# Becoming a Smart Student

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# BECOMING A SMART STUDENT

The construction and contestation of smartness in a Danish primary school

PhD Dissertation

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**Acknowledgements**

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# 1 Introduction

This study explores how smartness is constructed and contested in every day academic activities in a primary school in Copenhagen, Denmark. The study draws on three years of linguistic ethnographic fieldwork across mainstream classes (e.g. Danish, mathematics and history), Arabic heritage language classes (supplementary classes offered by the municipality) and the home of one student, named Mohsen (a pseudonym), a boy of Lebanese decent were Arabic is spoken in the home. I will now introduce and motivate my overall research focus.

## 1.1 Struggling around smartness

Consider the following scenario[1], which occurs in a fifth form math lesson (11 to 12 years old students[2]). The teachers, Sanne and Marie[3], are reviewing the day's homework assignment. The task was to calculate the surface area of a living room with eight corners: (2m x 5m) + (3m x 2m) + (3m x 8m) = 40 m$^2$. This is a difficult task for the class. Many students, including Mohsen, have solved the assignment incorrectly in their exercise books. The participating students are Elif, a girl of Turkish decent, Daniel, a boy of Danish decent, and Mohsen. As the researcher, I am sitting in the back of the classroom, next to Mohsen.

"Sanne asks, "How do you calculate the surface area of the room?" Elif: "You have to multiply" Sanne: "That won't do". The teacher then addresses all of the students, "As far as I can see the living room looks like this. Can I just say length multiplied by…?" Mohsen looks attentively at the teacher and says: "no". Sanne: "Yes do you have a suggestion, what should I do?" Mohsen: "I multiplied the rooms". Sanne asks Mohsen what three numbers he multiplied with. Mohsen: "Well the upper…" Sanne draws the living room on the blackboard and asks Mohsen, "Let me guess. Was it like this?" Mohsen: "Yes". The teacher continues to draw on the board. She then explains that one needs to multiply the length and the width of each rectangle in order to get on with the assignment. Next, Sanne asks, "What can the measurements be, Mohsen?" Mohsen has not raised his hand, or in any other way indicated his willingness to speak. Next to me Mohsen freezes in his chair. There is complete silence in the room. Finally, Sanne looks over at Daniel, who has raised his hand. Daniel then explains how to solve the problem. In the meantime, the other teacher, Marie, hurries down to

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[1] The scenario is summarized from the field note entry and audio recording that I collected on 23/4/13.

[2] School children aged 11 to 13 years old might also be called "pupils". I use the word "students" because "smart student" is the term generally used in the research literature. For instance, Hatt (2012) uses "students" about children in kindergarten.

[3] In Danish schools, teachers are commonly addressed by their first names.

Mohsen. Whispering to him, Marie explains to Mohsen how to solve the problem. Mohsen looks down in his exercise book. He does not move. Mohsen appears to be embarrassed, uncomfortable and distressed. During the break that follows, I notice other students taunting Mohsen, "Mohsen is so smart, Mohsen is a loser", they yell".

(Adapted from my transcribed audio-recording and field note, 23/4/13)

Looking back at this situation I was baffled by the teachers' actions. Why did Sanne seem to assume that Mohsen would know all the correct answers? Why did she fill in the answers on his behalf when he did not provide them himself? And why did Marie then walk over and explain the task to Mohsen, but not to Elif, when these two students seemed to face comparable difficulties? Moreover, I remember Mohsen freezing up next to me, and how this uncomfortable moment, and the other students' subsequent jeering at him, send cold shivers down my spine. What was going on here?

As I continued participant observation, and embarked on preliminary data analyses, a plethora of comparable puzzling situations, or "methodological rich points" (Hornberger 2013: 102), followed[4]. One of these was the question of smartness. Why did the teachers label Mohsen as a particularly smart student? As I immersed myself in the students' written schoolwork in search of an answer to this question[5], I found that Mohsen's exercise books contained many empty pages. Apparently for such a smart student, he did not attend very carefully to his homework. In contrast, the written work of Elif and several other students, for instance Iman, a girl of Iraqi decent, showed that these students carefully prepared for school. The teachers' high opinion of Mohsen did not seem to be reflected in his written academic performance. What was it about Mohsen's social behaviours and oral interactions with the teachers that made him into what they considered to be a "smart student"? How was his smartness constructed? And how did his fellow students contest it?

