How to get a grip on identities-in-interaction

(What) Does 'Positioning' offer more than 'Membership Categorization'? Evidence from a mock story

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This article advocates an understanding of 'positioning' as a key to the analysis of identities in interaction within the methodological framework of conversation analysis. Building on research by Bamberg, Georgakopoulou and others, a performative, interaction-based approach to positioning is outlined and compared to membership categorization analysis. An interactional episode involving mock stories to reveal and reproach an inadequate identity-claim of a co-participant is analysed both in terms of practices of membership categorization and positioning. It is concluded that membership categorization is a core element of positioning. Still, positioning goes beyond membership categorization in a) revealing biographical dimensions accomplished by narration and b) by uncovering implicit performative claims of identity, which are not established by categorization or description.

Keywords: positioning, membership categorization, mock story, conversation analysis, narratives in interaction, identities in talk

Over the last decade, conceptions of 'identity-in-talk' espoused by scholars of narrative analysis and by conversation analysts have increasingly converged. Researchers in narrative have argued that the analysis of identities must not only focus on narrative structure, but needs to be sensitive to positioning in interaction as well (Bamberg, 1997; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012, ch.6). Consequently,

positioning analysis has increasingly incorporated principles of conversation analytic (CA) methodology when looking at how identities are accomplished in conversational storytelling (see also Korobov this volume). This is most evidently needed when dealing with small stories in conversation (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2007), but an analogous methodological procedure has also been proposed for big stories in biographical narrative interview research (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2004b; Helsig, 2010). At the same time, the concept of 'positioning' gets increasingly popular among scholars in CA as well (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 2003; Quasthoff and Day & Kjaerbeck this volume, a panel devoted to "Displaying social Identity and (Re)Positioning oneself in Interaction", organized by Marja-Leena Sorjonen and Mia Halonen at the International Conference on Conversation Analysis ICCA10 in 2010). This is apparently so because the positioning perspective seems to be well equipped to attend to the fine grained work of invoking, ascribing and negotiating identities in talk without subscribing to problematic assumptions of grand sociological and philosophical theories of identity. Still, within a conversation analytic frame of research, membership categorization analysis (MCA; Sacks, 1972, 1992) has already developed as an approach to identities in talk (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). The question is thus how MCA and positioning analysis might relate to each other within a CA-framework for analysing identities in talk.

This paper argues that the study of identities in talk from a conversation analytic should focus on how participants position each other in social interaction (see Deppermann & Lucius-Hoene & Depermann, 2004a, b). Following Kitzinger and Wilkinson (2003), our starting point will be that membership categorization (MC) is an important part of positioning practices. Thus positioning analysis crucially has to make use of MCA. However, when constructing identities in talk, participants use still other practices than MC. The basic claim of the paper therefore will be: A CA-approach to identities in talk needs to adopt a concept of positioning which includes MCA, but also goes beyond it. This claim will specifically be made with respect to story-telling in interaction (cf. Becker & Quasthoff, 2005; De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012, ch.4). The analysis of a collaboratively constructed and disputed mock story will provide empirical substance to this claim.

The article shortly introduces 'positioning' and 'membership categorization', highlighting both their differences and their commonalities. We will then turn to the data, a series of small mock stories from adolescent peer-group interaction. First, it will be analysed how participants use membership categorization in order to negotiate identities. Secondly, it will be shown how positioning goes beyond membership categorization, mainly in terms of properties of the multiple temporal and interpersonal indexicalities of conversational action and biographical narration. The conclusion will plead for positioning analysis as a comprehensive

approach to identities in interaction within a CA-approach, which, however, needs to be enlarged by ethnographic considerations.

Positioning

'Positioning' has a discourse-theoretic heritage (see also Deppermann, this volume, and Deppermann, i.pr. for an overview of the history of the concept). The term originates from Foucault's notion of 'subject positions' which are provided for by societal discourses (Foucault, 1969). In Foucault's view, subjects are positioned by hegemonic discourses in terms of status, power and legitimate knowledge, which determine their interpretation of self, world and others.

Davies and Harré (1990) first brought 'positioning' to bear on interactive exchanges. They regard positioning activities as the primary locus of the discursive production of selves, "whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines" (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 48). Personal experience is organized in terms of storylines, which draw on discursive repertoires. They imply a moral categorial order in terms of which the subject is defined by acts of positioning. In contrast to Foucault and other (post-)structuralist approaches, Davies and Harré already underscore that positioning means to choose among competing storylines and that positions are negotiated in processes of reciprocal self- and other-positioning (see also Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). The concept of positioning envisaged by Harré and his colleagues paves the way for an interactional, dynamic conception of positioning. Still, the relationship between discursive practice, understood as a determining, societal order *sui generis*, and the emergent positions in conversation is unclear. The notion of 'story-lines' is very ambiguous as to its scope in terms of relevant activities and again its (determining?) relationship to situated action and its interpretation. Harré's approach does not do justice to the fact that not only the positions ascribed, but also the meaning of acts of positioning is an object of interactional negotiation, and it does not offer an adequate account of how narrative practice matters for positioning.

Starting in 1997, Michael Bamberg has developed a three level approach to positioning in and by narratives (Bamberg, 1997, 2004; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Taking issue with the ambiguities inherent in Harré's approach, Bamberg distinguishes three levels of positioning:

- Level-1: positioning of characters in the there and then of a story world, concerning mainly issues of biographical identity,

- Level-2: interactive positioning in the here and now, vis-à-vis interlocutors, dealing with local identity in the current encounter and
- Level-3: positioning with respect to master narratives or dominant discourses, i.e. locating the self with respect to larger social structures.

In contrast to Foucault and Harré & Davies, Bamberg is mainly interested in how people collaboratively construct and change positions in interaction. He underscores the fleeting, negotiable and often disputed nature of positions projected in interaction.

