncertainty, suggesting that she did not perceive her role as that of the expert, possibly because she located the responsibility to research these aspects with others. The result of their research came out without hesitance, showing her confidence in her words: Magdeburg is a student city, period. At this point, Omar jumped in, repeating part of Mona's utterance in line 08, and although Mona briefly tried to continue in line 10, he took the turn in line 11 to elaborate on the information Mona shared.

Mona's utterance built on shared knowledge that we all understood that Magdeburg is a German city. The use of "actually" in line 07 indicated that the following information, "a student city", was new and surprising in relation to her original statement that she thought Germans might not be very friendly. By revealing a previous gap in knowledge, she positioned herself as a novice or not-yet-an-expert. She seemed to imply that students in general, both domestic and international, might be different from the average German. As campus life was shaped by international connections and education specifically designed to broaden horizons, the idea might have been that the university experience moved students into a third space (Bhabha, 2004), a hybrid space that is different from an idealized, stereotypical, and closed space of "Germanness". In any case, it did seem to make international and domestic students in Germany non-prototypical members of the category "German", a difference that was welcomed here. By stepping outside of the bounds of "being German", university students in Germany moved a step closer to the participants into a grey zone in which they could meet.

Omar similarly built on shared knowledge of the Erasmus program, a student exchange program in the European Union, which he assumed that I was aware of, either as a European myself or as a former instructor at the university. His rising intonation, however, indicated some uncertainty. This may have been in regard to the correctness of the information or whether knowledge of this program was truly shared by me. As I did not raise a question and instead just signalled affirmation in line 15, he continued in line 16 by saying that Erasmus students in Magdeburg—that is, students from outside of Germany, in contrast to students from Germany—would be more open for friendships. There was some uncertainty expressed through light hedging in line 16 ("I think") and a pause, indicating that he was making assumptions about the possible experiences of his future self.

In a follow-up question, I asked if they intended to find primarily international friends, and Mona responded by saying it did not matter, but no one wanted to feel like an outsider. The students had gathered knowledge about Germany and Germans, and they did not expect German people to welcome them. In response, they did not make specific plans to become members of the German community but instead oriented themselves towards the international community in Germany. Their concern with the assumed unfriendliness of Germans was not that they would not be accepted into their midst, but more about the difficulties of living in Germany without local contacts. Since other international students could fulfill the role of local contacts, there was no problem. This exchange showed how the participants reacted to the knowledge that they displayed, that is, the conclusions they drew from it and the consequences they implemented in response. They built imaginary situations for their future selves and indicated through hedging that their knowledge was still limited and that they were making assumptions. The orientation towards a situation in the future typically demanded a degree of uncertainty, and their lack of

first-hand knowledge also led to uncertainty. They were not experts yet: They were still firmly on one side of the "us" versus "them" border, but they were making assumptions and oriented towards a situation in which they would physically cross the border.

Hedging behaviour, or lack thereof, could also be observed with displays of gaps in knowledge. Previous studies have discussed how students may reveal gaps in their knowledge or solicit information from an interlocutor, positioning themselves as novice (e.g., Hauser, 2018) and the interlocutor as expert. While this occurred in my data occasionally, I found a pattern of students revealing gaps in their knowledge to signal cultural distance, such as in the following excerpt. Here, Mona talked about expectations about adapting to life in Germany and how hard it would be in comparison to living in the U.S. where she had family to help her when needed.

Excerpt 11

01 Mona:	but in £Germany (.) I (.) I don't have anyone£ [(.) really]
02 Me:	[yeah]
03 Mona:	so I'm going I'm going with my friends [y] I mean (.)
04 Dania:	[((chuckles))]
05 Mona:	[WITH YOU GUYS]
06 Me:	[((laughs))]
07 Mona:	[((chuckles)) £THEY DON'T KNOW ANYTHING about GERmany] so£
08 Me:	[((laughs))]
09 Dania:	((laughs))

This excerpt is part of a larger discussion where Mona elaborated on how Germany would be different. In line 03, she mentioned going with friends. In line 05, she raised her voice for comedic effect and, addressing Dania and Omar, clarified that she meant them. Dania started chuckling in line 04, possibly indicating that she did not consider herself too much of an expert to help Mona out. Indeed, in line 07, Mona claimed that Dania and Omar did not know anything about Germany.

Here, it is the absence of hedging behaviour that is telling. The forceful utterances with a louder voice, the lack of hedging devices, Mona's chuckling and smiling voice all indicated that she was exaggerating about her peers not knowing anything, and Dania accepted this other-positioning as a relative novice with laughter in line 09. Of course, after six terms of German study, all three of them would have known quite a bit about Germany, so everyone, me included, seemed to understand this claim of not possessing any knowledge at all as an exaggeration. However, claiming gaps in knowledge did stress the difference between their current lives and life in Germany. When the student participants claimed a current or a previous lack of knowledge, it was often to position themselves or the region they were from as different from German people or Germany, sometimes conflated with Europe or the "Western world" as a whole.

The following Excerpt 12 showcases how different hedging behaviours in knowledge displays can be observed based on the level of abstraction, that is, from recounting a very specific situation to general statements that may be based on beliefs rather than experience. In this excerpt, the student participants responded to my question about potentially becoming an outsider by sharing their thoughts about fitting in and joining a community.

Excerpt 12

01 Me:	and so do you do you thi:nk u:m there is like a ri:sk of of being
02 Me:	an outsider in Germany? (.) and
03 Omar:	of [course an an] cause in every community [you can be] an outsider
04 Dania:	[yeah um definitely]
05 Mona:	[yeah of course]
06 Me:	uh-huh
07 Mona:	well [↑maybe] at fi:rst you will feel alone or
08 Omar:	[but]
09 Me:	uh-huh
10 Mona:	[an outsider]
11 Omar:	[but at the] end if you try enough you can fit in easily
12 Dania:	yeah [except people] that don't want to fit in

13 Me: [so so] [((laughs))]
14 Omar: [(...)]
15 Dania: EXCEPT the people that °you know°
16 Dania they don't want to fit in because they can't in uh
17 Mona: [↑maybe]
18 Dania: [like] THERE'S a lot of: uh subcategories within
19 Dania: subcategories within people
20 Dania: like a a lot of uh (.) some people even told me when I was applying for uh
21 Dania: apartments that they don't like (.) ↑Arabs and someone (.)
22 Dania: [didn't] reply to me because of (.) u:m
23 Me: [mhm]
24 Dania: they added me on Facebook and they sa:w (.) one of my posts was about
25 Dania: ↑Palestine and [like]
26 Me: [mhm]
27 Dania: a little politic-like a ↑tiny bit political
28 Me: mhm
29 Dania: so: they (.) >didn't reply to me< at a:ll
30 Me: mhm
31 Dania: so: it it I think it's very like u:m one word can change (.) like [the:]
32 Me: [mhm]
33 Mona: yeah
34 Omar: [the perception of people]
36 Dania: [yeah maybe yeah] of of [people]
37 Me: [mhm] [mhm]

There were no hedging devices in the students' immediate responses in lines 03 to 05. At the same time, they were not referring to specific situations and instead were talking about very abstract concepts. In line 03, Omar started generalizing: Although my question was about Germany, he broadened it to any community, anywhere. He introduced the general "you", neither speaking about a specific, personal experience, nor necessarily about his future sojourn. In line 07, Mona used "maybe" as a hedging device and picked up the general "you" used by Omar. She displayed knowledge, but in a very generalized and uncertain way. Omar took over from her again and made a very broad, unspecific statement in line 11 that was a personal belief rather than a display of knowledge. He did not elaborate on what he meant by "trying enough" or "fitting in", for that matter.

Dania rejected the "if you try enough, you'll fit in" approach. In line 15, she picked up the general statement and fleshed out exceptions, with "people" being a word almost equally as general as "you". As there was overlapping talk, she repeated the exception she thought of ("people that don't want to fit in"), starting her utterance more loudly and putting emphasis on "people". She rejected Omar's and Mona's general statements by saying that there were different types of people. However, she phrased this not as a contradiction but as a different piece of the whole puzzle or, as she put it, "subcategories" of people. From line 20, she elaborated on her statement with first-hand knowledge: As she was hunting for apartments in Germany online, she said she was rejected for being an Arab person and for her political views on Palestine. In line 20, she initially started her example with "a lot of people" but interrupted herself and said instead "some people". Downscaling the number of prejudiced people served to soften the severity of her complaint, or it may have been in recognition of the limits of her personal knowledge. Again, she might have been doing this for my benefit as well. It is also noteworthy that she did not go into detail about the people who apparently rejected her apartment application due to her ethnic identity and instead explained how someone stopped replying to her after seeing her social media post on Palestine. Her conclusion in line 31 was that one word could have a huge effect, and this would apply only to the expression of her political views as something she had control over, rather than her ethnicity. She used hedging to express this, such as "I think" in line 31 which indicated a somewhat low level of certainty in terms of epistemic access, and she self-corrected after using "very", possibly because she judged this to be too firm a statement. After the certainty and emphasis expressed by her in line 29, it seemed she was differentiating between her definite experience to which her epistemic primacy is uncontested, and her interpretation based on her possibly incomplete knowledge of German culture and people, which may still have warranted

more uncertainty. This was unlike the case in Excerpt 9, where Mona expressed her awareness that she might be identified as non-German just based on her appearance. Dania, in contrast, spoke about reactions to her behaviour rather than her physical appearance, which could indicate that she did not expect to stand out because she was more light-skinned than Mona.

In summary, in this section I showed the functions that hedging serves. As a strategy to clarify both epistemic access and epistemic primacy, the participants used hedging devices to soften critical statements about Germany in my presence, to express uncertainty and disclaim authority, and to avoid criticism from me. In doing so, they further developed an "us" versus "them" distinction, with them on one side and Germans on the other. As in section 4.1, an invitation by me to position themselves as knowledgeable may have encouraged them to edge closer to this divide, but as I unintentionally affirmed my identity as an expert and their identity as novices in attempts to put them at ease, I may also have inhibited their attempts to explore the border zone. This was particularly evident in Excerpt 9 about facing potential discrimination in Germany, and in a classic "show, don't tell" moment, only when I continued to listen instead of criticizing them for their views did they reduce their hedging behaviour and speak with more certainty. They were thus very attuned to my reactions and used them to determine how bold they dared to be in their exploration of the border between "us" and "them".

4.5 "I didn't know that": Displaying knowledge gaps and positioning

As discussed in section 4.3, revealing or emphasizing gaps in knowledge also serves to create a distance between oneself and German identity. Besides hedging devices, soliciting information through questions is another way to reveal such gaps in knowledge and simultaneously position the person who is being asked as someone more knowledgeable.

The following excerpt is the same as discussed in section 4.3, when students answered my question regarding the cultural knowledge their textbooks taught them.

Excerpt 5 (reproduced)

01 Omar:	they show us a a little bit of: (.) their culture:
02 Mona:	yeah
03 Omar:	Germany [Germanian culture]
04 Dania:	[and wo:rk cultu:re] in [Germany]
05 Mona:	[traditional foo:ds]
06 Omar:	[yeah]
07 Me:	[mhm]
08 Dania:	traditional foods
09 Omar:	and <u>how</u> they: they celebrate uh: Christmas and (.) [uh yeah]
10 Dania:	[Easter yeah]
11 Me:	[mhm]
12 Omar:	[an:d] we didn't know that there's Christmas <u>mar</u>kets (.)
13 Omar:	now we're excited to go to the [Christmas markets]
14 Dania:	[yes]
15 Me:	[.hhh] you <u>have</u> to do that
16 Omar:	wh which [WHICH CHRISTmas] market [is the best market]
17 Mona:	[where]
18 Me:	[ALL of them] <u>all</u> of them

Up to line 12, the students were almost mechanically listing topics from the book. The abstraction level was quite high, and there was no specific knowledge they displayed. In line 12 this changed, as Omar revealed a previous knowledge gap regarding Christmas markets. By doing so, he emphasized the students' learning process. Following that, he made a personal connection, saying they were excited to go to the Christmas markets. In this way, he formulated a desire for his personal life, a way to imagine himself and his friends in Germany, without necessarily indicating that he wished to join a German community.

I responded enthusiastically in line 15, with a sharp intake of breath and telling him with strong emphasis on the modal verb that they had to see those markets, as a heart-felt recommendation. In doing so, I positioned myself as an expert, as someone who knew these

markets and was able to make a recommendation based on knowledge and emotional investment. This was not necessarily tied to German identity. When these students come back from their study abroad program, they may behave in the same way with other students, talking to them about things worth seeing. It was, however, a marker of first-hand knowledge, and as a person from Germany, I was expected to possess this first-hand knowledge. My first order positioning was accepted by the students: In line 16, Omar asked for further recommendations, revealing a gap in his knowledge to solicit the missing information from me. Mona, in line 17, had the same idea when she asked where.

Omar's emphasis of their learning process by highlighting previous gaps in knowledge indicates his positioning as a learner. Omar's focus was on experiencing cultural events in Germany, much like tourists would without establishing stronger bonds with German culture. In response, I affirmed his position, as I answered his question as if he were indeed a tourist. I did not invite the students to dig deeper into their knowledge about Germany and let them remain at the surface.

One of my recommendations included the Christmas market in Dresden, which is famous for *Christstollen*, a traditional German fruit bread. In Excerpt 13, I had just explained what kind of food Christstollen was. The excerpt begins with Mona asking a clarifying question regarding the name. From there, Dania asked another question about German holidays. This excerpt was late in the interview, in the final 15 to 20 minutes. Until then, the students had asked no questions about Germany and instead only answered my questions. Once Omar started asking for recommendations about markets, however, more questions followed.

Excerpt 13

01 Mona:	↑<u>what</u> is it again
02 Me:	mh?

03 Mona:	what is it again
04 Me:	**Christ**(.)**stollen**
05 Dania:	↑**Christ**
06 Mona:	↑**Christ**(.)**stollen**
07 Dania:	**Christ**(.)**stollen**
08 Me:	yeah
09 Dania:	do ↑Germans uh celebrate ↑Halloween (.)
10 Dania:	>or is it just an American [thing]<
11 Me:	[uhm] it's starting I think
12 Dania:	it's cause I heard like yeah
13 Me:	it's it's it's uh ↑you know [getting more] popular
14 Dania:	[it's it's]
15 Mona:	[**Christ**]
16 Dania:	yeah
17 Mona:	stollen?
18 Dania:	cause I-I love Halloween

In line 01, Mona signalled that she was asking about information that I had provided earlier, using "again". I pronounced the word "Christstollen" very clearly, more so than I would have done with someone I considered a proficient German speaker, which is how I positioned myself here as an expert and a teacher. My pronunciation itself was an example of how language instructors might speak, clearly and slowly, with an unnatural pause at the seam of the two nouns making up the compound, so the students would be able to parse and repeat it—which both Mona and Dania did. Their practice also served as a way to position themselves as novices. In line 08, I evaluated their attempts positively. I thereby again positioned myself as an instructor or expert.

Dania asked another question in line 09. This was a fairly general question, revealing her knowledge of American culture and possible gaps in her knowledge of Germany. In line 11 she started saying that she had heard something about Halloween in Germany. She did not finish the sentence, but it seemed that I confirmed the second-hand knowledge she already possessed. Her question was, of course, a strategy to elicit this confirmation, but it is interesting that she did not indicate that she had prior ideas about the question she asked and instead opted to position

herself as a full novice at first before reclaiming that prior knowledge. Of course, she might not have been certain about the validity of her source of information and the knowledge itself, and therefore she may have wanted to avoid the risk of offering false information. Once she had this confirmation, she reclaimed that knowledge. Signalling this gap and then reclaiming the knowledge she had about it simultaneously served to emphasize a cultural divide while allowing her to subvert this through her knowledge of Germany.

Still on the topic of Halloween and holidays that allow children to dress up and/or go from door to door to sing for or request candy (which, in Germany, would traditionally be Carnival or St. Martin's Day), Dania asked in Excerpt 14 if it was acceptable for them to participate in these holidays despite their age. Dania's question did not aim to solicit a discreet piece of knowledge so much as my evaluation of a hypothetical situation—which, however, was also part of cultural knowledge. She thereby positioned herself as a novice and myself as the expert.

Excerpt 14

01 Dania:	would it be weird if a a bunch of twenty two-year-olds (.)
02 Dania:	[knocked on] doors £and sang£
03 Mona:	[((laughs))] £give me some candy£
04 Me:	£find some kids (.) [to take with you]£
05 Dania:	[((laughs))]

In Excerpt 15 below, Dania did not ask a question, strictly speaking. Instead, she shared second-hand knowledge, in contrast to her behaviour in Excerpt 13 where she also had information that she sought to get confirmed or disputed by me. Here, she engaged in the riskier behaviour of offering up this information for discussion.