While much research on smartness as a social construct depicts the smart student as an auspicious role imbued with good learning opportunities (e.g. Hatt 2012; Korp 2011; Bartlett 2007), I wondered about Mohsen's learning opportunities. What kind of learning did he accomplish when the teachers repeatedly filled in correct answers on his behalf? I learned that Mohsen himself and

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[4] Section 3.2.11 describes the process of data analysis.
[5] I collected the students' exercise books and written assignments.

his parents reported that Mohsen was not making satisfactory academic progress in school. During my visits in Mohsen's home, his parents repeatedly told to me that they were worried about Mohsen not learning what he should in school[6]. For instance, Mohsen's father, unsolicited, said, "It's very limited what Mohsen can learn. It's up to him how much he can read at home because he does not get the high level of learning that he should have. They have reached a level, and they don't develop any further". Mohsen's mother brought up the issue several times. She lamented, "as I've said, I don't think he learns that much".

On a follow up home visit when Mohsen was in the seventh form, I barely entered the home when Mohsen spontaneously embarked on a non-stop narrative about school. Mohsen opened his computer and showed me the essays and other written assignments he had done in his seventh form classes. He also told me that he had new teachers in the seventh form, and that this was hard. In my field note entry I wrote:

"Mohsen talks a lot about school. About what it is like to attend seventh form. It is tough. He has got new teachers. In fifth and sixth forms he did not have to work. Mohsen says, "in fifth and sixth forms I didn't read. It was so boring. I did not bother to do my homework because I didn't have to. But then, in seventh form they started to ask, "What is the text about?" and I thought, "Oh, I have to read. I have to do my homework". (Field note, 21/1/15).

As it appears both Mohsen and his parents felt that he did not learn what he should in these years of primary school. Mohsen himself seems to have noticed a marked difference from sixth to seventh form, and he tells me about it. Mohsen says that he "didn't bother to do his homework because he didn't have to". He also reports that the new teachers ask other questions. This suggests that Mohsen, at least in part, has become aware that he had been participating in teaching routines in which he performed student-like behaviours but never actually acquired the academic content (compare Rymes and Pash 2001). Mohsen may have been seen as a smart student, but it did not seem to be doing him much good. Being smart seemed to be a burden for him. How did this happen?

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[6] E.g. on my home visits, which took place on 30/4/13 and 6/11/13.

Another puzzle arose when I entered the field. Previous fieldworkers[7] who had worked in the same class reported that Mohsen's classmate Iman was seen by the teachers as one of the smartest students in the class. But during fieldwork and data analyses, however, I noticed that the teachers repeatedly dismissed Iman's interventions and achievements. During initial data analyses it also began to puzzle me that the teachers repeatedly accepted that Mohsen transgressed classroom rules and assigned him special rights, while disciplining and ignoring Iman's attempts to participate actively. Thus, I increasingly wondered about why my observations conflicted so much with the observations of previous fieldworkers. These puzzles reappeared during repeated visits to the classroom settings.

This study is an attempt to solve some of these puzzles. As I immersed myself in the data and revised my theoretical tools I came to the conclusion that smartness is not so much an individual characteristic, but a social identity that can congeal or change over time. This theoretical approach, what Wortham (2006: 47) calls "trajectories of identification", helped me understand the larger social pattern in which teachers and students struggled to define what it meant to be a smart student, and which students got to be viewed as smart. Twelve-year-old Mohsen was a subject and an object in the construction of smartness.

As I will argue in this study, attending to temporality in the data analyses, I realized that the research participants gradually and over time constructed Mohsen as a particularly smart and favoured student in classroom talk. The teachers offered Mohsen special rights because he became their favourite. I found that Iman and Mohsen had started out being identified as equally smart. Subsequently, however, Mohsen's smart identity "thickened" (Holland and Lave 2001: 9) and gave him a favoured position in the classroom. Struggling to maintain her smart role, Iman contested Mohsen's favoured role, but the teachers declined her actions because they inadvertently had dismissed her out of the game. Also, other students made Mohsen pay the price of having this favoured position by ostracizing him (compare Bucholtz 2011: 105 and Eckert 1989).

At the time of the fieldwork on which this study is based, my focal participants, Mohsen, Iman, and their peers, are 11 to 13 years old. They attend fourth through sixth form mainstream classes and fifth form Arabic heritage language classes. But this study is not about Mohsen, Iman, their peers,

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[7] Two of my research colleagues: Line Knoop-Henriksen and Liva Hyttel-Sørensen.

or their teachers; it covers only a tiny little part of the research participants' lived realities. Rather the focus is on the social identities that Iman and Mohsen represented for their teachers and classmates as they proceeded through their fourth, fifth and sixth form classes. Although social identification in other classrooms will not be identical to the trajectories I present in this study, comparable role formations and struggles around smartness are likely to be widely recognizable to researchers studying classrooms and schools across the world.