Membership categorization

The concept of 'membership categorization' (MC) has first surfaced in Harvey Sacks' lectures already in 1964 (Sacks, 1992, p. 40–48). Although not necessarily restricted to the categorization of persons, membership categorization analysis deals with how members categorize persons and how this is used as a resource of ascribing properties, explaining and evaluating actions, attributing responsibility and engendering inferences and expectations regarding actions of category-members. Basic properties of membership categorization were already laid out by Sacks, e.g., the organization of categories in 'devices', within which categories are related to each other (such as 'mother' and 'baby' within the device 'family'), the reciprocal relationship between categories in terms of rights and duties ('standardized relational pairs'), and rules and maxims for the application and interpretation of categories and their co-selection in talk (Sacks, 1972; 1992). Membership categorization owes much of its inferential and moral properties to the association of categories with category-bound and category-constitutive activities and predicates (Sacks, 1972; Jayyusi, 1984). This association is the most powerful mechanism by which categorizations and descriptions become paramount resources for implicit assessments, adumbration of category membership, properties, or actions to be expected of people so-categorized. Still, it is a matter of dispute how to warrant claims that specific activities and properties are associated by members with specific categories. Membership categorization analysis has mainly flourished in ethnomethodology (e.g., Jayyusi, 1984; Eglin & Hester, 1997). Ethnomethodologists have seen MCA as a way to uncover people's practical knowledge about culture and society as espoused in text and talk. For them, MC is a set of interpretive practices used by members to make sense of and construct social realities. Conversation analysts have started only rather recently to deal with membership categorization within the methodological framework of CA (Schegloff, 2007a, b; Stokoe, 2012a). Ethnomethodologists had sometimes already pointed out that MC is not

divorced from sequential organisation and that it thus crucial to study how categorial meanings are unfolded and constrained sequentially (see Watson, 1997). Still, it is a major criticism of conversation analysts that much of MCA has failed to address sequential organization sufficiently. Schegloff (1992, p. xli–xlii; 2007b) criticizes MCA of being in danger of imbuing the analysis with analysts' own understandings and assumptions about sociocultural knowledge associated with membership categories prematurely and unduly instead of showing how speakers themselves unfold the meaning of categories within sequences of interaction. This reproach crucially concerns assumptions about how categories and category-bound activities are associated to each other and thus allegations about inferential properties of categories and actions. In particular, it is disputed how obviously and unequivocally associations have to be displayed by participants in order to be arguably in play in a conversational sequence, what can count as a sufficient display in order to substantiate analytical claims about categorization and attribution and what should be done if putative inferences are only adumbrated rather indirectly, e.g., by not naming the relevant category, by being (deliberately?) ambiguous, or by leaving it open whether some putative category-relevant property (and which of several ones possible) applies (see Rapley, 2012; Stokoe, 2012b). Conversation analysts urge that MCA has to be methodologically restrained by the analytic apparatus of CA in order not to yield to unbounded speculation (Schegloff, 2007b; Stokoe, 2012a). The debates over the relationship of MC to interactional practice and over methodological requirements on MCA point to complexities which seem to go back already to Sacks' original conceptions of MCA. In some of his statements, Sacks deliberately ties MCA to sequential organization (Sacks, 1972). Still, there are others which rather play on MC being structurally organized in devices — a view which is reminiscent of categorial taxonomies of kinship known from cognitive anthropology of the time, thus suggesting a rather static, structuralist reading of MC (e.g., Sacks, 1992, pp. 40–48). Moreover, MCA is tied to members' social knowledge, which provides for the inference-richness of social categories (Sacks, 1979; 1992, p. 40), thus suggesting that background knowledge informs the interpretation of not-so-explicit categorial practice in talk.

'Positioning' and 'membership categorization': commonalities and differences

Positioning activities are all activities which in one way or another contribute to answer the questions "who am I" and "who are you" (Bamberg, 2011) in terms of locally relevant attributions and claims about facets of the self. Like MC, positioning does not deal with person reference (who is meant? Cf. Schegloff, 2007a), but

presupposes that issues of reference are settled. MC and positioning both regard the attribution of actions, moral accountability and facets of identity. All different levels of identity in the sense of Zimmerman (1998), i.e. discourse, situated, and transportable identities may be at issue. Since social identities of persons in discourse provide for major relevancies of positioning activities, membership categorization of and attributing category-bound properties and activities to persons are basic practices of positioning. This approach is taken by Kitzinger & Wilkinson (2003), who seem to identify a conversation analytic approach to positioning with membership categorization analysis. They point out three practices of positioning: "Naming or indexing a category", "invoking categorical membership", and "invoking attributes" (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 2003, pp. 174–176).

The sense of self (who am I?) conveyed by positioning activities, however, transcends membership categorization (which group of persons do I belong to? Which properties do I have on behalf of group membership? Which category-membership accounts for the way I am acting?). This is most obviously the case for (auto-) biographical narratives, the site of talk for whose analysis positioning theory has been developed. Positioning researchers have mainly been interested in autobiographical self-presentations and thus in the different facets of identity which people display in autobiographical narration and how they amount to a narrative identity (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2000). Relevant issues therefore are classical issues of autobiographical research (see Bamberg, 2011; Bamberg et al., 2011): (i) constancy and change, (ii) uniqueness/specificity and generality/universality, and (iii) agency, i.e., the two directions of power, control and causation, running from person to world and from world to person. Narratives provide particularly powerful resources for positioning. Firstly, narratives unfold biographical trajectories, which are much richer and more individualized than categorial and descriptive practices of MC and they index cultural categories of their own having to do with cultural plots and the kinds of personae and the motivational ascriptions and moral evaluations associated to them (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Secondly, narrating constitutes two temporal layers: the act of telling in the interaction in the here and now and the past story, establishing two different levels of positioning (Bamberg, 1997). Thirdly, narrated self and narrating self can stand in various relationships to each other, which provide for facets of identity generated by the way current and prior self are related to each other. The narrating self can, e g., attest biographical continuity or change, it may convey stances of self-irony, moral catharsis, or maturation vis-à-vis some earlier biographical state (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2000, 2004a). Forth, the sociolinguistic, performative approach to identity in narratives (see e.g., Georgakopoulou, 2007; De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012, ch.6), which does not solely focus on narrative structure, takes moral evaluations, epistemic stances, attributions of agency, the display of psychological states

and features, entitlements to knowledge, authority, and power in the way they are displayed in and by actions into account. However, they do not necessarily have to be organized according to the logics of membership categorization.