Excerpt 15

01 Dania:	I <u>ALSO</u> HEARD THAT YOU CAN'T. PET. DO:GS IN GERMANY

02 Me:	[you can or can't]
03 Omar:	[*la* you CA:N you can]
	no.PART
	'no'
04 Dania:	[like you can't you can't]
05 Me:	um
06 Omar:	I did pet dogs in /ˈ**dʏsldɔrf**/ ((Düsseldorf))
07 Dania:	a lot m- a lot- a lot of my friends that came back from Germany
08 Dania:	told me to <u>not</u> pet friendly do:gs
09 Omar:	[*LA*] you <u>have</u> to (.) ask [the O:WNERS first]
	no.PART
	'no'
10 Dania:	[of COURSE I'm] gonna ask
11 Dania:	but a [<u>lot</u> of] people are gonna say <u>no</u> and I'm gonna be sa:d
12 Me:	[yeah]

Since this exchange followed a line of questions (similar to Excerpts 12 to14), Dania's exclamation in line 01 can be understood as a strategy to solicit information. I did not get the chance to answer and contribute to the positioning. In line 02, I tried only to clarify as I was not quite sure what she had said. In line 03, Omar rebutted her theory. In starting his sentence with the Arabic word *la* 'no', he directed this to her and not to me. In line 06, he supported his claim with first-hand knowledge. However, Dania doubled down in response and increased the authoritative weight of her claim by saying "a lot of" her friends who returned from their sojourn to Germany had told her that she could not pet dogs. This negotiation continued, and again, Omar addressed her specifically by initiating his protest with the Arabic *la*. He modified his previous blanket statement by elaborating on the conditions under which people may be allowed to pet dogs, to which Dania responded that "of course" she would fulfill those conditions, but that she anticipated a negative outcome. During the course of this exchange, her asking for confirmation of a piece of information transformed into a defence of the same information, and there is no hedging when she predicted the outcome of asking German dog owners whether she might pet their dogs.

As I was slow to understand the question, trying to clarify in line 02 and reacting with a puzzled "um" in line 05, I was cast aside in the exchange that followed. Dania's interlocutor became Omar instead of me, so she positioned herself in relation to him and not me. The two of them argued among themselves. My exclusion from the conversation is indicated by Omar's use of the Arabic word *la* in lines 03 and 09. They dropped all hedging behaviour and actually emphasized the authority of their claims: Omar repeated and stressed the modal verb "can" in line 03, while Dania, in line 07, countered Omar's first-hand knowledge by invoking several friends as authorities, as they struggled to establish their epistemic primacy and to settle whether Omar's single, anecdotal first-hand account outweighed Dania's multiple second-hand accounts. Omar also used the German pronunciation of the city Düsseldorf, possibly as a strategy to take ownership of the German code in order to establish his expert status. This behaviour was strikingly different from situations in which I was their interlocutor, whereas here I was set aside. As I have shown in Excerpts 1, 2, and 3, invitations by me to share their knowledge may have enabled them to position themselves closer to the border between "us" and "them", but my presence and active participation inherently seemed to inhibit their willingness to do so.

Other questions the students asked about Germany during the last few minutes of the interview included recommendations for amusement parks, whether to stay in Germany over New Year's, which city I considered the best city in Germany, what I thought of Magdeburg, and one question concerning the spelling of Cologne. On the one hand, these questions covered a variety of topics, and by asking me, the students positioned me as a reliable source of information on Germany. They also seemed to consider this a convenient opportunity to fill their own knowledge gaps in an informal setting. On the other hand, the questions were either quite general and abstract, or pertaining to more touristic interests, which is in line with some of the

intentions the students had so far expressed for their year abroad. They continued to draw a line between "us" and "them" and positioned themselves firmly on one side of it. In other words, they did not express any intention of adopting a German identity, but under the right circumstances they were willing to position themselves as knowledgeable about Germany and the German language.

4.6 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined different strategies in knowledge displays used to construct the contrasting membership categories of "Jordanian" and "German", and I have shown how these categories are maintained, although the line between them is blurred.

One such strategy is the use of German. The students used German very rarely in the interview. Excerpts 1 and 2 are examples of the participants demonstrating knowledge in German with the goal to gloss over embarrassment due to failed word-searching behaviour in English. German was used as a way to circumvent a face-threatening event, but not a legitimate code for them to use. In contrast, in Excerpt 3, Omar switched to German due to contextual cues, namely when I, as an expert and a member of the category "German", explicitly invited him to share his knowledge. By asking him a direct question as a prompt to talk about his first-hand experience, I granted him authority and legitimacy to share his knowledge. In response, he did not use hedging devices or other markers of uncertainty. This mindfulness of the authority they granted me is evidence for the two distinct and typically mutually exclusive categories "Jordanian" and "German" and tied to that, the ownership of language or the authority over language. Both the students and I positioned ourselves and each other on different sides of this divide, with the students only approaching this divide when invited.

The students further constructed and indexed membership categories clearly through the use of pronouns, and while they displayed knowledge about the German language and culture, throughout the interview they did not once cross the line between these categories. They used this strict division for both positive and negative characteristics, such as the traits they perceived Germans to possess and the discrimination they expected from Germans. As firm as this line was, there did seem to be a grey zone in my case. As a non-prototypical member, possibly due to my international experience or perhaps simply out of politeness, they located me closer to the "them" side, but not necessarily all the way into the "them" territory.

An analysis of the students' hedging behaviour further uncovered important clues regarding this grey zone and the conditions for approaching or attempting to cross the line between categories. Hedging as a signal for uncertainty in knowledge displays could be observed in several instances. Confidence displays with little or no hedging could be observed when the knowledge displayed is generalized or neutral. However, when the students were saying something potentially negative about Germany, or when they might not have been sure of their knowledge, they employed hedging devices to soften their utterances. The students were quite attuned to my reactions, and simple backchanneling seemed to prompt them to venture further, share more of their knowledge, and claim greater authority with less hedging behaviour. By deferring to me, they positioned me as more "them" than "us", albeit possibly not a very representative member of the category "German". However, when faced with my approval—or at least, my lack of rebuttal—they did approach the line.

Throughout the interview, gaps in knowledge were used to emphasize the difference between the students' cultural identity and German identity. In the last section, I looked specifically at an example of soliciting knowledge. In that context, the students still maintained a

strong “us” versus “them” distinction, which was emphasized by their lack of knowledge about a particular aspect of German culture. At the same time, they positioned me as an expert who could fill this knowledge gap. As in section 4.3, the students did not signal any desire to blur the line between the membership categories they had constructed beyond a vague touristic interest. However, there was an instance in which they were willing to venture much farther beyond the line, not as ethnic members of the category “German”, but as experts about German culture. This happened when I was somewhat removed from the interaction, they were debating among themselves and struggling for the strongest claim to authority for their knowledge.

When it came to the construction and negotiation of German identity and their relation to it, the students were paying close attention to my positioning and adjusted their own accordingly. However, in moments during which they could temporarily set me aside as an interlocutor, they engaged in competitive behaviour regarding whose expert status in regards to the German language and culture was more complete and valid, employing a range of behaviours to do so, including emphatic intonation, German pronunciation, and establishing their epistemic primacy. Gaps in their knowledge and solicitation of information were primarily used in interaction with me, as there may not have been an expectation that they know everything, and they did not seem to feel the need to defend their authority and knowledge—again supporting their firm establishment of an “us” versus “them” distinction and their relative positioning of me.

In summary, the students employed various interactional resources to signal where they located themselves and where they located me in relation to the categories “German” and “Jordanian”. My own positioning and my responses created conditions that prompted them to either stay firmly on one side or to explore the grey zone between both categories.

5. Not being German, but doing German: Subverting the borders between membership categories

After examining the interview with Mona, Dania, and Omar in Chapter 4, this chapter presents the analysis of the end-of-term interview with the student participants Zaina and Wessam. The strategies they used in knowledge displays to construct their cultural and personal identities were in some ways similar to the strategies identified in Chapter 4, and I will discuss the differences or the similarities in the contexts in which they were used. The sections mirror those of the previous chapter. I first examine the use of German in knowledge displays, then the use of pronouns and membership categories. The third section is dedicated to hedging (or the noteworthy lack thereof) and performing confidence in knowledge displays. The fourth section is about strategies to solicit information. I also identified moments where the absence of such behaviour was worth investigating. By analyzing situations in which the participants employed similar or divergent strategies to the first group, I show how the willingness to approach or cross the line between "us" and "them" may be more pronounced in this group and how they position me more clearly in a grey zone compared to the previous group.

5.1 Participant profiles

Zaina and Wessam were both students of architecture. Zaina was two years ahead of Wessam in their program. Like the students in the first interview group, they sat next to each other in German class. Zaina was generally engaged in class, whereas Wessam was diligent but more reserved. Both Zaina and Wessam often expressed their frustration with the curriculum, such as its perceived lack of usefulness and authenticity, and they seemed to struggle to maintain their motivation and investment despite wanting to learn. As with the first interview group, they also expressed their clear appreciation of their current instructor.

5.1.1 Zaina

Zaina was an older student in her 30s and was originally from Kuwait. She considered herself overall motivated to learn German. The language program at the GJU was a bonus in addition to the major she was interested in, although it was not the first university in Jordan she had enrolled at. She did her first BA degree in Kuwait, then moved to Jordan for an MA degree in architecture. The first university she registered in turned out to be ineligible for her Kuwaiti scholarship, and since she wanted the experience of studying abroad, she changed universities within Jordan. The opportunity to learn German was one reason for her to pursue another undergraduate degree. She entered the first German classes later in the program than usual, as well as at a later age, and she caught up to her peers by taking private classes and spending a gap year in Germany. She had been to Germany several times to visit as well, the first time eleven years ago in southern Germany to represent Kuwait in a sports competition, then again for a full year to take German courses in a western German city. This latter visit was specifically to improve her German, but she did not meet her goal to reach the B2 level as she felt too much pressure, so she gave up and returned to the GJU German program.

5.1.2 Wessam

Wessam was in his early 20s, born and raised in Jordan, and had spent a year abroad in the U.S. He had no experience living in Germany yet. He wished to go to Germany, as his impression of Germany was overall positive, such as its free education and its strong economy as well as its reputation as a technologically progressive country. He started learning German at the Goethe-Institut for three months, covering the levels A1.1-A2.1 of the CEFR before enrolling at the GJU. He had, in fact, wanted to study in Germany instead, but then he changed his mind due to anxieties related to the risks of possibly not passing his courses, so he enrolled at the GJU. He

initially enrolled in mechatronics, by his own account influenced by his view of Germany as a leader in the automobile industry, but then had to switch majors one year into his program.

5.2 Doing German by using German and claiming authority

Like the first group, Zaina and Wessam displayed knowledge through the use of German, and they did so with comparable infrequency (only five times in total). However, unlike the students in the first interview, they code-switched without disclaimers, taking ownership to a higher degree. I examine three instances of deliberate code-switching in Excerpts 16, 17, and 19, one instance of accidental code-switching in Excerpt 18, and a discussion about the pronunciation of a word in German in Excerpt 20. In Excerpt 16, we were talking about Zaina's life as a Kuwaiti citizen in Jordan, and I asked her how different her variety of Arabic was from the local variety. She responded by saying that Jordanian Arabic was closer to the standard variety than Kuwaiti Arabic was.

Excerpt 16

01 Me:	so how different i:s you:r: uh >dialect< uh your variety of of Arabic
02 Zaina:	uhh
03 Zaina:	it's it's they have <u>more</u> of like **Hocharabisch**
	high Arabic.NOUN
	'Modern Standard Arabic'
04 Me	mhm
05 Zaina:	u:h than us.

In line 03, Zaina answered my question. She chose the German word instead of either the Arabic term (*fusha*) or the English one ("Modern Standard Arabic"). The word "like" preceding the German term was not accompanied by a pause or another hesitation marker and can therefore be interpreted as a non-contrastive focus and highlighting device (e.g., as described in Miller & Weinert, 1995). The spontaneity and lack of hesitation or hedging made this a display of confidence in her knowledge of German. Simultaneously, this served to position both me and

her. She could have reasonably expressed this in one of three languages. I have had several personal encounters in Jordan during which people used the term *fusha*. If she did not want to assume that I would be familiar with the Arabic term, she could have used the English word as we were speaking English. Instead, she chose German, demonstrating her ability in German to bridge possible gaps in my knowledge and also implying that this was the term I would be most familiar with. She thereby positioned herself as a trilingual expert and me as a novice regarding the Arabic language, to a degree that I might not even understand the term in English. She drew on membership categories when she positioned me as a typical "them" member, a German who would not have understood common terms referring to the "us" group encompassing Arab identities.

In another instance, Zaina was talking about how she was seen as a Kuwaiti citizen in Jordan and Germany. She complained that people in Jordan immediately thought she must have been rich because she was from a rich country, but that Germans generally did not know enough about Kuwait to harbour any particular stereotypes. She thereby positioned herself as a member of the "us" group, as an Arab, though not as a Jordanian. I asked if Germans projected any stereotypes from other countries onto her—thereby positioning her as non-German—but she said in Excerpt 17 that was not the case and that she generally did not feel uncomfortably stereotyped in Germany. However, at a different point in the interview, she did recount experiences of discrimination while apartment hunting, similar to Dania's experiences in the first interview. She then corrected herself when she did think of an instance that was uncomfortable for her. This occurred in the German language class she was taking, when she did a presentation about Kuwait. In hindsight, she explained, this presentation might have come across like bragging about the wealth of her home country.

Excerpt 17

01 Zaina:	no I didn't feel like weird about anything
02 Wessam:	yeah
03 Zaina:	yeah (.) I did in the German uh **Sprachkurs**
	language course.NOUN
	'language class'
04 Me:	mhm
05 Zaina:	actually

Her use of German again represented a knowledge display. In using German, she positioned herself as knowledgeable in the German language. In contrast to the previous excerpt, she did not use German to index my supposed lack of knowledge, but only to highlight her own. Here I was merely a person who she shared two languages with. In line 03, there was a brief hesitation filled with "uh" before she switched to German. This may indicate that she was not confident in her choice, was not certain if the switch was appropriate, or simply that she needed a moment to search for the word. Despite the topic, she did not explicitly draw on an Arab/German divide, as her experience in the language course pertained to her international classmates, and she used German expertly and appropriately, putting her and me into the same zone.

Wessam's use of German in the following excerpt was different from Zaina's. His initial plan was to complete his entire degree in Germany, but he was hesitant and anxious about passing German, so he found it stressful to make a choice. In addition, the Syrian Civil War caused the embassies to be booked out for appointments for months, as many refugees were trying to get to Germany as well, which is what he was explaining in Excerpt 18. Wessam then decided to study at the GJU where learning German and studying abroad in Germany were still mandatory elements of the curriculum.

Excerpt 18

01 Wessam:	but what happened is that the (.) I-all-everyone (.)

02 Wessam:	and with the refugee crisis and uh (.) like if you wanted to make
03 Wessam:	a-a **Termin**
	appointment.NOUN
	'appointment'
04 Me:	mhm mhm
05 Wessam:	an uh <u>appointment</u> uh
06 Me:	yes
07 Wessam:	in the in the embassy?
08 Me:	yeah
09 Wessam:	I had to wait like fo-for four <u>months</u>

Wessam's use of *Termin* 'appointment' in line 03 seemed unplanned. In line 04, I did not interrupt or correct him, as his use of the word was perfectly accurate and appropriate. However, he self-repaired in line 05, stressing the English word he used to replace the German term. From the context, it was unclear why he chose to correct himself. It seemed the German term was the one most readily available to him at the moment, demonstrating some German proficiency, but he did not mean to switch to German and possibly did not consider German an appropriate code here, making this an involuntary display of knowledge, in contrast to the previous excerpt, where the German term made sense given the context.

Wessam also used German deliberately once. The topic happened to be the same as in Excerpt 1 from the first group, namely the independence of Jordanian students, especially in the context of going abroad. This topic was raised by both groups without prompting by me. Wessam was explaining to me how he saw Jordanian people as less independent, or rather as dependent for longer than Europeans. Excerpt 19 differs in two details from Excerpt 1, however: First, the switch to German was not a correction but offered by the speaker himself, and second, I joined in laughing.