Besides trying to understand the construction of smartness, this study has a practical objective as well. It aims to inspire teachers to create "wiggle room" (Erickson 2001: 175) for their students by becoming aware of the conventional definitions of the smart student in their classrooms and schools, and how the enactment and contestation of the smart student role may either encourage or constrain possibilities for student participation.

The present study is an article-based dissertation consisting of seven chapters. The first three chapters lay out the theoretical and methodological foundations of smartness as a research topic. Chapters four, five and six consist of single authored articles, all written by me, which have been published, or are currently undergoing peer review. Chapter seven concludes. This dissertation reflects the learning itinerary I have travelled along while researching and writing it. I have ordered the articles in order to present my data chronologically, because the study traces the construction and contestation of smartness over time. The first article (chapter four) presents Mohsen's trajectory from fourth form through sixth form mainstream classes. The second article (chapter five) describes Mohsen's trajectory in fifth form Arabic classes, and the third article (chapter six) compares Iman and Mohsen's trajectories throughout fourth, fifth and sixth form classes. The following section outlines the dissertation chapters.

## 1.2 Chapter outlines

In chapter two, I describe my epistemological stance of constructionism. I argue that constructionism is a productive approach for an exploration of smartness because it enables the ethnographer to focus on teaching as social practice in a socio-historical context. The chapter reviews previous research on failure, success and smartness, showing how these studies tend to accentuate that smartness evolves from societal macro structures. This is followed by a discussion in which I situate my study at the intersection of linguistic anthropology of education and linguistic

ethnography. I argue that bottom-up exploration of how the smart student role evolves across time and space and invokes socio-historical context enables us to understand smartness in a more nuanced way. Subsequently, coming from a research tradition in the linguistic anthropology of education, I present the theoretical approach of the present study, which is that of social identification (Wortham 2006; Bartlett 2007; Dreier 2003) and participation (Goffman 1981). Finally, I present my specific research questions.

In chapter three, I present the linguistic ethnographic methodology (Copland and Creese 2015; Creese 2008; Rampton 2007a), the methods and setting of the study. I begin with a presentation of the linguistic ethnographic tools, which enables me to advance the microanalysis. This is followed by an account of the data collected and methods used, where I discuss issues of researcher positionality, field access, longitudinal collaborative ethnographic fieldwork, the data sources, selection of foreground and background data and focal participants, transcription, translation, ethics, data analyses and selection of excerpts for the articles. Subsequently, I describe the setting for this study, providing a description of the school and the specific classrooms were I conducted fieldwork.

The fourth chapter consists of the article, "The burden of smartness: Teacher's favourite and classmates' teasing in a Danish classroom" (Lundqvist 2017a). This article explores how students' social identification can change from being smart to being favoured. I will argue that when a student become socially identified as smart, and begins to actively collaborate with the teacher to construct correct answers to the teacher's questions, and the teacher comes to rely habitually on this collaboration to move the teaching activities along, the role of the smart student thickens into a favoured role. The student must then cope with the pressures of being favoured by the teachers and ostracised by peers. The article highlights how attention to identity transformation in micro-level classroom discourse and across various data sources can help researchers detect shifts in identities that result from wider scale, enduring teaching routines and identity models.

The fifth chapter consists of the article, "Becoming a "smart student": The emergence and unexpected implications of one student's social identification" (Lundqvist 2015). The article explores how a student shifts between being a student among other students – although he is a smart and favoured student – to attaining a qualitatively more privileged position in which he has rights to symbolic and material resources denied other students in the classroom. The focal student's social

identification increasingly points towards a local model of the smart student. This model involves knowing the correct answer, being friendly to the teachers, compliant and funny. In this article, I will argue that the regular identification of the student as smart is so strong that the teacher draws on it even when the student's actions are not in accordance with the local smart student model. The described trajectory becomes socially consequential because other students contest the focal student's smart role. When a teacher identifies students as "smart" and assigns them favoured positions and special rights, those students are likely to become socially vulnerable. In addition, the learning opportunities of such students may end up being reduced. Students deemed "smart" might end up suffering both socially and educationally.