Positioning analysis thus has to offer CA a more comprehensive perspective to identities in interaction by attending to moral and epistemic positioning in terms of agency and evaluation (see also Wortham, 2001) and by the refined analysis of various orders of the constitution of the self in interaction with respect to biographical time. Positioning analysis has mainly dealt with versions of selves deployed in different interactional contexts. In contrast to CA and to Sacks' studies on MCA, it has only rarely made practices of positioning themselves, i.e., how it is done, an object of study. From a CA-perspective, positioning suffers from methodological problems:

a. Positioning analyses tend to assume the omni-relevance of identity in talk (cf. Schegloff, 1997 vs. Wetherell, 1998), because every action can be understood in terms of claiming and attributing positions. Nota bene, this does often, but not necessarily mean the omni-relevance of a specific set of identity-categories, such as gender, class, ethnicity, power, which are claimed to be infallibly relevant by (critical) discourse analysts (cf. the criticism by Stokoe, 2005). Closely related to this stance is that positioning analysts usually adopt a more theory-based observer perspective on discursive practice. They are more inclined to appeal to presumed common knowledge in extracting the implicit identity-relevance from conversational action than conversation analysts, who insist on interactional displays of the relevance of some putative identity-feature. The methodological critique of positioning analysis by CA is reminiscent of its problems with ethnomethodological MCA in this respect (see sect. 2 above; cf. Stokoe, 2009).

b. Conversation analysts are likely to have problems with the discourse theoretic heritage of 'positioning', namely with level-3 positioning according to Bamberg (1997). Problems include: How are we to determine what are dominant and what are counter discourses? How is 'a discourse' to be pinned down methodologically? How do participants contextualize it to be relevant in situ? How can its situated relevance and interpretation be methodologically grasped (see also Georgakopoulou, this volume; and De Fina, this volume)?

c. Although more recent publications underscore the interactional basis of positioning in terms of reciprocal ascriptions (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008), most studies still analyse positions in terms of what speakers do unilaterally. This is in part because of the materials they deal with, i.e., biographical narrative interview (BNIM) data, where co-construction is only a minor issue (cf. the "big stories vs. small stories" debate in Bamberg, 2006).

The data: A collaboratively constructed mock story in peer-group conversation

In what follows, I will discuss how positioning activities relate to MC in an episode of conversational story telling. The extract is a conversational, collaboratively constructed small story, in fact, a series of small stories having to do with scrounging alcohol from peers.

There are four participants in the extract, Markus, Wuddi, Denis and Till. They are between 15 and 17 years old, have known each other for several years and spend their leisure time together on a regular basis. The extract starts when Markus, having heard that Wuddi has some stock of alcohol at his place (not in the transcript), requests Wuddi to drive with him to Wuddi's home in order to fetch some bottles (segments 01, 07–08, 10). Denis and Till respond to Markus' request by reproaching him of being an "alkschlampe" (alcohol slut, segments 04–06, 09, 11). They warrant this ascription by the collaborative recall of a prior event when Markus scrounged alcohol from his peers (16–33). Denis confesses that he also profited from his mates' alcohol at that occasion (34–47). The story about Markus then is projected into the future by a collaborative mock fiction: Chris, Denis and Wuddi imagine how Markus will visit his friends one by one in order to see if they have some alcohol he can get for free (segments 48–60). In the extract, thus, the participants deal in various ways with behaviours which have as their common denominator that some peer is trying to or actually does benefit from alcohol which belongs to another peer for his own consumption.

Juk 24–4: 19:51–21:12 "Absahnen"

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01 Markus:   ey, dann fahren wir JETZT wuddi- (.)
             hey so we're gonna drive now Wuddi
02 Wuddi:    <<t> ey ne: ich [habe>          ]
                  hey no I have
03 Denis:                    [<<h> de MA:Rkus>]
                                  Markus
04 Till:     <<sizzling, dim> de markus was er schon
                             Markus what he already
05           [wieder sich EINschleimt; oder?]>
              again bootlicks, doesn't he?
06 Denis:    [was für ne !ALK!          ]schlam:pe::.
              what an alcohol bitch
07 Markus:   ich muss_n hubert ma klarmachen dass mer FAHren- (.)
             I want to make it clear to Wuddi that we're gonna drive
08           AUF wUddi, wir FA:hren, (--)
             come on Wuddi we're gonna drive
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09 Till:     ey des is !SO! eine SCHlam[pe:.                    ]
             hey this is such a bitch
10 Markus:                          [<<f> wuddi AUF>,] (---)
                                     Wuddi come on
11 Till:     ey de markus is ja so verWEICHlich(t) durch_s [viele] saufen.
             hey Markus is so sissy by all that booze
12 XM:                                                   [haja,]
                                                          yes
13 Till:     °h H (-)
14 Denis:    ey de markus will Ohne schEIss bei den anderen leuten
             hey MArkus really wants to scrounge from the other guys
15           noch dIck abSAH:n(en) <<t> beim alk kaufen;>
             heavily when it goes to buying booze
16 Till:     so EY, (.) hört mal- weißt du
             like hey listen do you remember
17           <<laughing> wie wie w(h)i(h)r es geholt ham hE wie er; (-)
                         when when we fetched it PRT he was like
18           komm gib doch ma n_biss_en von dei_m BIE:R-
             come on give me a little bit of your beer
19           !WIE! er damals oder !WIE:! er;>
             like he then or like he
20           °h h
21 Denis:    ey de markus wie !BI:!llig;=
             hey Markus how cheap
22 Alex:     [((laughs))                                       ]
23 Till:     [=<<all> schau so wie er bei mir ANgerufen hat->] (.)
                     look like he called me
24           ja weller wir sitzen hier auf_em TROCKnen sOzusagen-
             yeah Weller we are left here high and dry so to speak
             würdest_e ma vorbEIkommen mit_nem biss_en BIE:R->
             would you just come over with a little bit of beer
26 Several:  ((Laughter))
27 Till:     <<laughing> °h h> [LETZtes jahr.>]
                               last year>
28 Markus:                     [ne des wAr (-)        ]
                               no it was
29 Till:     vom [tennis] aus hat er Ange[rufen].
             from the tennis ground that he called
30 Markus:       [wO:hl-]              [des  ]war wO:hl de FAbian; (-)
                 probably                it was probably Fabian
31 Till:     nE: das warst !DU!, (.)
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                no it was you
32              [das war vom    ]TENnis aus [angerufen.      ]
                 the call was from the tennis ground
33 Markus:  [oder der FAbian]
                 or the Fabian
34 Denis:                            [<<laughing,f>ich] war dabEI::,>(.)
                                                        I was present
35         [ich war dabEI::;      ] (.)
                 I was present
36 Wuddi:   [da war ich auch dabEI.]
                 I was also present
37 Denis:   °hh <<laughing> ich geb_s ZU::;> (-)
                           I confess
38 Markus:  ja da ham [einige (-)       ]        [da ham EInige (drum)]
                 yeah there were several               there were several
39 Denis:            [<<laughing> ich hab] da auch [MITgetrUnken,      ]
                           I was also involved in the drinking
40 Markus:  [(gespie:lt-))   ]
                 who played for it
41 Denis:   [°h bei der PILS]kiste-> °hh (.)
                  of the pack of pilsener
42          die du AUSgegeben hast.
                 which you had paid
43          (1.5)
44 Denis:   das STIMMT, (.)
                 that's right
45          das war ne ASsige aktiOn
                 this was a chavvy action
46          <<laughing> aber weller wir ham unbedingt was zum SAUfen
            gebraucht;> (-)
                         but Weller we absolutely needed some booze.
47          ((laughs)) °hh das war so SCHLIMM ey.>=
                         it was so bad ey.
48 Chris:   =und des wird de markus dies jahr MAchen
                 and that's what Markus will do this year
49          aber bei jedem alLEIN so OAH? (--) ah? (.)
                 but with everyone in turn like <<demand gesture> PRT PRT>
50 Denis:   de markus immer so hey KOMM huber- (-)
                 Markus always like this ey come on Huber
51          [huber komm wir guck wir zocken mal]
                 Huber come on let's play
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52 Wuddi:    [sitzen auf dem trockenen;          ]
                we're left stranded
53 Denis:    tony hawks SKAteboarding hä?> (-)
             Tony Hawks Skateboarding uh?
54           <<whispering> °h komm-> (-)
                              come on
55           hey HUby, (-)
             hey Huber
56           hey hast_e eigentlisch deinen KASten schon geholt? (.)
             hey have you PRT already got your crate of beer?
57           <<pp,whispering> hast_e was da?> (.)
                              do you have something here?
58 Wuddi:    nee:, (.)
             no
59           aja gut TSCHÖ:;
             well alright bye
60           H <<laughing> isch komm dann (so) MORgen wieder.>
                              then I'll be back tomorrow
61           (1.0)
62 Denis:    de mArkus- (--)
             Markus
63 Alex:     <<p> markus schläfst du Immer noch?> (-)
                  Markus are you still asleep?
64 Markus:   dieses geLA:ber;=NEIN. (.)
             this chatter, no
65           nur weil ich jetzt wieder so BREIT bin. (--)
             only because I am drunk again
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Membership categorization in the mock story