Excerpt 19

01 Wessam:	↑yeah (.) ↑even education (.) like I'm twenty-two and I'm still: (.)

02 Wessam:	like ma- uh h- uh **Hotel ↑Ma:ma**
03 Zaina:	((laughs))
04 Me:	((laughs))

Wessam started searching for a word in line 01, lengthening the last sound of "still", followed by a pause. Then in line 02, he used "like" as a comparative preposition and started phonetically approximating the expression he is searching for: *Hotel Mama* 'Hotel Mom', a German colloquial expression for a parental home in which young adults live beyond the expected age and in which the mother does all the chores for them. This specific term also came up in class during one of my observations. Wessam was either making a language reference as in the previous example, a reference to educational material he knew I was familiar with, or possibly both at once. As in Excerpt 2, it was followed by laughter, initiated by Zaina, with me joining in this time. However, it seems that unlike in Excerpt 2, here I could appreciate the reference to a topic that came up in class when we were both present, a shared experience and shared knowledge. This is also evidence for why the use of German may have been considered legitimate here by the participants. They were specifically referencing something from the GJU German program, which allowed them to take ownership of and claim authority over this part of the German language, as it referenced a familiar social concept that they identified with.

Excerpt 19 superficially shows a situation similar to Excerpts 1 and 2 from the previous group (Chapter 4), as a German expression was produced and then followed by laughter. However, the German expression was not produced as a face-saving strategy, and the laughter did not seem to soften a delicate moment but instead seemed to be in appreciation of a mutually understood reference and a legitimate code, in contrast to the "illegitimate" use of German in Excerpts 1 and 2 by the first group.

Zaina, in particular, code-switched several times during the interview. Interestingly, Excerpt 16 and Excerpt 19 were exceptions in this interview as the only instances in which the conversation was not about Germany or German. In all other cases, both Zaina and Wessam used German in the context of Germany, for example when talking about language class in Germany in Excerpt 17, an assignment for German class (not analyzed here), or appointments at the German embassy in Excerpt 18. It seems that topics related to Germany and German were seen as an appropriate opportunity to demonstrate knowledge about these topics by using the German language.

In Excerpt 20, Zaina questioned the German pronunciation of her home country. This was a deliberate examination of the phonetic properties of a word. The German pronunciation served as a knowledge display, and expert status was animatedly negotiated between Zaina and myself. Zaina started by talking about German people lacking knowledge about her home country, Kuwait, and related that to how her pronunciation of the country name was often not understood. This was followed by a lengthy negotiation between Zaina and myself regarding the correct pronunciation of "Kuwait" in German.

Excerpt 20

01 Zaina: a lot of /pɛj/-a lot of people don't know actually about Kuwait especially in
02 Zaina: Germany=in the States they ↓do (.) for ↓sure (.)
03 Zaina: and (.) in Germany for some reason I say it wrong (1.0)
04 Zaina: when I say ¿/kʊˈweɪ̯t/ (.) even if I say ¿/kʊˈveɪ̯t/ (.) >they don't get it<
05 Zaina: they would be /kʊˈveɪ̯ːt/ [it's the same thing] I just said [((laughs))]
06 Wessam: [°/kʊˈveɪ̯t/°] [heh] ((laughs))
07 Zaina: £like what (.) I still don't get (.) what the difference is£
08 Me: honestly I haven't lived in Germany for seven yea:rs [now?]
09 Zaina: [okay]
10 Me: so I think the way I would pronounce it i:s more £English [than German£]
11 Zaina: [like /kʊˈweɪt/] yeah
12 Me: so [£I'm sorry I cannot help you there£]
13 Zaina: [((laughs))]
14 Wessam: [((laughs))]

15 Me: °°/kuˈvaɪ̯t/ /kuˈvaɪ̯t/°° I think maybe [it's uh]
16 Zaina: [/kʊˈvaɪ̯t/]
17 Wessam: /kʊˈveɪ̯t/
18 Me: [I think yes]
19 Zaina: [/kʊˈvaɪ̯t/]
20 Me: yeah I think [that's maybe that] part
21 Zaina: [I think yeah]
22 Wessam: /kʊˈvaɪ̯t/
23 Me: yeah /kuˈvaɪ̯t/
24 Zaina: /kʊˈvaɪ̯t/
25 Wessam: /kʊˈvaɪ̯t/
26 Zaina: I have to say the ai
27 Wessam: ((laughs))
28 Me: ↑I'm not sure where to put the stress though-though
29 Zaina: I think it's the **i:** (.) German **i**. ((Germ. letter i, /i:/))
30 Wessam: /kʊˈvaɪ̯t/
31 Me: ↑no: ↓yeah like [I think it's]
32 Zaina: [cause we say it] [/kʊˈveɪ̯t/] okay
33 Me: [yeah] mhm
34 Zaina: it's [/kʊˈvaɪ̯t/] (.) [I think.]
35 Me: [mhm]
36 Wessam: [/kʊˈvaɪ̯t/] [it's sounds] ↑Russian [((chuckles))]
37 Zaina: [(...)]
38 Me: [mhm it might- it might-]
39 Me: yeah it might be that Germans might (.)
40 Me: want to put the stress on the first syllable.
41 Zaina: [okay_]
42 Me: [like /'ku:vaɪ̯t/]
43 Zaina: /'kʊ:vaɪ̯t/
44 Me: m:ay:be
45 Zaina: /kʊˈvaɪ̯t/

Throughout this conversation, I kept hedging and inserting ambiguity in my statements, such as "I think" and "maybe", distancing myself from any expert status. Zaina interrupted twice, in lines 16 and 19, to try out this pronunciation herself. In line 20, I did not clearly self-position as the expert either, offering my language intuition as an opinion rather than knowledge. Zaina, in line 21, also did not accept my opinion as expert opinion, as she started talking over me in agreement, tacitly self-positioning as equally knowledgeable. Although she acknowledged my pronunciation of Kuwait, she tried it out herself and made a judgment based on that. In line 26,

Zaina identified the sounds that she had previously gotten wrong herself. She did not phrase it as a question to me, but as her own finding.

The loss of my status as an expert is reinforced in line 28, when I expressed uncertainty about the intonation pattern of the word, and Zaina offered her own idea about it. While she softened it with “I think”, she ended the sentence with a downward pitch, indicating finality and certainty. It is also interesting that she produced the German pronunciation of the letter “i”, which she realized herself and clarified in line 29. This in itself was a knowledge display.

I started contradicting her but aborted the attempt since I figured it was close enough to what she likely meant, namely the pronunciation of the second syllable of “Kuwait”. Zaina started explaining the difference between the English and the German pronunciation to me, a clear and unambiguous display of both knowledge (gained through this conversation) and confidence. She self-positioned as an expert, or at least as knowledgeable enough to interrupt my attempt to correct her by offering her own explanation. In line 38 I managed to offer my language intuition, with some intense hedging, using “might” three times in one utterance (plus one time while there is still overlapping talk). Zaina responded with “okay” in line 40, although her intonation was carrying and she did not sound convinced. She continued trying out pronunciations, and I added “maybe” as another marker of uncertainty in line 44.

Zaina personally self-positioned as knowledgeable in German through the actual use of German, throwing her suggestions for the pronunciation of “Kuwait” into the ring just as I did, negotiating the correct pronunciation with me instead of deferring to my judgment. The knowledge gap, that is, the pronunciation of “Kuwait”, may not have been a sign of her novice status, but a sign of her cultural and linguistic distance to the German language and culture. Since I signalled the same knowledge gap, I myself moved closer to the category “us” rather than

"them". The display of a knowledge gap may also not have contradicted her self-positioning as knowledgeable, since expert status does not necessarily have to mean omniscience. After all, even though she frequently solicited information from me, positioning me as an expert, I was not always able to answer. In this excerpt, my hedging due to my lack of knowledge on the topic of the German pronunciation of "Kuwait" was very pronounced. Furthermore, when I did provide an answer, Zaina did not seem convinced and formulated her own theories. This also illustrates how open to negotiation "being an expert" is and how positioning may change turn by turn.

The next excerpt provides some insight into Zaina's attitude towards the use of German. In Excerpt 21, she started by explaining that her German proficiency progressed to the point that she could think in German and that sometimes she recalled a German word rather than an appropriate Arabic or English word in class, which she reported was met with ridicule by her peers.

Excerpt 21

01 Zaina:	I <u>think</u> in German now=[a lot of words come out]
02 Me:	[mhm mhm]
03 Zaina:	=[like when] I go to the: next class emotional ↑in<u>tel</u>ligence after German, ((the title of her class))
04 Wessam:	[yeah ((clears throat))]
05 Zaina:	u:m (.) a lot of times like this is the word in Arabic and-and [<u>En:g</u>lish]
06 Me:	[yeah]
07 Zaina:	[and I-I only] [know] it in [German]
08 Me:	[((laughs))]
09 Wessam:	[yeah] [yeah]
10 Zaina:	I'm like I ca:n't <u>u:se</u> this [like]
11 Me:	[uh-huh]
12 Wessam:	yeah
13 Zaina:	£people make fun of me£ [((laughs))]
14 Me:	[((laughs))]

Zaina deliberately ruled out the active use of German in class, even though she took this class with peers who were also learning German at the same institution. This did not contradict

her claims to proficiency in German and her knowledge of German; Zaina asserted the degree of her mastery of German by saying she had the ability to think in German and that sometimes the German word came to mind when the Arabic or English word did not. The example she mentioned was from a class at university, and she identified Arabic and English as the appropriate codes. Even though her classmates in such a situation would likely have understood her, she said she could not use her knowledge of German or she would risk being made fun of. This is in line with the laughter in Excerpts 1 and 2 from the previous group. German was part of their knowledge repertoire, and although she herself considered it legitimate, the use of German could be met with ridicule as her classmates did not consider it appropriate. At the same time, she signalled her proficiency in German by sharing this in the interview. When she acknowledged that German had entered her repertoire (in line 01, she said she thought in German now, implying that it was not always the case and was a relatively recent phenomenon), she claimed a status as a person proficient in German. This indicates that German was part of her personal repertoire now and that she claimed an advanced learner identity. As she recounted the reaction of her classmates policing her language use, she showed that she was positioning herself less as "us" and more as "them". None of the other participants exhibited this behaviour. It is also possible that it was precisely because her peers in her non-German class understood as much German as she did that the use of German is not socially accepted and is ridiculed. Students who positioned themselves as knowledgeable in German when knowledge of German was the norm anyway are sanctioned so as to prevent them from making this knowledge out to be something special.

In this section, I examined how students used German in knowledge displays and how this served to locate them in relation to "us" and "them". While Zaina considered German to be a

legitimate code in her content courses, her classmates did not accept this. By telling me about this, she positioned herself more as "them" and cited her urge to do so as evidence for her proficiency. Furthermore, both Zaina and Wessam code-switched to German several times during this interview and in contrast to the students in the first interview, they treated German as a legitimate code in the respective situations, with the exception of Excerpt 18 where Wessam did not intend to switch to German. In the other instances, Wessam used German as a deliberate reference of shared knowledge of German. Zaina also code-switched to German occasionally, especially, but not exclusively, when the conversation topic was related to Germany and German culture or language. Linguistic knowledge also served as a knowledge display when Zaina actively negotiated the correct pronunciation of "Kuwait" with me. What was particularly clear was the difference between this group and the first group of students. In this group, the use of German did not illustrate a divide between them and "Germans". They took a higher degree of ownership of the language and displayed certainty in their use of German. The next section, however, showed that this did not mean they did not draw on the same membership categories.

5.3 Being German: Maintaining ethnic categories through pronoun use and deixis

Despite being bolder in their use of German, the current pair of students displayed the same tendencies to draw explicit and clear lines between membership categories using pronouns such as "us" and "them", which I discuss in this section. In addition, I examine the use of deictic expressions that served a similar purpose as "us" versus "them", namely the use of "here" versus "there" to create geographical categories that may be conflated with groups of people.

In Excerpt 22, Zaina talked about the asymmetry of knowledge of the Other in the Middle East and Western countries. She said that people in the Middle East, in particular in her own social bubble, were generally familiar with Western cultures, ideologies, and their way of life

through media, whereas the reverse was not the case. This excerpt was an especially clear example of the lines she drew and on which side she positioned herself and Wessam.

Excerpt 22

01 Zaina:	we: (.) especially uh like (.) this region uh the ea:stern £Middle East£ uh
02 Zaina:	we're ↑so::: [comfortable and] used to
03 Me:	[uh-huh]
04 Zaina:	>especially the bubble that we live in< uh we're ↑used to: (.)
05 Zaina:	uh the ↓European and the [Western ideology]
06 Me:	[mhm mhm]
07 Zaina:	and the [way of life] and [culture]
08 Me:	[mhm]
09 Wessam:	[right]
10 Zaina:	and we're more ↑except like people ↑think (.)
11 Zaina:	>oh you need to teach us< ((stage whisper)) we understand it
12 Me:	yea(h)h
13 Zaina:	we have tv we have internet
14 Me:	[yeah]
15 Zaina:	[we:] do even if we don't kno:w it's not something foreign
16 Zaina:	it's not [like] the other way [around]
17 Me:	[mhm] [mhm]
18 Wessam:	°right°
19 Zaina:	we: get it
20 Me:	m-hm:
21 Zaina:	we ↑know >how the American think<
22 Zaina:	we know >about how the European think<
23 Zaina:	they >we know their culture< they we >know like they do
24: Zaina:	we know their religion< we know a lot of things

This excerpt showed how the student participants used knowledge displays as a marker of difference, reflecting the power imbalances between cultures. Zaina very explicitly drew a line between the Middle East and the West. She started by using the pronoun "we", likely referring to the Arab world as a whole, then further narrowed it down. In doing so, she avoided the Arabic term *Mashreq* (also used in English) that includes Jordan and Kuwait as well as other eastern Arab countries. Instead, she defined the region as "eastern Middle East", with a smiling voice, likely due to the awkwardness of the term she chose. In avoiding the self-designation *Mashreq*,

she seemed to anticipate the lack of knowledge about the Middle East that was the topic of this conversation, positioning me on the other side of the line she drew through the use of "we" and "they". She continued specifying what "we" meant to her in line 04, narrowing it down to her inner circle. On the other hand, she broadened the definition of "they" when she started with European ideologies in line 05 and expanded it to include Western ideologies. In this case, the conjunction "and" did not seem to connect two different ideas but instead appeared to broaden the first element. The U.S. was explicitly included as a concept parallel to Europe, both included in the idea of "the West", as Zaina made clear in lines 21 and 22.

Zaina made consistent use of first- and third-person pronouns throughout the excerpt, in lines 10, 11, 13, 15, 19, 21, 22, 23, and 24. The repeated use of these pronouns and the repetitive sentence structure served to emphasize her point and the clear distinction between her definition of "us" and "them". Her use of the word "people" in line 10 also made clear that she saw a difference in cultural power, as she adopted the dominant view that made people from "Western" countries the default and positioned herself and her in-group in opposition. The reason is a power imbalance implied through her portrayal of the asymmetric distribution of knowledge, as Western countries did not know as much about the Middle East as the other way round, and because of representation in the media that she cited. She expressed resentment at the idea that they were treated like empty vessels to be filled with cultural knowledge about places like Germany. She used a stage whisper in line 11, mocking this attitude that underestimated her in-group's knowledge. Although she did not cite a specific situation, her rejection of a positioning of her and her in-group that apparently occurred in previous encounters constitutes third order positioning. She asserted that people in the Middle East already knew a lot and had a basic understanding of what was going on in Western countries. In line 15, she clarified that it was not

necessarily about detailed knowledge but a general familiarity with Western culture, so even if the information presented to her was new, it would not be exotic and strange. In this way, she showed that knowledge of German culture was not necessarily a sign of her participation in German culture, but rather a sign of her difference.

As in the first interview, revealing gaps in knowledge was a strategy to highlight cultural differences. Positioning oneself in opposition to "German identity" could also be observed in this second group, such as in Excerpt 23, where Zaina talked about her perception of Germans as unsmiling people and solicited information from me as to the reason. Here, I discuss primarily the pronoun use in knowledge displays.