The sixth chapter consists of the article, "Smart, smarter, smartest: Competition and linked identities in a Danish school" (Lundqvist accepted). Success and failure are often described as interdependent socio-historical available positions in schooling. But the common social phenomenon of one student coming to inhabit "failure" relative to another student coming to inhabit "success" needs an empirical account. This article explores how the negatively valued identity of one student can come to link with the more positively valued identity of another student. The article illustrates how one student's trajectory of identification, vis-à-vis institutional conceptions of smartness, becomes tied to the identification of another student over time. We will see how a student with obvious abilities is ignored by the teachers and relegated to a role as disruptive and quiet, relative to her classmate comes to be seen as the smartest student in the cohort. I will argue here that when a student struggles to maintain her or his role as smart relative to another student's thickening identification as smart and favoured, and the teachers continuously dismiss the actions of the struggling (to be smart) student as inappropriate, these students' trajectories of identification become linked. Students who find themselves caught in these processes of linked identification are likely to encounter constrained participation possibilities. They may also become educational discouraged.

I begin chapter seven by summarizing the scholarly contributions made by this research. The overall contribution of this study is to account for – in broad ethnographic scope and interactional detail – how the smart student role can reinforce into favoured roles, become contested by other students, and even evolve into inferior roles contingent upon linked identification. I will suggest

that the concept of linked identification helps us to better understand the social inequality that often evolve in classrooms, when teachers habitually position one student relatively to other students.

This is followed by a description of the study's implications. Here I point out that the teacher's handling of the smart student role, runs the risk of burdening smart and favoured students with responsibilities for the teacher's activities of moving the teaching onward. This is done through comparison between individual students - assigning students inferior roles, or simply ignoring some in favour of the smart and favoured student. As a result of the teacher's favouritism, the favoured student is at risk of being subject to pressure on their academic performance as well as becoming at odds with their peers. Smart students who struggle to maintain their high academic status are at risk of becoming caught in linked identification. They may come to acquire stigmatized roles and encounter constrained participation possibilities. Being smart and continually favoured has its prize, as does being smart and ignored. I then critically discuss the broader relevancy of the findings of this study. Finally, I discuss how the findings from this study can motivate the development of an agenda for future research.

## 2 Theoretical preliminaries

Ethnographic articles offer only limited space for researchers to lay out their theoretical approach. In recognition of the shoulders I stand on, this chapter describes the relevance for studying the smart student role and the particular theoretical approach used in this study. I begin with an account of why my exploration takes a constructionism stance. This is followed by a review of the background literature on success, failure and smartness as social constructs. In the review, I underline that this research, to a large degree, explores smartness through predefined social structures. Subsequently, I discuss why I aim to shift the research lens to focus on a more dynamic concept of smartness, how it evolves over time. I then situate my study at the intersection of linguistic anthropology of education and linguistic ethnography. Here I present the two main conceptual approaches used in this study: social identification (Wortham 2006) and participation framework (Goffman 1986). I end the chapter by laying out my specific research questions.

### 2.1 Epistemological stance

An axiom of social research is to aim for commensurability between epistemological stance, theoretical and methodological frameworks, and methods in order to ground the research results of a given study (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2010 [2007]: 87). The theoretical and methodological frameworks used in this study align with the epistemological stance of constructionism. A constructionist approach begins with the assumption that meaning is socially constructed in everyday interaction amongst people, and that these everyday constructions depend on a socio-historically shaped context (Gergen 1995). According to Gergen (1995: 25), constructionism foregrounds micro-social processes, such as "negotiation, cooperation, conflict, rhetoric, ritual, roles, [and] social scenarios", and attends to how those processes emerge "within particular socio-historical circumstances".

I assume that smartness is more than just a cognitive ability. Whatever peoples' cognitive abilities may be, smartness is also a social identity assigned to and inhabited by individuals in social interaction. Smartness is socially constructed in interaction among teachers and students during the conduct of everyday teaching activities. Such local constructions invoke[8] larger socio-historical understandings of what it means to be a smart student. In this study, I focus on how smartness is

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[8] An appeal to some kind of tradition or accepted understanding ("This is the way we've always done things around here") is what I would call an act of "invoking" socio-historical understanding.

socially constructed in a Danish primary school of 11 to 13 year-olds. I find this focus on smartness as a social construct to be a productive overall epistemological stance for several reasons.

First, a social constructionist approach enables the researcher to move beyond the idea that the individual student is solely responsible for becoming a smart student, and, ultimately, fare well in school (compare Borland 1997: 439 and Varenne and McDermott 1998: 9). By recognizing that smartness is a social role[9] that is negotiated, constructed and contested among teachers and students in everyday academic practices, I move the focus from the individual to the social practice of teaching in the socio-historical context.