In this extract, Markus is explicitly categorized in segment 06 by Denis as "alk-schlampe", which is echoed in segment 09 by Till: "schlampe". These nominal category-terms have two conventional meanings, which is reflected by the two translations '(alcohol) sloven' and '(alcohol) bitch': They can mean 'sloven person (who has become so by too much drinking)' or 'person who prostitutes him/herself (in exchange for alcohol)'. In contrast to other occasions, *Schlampe* is devoid of sexual meaning here. Neither the action so-reinterpreted nor the ensuing small stories give any evidence that a sexual component is in play. Denis and Till use "(alk)schlampe" here to interpret Markus' prior actions, i.e., his request to drive to Wuddi's place, which — as can be inferred from the prior talk — is produced in order to fetch

alcohol. The MC thus reinterprets Markus' action by imputing a blameworthy and utterly discrediting motive, attributing to him a deviation category (cf. Deppermann, 2005). Indeed, the categorization "(alk)schlampe" locally seems to index both dimensions of moral degeneration captured by dictionary entries: Till's prior categorization of Markus' request in segments 04–05 as bootlicking ("de markus was er schon wieder sich einschleimt") imputes to him an inauthentic, strategic motive for his request, which is related to the 'prostitute'-semantics of *Schlampe* (however, without its sexual implications); Till's later characterization of Markus as being sissy because of alcohol abuse (segment 11: "de markus is ja so verweichlicht durchs viele saufen") attributes to him a negative moral and physical consequence of alcohol abuse, which resonates with the 'sloven'-semantics of *Schlampe*. Denis, in contrast, only orients to the categorization of Markus as acting strategically, describing him as a person who intends to scrounge from peers who buy alcohol (segments 14–15: "wird bei den anderen leuten noch dick absahnen beim alk kaufen").

Both the nominal categorization (("alk")schlampe") and the descriptions of Markus' actions and properties are attributed to him as an individual. The actions ascribed to Markus are not explicitly tied to the categorization "(alk)schlampe" as category-bound activities. Still, since these descriptions are occasioned by the same behaviour by Markus and since they are produced as locally contingent and consistent, although asyndetically added elaborations of the categorizations provided, they do not seem to be produced and heard as additional characterizations unrelated to the MC "(alk)schlampe", but as explications of its locally relevant meanings. The explicit categorization ((alk)schlampe, segments 06/09) frames the following descriptions and enactments (segments 11, 14–32, 48–60), constraining and supporting their categorial and moral upshot; reflexively, the descriptions and the story fragments are occasioned by and elaborate on the situated meaning of the prior categorization. This does not mean that the actions reported are necessarily produced as being category-bound in the sense that the speakers presuppose that they regularly or even necessarily co-occur with category-membership. In this sense, it is dubious whether they could be termed "category-bound activities". Still, in the sequential context, the activities reported are category-constitutive, i.e., they warrant the MC (cf. Jayyusi 1984, pp. 35–47).

The category "(alk)schlampe" belongs to a membership categorization device of deviation categories (like *poser*, *racist*, *prole*, *pervert*) which are routinely used to build (more or less serious) criticism in interactions of this peer-group. In terms of its duplicative organization, its local meaning of 'acting inauthentically and strategically' implies an exploitive relationship to peers and friends, which violates rules of reciprocity, equity and authenticity. The literally general reference to "anderen leuten" ('other people', segment 14) is semantically constrained to a

'peers'-reading, because it is a generalization occasioned by Markus' local action of requesting Wuddi.