Excerpt 23

01 Zaina:	they a:re um (.) >↑serious they have the serious face
02 Zaina:	I wrote to you why don't they smile.< is it a sign of uh of uh
03 Me:	((laughs))
04 Zaina:	(.) not being serious
05 Me:	£uh-huh£
06 Zaina:	is it.
07 Me:	↑well (3.5) for me for me [(serious face)]
08 Zaina:	[no no you're a smiley person] [((laughing))]
09 Me:	[yeah]
10 Me:	[you know it's um]
11 Zaina:	[a smiley German]
12 Me:	mh (1) I never perceived Germans as people who don't smile?
13 Zaina:	[okay]
14 Wessam:	[((laughs))]

Zaina clearly and explicitly positioned herself as non-German through the use of the pronoun "they", which she used to refer to Germans. In lines 01 and 02, she displayed knowledge by asserting that Germans do not smile. She presented this as a fact, as it was based on her observations, which she would have considered first-hand knowledge. She positioned me as "not them" on account of me smiling too much to qualify. As stated before, the membership

category “German” remained intact and so did her collection of knowledge about this category, despite me being evidence to the contrary. Instead, I was then categorized as a “defective” member of this category or at least as a marked and therefore unusual member (“a smiley German”) in line 11. My expertise or perception of Germans in line 12 was doubted, though not outright challenged, as she weighed my authority against her own and acknowledged my point of view with a skeptical “okay” in line 13. My interpretation of her tone as skeptical is supported by Wessam outright laughing at what I said in line 14: He did not seem to consider my perspective to be particularly accurate, either.

In Excerpt 24 below, Zaina recalled her interactions with people in Germany, saying that they were “fun” to socialize with but not “funny”. I offered an alternative explanation which she rejected. Here again, she did not position me as an expert, but at the same time she did not necessarily include me when she grouped “Germans” together, as indicated through her pronoun use.

Excerpt 24

01 Zaina:	↑you kno:w- ↓>don’t get me wrong< they <u>were</u> fu:n and we were <u>ou:t</u>
02 Zaina:	and we <u>par</u>tie:d and it was ↑fu:n but the <u>JO:KES</u> (.) [>we don’t <u>get.</u><]
03 Me:	[((laughs))]
04 Zaina:	((laughs)) we don’t under<u>stand</u> it
05 Me:	↑is it-is it (.) maybe because of the ¿<u>language</u> though?
06 Zaina:	↑>no even if they say it in English< [or like they try: to-][to]
07 Wessam:	[in <u>En</u>glish yeah]
08 Me:	[↓yeah]
09 Zaina:	↓but. (.) like I don’t find it funny [((laughs))]
10 Me:	[((laughs))]
11 Wessam:	[it’s-it’s-it’s] ↑<u>diff</u>erent it’s ↑different
12 Zaina:	↑yeah
13 Me:	mhm

Here, Zaina explicitly and consistently positioned herself in contrast to German people through the use of the pronouns “they” and “we”. She used first-hand knowledge to further

elaborate on the difference: She had personal experience socializing with Germans and found the humour to be a marker of difference. It was not entirely clear who she meant by "we". She was a Kuwaiti living in Jordan, and Wessam was Jordanian. It is possible that the line she drew was between German and Arabic people in general, or Kuwaiti people in particular. This is especially unclear since she frequently drew explicit lines between Kuwait and Jordan. Who she did *not* mean, however, is clear: "we" did not refer to Germans.

When I offered a language barrier as a possible explanation in line 05, she rejected that explanation, implicitly assuming that both her and her German interlocutor's proficiency in English was sufficient to exclude the possibility of any linguistic misunderstanding. It is noteworthy that she did not include me in the category "Germans", as she did not use the second-person plural pronoun to refer to Germans, but rather the third-person plural pronoun. This could be because she specifically referred to the people she interacted with—although she did seem to generalize this experience—but at this point I had also repeatedly stressed that I had not lived in Germany for several years and had changed because of that. My expertise was discounted not just by her, but by myself first, due to me not being a representative member of the category "German".

The explicit topic of differences came up again later. Wessam told us of an observation one of his professors had shared with him. She said she found German students who came as exchange students to the GJU to be more carefree, whereas Jordanian students were more worried. Excerpt 25 starts with Wessam evaluating this observation and legitimizing his professor as a knowledgeable source. Zaina then said that she perceived German students as disciplined and elaborated on what she meant by that.

Excerpt 25

01 Wessam: yeah (.) yeah (.) so (.) I ↑thin:k (.) sh-sh-she-she:-she made a
02 Wessam: ↑very::(.) like (.) ↑well obser (.) like observation
03 Me: yeah,
04 Wessam: and it's not the first time that (.) she has u:h like u:h a as a German:
05 Me: yeah
06 Wessam: u:h (.) students
07 Me: yeah
08 Zaina: ↑they: but they're disciplined [↓as like]
09 Wessam: [oh yeah]
10 Zaina: [they're very like (.) this is what we need to do:]
11 Wessam: [yeah. yeah. yeah. yeah. yeah. yeah.]
12 Zaina: [that, that,] (.) finish that,
13 Wessam: [yeah yeah (.) of course]
14 Zaina: [go party: (.) no: tomorrow:,]
15 Wessam: [no no it's- it's- not- it's not ↑ba:d] it's not ↑bad
16 Wessam: but it's about the difference
17 Zaina: and it's no:t like the ((clicks tongue)) £↓the Korean-
18 Zaina: the North Korean discipline£
19 Zaina: like you have to
20 Wessam: yeah
21 Zaina: >I don't know< it's not the Asian type,
22 Wessam: yeah
23 Zaina: ↑but's it's very:
24 Wessam: the stereo- £the European£ t(h)ype ((laughs))

In this excerpt, Wessam invoked the authority of a professor at the university. According to him, she had observed that the German exchange students she had taught seemed more carefree than the Jordanian students. In line 01 and 02, he aligned himself with her view, emphasizing the quality of her observation with "very", stressing and lengthening it with an upturn in pitch. In line 04, he made a case for her role as an expert, strengthening her argument—and in turn, his own—by saying that she had taught students from Germany before, so her observation was not based on a few individuals but on a sufficiently large sample to draw valid conclusions from.

Zaina, in line 08, started offering an explanation for why German students were able to enjoy leisure time. She considered this a benefit of being disciplined and illustrated how she saw German students, starting in line 10. She ordered a set of imaginary tasks with deictic expressions and a staccato rhythm in her speech to mimic a steady, fast work pace. In line 14, she extended the German students' way of working to leisure activities by continuing the staccato rhythm and adding an elliptic style.

Wessam seemed to interpret her interjection as a justification or defence of the German students' work habits, as he kept repeating "yeah" overlapping with her turn, possibly looking for an opportunity to take the turn, then started to protest in line 15 to clarify that he did not mean that the carefreeness ascribed to German students by his professor and by extension, him, was bad, only different. The difference between Germans and Jordanians or Arabs is a theme that both of them stressed in this excerpt, even if what they constructed as German traits was seen as positive. They continued discussing the self-discipline they considered typically German. While this was not accompanied by pronoun use, it contained further evidence of the type of Othering evident in the use of pronouns. The categorization of self-discipline as "Korean", "Asian", or "European" suggested that there were various types of discipline, but none of these discussed were Jordanian, Arab, or Middle Eastern. Zaina elaborated on what the German students' sense of discipline was not. Her example was what she called "North Korean discipline", which she explained with a forceful emphasis on the modal verb in line 19, signalling an external authority forcing someone to do something. She continued elaborating by saying that German discipline was not an "Asian" type of discipline. Wessam, interestingly, started saying "stereotype" or "stereotypical", but self-repaired his attempt mid-word and said with a smiling voice that it was the "European" type, followed by laughter. This laughter

indicated that he was not entirely serious about what he said, and the half-finished word in line 24 seemed to signal that he may have been aware that they were discussing stereotypes rather than realities. Still, this stereotyping confirmed the line drawn by the use of "us" and "them" in other parts of this interview.

In the next excerpt, the students did not use pronouns to delineate groups of people they did or did not belong to, but the deictic expression "here" achieved something similar in the geographical sense. Zaina was describing religious customs and reported that she had noticed that people in Germany did not make time in their daily life to go to church, despite churches being physically present and the call of the bells being widely audible. She contrasted that with the situation in the geographical-cultural region she referred to as "here".

Excerpt 26

01 Zaina: but I .h did not notice that different- that people like
02 Zaina: >stop going to [church]<
03 Wessam: [yeah]
04 Zaina: I: did not see that yet >although there is the church like uh
05 Zaina: down the ↑street<
06 Wessam: right
07 Zaina: .h >and the bells and I enjoyed that =
08 Zaina: but I can't- like see the whole [peo:ple] thing [going in and out] no.
09 Wessam: [°yeah°] [no no no no no]
10 Zaina: not like here
11 Wessam: [not like here no]
12 Me: [I don't I don't] I don't kno:w a single person
13 Me: who goes to church in Germany.
14 Wessam: yeah. right.
15 Zaina: ↑yeah (.) [like I've hea:rd] about that actually.
16 Wessam. [right]

Zaina recounted an observation she made, which constituted first-hand knowledge of Germany. Again, she allowed for a margin of error in her perception by repeatedly citing what she saw, without framing it as a fact. She presented evidence she collected, describing in line 05

the location of a church, likely because it was near her accommodation, and the sound of the bells in line 07 as an indication that this was an active church. By stressing her enjoyment of the church bells, she seemed to underline how the sound had no deeper religious meaning to Germans nor to her, making it part of the German sound landscape but little more than that. In line 08, she mentioned lack of evidence of people going in and out of the church, which was what she expected, as she elaborated in line 10. Her use of the deictic expression "here" seemed to be quite broad. She was from Kuwait, and people going to mosques and churches would have been visible in both Kuwait and Jordan. Christians in Jordan are a small group, but the Christian tradition in Jordan is very old. In any case, "here" was in direct contrast to the situation in Germany. Throughout this excerpt, Wessam kept nodding along and interjecting with his own backchanneling utterances in lines 03, 06, 09, 11, and 14, indicating his strong agreement.

I added my own perception, speaking from my individual experience rather than my expertise, to support Zaina's observation. In line 15, Zaina confirmed my observation with knowledge she had gained from others. She thereby positioned herself as an equal in terms of expertise, without questioning or challenging my statement, but through agreement, putting her knowledge on the same level as mine.

In sum, although in section 5.2 I showed that Zaina and Wessam used German quite differently from Dania, Mona, and Omar, in the current section it becomes clear that this does not mean the category "German" was less defined for them. In terms of ethnic identity, all five students positioned themselves clearly and unambiguously as "us", although sometimes there were subdivisions within the "us" group that was not evident with the first group of students. Because Zaina was Kuwaiti, the "us" category was more complex than merely "Jordanian" and instead referred either to Jordanians or Kuwaitis, and even to "Arab" or "Middle Eastern" more

often than in the first group. Otherwise, both groups' use of "us" served the same purpose. I also showed how I did not position myself too firmly within the "them" category and how my characteristics were not considered a reason to revise the category "German", but rather were used to construct me as a "deficient" member instead.

The students' clear positioning as "us" rather than "them" did not mean that they signalled low levels of certainty regarding their knowledge of Germany, as the first group did. Rather, Zaina repeatedly claimed authority over her knowledge of the category "German" through her first-hand experience as well as her second-hand knowledge. Wessam was overall more hesitant than Zaina but seemed to be emboldened by Zaina's displays of confidence. The ways to signal epistemic access deserve a closer examination in the following section.

5.4 Assertive behaviour in knowledge displays

Compared with the group in Chapter 4, Zaina stood out due to the relative confidence she demonstrated in her expertise. Although she did not refrain completely from hedging in knowledge displays regarding Germany, when she did use hedging devices, they typically did not serve to position me as an expert above her knowledge level, unlike in the previous group. Instead, she positioned me as someone who may have been somewhat knowledgeable but at the same time emphasized her own knowledge as well.

One example of Zaina using several strategies to emphasize her utterances instead of hedging is the previously discussed Excerpt 22.

Excerpt 22 (reproduced)

01 Zaina: we: (.) especially uh like (.) this region uh the ea:stern £Middle East£ uh
02 Zaina: we're ↑so::: [comfortable and] used to
03 Me: [uh-huh]
04 Zaina: >especially the bubble that we live in< uh we're ↑used to: (.)
05 Zaina: uh the ↓European and the [Western ideology]
06 Me: [mhm mhm]

07 Zaina: and the [way of life] and [culture]
08 Me: [mhm]
09 Wessam: [right]
10 Zaina: and we're more ↑except like people ↑think (.)
11 Zaina: >oh you need to teach us< ((stage whisper)) we understand it
12 Me: yea(h)h
13 Zaina: we have tv we have internet
14 Me: [yeah]
15 Zaina: [we:] do even if we don't kno:w it's :not something foreign
16 Zaina: it's not [like] the other way [around]
17 Me: [mhm] [mhm]
18 Wessam: °right°
19 Zaina: we: get it
20 Me: m-hm:
21 Zaina: we ↑know >how the American think<
22 Zaina: we know >about how the European think<
23 Zaina: they >we know their culture< they we >know like they do
24 Zaina: we know their religion< we know a lot of things

Here, Zaina used intensifying particles such as "so" in line 02. She lengthened the vowel and raised the pitch for additional emphasis, highlighting her high degree of familiarity with Western culture. Her stage whisper in line 11 with which she mocked the assumption that Middle Eastern people lacked knowledge was followed by her own rebuttal. Both strategies displayed her confidence and were remarkably different from the behaviour of the students in the first group (Excerpt 7 in Chapter 4). The topic was similar in both excerpts, but Zaina did not engage in any hedging behaviour and was not trying to avoid stepping on my toes.

In contrast, Wessam had no first-hand experience of Germany and overall displayed more hedging behaviour in knowledge displays about Germany. The following excerpt was from a discussion about what kind of experience Zaina and Wessam sought in Germany, the difference between touristic and authentic experiences, and how to access authentic experiences in Germany. Here, Wessam stated his view that authentic experiences relied on connecting with local people. He brought up the Erasmus program, as did the students in the first group.

However, in contrast to them, he did not consider the Erasmus program necessarily as a good thing.

Excerpt 27

01 Wessam: I think be (1.5) be (.) or: having the authentic experience (.) is::
02 Wessam: (.) all about connecting (.) with the [peop-]with the locals
03 Me: [mhm] mhm
04 Wessam: >connecting with the locals,< I: (.) maybe (.)
05 Wessam: I know there's like the Erasmus and the
06 Zaina: yeah
07 Wessam: those (.) many: fun: ↑things (.) but I don't think that's (.) very authentic,
08 Me: ((chuckles))
09 Zaina: that is uh authentic student life
10 Wessam: yeh [authentic]student [*li*- it's]- yeah
11 Zaina: [all over the world]
12 Me: [that's right]
13 Wessam: [uh: it's ↓yeah] [↓yeah]
14 Me: [I'd say yeah] [mhm]
15 Wessam: that's why [because it's an international] like- LIFEstyle
16 Zaina: [yeh-yeah]
17 Wessam: [for] students (.) maybe
18 Me: [yeah]
19 Wessam: Western life[style]
20 Zaina: [yeah]
21 Wessam: but (.) if you connect with: (.) with the ↑right people (.)
22 Wessam: with the: like with the lo:cals?
23 Me: mhm
24 Wessam: I think you get (.) a good experience
25 Me: and ho:w do you connect with locals=so we had [we- we talked]
26 Zaina: [you tell us] ((laughs))
27 Me: [((laughs))]
28 Wessam: [((laughs)) yeah that's]
29 Zaina: [((laughs))] £I'm trying£

Like the first group, when Wessam mentioned the Erasmus program, he built on the assumption of shared knowledge. Wessam and Zaina started discussing what the program involved in line 07. Wessam clearly distinguished between his knowledge about Erasmus ("I know there's like the Erasmus") and his opinion about it ("I don't think it's very authentic"). With the use of "very" before "authentic", he allowed for a margin of error, as is typical with an

expression of opinion. In this interview, my own opinions generally came through more clearly than in the first interview. In this instance, when Wessam said Erasmus was probably not the most authentic way to experience Germany, I started chuckling, indicating implicit agreement.

Zaina then added, without hedging, that Erasmus represented an authentic *student* experience, implying that this might be different from everyday German experience. She made the case in line 11 that this was similar all over the world. Her lack of hedging made this a display of confidence. Wessam agreed and continued by saying that it was not authentically German because students live an international lifestyle. He did, however, then add "Western lifestyle" in line 19. This is interesting because it appears that he attributed the "international student experience" to a broader Western lifestyle which was distinct from his own, but that also seemed to be different from the average German lifestyle, because Wessam continued to insist, in line 21, that a good study abroad experience in Germany depended on connecting with local people, not with the international Erasmus crowd. In contrast to the students in the first group, Wessam did not consider international socialization to be a good, sufficient study abroad experience. His orientation was much more towards entering "authentic" German communities, thereby constructing Germans with international experiences as insufficient members of the category "German".