The morally devaluating MC attributed to Markus builds neatly on properties of his prior (and repeated) action of requesting Wuddi to drive to his home (segments 01, 07–08). The MC is occasioned both in terms of the identity-categories and of the category-bound actions ascribed to Markus. The MC is used to other-position Markus, it re-interprets his action by reframing it in terms of uncovering a hidden strategic intention, and by assessing it negatively. In my data from adolescent peer-group interactions, deviation categorizations (and the ensuing mock stories, see below.) are responses to a prior action of a peer which is seen to imply an unacceptable identity-claim. Similarly to what Drew (1987) found for teases, deviation categorizations treat this prior action of the categorized person and the implicit identity-claim established by him/her as a prerequisite for attributing a deviant identity to him/her.

Denis, Till and Wuddi's ensuing descriptions and enactments of Markus' actions produced later in the extract refer to past events (segments 16–32) of Markus scrounging. After this, they construct a fictional scenario of how Markus will act in the future as a scrounger (segments 48–60). All of these descriptions are co-selected to consistently corroborate the applicability of the category "(alk)schlampe" and to exclude possible alternative interpretations of Markus' behaviour:

– Denis attributes to Markus the motive of profiting from others ("absahnen", 'scrounging', segments 14–15),
– Till re-enacts how Markus requested alcohol from his peers at two prior occasions (segments 18, 24f.),
– When reporting Markus' alleged speech, Till enacts a cool vocal and verbal attitude: He imitates Markus by choked voice and using formulaic speech (segments 24f.: "sitzen auf dem trockenen", 'are left high and dry'), which can be understood as indexing doing being cool, a property which resonates with the inauthentic habit of a scrounger. The enacted habit of speaking and, more generally, feigning to be cool, of course, is not a category-bound attribute of being an "(alk)schlampe", but it supports it. It is systematically used to flesh out Markus' personal identity by indexing an additional membership-category '(feigned) coolness', which, however, is not explicitly ascribed. Here we have to go a step beyond the methodological tools usually used in MCA. We have to take vocal performance and practices of double-voicing (Bakhtin, 1981; Günthner, 1999), where assessment and intention of the animator and the animated person diverge, into account and see what kind of work they are doing for indexing identities. This crucially includes to attend to practices of footing (Goffman, 1981; Clift & Holt, 2006), such as animating the voice of the

person categorized and indexing who is treated as author and principal of the enacted stretch of talk.

– Till reports that Markus was the one who initiated the request for alcohol (segment 29: "vom fabian aus hat er angerufen."), thus attributing individual agency to Markus.

In contrast to Sacks' (1972) seminal study on MC, in which he analyses a child's small story "The baby cried. The mommy picked it up.", co-selection in our extract does not concern two or more categories from the same membership categorization device (like 'mother-child', 'victim-perpetrator'). Instead, several actions are co-selected so as to unambiguously give evidence of the situated relevance and applicability of a single identity-category. Unambiguousness is not only brought about by positive co-selection of descriptions and enactments, but also by avoiding and discarding alternative categorizations and descriptions which might undermine the MC "(alk)schlampe". As Markus provides an account which serves to reinterpret and reassess his possibly problematic actions by ascribing responsibility for initiating the request for alcohol to another person ("fabian", segments 28/30), Till is quick to reject it (segments 31f.).

In sum, the MC '(alk)schlampe' is a case of a deviation-category in line with some others which are routinely used by the peer-group studied (such as *pervert*, *racist*, *poser*, and *prole*). These categories share the following features:

– They are assessed negatively.
– They are ascribed on the basis of actions which are perceived as violating norms of appropriate behaviour (for a peer-group member).
– They are used to interpret the target's behaviour within the frame of reference (i.e., regarding norms and expectations) of the categorizer.
– The interpretation of the behaviour is not shared by the target, who has produced the behaviour. Thus, the deviation-categorization contrasts with the (in a Gricean sense) communicated and probably intended self-positioning.

The ascriber of a deviation-category can resort to various resources for accomplishing the contextualization of behaviour in terms of framing it as an action warranting the deviation-categorization. S/he can

– reveal hidden, strategic motives and intentions,
– construct biographical continuities (see below.),
– point to information gleaned from the target's behaviour which is given off in the sense of Goffman (1969), i.e., which is not communicated and probably not intended to be seen, but which becomes visible from another perspective or which simply "leaks",

– contrast the actions and claimed identities of the target with what the ascriber holds to be real (e.g., regarding knowledge, skills, resources, social status, intentions, motives, etc. of the target).

In the interactional episode, participants produce a multitude of descriptions which are to capture the same behaviour(s) of 'requesting peers for alcohol and consuming it' (this formulation, of course, is also just one descriptive version, however, one which is intended to be neutral in terms of moral assessment). While Denis and Till portray Markus as an "(alk)schlampe" (with slightly different, but matching nuances), Markus himself performs his requests (segments 01, 07/08) without accounting for them. With respect to Till's small story, he first rejects that he was the one who requested his peers to bring alcohol along (segment 28/30) and, later again, this time implicitly, he denies his personal responsibility by claiming that it was a collective action (segment 38/40: "da ham einige drum gespielt", 'there were several who played for it" [i.e., the pack of beers]). Markus formulates his actions (past and present) by using the first person plural, inclusive *we* (segments 01 and 04) and the plural quantifier "einige" ('several', segment 38), i.e., he self-positions his involvement and agency in consumption as a member of a group of peers.

But it is not only that Markus' actions are described differently, suggesting competing identity-categories, motives and assessments to make sense of his behaviour. His offender Denis confesses that he has himself participated in the same action of consuming alcohol from his peers as Markus did (segments 34–37; "ich hab da auch mitgetrunken", 'I was also involved in the drinking', segment 39). He admits the morally contaminated nature of the action ("ich geb_s zu", 'I confess', segment 34, "das war ne assige action", 'this was a chavvy action', segment 44), but then laughingly produces an account (segment 45–46: "aber wir ham unbedingt was zu saufen gebraucht", 'we absolutely needed some booze') and, still laughingly, adds a negative assessment ("das war so schlimm", 'it was so bad', segment 47). It seems to be difficult to sort out what Denis does here in terms of identity-ascription using the conceptual tools of MCA established so far. While overtly confessing to have participated in a chavvy, i.e., stylistically devaluated and morally suspect activity, which he himself assesses explicitly negatively, the unusual use of the speech act verb "geb_s zu" ('confess') for an unforced, ostentatious and explicit concession produced without delay or hedging and the laughing tone of his voice contextualize a jocular mode, thus making the moral assessment plurivocal. The analysis here cannot rely on categorizations and descriptions and their sequential deployment alone anymore. In order to capture which facets of identity are indexed by Denis, we have to attend to turn-design and vocal performance, irony and double-voicing, and we need to bring ethnographic background knowledge into the analysis. While being usually used as a derogatory term, *assig* ('chavvy') can at times also