In contrast to Zaina, Wessam softened each of his contributions with a hedging device, such as in line 07 ("I don't think"), line 17 ("maybe"), and line 24 ("I think"). This was likely because Wessam did not possess first-hand knowledge of Germany yet and therefore signalled the uncertainty of his beliefs and opinions. However, I recorded the following situation in my field notes (June 22, 2019) in which his hedging behaviour was markedly different. I was chatting with the students in German before class and drinking pop. A female student observed

that drinking pop was not healthy, to which I jokingly responded that I did not drink alcohol nor smoke, so I needed something bad in my life. Wessam responded by saying in German: "*Kein Bier? Das ist nicht typisch deutsch.*" ('No beer? That is not typically German.') I replied: "*Richtig. Sind Sie denn immer einhundert Prozent typisch jordanisch?*" ('Correct. But are you always one hundred percent typically Jordanian?'). In response, he said, "*Ich weiß nicht, ich denke traditionelle Kleidung ist typisch jordanisch.*" ('I don't know, I think traditional clothing is typically Jordanian'). It is worthwhile to point out that Wessam was wearing a T-shirt and jeans while stating this. Wessam clearly demonstrated his ability to use hedging devices in German (*Ich weiß nicht* 'I don't know') in this last response, so his assertive, straightforward observation that not drinking beer was not typical of Germans was unlikely to be a product of his lack of proficiency. Rather, he knew what he was saying and did so with a display of confidence in a context of friendly informal joking before class. We were already using German, and the atmosphere was relaxed, so he may have felt more comfortable with approaching the line between "us" and "them", which was, throughout this exchange, referenced by the students and myself explicitly positioning ourselves on one of the two sides. Ethnic identity was, despite some questioning, fairly clearly established here, but his position as an expert on Germany who had already been invited to use German allowed Wessam to stick his toe over the line, so to speak.

In this section, I showed that Zaina rarely used hedging devices to signal uncertainty in her knowledge displays. Instead, she invoked her authority as someone with first-hand experience of Germany and cited anonymous secondary sources to establish her expertise. It is noteworthy that she did so when she expressed both positive and negative opinions about Germans, which shows that she did not have the same hesitance as the students in the first group who were worried about offending me or drawing criticism. Wessam displayed less certainty

during the interview, but, like the first interview group, he seemed to be encouraged by invitations to approach the line between "us" and "them" and expressed his knowledge with fewer hedging devices. My own positioning may have played a role here, too: In comparison to the first interview, I positioned myself as a non-expert more clearly. The students accepted my positioning and like the first group, also signalled that they saw me as a non-prototypical member of the "German" category. My positioning may have had a similar effect as in Excerpt 15 in the previous chapter, where my initial lack of understanding led me to take a backseat in the exchange that followed, and the students tried to establish primary authority over the matter among themselves rather than probe how much room I would allow them to display their knowledge.

5.5 "I don't understand that": Knowledge gaps and the difference between expertise and ethnic identity

In Chapter 4, section 4.5, I discussed an instance of students soliciting information from me, positioning me as the expert and themselves as learners. In this section, I examine how Zaina solicited information through the use of questions and how she positioned me.

The first example is Excerpt 23, previously discussed in section 5.3. In this excerpt, Zaina talked about her perception of German people who do not smile.

Excerpt 23 (reproduced)

01 Zaina:	they a:re um (.) >↑serious they have the serious face
02 Zaina:	I wrote to you why don't they smile.< is it a sign of uh of uh
03 Me:	((laughs))
04 Zaina:	(.) not being serious
05 Me:	£uh-huh£
06 Zaina:	is it.
07 Me:	↑well (3.5) for me for me [(serious face)]
08 Zaina:	[no no you're a smiley person] [((laughing))]
09 Me:	[yeah]
10 Me:	[you know it's um]

11 Zaina:	[a smiley German]
12 Me:	mh (1) I never perceived Germans as people who don't smile?
13 Zaina:	[okay]
14 Wessam:	[((laughs))]

The knowledge gap Zaina inquired about is the reason for the "serious face". Her question served to underline the difference between moving within a culture and being a part of it. Anyone could have made the observation she made, but actually understanding it required deeper cultural knowledge and insight. However, she did not position herself as a complete novice, either. Apart from the first-hand knowledge of her observation, she also ventured a guess, showing that she had thought about this and was connecting this with her previous cultural knowledge of German. Additionally, her question demonstrated that she knew something about Germans already and that she was not a novice. At the same time, it was a clichéd observation, and because of this, I did not immediately recognize that she was trying to elicit information from me, thereby positioning me as an expert. That is why, in line 05, I merely signalled for her to go on, prompting her to clarify in line 06 that she was asking a question, or possibly understanding my contribution as an affirmative reaction. When I started my explanation in line 07 by indicating that I was going to voice my own personal opinion so as to gently rebut her observation, she clarified that she did not mean me personally, as she saw me as a "smiley German" (line 11) and therefore as an exception. She did not seek my thoughts as an individual German, but rather she wanted a more general view from me as an expert. In line 12, I rejected the premise of her question but phrased my contribution so it was based on my own perception. This had the effect of avoiding a challenge to her observation or her expertise. In response, her incredulous "okay" in line 13 and Wessam's laughter in line 14 indicated that it was my expertise that was in question, not the observation itself. This excerpt shows that while Zaina's question to

me in the first place necessarily positioned me as an expert, it does not mean that she positioned herself as a novice in contrast. She did not treat me as an absolute authority but instead considered herself knowledgeable enough to question my answers if they clashed with her own observations.

Another request for information occurred in Excerpt 27 from the previous section in which we were talking about social connections while studying abroad. I asked how they expected to connect with local people in Germany in line 05, and Zaina returned the question back to me.

Excerpt 27 (reproduced and shortened)

01 Wessam: but (.) if you connect with: (.) with the ↑right people (.)
02 Wessam: with the: like with the lo:cals?
03 Me: mhm
04 Wessam: I think you get (.) a good experience
05 Me: and ho:w do you connect with locals=so we had [we- we talked]
06 Zaina: [you tell us] ((laughs))
07 Me: [((laughs))]
08 Wessam: [((laughs)) yeah that's]
09 Zaina: [((laughs))] £I'm trying£

When Zaina responded "you tell us" in line 06, she openly revealed her gap in knowledge and positioned me as someone who should know this. It seems she attributed the capability, responsibility, and authority of answering to a person from Germany. She laughed, as if it was absurd that I asked her, thereby positioning herself as someone who could not possibly know this. To underline her response, she added that she was trying to make these connections, with the implication that she was not very successful. At the same time, she was not a complete novice, either, as she knew several ways that she could try to do so. This could indicate a possible cultural gap that she perceived, but it could also merely reflect a lack of personal connections.

These were the only times either Zaina or Wessam outright solicited information from me in this interview. The situational context may have prevented this: In the first interview, the students only started asking questions at the end, when I explicitly made room for questions, which I did not do in the second interview. It is possible that the students did not think these interviews were the place for them to solicit information and instead more about me getting information from them.

With that in mind, I identified several situations in which Zaina did not outright ask a question but announced a gap in her knowledge and let me decide how to react. One example of that is the previously analyzed Excerpt 20.

Excerpt 20 (reproduced)

01 Zaina: a lot of /pɛj/-a lot of people don't know actually about Kuwait especially in
02 Zaina: Germany=in the States they ↓do (.) for ↓sure (.)
03 Zaina: and (.) in Germany for some reason I say it wrong (1.0)
04 Zaina: when I say ¿/kʊˈweɪ̯t/ (.) even if I say ¿/kʊˈveɪ̯t/ (.) >they don't get it<
05 Zaina: they would be /kʊˈveɪ̯ːt/ [it's the same thing] I just said [((laughs))]
06 Wessam: [°/kʊˈveɪ̯t/°] [heh] ((laughs))
07 Zaina: £like what (.) I still don't get (.) what the difference is£
08 Me: honestly I haven't lived in Germany for seven yea:rs [now?]
09 Zaina: [okay]
10 Me: so I think the way I would pronounce it i:s more £English [than German£]
11 Zaina: [like /kʊˈweɪt/] yeah
12 Me: so [£I'm sorry I cannot help you there£]
13 Zaina: [((laughs))]
14 Wessam: [((laughs))]
15 Me: °°/kuˈvaɪ̯t/ /kuˈvaɪ̯t/°° I think maybe [it's uh]
16 Zaina: [/kʊˈvaɪ̯t/]
17 Wessam: /kʊˈveɪ̯t/
18 Me: [I think yes]
19 Zaina: [/kʊˈvaɪ̯t/]
20 Me: yeah I think [that's maybe that] part
21 Zaina: [I think yeah]
22 Wessam: /kʊˈvaɪ̯t/
23 Me: yeah /kuˈvaɪ̯t/
24 Zaina: /kʊˈvaɪ̯t/
25 Wessam: /kʊˈvaɪ̯t/
26 Zaina: I have to say the ai

27 Wessam: ((laughs))
28 Me: ↑I'm not sure where to put the stress though-though
29 Zaina: I think it's the **i:** (.) German **i**. *((*Germ. letter i, /i:/*))*
30 Wessam: /kʊˈvaɪt/
31 Me: ↑no: ↓yeah like [I think it's]
32 Zaina: [cause we say it] [/kʊˈveɪt/] okay
33 Me: [yeah] mhm
34 Zaina: it's [/kʊˈvaɪt/] (.) [I think.]
35 Me: [mhm]
36 Wessam: [/kʊˈvaɪt/] [it's sounds] ↑Russian [((chuckles))]
37 Zaina: [(...)]
38 Me: [mhm it might- it might-]
39 Me: yeah it might be that Germans might (.)
40 Me: want to put the stress on the first syllable.
41 Zaina: [okay_]
42 Me: [like /'ku:vaɪt/]
43 Zaina: /'kʊ:vaɪt/
44 Me: m:ay:be
45 Zaina: /kʊˈvaɪt/

Zaina made a statement about how little Germans knew about her home country, Kuwait. The use of "actually" in line 01 was to introduce a new piece of information, namely, the lack of knowledge about Kuwait. There was no uncertainty, no qualifiers that softened the statement or allowed for ambiguity, but rather quite the opposite: The modifiers she used were to intensify her statement, such as "a lot of people" and "especially". She further compared the situation in Germany with the U.S. (line 02). Her statement was forceful, using sharp downturns in pitch, with brief pauses that punctuated each phrasal unit ("they do" and "for sure"). She did not evoke any outside authorities or sources, but rather she displayed her knowledge with full confidence, distinguishing between herself as an expert on Kuwait and Germans as non-experts. She had established previously that she had been to Germany, and her view of how Germans reacted to her when she talked about Kuwait therefore constituted first-hand knowledge.

Zaina continued by explaining how people in Germany did not understand her when she said "Kuwait", imitating the correction she got with a mocking voice by lengthening the

diphthong in “Kuwait”, adding that it was the same thing she had just said, and laughing. The implication here might have been an unwillingness to accept a correction from people who did not know about her country in the first place and might not have been able to parse her pronunciation because of their lack of knowledge rather than an issue with her pronunciation. She thus acknowledged her learner identity while signalling her suspicion that the supposed experts were not experts in this regard any more than she was.

When she said she still did not understand the difference in line 07, I interpreted that as her soliciting my input, evading the question at first because I myself was not sure of the response. However, after my disclaimer in lines 08 and 10, I tried out the pronunciation to myself in line 15 and offered a pronunciation which she subsequently rejected, thereby challenging my positioning as an expert.

In Excerpt 28, Zaina was talking about the experiences Germany had to offer, in particular what she identified as “authentic” life which, to her, meant rural farm life rather than city life. She came to the conclusion that there was a lot that she wanted to experience but did not know how to access.

Excerpt 28

01 Me:	you have to find the right spots in Germany ((chuckles))
02 Zaina:	yeah ↑that’s the problem=Germany has a lo:t of things
03 Zaina:	<↓but ho:w am I going> to get them
04 Me:	mhm
05 Zaina:	googling them is not easy it’s always-even here all over the world
06 Zaina:	if you wanna go-(.) you wanna (.) experience Amman
07 Zaina:	>you wanna experience Kuwait< you need to know the right people

Zaina described her lack of access to the parts of Germany she was interested in. She phrased this as a question, but I interpreted her intonation less as a question for me and more of a

statement of what she had been wondering to herself—and indeed, she continued describing the steps she had taken to address this herself in line 05. While she clearly and explicitly described Germany as a place with many aspects she had not experienced yet in lines 02 and 03, she reduced this distance in line 05 when she said that it was no different from anywhere else. Difficulties were not a matter of lack of knowledge and cultural understanding but a lack of familiarity with the right people. She therefore positioned herself as an expert, and her expertise was in living abroad. Excerpt 27 from the previous section follows chronologically right after Excerpt 28.

Excerpt 27 (reproduced)

01 Wessam: I think be (1.5) be (.) or: having the authentic experience (.) is::
02 Wessam: (.) all about connecting (.) with the [peop-]with the locals
03 Me: [mhm] mhm
04 Wessam: >connecting with the locals,< I: (.) maybe (.)
05 Wessam: I know there's like the Erasmus and the
06 Zaina: yeah
07 Wessam: those (.) many: fun: ↑things (.) but I don't think that's (.) very authentic,
08 Me: ((chuckles))
09 Zaina: that is uh authentic student life
10 Wessam: yeh [authentic]student [*li*- it's]- yeah
11 Zaina: [all over the world]
12 Me: [that's right]
13 Wessam: [uh: it's ↓yeah] [↓yeah]
14 Me: [I'd say yeah] [mhm]
15 Wessam: that's why [because it's an international] like- LIFEstyle
16 Zaina: [yeh-yeah]
17 Wessam: [for] students (.) maybe
18 Me: [yeah]
19 Wessam: Western life[style]
20 Zaina: [yeah]
21 Wessam: but (.) if you connect with: (.) with the ↑right people (.)
22 Wessam: with the: like with the lo:cals?
23 Me: mhm
24 Wessam: I think you get (.) a good experience
25 Me: and ho:w do you connect with locals=so we had [we- we talked]
26 Zaina: [you tell us] ((laughs))
27 Me: [((laughs))]
28 Wessam: [((laughs)) yeah that's]

29 Zaina:	[((laughs))]	£I'm trying£

When Zaina said in line 26 that I should be the one telling them how to engage with the locals, she brought in an aspect of cultural expertise after all. More explicitly than at any other point in the interview, she positioned me explicitly as the one who should possess the required expertise. By using "us", she included Wessam and again drew the line between German and Middle Eastern people, with me more firmly on one side this time, although her (good-natured) mocking tone once again underlined my non-prototypical membership and my lack of useful expertise.

Following this excerpt, instead of giving an answer I referred them back to previous discussions of how to make connections and asked them about how they expected to interact with people in Germany. Nao (2015) observed that English teachers chatting with Japanese students about their countries of origin used this strategy as a way to cast themselves as experts and retain the authority to confirm or reject the knowledge the students offered in return. While this strategy recognizes the students' knowledge and invites them to share this knowledge, questions do not automatically constitute relinquished authority. Likewise, here, I positioned myself as an expert through my questioning. My evasiveness was also motivated by my aims for this research, as I wanted the students to tell me their ideas without me priming them.

In Excerpt 29, in contrast, I provided unsolicited advice as I mistook a complaint about German weather for a question. We were talking about expectations and surprises when Zaina went to Germany. She said she found the weather difficult to deal with, as she did not know what to wear because the weather changed throughout the day, in addition to the differences in temperature inside and outside. When I suggested layers as the solution, she countered by saying that she hated layers.

Excerpt 29

01 Zaina: oh (.) >the weather<. the >weather<. that I did not [expect]
02 Wessam: [((laughs))]
03 Zaina: like sa:me day. (.) rains. [windy. hot.]
04 Me: [((laughs))]
05 Zaina: like (.) I didn't. know. what to ↑WEA:R
06 Me: ((laughs))
07 Zaina: ↑it was [like w- u- ↑summer:]
08 Me: [we don't] know ↑either: [((laughs))
09 Zaina: [you know you]
10 Zaina: see people in ↑shorts and they're walking normally
11 Zaina: I would people in ↑jackets and like are the only-
12 Zaina: and like when you enter somewhere (.)
13 Me: [((laughs))]
14 Wessam: [((laughs))]
15 Zaina: [like] it's freezing outside and you're sweating insi:de like
16 Me: yes. (.) layer.
17 Zaina: I [↑hate] ↑la:yer:s
18 Me: [that's the secret]
19 Zaina: it's too much it's heavy:
20 Me: ((laughs))

Zaina identified the weather as a problem she did not know how to deal with in Germany. In line 08, I jokingly said "we" did not know either. In line 16, I offered the advice to use layers to adapt to changing weather conditions quickly and labelled this advice a "secret" in line 18. In these three lines, I explicitly and repeatedly positioned myself as German and her as an outsider: first through the use of "we", referring to Germans and including me but excluding her. Next, by giving advice, I positioned myself as someone who possessed relevant practical knowledge for Germany and her as someone in need of such knowledge, even though she was simply describing the people she saw who were apparently not able to agree on an appropriate clothing style, either. Her response in line 17, an emphatic rejection of the suggested layers, was also a rejection of my positioning, as she implicitly told me she did not layer her clothes because she deliberately chose not to, not because she was not aware of the option.