acquire another meaning which is similar in terms of acting against common moral standards, but inverted in terms of evaluation. This inversion derives from the fact that acting *assig* ('chavvy') sometimes is cherished as subversive opposition against bourgeois norms of decency (cf. Deppermann, 2002; Schwitalla, 1994). Denis' ironical confession, his laughing voice and the ostensibly fictitious account ("aber wir ham unbedingt was zu saufen gebraucht", 'we absolutely needed some booze', segment 46), which contra-factually attributes a need that portrays himself and his peers as members of the category 'alcohol addict', all suggest that *assig* here indexes self-categorization as a person who violates bourgeois norms in a hedonistic manner, thereby contributing to a memorable group event. So, whereas Markus is other-positioned as a morally defective "(alk)schlampe", who abuses his peers, Denis seems to frame his own analogous behaviour as hedonistic deviance from bourgeois norms, thereby positioning himself as an insider of subversive peer-group practices. In methodological terms, Denis' turns do not give strong positive evidence for this interpretation in terms of straightforward displays. But in order to make sense of his actions, it is necessary to pay attention to vocal performance and double-voicing and to import ethnographic background into the analysis. If we deny doing so, Denis' turns will remain opaque or even be misapprehended if understood "literally".

The differences in participants' descriptions of what transpire to be instances of more or less the same behavior hint to the necessity of a distinction between actions and action descriptions when talking about MC. It is not that actions per se are category-bound. Actions are indexical and disputable in terms of being possibly category-bound (Stokoe, 2012b; Rapley, 2012). The same behaviors and even the same actions can be treated as giving evidence of different and even competing identity-ascriptions. There is no context-free mapping of an action to identities. It is even disputable if every action as such is identity-relevant at all. Rather it is a practical concern for members to decide:

- When do two instances of behavior (here: Markus' vs. Denis' co-consumption) amount to the "same action" in terms of ascription of motive and intention, category-indicativity and moral assessment?
- How is one behavioral token to be categorized in terms of action and identity-indicativity (competing interpretations of Markus' action)?

The relationship of behavior to action and to identity categories depends on the formulation of action in terms of agency, identity-relevance and moral accountability. Relevant distinctions in the episode (and more generally) are:

- Individual vs. collective agency: Is it an individual's action or does the individual take part in a collective *we*-action?

- Assessment: Is action framed as a deviation from norms (innocent request vs. strategic attempt at scrounging) and how is deviation (implicitly) assessed (hypocritical abuse or hedonistic subversive violation)?
- Ascription of intention and responsibility: Is, e.g., a strategic, deceitful intention ascribed or is the action framed as being caused by a need?
- Identity/biographical import: Is the action attributed to situational circumstance or is it framed as giving evidence of and being motivated by a stable, overarching identity of the actor, thus suggesting a dispositional interpretation (cf. Edwards, 2006)?

MC offers rich insights into the identity-work going on in the occasioning and production of the mock story in the episode under study. The use of nominal category-terms, descriptions of activities and properties and the consistent co-selection of ascriptions which all index a univocal categorial upshot and reflexively support each other provide for an infrastructure of ascribing identities in talk. We could see, however, that in an episode where participants do nothing else than negotiate identities, none of this work is performed by explicitly tying actions to a category. Rather, there is a reflexively elaborative and supportive relationship between categorizations and descriptions applied to individuals. Also, we could see that MCA has to be supplemented by attention to practices other than nominal categorization and predicative description, namely, enactments, vocal performance, turn-design and practices of changing footings and double-voicing used for stylizing identities (Coupland, 2007; Rampton, 2009, 2011; see also Bamberg et al., 2011). This, however, requires the analyst to resort to a wider notion of "display" than is usual in CA: S/he needs to turn to and incorporate the ethnographic knowledge the participants themselves dispose of into the analysis in order to grasp indexical socio-stylistic functions (cf. Eckert, 2008) attributed to ways of speaking (in terms of vocal performance, lexical choice and discourse strategies).

Positioning in the mock story

We have seen how MC is most important for self- and other-positioning in the extract. Participants' categorial work is basic for the ascription of identities; descriptions are used in order to deploy categories further and define their situated meaning. Still, we have already seen that the analysis of MC requires us to go beyond the conceptual and methodological resources usually used in MCA. The resources which were shown to be used for MC by participants in addition to categorization and description, namely, enactments, vocal performance, changes in footing, and practices of double indexicality, however, are regularly considered

in analyses of positioning in interaction (see, e.g., Bamberg, 2004; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Deppermann, 2007a; Georgakopoulou, 2007; Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2004a; Wortham, 2001). This is because positioning analysis has developed from narrative analysis (see Bamberg, 1997), and the practices for portraying persons used in addition to categorization and description are genuinely narrative practices (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012, ch.6; Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2004b; Capps & Ochs, 2001; Schiffrin, 1996). We will deal with narrative resources of positioning used in the mock stories episode by reference to Bamberg's three positioning-levels:

a.   the temporal and biographical dimensions of narratives,
b.   the action- and interaction-related aspects of identity-construction and negotiation,
c.   the link between local action and wider societal discourses. We will discuss shortly whether this third level can and should be included in an approach to identities-in-talk in line with the methodological tenets of CA.

Positioning of characters in the story world (level-1 positioning, Bamberg, 1997)

The small stories are used to index that the ascription of being an "(alk)schlampe" to Markus is not only an ephemeral situated identity. By evoking a past event of Markus scrounging and by extrapolating Markus' actions into a fictional future scenario, Denis, Till and Wuddi construct biographical continuity for Markus' "(alk)schlampe"-identity. Biographical continuity lends the identity a dispositional flavour transcending the current situation (Edwards, 2006) and it reflexively supports the situated ascription of Markus' "real" intention motivating his request. Thus, practices of telling provide for the biographical scope and generalization of the MC. The mock fiction about Markus' alleged future action (segments 48–60) unfolds the basic hypocritical action structure of scrounging in a most articulate, stereotypical way:

–   First, Markus displays intimacy and interpersonal interest by asking his peer Till (whose surname is Huber) to play a computer game (Tony Hawks Skateboarding) together (segments 50–51, 53),
–   then Markus asks him in a conspiratorial, whispering voice, whether he has bought a crate of beer (segments 54–57),
–   Till denies (segment 58),
–   Markus immediately takes his leave (segments 59–60).