As in the previous interview, soliciting information served different strategic purposes. Questions both signalled existing knowledge of Germans and outlined a gap between "us" and "them". Zaina did not identify with Germany, but neither did she identify as a novice anymore. My position as expert, on the other hand, was contested, as I may not have been a "sufficiently German" member of the "German" category. Overall, however, there were very few questions about Germany. As stated in chapter 4, the situational setting may have prevented questions, as the students may have thought their role was to provide me with answers, not the other way round. In addition, several times both I and the students positioned me as a non-prototypical member with insufficient expertise. Still, Zaina, in particular, indicated gaps in her knowledge through direct questions that showed both her level of knowledge, which allowed her to precisely identify what she was still missing, and her construction of "them" as different from "us".

5.6 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I examined strategies in knowledge displays similar to those employed in Chapter 4, with sometimes quite different effects. Overall, the students in the second group drew on similar membership categories of "German" and a contrasting category, one that is broader than "Jordanian" to encompass Zaina's Kuwaiti identity and may be the equivalent of "Arab", "Mashreqi", or "Middle Eastern". Unlike her peers, however, Zaina positioned herself much more clearly as an expert and questioned my expert status more overtly.

Zaina and Wessam did not delegitimize German as a code to use in conversation with me. Zaina, in particular, revealed where she considered German appropriate and inappropriate to use and included it naturally in her speech, even using it to bridge what she assumed would be a gap in my knowledge of Arabic (and English). The use of German was otherwise restricted to topics related to German and Germany, and once a topic that was covered in German class but not

limited to Germany ("Hotel Mama"). Both Zaina and Wessam claimed equal ownership of German in this mostly English-based conversation.

At the same time, the distinction between the students' ethnic identity and German identity was as strong and explicit as in the first group. Their use of pronouns clearly showed the line they drew. Like their peers, they generally did not position me on either side through the use of pronouns, likely out of politeness or because I was not a prototypical example of a German. However, indirectly but frequently, they categorized me as German, if not always as the ultimate authority on topics related to German and Germany, perhaps because I positioned myself as a non-expert several times. The students' clear positioning as "us" also does not mean they positioned themselves as non-experts. By invoking first- and second-hand knowledge, both displayed their knowledge and positioned themselves at least as non-novices.

In the analysis of the students' hedging behaviour in knowledge displays, I further showed how both students used claims to authority to support their epistemic primacy and access. Zaina showed less hedging and uncertainty than Wessam, both in positive and negative opinions about Germany and Germans, thereby clearly positioning herself as an expert. This became clear again in section 5.4, where I showed that questions and other signalled gaps in knowledge served not merely to solicit information, but also to index the distance between "us" and "them". In addition, questions could also convey knowledge, indicating what someone already knew and what was still unknown. In other words, questions demonstrate where the speaker is located on their path to become an expert, and it is not necessarily at the novice stage. Similarly, I showed typical "teacher" behaviour when I returned questions instead of answering them directly. In doing so, I positioned myself as an expert and retained the authority to evaluate the students' answers.

Overall, Zaina, in particular, made a distinction between expertise on German-related topics and German as a membership category. While she maintained a difference between her identity and German ethnic identity, she frequently claimed expertise on German-related topics, which indicates there may be a third option that is beyond ethnic identity, but not merely located within a grey zone between two membership categories: Instead of *being* German, they were *doing* German. Zaina's first-hand knowledge of Germany was more extensive than that of the other students, and she displayed confidence when she engaged in second-order positioning after rejecting instances of my first-order positioning.

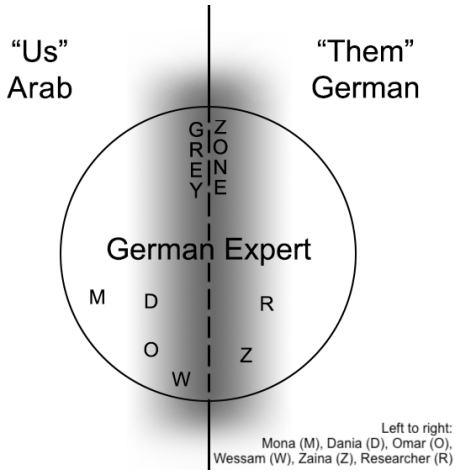
6. Discussion and conclusion

In this dissertation, I have examined the strategies German learners use in knowledge displays to position themselves in relation to German identity. My research questions were intertwined: 1) What strategies do five German learners at the German Jordanian University in Jordan use to signal their knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of the German language and culture? 2) How do these knowledge displays in relation to the learners' concept of German identity contribute to the construction of their own ethnic identity? In this chapter, I will first discuss the general findings, the five participants, and myself as the sixth interactant. Following this, I will discuss my findings in light of previous research and consider the implications for future research as well as for pedagogy.

6.1 General findings

The students established clear lines and maintained them between different, but often overlapping, "us" and "them" relationships. In Figure 2, I approximate these relationships visually, although their positioning, of course, was more dynamic and shifted in conversation. I first discuss the more general processes that emerged as illustrated in Figure 2, then the nuances beyond the illustration.

Figure 2
"Us" versus "them" in positioning



The individual participants' positions are represented by their first initial, with R for myself as the researcher. The categories "us" versus "them" overlapped with "Jordanian/Kuwaiti/Arab/Middle Eastern" and "German/European/Western", but also with "novice" and "expert", as the participants indicated that gaps in knowledge about Germany were cultural gaps as well, and being German correlated with possessing knowledge about Germany, although they demonstrated that the reverse did not need to be true. That is, knowledge about Germany does not make someone German, but being German comes with knowledge about Germany. The ethnic distinction is strict, and the figure, therefore, shows the clear line between "us" and "them". However, it is softened by a grey zone for non-prototypical members of each category, in particular those shaped by international experiences. Furthermore, expert status allowed the students to cross the divide, as it enabled them to *do* German despite not *being* German.

Both interviews took place in different settings, that is, a classroom and a café. In particular, Excerpt 3 showed Omar and myself assuming the roles of student and instructor, where I asked a typical instructor question and Omar responded like a typical student. The matching surroundings—a classroom—may have contributed to this behaviour. The students with their different backgrounds and experiences also reacted differently to similar prompts, and I myself responded differently depending on the situation. Due to the noticeable differences between students, I will discuss their individual strategies and approximate where they typically located themselves through positioning, as illustrated in Figure 2.

6.1.1 Mona

Mona's positioning is illustrated by the letter M in Figure 2. She was comfortable in both English and Arabic, being born in the U.S. and having moved to Jordan later. She sometimes

offered English words when the others were searching for the right word. Learning German was a requirement of her enrollment at the GJU, and her original plan had not involved Germany or Jordan, but rather the U.S. While all three students in her interview group spoke about their worries of facing discrimination, she was aware that she was the most visibly Arab in her group and might face discrimination simply because of her appearance rather than her behaviour. In the interview, she did not take any potentially risky moves that may have invited criticism from me, such as voluntarily using German words. She joined in the conversation when others used German first, however, indicating that she may have preferred certain safety features to be in place, such as someone else testing the waters and checking whether I would criticize them for expressing negative opinions about Germany. Despite uncertainty expressed through extensive hedging, Mona also displayed her knowledge about Germany and German while explicitly drawing a line between "German" and "Jordanian" as categories. Despite exaggerating her lack of knowledge at times to show cultural difference, she demonstrated that she was not a novice , but not an expert yet, either.

6.1.2 Dania

In Figure 2, Dania's positioning is represented by the letter D. As someone who had originally planned to study in Italy, German was not Dania's first choice of language. Throughout the interview, she expressed interest in going to Germany but also frustration regarding the German instruction at GJU. She used German during the interview as a possible face-saving strategy to help Omar who was struggling to pronounce a word in English, thereby demonstrating her German knowledge, but she also added laughter as a disclaimer. While she showed her knowledge and even did so in a high-risk situation where her use of German was unprompted, she did not display high certainty or authority. Her pronoun use clearly and

unambiguously drew a line between “German” and “Jordanian”, positioning her on the Jordanian side of that line.

Under the right conditions, however, this behaviour changed: When I took a step back, and she spoke to Omar directly, they engaged in an animated struggle over the most accurate knowledge of German and who had the authority to express it. Instead of hedging, they “upgraded” their knowledge by citing authoritative sources and rejecting each other’s arguments. When expressing negative opinions and impressions about Germany, Dania also waited until I actually demonstrated that I would not criticize her for it and would not simply accept my explicitly saying so; only then did she start to drop the hedging behaviour. This attentiveness to my reactions and the differences in hedging behaviour based on the interlocutor showed the nuance of emerging expert identities: Dania was not a novice anymore, yet she had not arrived at expert status, either. She was not yet ready to argue against me or take extraordinary risks in my presence, but she was perfectly willing to stand her ground with her peer. At the same time, she clearly maintained the boundary between “Jordanian” and “German” as ethnic membership categories.

6.1.3 Omar

Omar’s positioning is located at the letter O in Figure 2. Despite having more first-hand experience in Germany than the other two students in his interview group, Omar did not exhibit noticeably more certainty or assertiveness in his knowledge displays than Dania did. In part, this may have been on purpose: Hauser (2018), for example, also pointed out that expressions of epistemic uncertainty are purposefully used among Japanese students to avoid creating hierarchies within peer groups. When challenged, however, Omar did invoke his first-hand knowledge as an authoritative source. Like the others, he drew an explicit line between German

and Jordanian membership categories. He spoke as a Jordanian participating in German society, not as someone who wished to cross ethnic membership lines. In Excerpt 07, it became clear that despite overall positive experiences in Germany, he was aware of stereotypes regarding Arab people and considered the public use of Arabic in Germany risky when trying to avoid discrimination. Since he was going to eastern Germany where he expected more racism and discrimination than in western Germany where he had already been, it is possible that he viewed the situation for Arab people in eastern Germany differently.

6.1.4 Wessam

Wessam is located at position W in Figure 2. Wessam had international experience in the U.S., as he spent a year there. He also expressed the most desire of the group to learn German initially and to spend time in Germany. In comparison with Zaina, he was more hesitant to claim authority when he displayed knowledge of Germany or the German language, but under certain circumstances, he was certainly willing to do so, particularly in the event recorded in my field notes in section 5.4 where he declared me to not be a typical German because I did not drink beer. In a situation where we were already speaking German, Wessam inhabited the role of a fully competent German speaker—not an ethnic German, but an expert in German. He called me out for displaying untypical behaviour for a German, displaying both his knowledge of the stereotypes as well as his mastery of the language. As he proved in the same conversation, he was fully capable of hedging appropriately in German, but he did not use hedging devices when he labelled my habits. Interestingly, it was me, not Wessam, who positioned him as Jordanian in response. Here, too, the difference between "being German" and "being an expert on Germany" emerged.

6.1.5 Zaina

The letter Z in Figure 2 shows Zaina's positioning. Zaina had the most extensive experience in Germany of all the participants. She had spent over a year taking German courses in Germany and had visited the country several times. Her willingness to position herself as an expert and question my expertise was more pronounced than any of the others'. She used German in conversation without disclaimers, taking ownership of the language and describing several indicators she considered as markers of proficiency, such as thinking in German or German words being more readily available to her than words in other languages. She did not position herself as a full expert and freely discussed her gaps in knowledge, such as the pronunciation of "Kuwait". However, even in doing so, she knew that she had expertise and was not as readily accepting of mine as the other participants. She had enough proficiency in German to realize that I had limits to my knowledge as well and therefore was comfortable positioning herself as knowledgeable.

At the same time, the distinction between membership categories was just as clear in her positioning as in the others'. Her expertise and her understanding of German culture did not make her German, nor did it give her the desire to be German. She did not seek membership in the sense of assimilation. Instead, she sought the right to participate as herself, a person with extensive international experience, a hybrid identity.

6.1.6 Researcher

Finally, my positioning is illustrated by the letter R. In the first interview, I mostly positioned myself as an expert, instructor, researcher, L1 speaker, and German. The difference between these roles was not always clear, and they were blended in how both I and the students positioned me. This shone through in particular in the questions I asked, the students' reactions

to these questions, my pronoun use, my lack of hedging, and my readiness to offer information. Even in the first interview, however, the students tended to avoid positioning me explicitly as German. For example, they would speak about Germans using the third-person plural pronoun "they", which would exclude me as their interlocutor. This pronoun choice may have been to avoid ascribing certain attributes to me directly without knowing me personally—not necessarily always negative attributes, but also neutral or positive ones, such as punctuality or certain traditions.

The situation is made more complex because the students did not see me as particularly representative, that is, they located me in a grey zone rather than a category of unambiguously German people. In the second interview, this pattern of positioning me as non-representative can be observed most clearly, as Zaina and Wessam not only excluded me from the category "German" through the use of pronouns, but Zaina also directly corrected me when I assumed her statement about Germans was automatically about me as well (Excerpt 23 in section 5.3). During class, Wessam explicitly labelled my habit of not drinking beer as "not typically German" (Excerpt 5.4). In this last example especially, Wessam's behaviour cannot be explained as a polite avoidance of attributes that I might disagree with, as he was jokingly admonishing me for being insufficiently German.

Given the students' overall comments on international experiences and how those remove a person from their culture's traditional practices and values which, as they expressed, are changed not only by going abroad but also through prolonged exposure to what they consider an international space, such as a university, it seems they considered me as inhabiting a hybrid identity. My language proficiencies beyond German, the only language most typically associated with Germans, likely did not play a role here. English seemed to be a tool that the participants

did not consider special and that, despite not being a language they associate with German identity, also did not subtract from this identity. For example, in Excerpt 24, both Zaina and Wessam demonstrated that they took the German students' proficiency in English for granted, as a skill detached from culture.

Overall, the way the students positioned me shifted: Sometimes, I was unambiguously "them", sometimes I was more "them" than "us", and sometimes I was excluded from "them" altogether. These changes occurred based on how important different aspects of identity were at any given moment. Increased positioning of me as a non-representative German affected the students' perceptions of me as well as my own positioning as an expert, leading Zaina and Wessam, in particular, to question my expert status.

6.2 "Us" versus "them"

"Us" and "them" represented both ethnic identity and expertise, with the former always maintained and the latter more in flux. The ethnic categories are named based on how the students themselves referred to them. The topics of the interviews made the distinction between Arabs and Germans salient most of the time. In this section, I first discuss the linguistic resources the participants employed to construct and draw on ethnic categories and to position themselves in relation to these. I then discuss the strategies the participants used to signal their expertise.

6.2.1 Being German: Ethnic identities

The idea of "us" and "them" in the ethnic sense was constructed most noticeably through pronouns which they used to categorize themselves and others, as the "us" and "them" distinction was made literal. Through epistemic stances such as hedging in statements about Germany, the German language, and German identity, and also by soliciting information or otherwise revealing gaps in their knowledge, the students further defined the distance between

"us" and "them". The gap in knowledge then became a cultural gap as well, indexing the distance between the students and Germans.

"Us" corresponded in both interview groups to the overlapping, but not identical, categories "Jordanian", "Arab", and "Middle Eastern", while "them" referenced the category "German" and sometimes "European" or "Western". In the second interview group, the category "Kuwaiti" was often in alignment with "Jordanian", although sometimes it was distinct as Zaina negotiated her identity in relation to her Jordanian peer in an interview with me, a German. Zaina sometimes strove to distinguish herself from Jordanians. In one such case, she located "Jordanian" closer to "German" than "Kuwaiti": As a Kuwaiti student studying abroad in Jordan, it was more relevant in this instance to stress her distance from Jordanians than from Germans. Other times she located all three categories at an equal distance from each other. Generally, however, "German" was a distinct category, and the students made no attempt to claim membership nor expressed a desire to do so.

Although on some occasions I positioned myself as belonging to a more hybrid identity, in general I positioned myself as German. The students, however, frequently excluded me when they spoke about Germans and located me in a grey zone. Instead of the plural "you", they used "they" to speak about Germans. This may have been out of politeness in order to avoid explicitly other-positioning me, but generally it became clear that they did not consider me a typical and representative member of the category "German" and that they located me outside of this category. Nonetheless, I seemed to be more "them" than "us".

Overall, the students continuously maintained the "us" versus "them" distinction in an ethnic sense. In other words, being German was distinct from them, and while the students in the first group sometimes differentiated between themselves and who they labelled "traditional

Jordanians", they made no attempt to "become German" nor did they express the wish to do so, instead occupying their own space within the category "being Jordanian" as well-educated and open-minded young people, as discussed in the next section.

6.2.2 Doing German: Novice and expert identities

The distinction between novices and experts of German is another example of the "us" versus "them" distinction, partially overlapping with the distinction between students and instructors of German, and sometimes with ethnic identities as well. Unlike "us" and "them" in the ethnic sense, the students "do being an expert" but still orient themselves towards the novice-expert distinction not necessarily as a dichotomy, but rather as a spectrum. The orientation towards expertise and becoming experts allowed the students who did not identify as German to cross the line between themselves and Germans, thus subverting the distinction: Instead of *being* German, they were *doing* German.

The participants positioned themselves clearly as students but not entirely as novices, though typically they located themselves further from expert status, for example through strategies to indicate epistemic stances. In the first group, such strategies primarily included hedging devices to clarify epistemic access and primacy. That is, the participants hedged to express uncertainty or to avoid claiming authority in my presence, possibly in order to not draw criticism from me or risk offending me. This in itself showed that they located authority over knowledge about Germany with me, that I was a member of "them", not "us". Fittingly, when I invited them to share knowledge—a right that I had due to them positioning me as "them"—they were less hesitant, most noticeably so when I showed evidence that I was not going to judge them rather than merely telling them I would not. Another strategy to position themselves as "not German" was adding laughter. In these instances, the use of German was unsolicited and

therefore risky. Laughter served as a device to disclaim authority over the language and signal a not-serious use instead. This may have been to avoid drawing criticism for the appropriateness of the use of German; while speaking German was a knowledge display and positioned the students as non-novices, the laughter showed that they did not claim equal rights to this knowledge in my presence. The students did not always add laughter as a disclaimer, such as in the first group in which I established a familiar setting, that is, a classroom with me as an L1 speaker of German asking the students questions about their experiences in Germany. This was a prompt or an invitation to share their knowledge and in doing so, the language. While they accepted this invitation and thereby closed the distance between "us" and "them" to some degree, the necessity of an invitation itself indicates that the students saw a difference between my right to the language and their own, a difference between "us" and "them".

In knowledge displays, revealing knowledge gaps also served a purpose. First, depending on the context, questions could position participants as instructor and students. For example, if I ask a class "how many states does Germany have?", it is generally understood that I am not soliciting this information to fill my own knowledge gap, but rather to invite them to participate and gauge their knowledge level. This question positions me as the instructor and the people I ask as students, also because it would be highly inappropriate to ask this of a fellow instructor as it would challenge their expertise. In the interviews, I used this way of asking questions, or even answering questions with another question, to position myself as an expert and instructor (see Nao, 2015). In return, the students asked very few direct questions, although they may not have felt that it was appropriate to do so in a research interview. Only when invited did the students in the first interview group ask questions. Of course, my invitation to ask itself meant that I considered myself knowledgeable enough to answer. Furthermore, when students revealed gaps

in their knowledge or in their understanding of Germany or the German language, they not only positioned themselves as not-yet experts, but more importantly, as not German. Both interview groups used gaps in knowledge to indicate gaps between cultures: The bigger the knowledge gap, the bigger the cultural gap.

However, the students did not always indicate knowledge gaps. Zaina, in particular, frequently invoked her first-hand experience as well as other knowledge to make authoritative statements about Germany. She also confirmed my own knowledge displays and displayed confidence that her perspective would add something to mine or signalled that her knowledge level matched mine. At the same time, in this second interview I used more hedging devices to signal the uncertainty of my knowledge, which may have contributed to making the students more comfortable to share their own. Wessam generally hedged more than Zaina but also accepted invitations to share his knowledge. It seems that of the five students, Zaina most clearly positioned herself as an expert, or almost-expert, whereas the other four students located themselves more in-between novices and experts. Although they were not complete novices, they may not have been certain enough to defend their knowledge against my potential criticism and so had to avoid drawing my criticism.

Zaina and Wessam demonstrated that the categories “German” and “German expert” did not have to overlap, even with me present and actively involved in conversation. Both Wessam and Zaina used German without disclaimers and demonstrated a high level of understanding regarding the appropriate context of use. In one instance, a German word was more readily available to Wessam than the English expression, and he corrected himself to use the English word. This showed both his knowledge of the German word and the appropriate context. Zaina, on her part, expressed her frustration with not being able to use German freely without being

judged by her peers, indicating that she saw herself as both proficient and having ownership of the language. In contrast to the first group, Zaina and Wessam used German freely and appropriately, if rarely. Still, they took ownership of German as part of their linguistic repertoire and did not make the use of German dependent on my reaction. In their case, the novice-expert distinction of "us" and "them" was blurred, while the ethnic distinction was still intact.

Interestingly, I myself did not always claim full authority and expertise of the German language when talking with the second group. While I was positioned as possessing certain rights to knowledge—whether that was because I was from Germany, an L1 speaker, or an instructor and researcher, as these categories overlapped for me—in one instance I told the students that I did not know the correct pronunciation of a word. I blamed this on having lived abroad for so long, and in turn, Zaina did not accept another attempt at my positioning myself as knowledgeable, further demonstrating her more egalitarian attitude towards the use of German in this group. A lack of hedging and responding to pieces of information by saying they already possessed that information were also ways to signal closeness to expert status.

The participants were clearly attuned to my reactions, as they carefully navigated around me to avoid criticism or offense. In Excerpt 15 in section 4.5, however, I took a step back by not grasping the meaning of a question quickly enough. In response, the participants turned to one another as interlocutors and started arguing among themselves. In this instance, my role became insignificant, and their hedging behaviour dropped noticeably; on the contrary, they used linguistic devices to upgrade their claims to authority rather than express uncertainty by citing first- and second-hand knowledge and using intensifying words to lend authoritative weight to these sources. This, then, became yet another "us" versus "them" situation, in which the students negotiated their group-internal expert status. "Us" and "them" corresponded to "expert" and

"more expert" in this case, or "expert with theoretical knowledge" and "expert with practical knowledge".

6.2.3 Omnirelevance and category stability

The frequent and quick shifts in positioning demonstrate the concept of omnirelevance. Certain membership categories are available at any time and can be referenced if needed, but they do not always play the most salient role. In the context of this study, the different overlapping "us" and "them" categories, namely "Arab" and "German", "novice" and "expert", and "first-hand knowledge expert" and "second-hand knowledge expert", were always available but not drawn on equally all the time. When the students negotiated among themselves, they focused exclusively on first-hand and second-hand expert status, whereas they alternated more between all the "us" and "them" categories in direct conversation with me. This shows that what is relevant in the moment changes with the situation itself. At the same time, I showed that ethnic categories remained fairly stable and the distinction between the students and being German were maintained throughout and referenced when needed, whereas expert status was situationally bound. This latter category is where students had leeway to negotiate: with invitation, growing expertise, and/or me taking a step back, students were able to assert their authority, take ownership of their knowledge, and do German without being German.

6.3 Significance of the findings

In this dissertation, I showed that "being German" and "doing German", ethnic identity and expert status, may coincide in a person, as was the case with me, but that was not necessarily the case every time. The students signalled a strong sense of being distinct from the membership category "German", that is, "being German", establishing a large metaphorical distance between them and this category. They typically did not attempt to cross this line. However, they did

position themselves as experts, or experts-in-progress, thereby "doing German". The more they did so, the more independent they were from my judgement and evaluation, and the freer they were to express themselves. German was a tool in their knowledge repertoire and although it was not necessarily tied to German *ethnic* identity, it was an index of German *expert* identity. In other words, speaking German does not exclusively belong to people who are German, but also to people who are knowledgeable about Germany and the German language. Expertise and proficiency in German thereby become a way to subvert the strict lines between ethnic identities.

A similar distinction between ethnic identity and expertise was observed by Nishizaka (2011/1995). In his study of radio program interviews between "Japanese" interviewers and "foreign student" interviewees, employing methods of Membership Categorization Analysis, he found that the interlocutors referenced "Japanese" and "foreigner" as categories to which they oriented themselves, but they also made the distinction between "specialist" and "lay person". The borders of this distinction, as was the case with my study, can correlate with ethnic categories, but do not necessarily do so. Nishizaka's argument was mainly a criticism of essentialist notions applied by researchers who presuppose interculturality without examining whether interculturality is made relevant in the interaction in question. In his data as well as in mine, interactants indeed made interculturality relevant and could draw on cultural or ethnic identities at any time, but these identity categories were not the most salient categories all the time. Apart from the distinction between members and non-members of ethnic identities, expert and non-expert status may be more salient depending on the situation. The author also discussed normatively expected entitlements to certain knowledge and attitudes, such as finding the same behaviour ordinary in someone positioning as a Japanese person and troublesome in someone constructed as a foreigner.

Similarly, Nishizaka (2011/1995) pointed out that ownership of the language is detached from proficiency and attached to ethnic identity:

> The ownership of the language is the normative expectation that the Japanese should be able not only to understand better, but to evaluate the understandability of the Japanese language used by the non-Japanese, and that they should be entitled to give advice about how to speak Japanese, appraise a foreigner's Japanese and so on. For example, it would sound unnatural, although not impossible and maybe even reasonable, if a non-Japanese, whose mother tongue is not Japanese but who speaks Japanese at least as fluently as a native Japanese, were to say to the latter, "You speak Japanese really well." On the contrary, however poor a speaker a native might be, he or she should be able to use the compliment when speaking with the non-Japanese (at least more) naturally. Note that I am not saying that only the Japanese have the exclusive right to use the Japanese language in an authentic way. The ownership of the language is a normative expectation, which is used by the participants as a resource for organizing their interaction. (pp. 311-312)

These expectations were present in my dissertation as well. However, Zaina had progressed to a point where she was able to show confidence in her own German proficiency without relying on the L1 speaker's judgement. Nishizaka's (2011/1995) study and this dissertation both employed Membership Categorization Analysis with some similar findings, and I will discuss membership categories here further.

As Schegloff (2007) states, membership categories are "protected against induction" (p. 469), meaning that members that do not fit the common-sense knowledge attached to a category are considered exceptions rather than a reason to revise the knowledge collection for this

category. This could be observed in my data: When I was deemed to behave in unexpected ways or displayed apparently atypical characteristics, the students moved me into a third category, a grey zone or hybrid space, rather than correcting the category "German". They themselves were simultaneously moving further away from the prototypical Jordanian or Kuwaiti. However, it should be noted that it is possible to revise these categories. The students, after all, collected information and corrected their knowledge about these categories all the time during their studies, for example when they realized Germany may be less safe when it comes to pickpocketing and theft. While stereotypes may require a critical mass of counter-examples or information to dissolve, and cognitive biases are obstacles that are difficult to overcome, it does not seem impossible to do so.

The grey zone or hybrid space where students—and sometimes I—self-positioned deserves some closer attention as well. Much work has been done on language learner identities in the context of globalization (see Higgins, 2011). Higgins (2011) argued that static categories such as "target culture" do not sufficiently capture the realities of what she named "hybrid, in-between, and transcultural identities" (p. 2). She proposed that "rather than linking identity tightly with clear-cut nationalities, ethnicities, or cultures" (p. 2), we need to look beyond, complementing the aforementioned categories with the more flexible idea of interconnecting "scapes", that is, "dimensions of cultural flow" (Appadurai, 1990, p. 296) that are not objectively defined but subjectively regarded and that create new identity zones rather than immobile categories. She also pointed out that this concept of hybrid identities merely creates more room and flexibility rather than replacing traditional identities. In the context of this dissertation, the default assumption that the aforementioned concepts are clear-cut is present and explicit in language learning educational material, the classroom discourse, and, most importantly, it was

shared by the participants. The students clearly demonstrated a tight adherence to what they considered clear-cut membership categories. The Japanese learners conversing with non-Japanese L1 English instructors in Nao's (2015) study similarly showed a sharp distinction between the category "Japanese" and the respective English speaker's country of origin. Although not the focus of her study, she noted that while the students expressed interest in English-speaking countries, they never once expressed a desire to view these places and their people as anything but distinct from them.

The question remains if the grey zone that the students in my study allowed for can be considered in the context of scapes, specifically, ethnoscapes. It seems that international experiences and contacts play a role which may be in line with Higgin's (2011) concept. The students assigned me to such a zone because I was not a sufficiently representative member of the category "German" according to their collection of knowledge of the category. Their own positioning as German experts rather than as members of a German identity group may further support a more fluid concept such as that of scapes, with the caveat that they established and maintained firm and explicit lines around the category "German". This may shift in time and possibly even during or after their sojourn. Other participant groups may exhibit a different orientation towards grey zones or hybrid identities, in particular those with some German heritage in their family tree who might "be German" without "doing German", or those who can "pass" as German (for a brief explanation what makes this term problematic, see Chapter 2) and thus conform to the (white) Germans' idea of being German. These groups may adopt hybrid identities more readily or construct (white) ethnic categories with more flexibility and permeability and play with German identity or aspects of it as part of their own identity. However, this group in this dissertation repeatedly signalled their awareness that they will be

seen as different. There was no talk whatsoever about "blending in". Mona explicitly cited her physical appearance as a factor that may subject her to discrimination. Both Omar and Dania also were worried about facing discrimination. What they accepted as common knowledge about Germany does not grant them any room for blending identities, even if they wanted to. While Dania once in the interview acknowledged that touching different lives—"a whole country" of different people, as she put it—would necessarily change them, these changes did not necessarily result in hybrid identities. The students acknowledged the impact that their sojourn would have on them, but they did not envision themselves crossing ethnic boundaries despite appreciating some aspects of what they attributed to being German and even looking forward to experiencing these.

The students thus constructed Germans in Germany as an imagined community (see Anderson, 2006), a group of people they considered affiliated with each other and one they imagined getting in touch with during their sojourn. What they did not expect was to become a member of this community. The German language itself was a tool that for them was somewhat separated from German identity. Thus, as students from non-German-speaking countries, the participants did not necessarily seek to be or to become German. Several expressed excitement about their year abroad, but not, for example, to immigrate and integrate. Some of them were in fact quite firm about not wanting to live in a German-speaking country for a long time. Nevertheless, they were open to "doing German", interacting with Germans and participating in their political, educational, and occupational discourses in different ways and on different levels. They positioned themselves, and were positioned by others, as belonging to a community of people who were knowledgeable about German-speaking countries, who were "doing German" rather than being German as members of a German-Jordanian institution, who would soon live or

who had lived in German-speaking countries, who were learners and speakers of the German language. As such, even learners uninterested in joining the target culture(s) may construct an imagined community of the "German sphere", transcending both German identity and professional identity in a German language context, but possibly containing both.

Studies examining the identity construction of students in multilingual study abroad contexts showed that being Othered or being misunderstood may lead them to retreat into a national identity (Craig, 2010; Isabelli-García, 2006; Jackson, 2008; Kinginger, 2010; Talburt & Stewart, 1999; Wilkinson, 1998), while students who were able to consider cultural differences positively may adopt intercultural or hybrid identities (Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2004; Pitts, 2009). In my analysis, I showed that all the participants, regardless of whether they had experience in Germany or not, maintained the same strict division of ethnic boundaries. Although not all cultural differences were considered negatively, they also expressed a keen awareness of potential discrimination and Othering they may face. This study cannot answer whether the strict divisions of ethnic boundaries and the awareness of potential discrimination are related, but the findings warrant further linguistic studies with a focus on turn-by-turn identity construction and positioning to tease apart the nuances of "intercultural" or "hybrid" identities and examine whether a similar distinction between "doing" and "being" is present in other groups.