This lets infer that Markus' initial display of intimacy and personal interest was only feigned, being an instrumental pretext for getting alcohol for free, thus trying to take advantage on his peer. Again, changes of footing by enactments and vocal performance of Markus' actions are used to bring off his portrayal. This little fictional scenario reveals that the categorial logic of scrounging is more complex than could be captured by a simple description. It requires a narrative to be deployed. A sequence of actions is needed both to accomplish descriptively the action of scrounging (i.e. the action of feigning a strategic motive of solidarity contrasted with the real interest in consumption) and to give evidence of its strategic nature (i.e., the scrounger immediately abandons the interpersonal encounter, when it becomes clear that his goal to get something for free will not be reached, observably not caring anymore about his initially claimed relationship-oriented motive of playing together).

Like the prior categorizations and descriptions of Markus, the mock fiction is an interpretive practice of social control: It is designed to index unequivocally a deviation-identity of the target. It deals with the indexicality of behaviors noted above, i.e., their potentially ambiguous and disputed relevance to various categories of identities. Mock fiction reduces this interpretive potential by producing a stereotyping parody, which indexes the relevant identity unequivocally and shows that it is locally relevant with respect to the target and his behavior. To do this, the mock fiction is grounded in the target's behavior. Markus' action (requesting a peer to fetch his alcohol) and the retelling of a story of a prior parallel incident with quotes of the target (segments 18, 24f.) serve as the starting point for extrapolating his behavior into the future (see Kotthoff, 2009 for how fictional stories are motivated by and depart from true stories in conversation). The stereotyping parody accentuates and disambiguates the target's behavior: Just like the consistent co-selection of action descriptions of Markus' actions before, the little dramatic, fictional performance of Markus' scrounging in the future (segments 48–60) selectively chooses, explicitly formulates and enacts in an exaggerated fashion the typical actions of a scrounger and their sequencing to expose their hypocritical and strategic design. A pure representation of the stereotypical scrounger emerges, which leaves no room for the ascription of competing motivations and which provides no contextual details which could contradict the stereotypical interpretation.

Interactive positioning (level-2 positioning, Bamberg, 1997)

As it is common for small stories, the stories in this episode are intimately tied to and emerging from participants' current life-world concerns (cf. Georgakopoulou, 2005, 2007). The stories about Markus warrant and expand on his categorization

as "(alk)schlampe", which in turn is motivated by Markus' requests. The stories are designed to expose the inadequacy of Markus' behavior in the here and now and to reveal that it is to be interpreted differently from what he presents it to be. In this way, the stories are produced to unveil and reject the target's claim to a false identity by giving evidence of the target's membership in a deviation-category. Mock stories thus are means of occasioned, situated social control: They delegitimize Markus' turn-generated identity-claim (cf. Zimmerman 1998) as a requester who assumes the right to issue commands. As such, they deal with a recurrent issue in the interactions of this peer-group: Who has the right to command whom (cf. Deppermann & Schmidt, 2001; Schmidt, 2004)?

Positioning of the stories' target in the story world here impinges on his interactional positioning, because the target is present and the story is used to reposition him in the present interaction. How powerful this can be as a means of social control is evidenced here by the fact that, indeed, Markus does not try to get Wuddi to bring his alcohol anymore in the following interaction. The other-positioning of Markus by MC and stories thus has made him give up his initiative without explicit rejection, but by tying a negatively assessed identity to his initiative and by ridiculing him on behalf of it.

Still, the stories are not only means of other-positioning. They are also used to self-position the tellers performatively. They display their cleverness as peers who are socio-cognitively skilled: they closely monitor their peers' behavior, are able to diagnose hidden motives and intentions, to reveal the partner's character and to evaluate his behavior with respect to normative standards of authenticity, equity and solidarity, and — what matters most in case of scrounging — they are not fooled by the appearances of Markus' actions. This self-positioning of the tellers is not only performatively conveyed by the activities of occasioned story-telling. It is also built into the story itself: It is the rejection of Markus' request for alcohol in the mock fiction (segment 58), which both thwarts his plan and, by its consequences, lays bare his inauthentic motive. Till, Denis and Wuddi position themselves as rhetorically skilled by producing a creative repartee and by putting their competence in mimicry of the target on display. By unfolding a shared portrayal of Markus and creating a common scenario, which involves even a spontaneous collaborative role play in segments 48–60, they align and affiliate with each other closely and delicately timed (see Day & Kjaerbeck, this volume, for a discussion of how alignment and affiliation may relate to positioning). Doing so, they display their intimate knowledge and belonging to a group with shared communicative practices and a shared view of their social world (cf. Deppermann, 2007b). However, to be sure, these identity-upshots of performative self-positioning are more speculative, because they are not claimed in any explicit, categorial way.

Positioning vis-à-vis societal discourses (level-3 positioning, Bamberg, 1997)

Societal discourses are not explicitly addressed in this extract. However knowledge about them is crucial in order to understand what the participants display and take each other to display in terms of meaning and action. This applies already to MC and the relevance of descriptions of actions for it: how bootlicking and scrounging are assessed and how they matter to peer-relationships can only be understood if we grasp how norms of authenticity, equity and solidarity figure in peer-group relationships, how they are violated by bootlicking and scrounging and how they are indexed by these ascriptions. Still, we have already pointed out that the relevance of norms and thus the question, whether there is a "dominant" moral discourse the participants orient to and which one it is, remains ambiguous in this extract: The same behaviors seem to be categorized as scrounging or as breaking bourgeois norms of conduct. Of course, the invocation of the latter discourse is much more speculative. Still, if we are to account for Denis' self-positioning in segments 34–47, we cannot but assume that there is some alternative discourse in which unilaterally profiting from the peers' goods without providing something in exchange is positively assessed. Participants display an evaluative ambiguity which is characteristic of the interactions of the peer-group studied more generally (cf. Schmidt, 2004): Evaluation of behaviors oscillates between orienting to norms of solidarity between peers (an in-group concern) and displaying distinction by denying norms of other social groups (not only bourgeois adults, but also other out-groups, e.g., migrant adolescents, see Deppermann, 2007a). In the case of scrounging, these two orientations obviously clash, because they lead to competing evaluations of the same behavior. Knowledge of these discourses helps us to understand the wider importance and indexicality of interactional events like the one analysed here in more detail. Still, and most importantly in methodological terms, the import of discourses into the interaction is reflexive, because the workings of discourses and their uses only get elucidated by analyzing concrete occasions.