Previous studies have also found that students may focus more on their national identity at the beginning of their study abroad program, but later may transition to a more flexible, hybrid identity (Murphy-Lejeune, 2001). In contrast, Plews (2015), in his study of Canadian students in Germany, found that their strengthened national identity was tied to multiculturalism and multilingualism. He suggested that acquiring German and intercultural competence made the

students even more Canadian. The studies cited above largely focused on North American students, with the exception of Craig (2010) who focused on language assistants from the Caribbean, Jackson (2008) who worked with Chinese learners, and Murphy-Lejeune (2001) with her work on European Erasmus students. My dissertation therefore adds another perspective from a lesser studied group of participants. This is important because their experience is different than the experience of white students from the Global North. Plews (2015), for example, found that some white Canadian students deliberately tried to conceal their Canadian identity in Germany so that they may be read (or "pass") as German in order to increase their interaction with L1 German speakers and keep their interest, or to avoid drawing heightened scrutiny as foreigners (p. 292). In his study, the students did cross the borders of ethnic membership categories despite retaining a Canadian sense of self. By "doing German" as well as "becoming German", they were "being Canadian" because being Canadian meant being multicultural to the students. That means there was a crossing of ethnic identities that went beyond the more instrumental "doing German". In my dissertation, the Arab students, unlike the Canadian students, did not view themselves as inherently multicultural. Their international orientation mattered to them as well-educated, modern young Arabs, but it was not inherently part of their ethnic identity. Moreover, the white Canadian students' strategy of "blending in" by concealing their Canadian identity was an option available to them because they were seen as white in most available contexts for sojourners in Germany. Some of the participants in my study, such as Mona, may have found circumstances in which they could also conceal their identity, but probably not in most daily encounters. Plews's (2015) study therefore may be considered evidence for the argument to include more diverse voices in study abroad research, as racial

factors likely played a role in whether learners perceive crossing ethnic boundaries as an option. However, further study is needed.

My dissertation revealed a distinct difference between ethnic identity and expert status. The students showed they were perfectly willing to identify as almost-experts with growing confidence regarding their knowledge. This expert status included intercultural competence. For them, the German experience was not necessarily linked to their ethnic identity, especially not in the way it appeared to be for Plews's (2015) Canadian students, but knowledge of German and studying abroad in Germany contributed to their overall expertise. Finally, it was this expertise and expert status that allowed them to subvert the otherwise strict distinction between them and "Germans" to some degree. While studying abroad may involve shifting and reimagining ethnic identities for some sojourners, my dissertation shows that at least for the students I interviewed, it had nothing to do with wanting to be German but with their identities as open-minded and well-educated Arab students. They were internationally-minded in the sense that they showed curiosity about the world and understood the economic and personal advantages of studying and even working abroad. In that regard, they displayed characteristics of the concept of "cosmopolitanism" as defined by Guardado (2018), "a symbiotic blend of cultures" that "allows individuals to draw on the country of origin as a source of identity", but which relies on a shared view that "all humans should see themselves as members of one community—one group—and that this community should be nurtured and protected" (pp. 221-222). The students in this study certainly fit these criteria in some ways, especially since the idea of cosmopolitanism does not mean an egalitarian blend of cultures but instead allows for one or two cultures to be dominant factors in an individual's identity. They displayed an orientation towards English as a global language, which Guardado considered a prerequisite for cosmopolitanism (p. 224), but they also

saw it as encroaching on their identities as Arabic speakers (a view they said was shared in particular by their parents' generation). As for German, the participants were all actively negotiating the space it may inhabit. For all of them, this was expressed through their code-switching during an interview with a German speaker, and they showed that German was a tool in their repertoire as experts-in-progress of German. For Zaina, it also meant exploring how her growing proficiency increasingly allowed her to claim the identity of a German speaker, while discovering her peers who also spoke German as an additional language did not welcome her use of German. While German may have enabled her to gain more international options for communication, her attempts to use German as a tool outside of the community of L1 German speakers were not always successful.

The students valued international education and experiences. Still, it seems that due to the discriminatory views, prejudices and Othering the students described receiving not only from Germans but also from Europeans or "Westerners", they may have been hesitant at the point of the study to fully adopt a cosmopolitan identity. This is an aspect that is particularly important to investigate in contexts of the Global South. Furthermore, the students' anticipation of becoming a target of discrimination and prejudice warrants further discussion. The problems the students were expecting are referred to as "face problematics and dialectics" in Identity Management Theory (Imahori & Cupach, 2005), which proposes four types of face-threatening experiences: *Identity freezing* as cultural identities are constrained (for example, due to stereotypes or reduction to one's cultural identity), *nonsupport problematic* when one's positive face is threatened because one's cultural identities are ignored, *self-other face dialectic*, that is, "dialectical tension between supporting one's own face versus the partner's face related to their cultural identities"; and a *positive-negative face dialectic*, referring to "a dialectical tension

between supporting the partner's negative face or positive face" (Imahori & Cupach, 2005, pp. 199-200). The students I interviewed clearly expressed that they expected to experience identity freezing.

In regard to difficulties students abroad may face in relation to their national identity, previous studies reported students having to correct people when they mistakenly assumed their national and cultural identity, for example, students from Hong Kong in the United Kingdom (Jackson, 2008), Caribbean students in France (Craig, 2010), and Canadian students in Germany (Plews, 2015). Such corrections fall under facework strategies—specifically, education about one's identity—to cope with face problematics such as identity freezing. As I showed in the interview data, the participants of my dissertation expected this to happen as well, discussing stereotypes people held about Middle Easterners or the ignorance they had of individual countries. Some of them drew on previous experiences, though not all of them had been to Germany. While Kinginger (2010) reported that her American student participants for the most part had not considered how their host country would construct and react to the image of Americans until they actually were confronted with these attitudes and experienced them first-hand, the same is decidedly not true for the students in Jordan. They had given extensive thought to their reception and the image people may have of them. In part, they were encouraged to do so within the German curriculum at the university. However, Zaina addressed this herself: In Jordan and Kuwait, people are aware of issues, attitudes, beliefs, cultural products, and other characteristics of European and North American societies to a much higher degree than vice versa. It is because North America and parts of Europe are culturally, politically, and economically dominant in the world, such that its citizens do not need to focus as much on countries with lesser power. Jordanian cultural products hardly ever make it into North America

and Europe, while the reverse is true all the time. The existence of the GJU itself is an example of this. A German university in Jordan is considered prestigious and beneficial, while the reverse is unthinkable. This shows the importance of including diverse voices in study abroad research, as hegemonic and global dynamics shape students' perspectives and determine the knowledge and view of the world necessary for different people in different parts of the world. Focusing on diverse groups of sojourners gives us a more complete view of the processes involved in studying abroad.

Lastly, my dissertation contributed to the field methodologically. While there are a few studies applying Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis to the study of language learners abroad (e.g., Nishizaka, 2011/1995), identity and study abroad research only sporadically uses turn-based analyses. While Plews (2015) did consider not only what was said but also the linguistic repertoire used to construct identity; he did not examine the fine nuances in the circumstances that can affect students' positioning turn-by-turn, as my analysis showed. It would therefore be beneficial to the field to include more approaches that employ elements of Conversation Analysis, such as Interactional Sociolinguistics.

To summarize, I showed a distinction between "being German" and "doing German". Both can occur within the same person, but for the student participants of this study, this was not the case. They were doing German, if sometimes still hesitantly, but they were not German. They left space for hybrid identities primarily when a person did not fit neatly into membership categories. Because the strict categorization of ethnic identities may be more fluid and flexible for other groups and is shaped by hegemonic dynamics and discourses, it is important to include more diverse voices to gain a more complete and honest picture of study abroad and the language

learning process. It is especially helpful to consider fine-grained analytical approaches such as Interactional Sociolinguistics to uncover such phenomena in the data.

6.4 Implications

This dissertation has implications for language teaching and study abroad programs. I showed in my analysis that for the participants, L2 socialization (see Duff, 2011), in the sense of ethnic or cultural socialization, meant seeking competence or expertise, and for some—but not all—the ability to participate in German society, but not membership. In other words, they may not have wanted to "be German", but rather they wanted to know how to "do German", an important distinction that reflects an instrumental motivation rather than an integrative motivation which has implications for language education practitioners. It is therefore necessary to differentiate between L2 socialization in the sense of target culture socialization and in the context of communities of practice. The students considered their need to acquire "normative target language forms [and] values, ideologies, identities, stances, affective states, and practices associated with the language and its users in particular communities of practice" (Duff, 2011, p. 566) as limited to their practical interactions in Germany as students abroad, and their sojourn itself was seen as instrumental to their education. It would be interesting to compare their motivations and goals post-sojourn to their stances pre-sojourn, as these might well have changed. Classroom education, however, may benefit from the knowledge of their pre-sojourn stances in order to support students adequately in their goals. We need to be aware of the spectrum of desires attached to studying abroad in order to prepare learners for the experience. That is, we need to know more about what it means to live abroad in terms of identity construction and adjust what possible identities textbooks, classroom instruction, and program structures are enabling learners to do and to be.

Learning how attuned the students are to an expert's reactions—whatever qualifies them as an expert, be it L1 status or the authority of their position as instructor—showed us how we may aid students in classroom and other instructional settings. Refraining from judgement, inviting learners to participate, and acknowledging the students' own knowledge about the target culture may encourage and support students to see themselves becoming experts. This expertise may be particularly important for those students who do not want to cross membership categories and incorporate aspects of the target culture identity into their own, as a sense of expertise may help them subvert membership categories and thus build their own space. In the classroom context, learners are agents who construct and negotiate "social relations (e.g., hierarchical relations), ideologies (e.g., inalienable rights of the individual), and identities (e.g., good student)" (Willett, 1995, p. 475). In my analysis, the students demonstrated agency, but those who did not position themselves as full experts or near-experts also showed hesitance to display their knowledge. It took invitations and, just as importantly, a proven and demonstrated restraint from me to not judge them before they showed more willingness to position themselves with more certainty.

Administrators and practitioners in language and study abroad programs may be able to support learners by being mindful of the "us" versus "them" dichotomy, in particular in the sense of non-Germans versus Germans, that is all too easily reproduced and reinforced. They should create additional opportunities for learners to inhabit spaces in relation to the target language, not necessarily nor exclusively as members, but as experts and mediators as well. In addition, the "us" versus "them" dichotomy in the sense of novices and experts does not always need to be strict and impermeable, in particular as the field of pedagogy is moving away from understanding the instructor as the primary authority, filling the students with knowledge as if

they were empty vessels. Instead, our goal is now to encourage co-creation of knowledge, but despite our best intentions, our constructed selves as instructors may occasionally get in the way.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the frequent expressions of fear and worry by Arab students moving to Germany. Instructors for the most part are already aware of these, and they have even been documented in the German press. While I cannot say with certainty where the students' awareness of the potential discrimination they might face in Germany originated, the finding that this discrimination weighed heavily on their minds is important and invites us to conduct further research on the messages learners receive and what impact the messages have on their learning progress. I would like to stress how important it is to support students not just as individual instructors, but through systematic and institution-wide measures and acknowledgement, not by glossing over these fears, but by creating curricula designed to voice them and address them honestly, and by providing resources in the event something does happen to the students. Several theories of intercultural communication examine and propose strategies to cope with misunderstandings and threats to one's identity. For example, Identity Management Theory (Imahori & Cupach, 2005) has identified strategies to address specific face problematics. Pre-study abroad courses could use such descriptive insights and turn them into learning moments by discussing fictional or reported situations with learners and by identifying strategies learners want to adopt should such a situation arise. In my data, identity freezing was expected by the participants, but other face problematics may not have been salient enough for them to express concern in that regard. Explicit inclusion of intercultural communication theories may provide learners with the tools to anticipate and reflect on their experiences, providing security and predictability and also strategies to cope. Other practical support may include information on local resources in Germany, for example, university contacts such as *Gleichstellungsbeauftragte*

(equal opportunities officers) and *Antidiskriminierungsstellen* (anti-discrimination offices), organizations against right-wing violence, psychological counseling services, information on students' rights, and general measures for empowerment and resilience.

6.5 Limitations

One limitation of the data I collected is the lack of video. Since the students of the second interview group chose a public café for our recording, I chose not to include video in order to avoid accidentally filming other people. However, as Dailey-O'Cain & Sluchinski (2023) pointed out, body language is crucial to fully understand interactional positioning. Similarly, the data collected by Hauser (2018) also showed that gestures and body orientations are vital for understanding interactions. Video may not always be feasible, and in cases such as mine the comfort of the participants took precedence, so the limits imposed by the physical surroundings must be considered. However, future research should strive to include multimodal data if possible.

I addressed the language choice in the interviews in Chapter 3, but I will reflect on it more here. As I said, I made the choice to speak English with the students because they were all fluent in it and because there is an expectation to speak English with white foreigners such as myself. That means the language I based my analysis on was not the L1 for any of the participants, including myself (with the possible exception of Mona, who was born in the U.S., though she identified Arabic as her L1). The application of Interactional Sociolinguistics to data in English as an additional language is a valid approach. Although there may be some assumptions that additional language speakers do not have full command over their additional language and therefore the analysis of their speech might be flawed, there is ample evidence that this is not the case. Additional language speakers may use a language differently than an L1

speaker in a lingua franca situation, such as by using increased self-correction of grammar possibly due to "faith in the positive role of grammatical correctness in facilitating intelligibility" (Mauranen, 2011/2006, p. 254). However, that does not mean their language output cannot be appropriately analyzed. For example, I was able to compare Wessam's ability to use hedging devices in German in different situations and conclude that he knew what he was doing. In particular, in light of the topic of this dissertation, I join Mauranen (2011/2006) in her argument that "we need to break out of the confines of accepting only the native speaker as worth investigating, and above all stop considering second or foreign language users as eternal 'learners' on an interminable journey toward perfection in a target language" (p. 254). Not only was the communication in the interviews clearly successful and analyzable, the participants themselves found English unproblematic and not as a primary factor in intercultural misunderstandings involving humour, as demonstrated in Excerpt 24.

English had advantages that I did not anticipate but nevertheless benefitted from. For example, I did not expect the students to switch to German at all, but when they did, it was meaningful for my analysis. Similarly, their use of Arabic to address their peers instead of me was a helpful cue as well. Conducting the interview in Arabic (which would not have been possible for me) or in German would have resulted in a different study altogether, as these languages come with different affordances in interaction, such as switches to other languages indexing closeness or distance as described above. Using German would have limited their range of expression but also would have had potential to uncover other nuances, for example in word searching or self-correcting behaviour. Arabic could have revealed in more detail Zaina's positioning as Kuwaiti in relation to Jordanians through the varieties of Arabic used. The limitation therefore is the choice of *any* of three theoretically possible languages, as this choice

will inherently change the study. This illustrates what Bucholtz and Hall (2010) said, as I discussed in Chapter 2: Any account of identity construction is partial, situated, and constantly shifting, as the principle of partialness postulates (p. 25). I wish to stress that this dissertation is such a partial account of identity, situated at a particular time and in a particular context.

6.6 Conclusion

Focusing on knowledge displays allowed me to see how the students established and recognized "German" as a membership category, how they rejected membership, and also how they claimed or were in the process of claiming expert status. Instead of being German (or wanting to be German), they were doing German. Being and doing German overlapped for me but were distinct for them. In addition, I was able to show that beyond the categories "Jordanian/Kuwaiti/Arab/Middle Eastern" on the one hand and "German" on the other, there is a grey zone that is inhabited by people shaped by international experiences who move beyond the culture and customs of their own ethnic group or country. Furthermore, expertise regarding Germany can be a way to subvert rigid membership categories and serve as a tool for learners to carve out their own space.

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Appendix A

Interview guide for students

Do you think about identity?

What do you think about identities portrayed in the German textbook? In media? In politics?

Which languages do you speak?

Why did you decide to learn German?

What do you think of learning German?

Why did you choose the GJU?

Have you been to Germany?

Tell me about your experiences in Germany.

What are your expectations regarding your year in Germany?

How do you expect to make friends in Germany?

Do you think it's going to be difficult for you to make friends in Germany?

Do you see Germany as a multicultural country?

Do you think about finding a German partner? A job in Germany?

What difficulties do you expect in Germany?

How do you think you will overcome difficulties?

How does motivation help overcome difficulties?

How does motivation change?

Appendix B

Interview guide for the instructor

Interview at the beginning of the course

Can you tell me about your experiences learning languages and living in different countries?

Why did you learn these languages? Why did you choose these countries?

How do you see yourself in terms of national or cultural identity?

Do you think about identity?

Do you think about the image of Germany the textbook conveys?

Do you think about what the topics the textbook covers in B1 communicate to the students?

Why have you chosen additional material for class and skipped topics from the textbook?

What do you want to convey to the students about Germany?

What do you think about how the current German department represents German identity?

What do you think about how German identity comes across in the news?

What do you think about how German politicians communicate German identity?

Interview at the end of the course

Do you think the students can see a place for themselves in the material used in class?

Are the students in the textbook?

How are language and identity related? Does German “belong” to the students?

What kinds of problems do you think the students will encounter in Germany?

Can you talk about the things you have done to help them?

Do you think the students want to learn German? Why (not)? How do you contribute?

What is your goal when you teach German culture (*Landeskunde*)? Do you think you have reached your goal? Are you satisfied with how the course went?