Conclusions and a methodological desideratum

This paper has argued that 'positioning' provides for a comprehensive concept to study the construction and negotiation of identities in interaction within the methodological tenets of CA. MC practices are major resources for positioning. Still, a thorough analysis of MC needs to take discursive practices into account which have not been attended to by MCA yet, but which have been an object of positioning analysis. Moreover, positioning analysis reveals facets of identity and addresses practices of identity-construction in talk which are not covered by MCA,

but which are crucial to a full understanding of identities in talk. Positioning goes beyond MCA in terms of its interest in identities in interaction by attending to the biographical dimension of identities, namely, continuity, change, and individuality of identities (cf. Bamberg, 2011). The biographical dimension of identities-in-talk is accomplished by level-1 positioning. It rests on properties peculiar to narratives: indexing multiple temporalities, representing temporally extended trajectories of actions and events and conferring identities uniqueness by situating actions spatiotemporally and by detailed description. By the example of a mock story, it was shown how narratives can be used to interpret and extrapolate the target's actions so as to project local actions onto enduring identities. Occasioned stories thus can be used as generalizing devices, linking local action to global personality, thus micro and macro from the participants' point of view. Level-2 positioning addresses the (mostly implicit) claims to and negotiations of facets of identity which are performatively deployed by accomplishing relationships via conversational action. This crucially involves claims to identities displayed by the way tellers construct stories and launch them into the interaction. Finally, level-3 positioning could be seen to be operative already in MC and in the two other levels of positioning. Level-3 positioning does not so much refer to distinct practices, but rather to interpretative resources participants draw on when producing and understanding displays of identity. In many cases, identities are implicitly indexed and ascribed; even explicit MC and attribution of category-bound activities presuppose stocks of knowledge needed to understand the ramifications and allusions tied to the invocation of explicit categorizations. Thus knowledge of cultural discourses is often needed for noticing and almost always needed for a full understanding of how participants display and negotiate identities in talk.

However, if identity-ascription in talk is not just a matter of explicit categorization, then we need to ask: When does identity matter and which? In methodical terms, we have to provide an answer to the question: How do we get access to relevant background knowledge and how do we decide when which kind of background knowledge matters for understanding what a display of identity is and what it does? Positioning theory is in danger of prematurely presuming the omni-relevance of positioning. It tends to miss to ground the analyst's identity-ascriptions solidly enough in what the participants do. Members may choose to display identity relevance sometimes and sometimes not (cf. the debate between Schegloff, 1997, 1998 vs. Wetherell, 1998), they sometimes take care to prevent actions from becoming interpreted in terms of identity categories, just as Markus seems to be doing with respect to his actions of requesting in the extract we have analyzed.

We have seen that, in line with what CA assumes, the contextualizing work of sequential action is the prime resource for participants to reflexively constrain and elaborate on identity-ascriptions. Actions (both ascribed and enacted) do not

mechanically imply their category-boundness, but their link to identity-categories is disputable and indexical. In our data, we have seen how several practices work together to constrain the category-indicativity of actions in multiple and convergent ways: the description and formulation of behavior as amounting to a specific action, the framing of actions in terms of their place in a story-plot, the unanimous co-selection of reported actions, the explicit ascription of intentions and motives and moral assessments.

Still, we could see how additional ethnographic knowledge is necessary in order to grasp participants' full evaluative, stylistic, socio-structural meaning of the identity-categories they invoke. This should not be taken as a call for resorting to cultural discourses "known" to be relevant by the researcher. Rather, we have to have ethnographic evidence that and how these discourses matter for the participants. Of course, the best ethnographic evidence will be the one which is documented by recordings of recurrent practices of the participants themselves (cf. Georgakopoulou, 2006; this volume). But even if such data are available, methodological requirements have to be developed when and how ethnographic knowledge should be evoked and how it needs to be tied to interactional episodes in question (see Deppermann, 2000; DeFina, 2008, this volume). This, in other words, amounts to a reflection on how ethnographic knowledge necessarily enters into the CA-notion of a display. A fuller account of this is still missing. It seems to be an urgent task for the future advancement of the study of (not only) identities in interaction.

Transcription conventions GAT2 (Selting et al., 2011)

[ ] [ ]	overlap and simultaneous talk
=	latching
(.)	micropause (shorter than 0.2 sec)
(-), (--), (---)	brief, mid, longer pauses of 0.2-0.5, 0.5-0.7, 0.7-1.0 sec.
(2.85)	measured pause
geht_s	assimilation of words
:, ::, :::	segmental lengthening, according to duration
so(h)o	laugh particles within talk
haha hehe hihi	laugh syllables
((laughs))	description of laughter
akZENT	strong, primary stress
ak!ZENT!	extra strong stress
akzEnt	weaker, secondary stress
?	pitch rising to high at end of intonation phrase
,	pitch rising to mid at end of intonation phrase

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–                        level pitch at end of intonation phrase
;                        pitch falling to mid at end of intonation phrase
.                        pitch falling to low at end of intonation phrase
↑                        jump to higher pitch
<<f>       >             forte, loud
<<p>       >             piano, soft
<<pp>      >             pianissimo, very soft
<<dim      >             diminuendo, decreasing loudness
<<all>     >             allegro, fast
<<len>     >             lento, slow
°h, °hh, °hhh            inbreath, according to duration
h, hh, hhh               outbreath, according to duration
<<creaky voice>   >      commentaries regarding voice qualities with scope
(    )                   unintelligible according to duration
(solche)                uncertain transcription
English                  free English translation (preserving German word order as
                         far as possible)
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