Secondly, it is widely acknowledged that the ethnographer is a historically situated and "politically engaged" "cultural critic" "anchored in a specific community of moral discourse", rather than an objective, neutral observer (Denzin and Lincoln 2001: x), and that ethnographic validity, to a large degree, depends upon the ethnographer reflecting upon how the fieldwork, data analysis, and the subjective value of the researcher's perspective influence the research findings (e.g. Blackledge and Creese 2010; Erickson 1985; Gulløv and Højlund 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Heath and Street 2008; Hornberger, 2013; Jaspers and Meeuwis 2013; Rampton, 2006: 392; Rampton, Maybin and Roberts 2015: 16). I find that researchers writing up an ethnographic account reflexive of their own moral and cultural affiliations require at least a minimum of constructionism.

Constructionism may take various forms. How should a researcher who wants to understand the social construction of smartness balance the relationship between micro-social processes of classroom interaction, with the larger socio-historical circumstances and institutional discourses?[10] This question is important because the theoretical and methodological decisions the researcher makes in search of an answer decides what answers it will be possible to provide. With this question in mind, let me review the research landscape on educational success, failure and smartness.

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[9] I use the terms "role" and "identity" synonymously.
[10] By "discourse" I mean the display of organized and meaningful symbolic behaviour in language in action (Blommaert 2005: 2).

**2.2 Background literature**

**2.2.1 Success and failure**

In their landmark study of the American educational system Varenne and McDermott (1998) argue that this system works as a cultural fact that disables some students, and enables others. Drawing on Durkheim, Benedict, Bourdieu and others, the authors demonstrate how success and failure are mutually constructed through the everyday academic practices of competition and measurement: "the success/failure complex will have its say. It will acquire people to be displayed as a success or failure even if there are only two persons to divide the spoils" (Varenne and McDermott 1998: 121-122). Varenne and McDermott (1989: xi) describe success and failure as particular positions, i.e. social identities, available for students in schooling. Children come to inhabit social identities such as "learning disabled student" or "smart student" in everyday educational activities. While teachers and students are busy "doing this or that" they are "almost always doing one fateful thing: determining who is the most successful".

Varenne and McDermott (1998: 19) underscore that the success/failure complex arises from the socially and culturally structured world of education in America, which "organizes interpersonal relationships at the local level (in both geographical and temporal terms)… the relations among localities, communities and groups". Viewed from this perspective, smartness emerges from predefined social structures, more specifically, from the institutional discourse and rituals of the educational system, within which act teachers, students, parents and other agents (Varenne and McDermott 1998: 7, 14 and 209-210).

Varenne and McDermott (1998: 209) provide two insights of critical importance to my exploration of linked identification. First, they observe that success and failure are socially available positions for children to inhabit in schools. Second, students' social identification may be influenced by institutional discourses. In chapter six, I use these two insights to show how identification operates in a concrete setting. However, one limitation of Varenne and McDermott's approach is that their conceptual tools are not attuned to accommodate heterogeneous patterns of ethnographic observations, such as those described in my study. Exploring smartness through the lens of the Danish educational system could have helped us understand that there might be an available position of success for children that live up to the expectations generated by such a position in the Danish system. But an assumption that the Danish school system simply generates a smart student

role would not have enabled us to understand how the roles of smart students can change and become socially consequential in unintended and unexpected ways.

### 2.2.2 Smartness

Educational scholarship in North America, Europe and Scandinavia, focuses directly on the socio-cultural construction of smartness and related categories. Scholars studying various educational settings have focused on similar categories of students, such as gifted students (Sapon-Shevin 1994), good students (Thornberg 2009), ideal students (Hempel-Jorgensen 2009), normal students (Bartholdsson 2007) smart students (Bartlett 2007; Gilliam 2009; Hatt 2012; Korp 2011), or successful students (Berry 2005; Michael, Andrade and Bartlett 2007). Other scholars historicize and discuss concepts of genius (McDermott 2006), giftedness (Borland 1997), intelligence (Sternberg 2007) or student success (Enoma 2006).

The vast majority of this work challenges the sociocultural construction of smartness, pointing to its capacity to shape social stratification in society and in classrooms (though see Bartlett 2007; Michael, Andrade and Bartlett 2007). Many of these studies draw on the works of Bourdieu, Durkheim, and Foucault to describe how smartness emerges from predefined social structures. They then demonstrate how smartness works as a structural means of control, linked to ideological models of the smart students as well behaved, docile, compliant or normal. These studies emphasize how smartness fits with a discourse that constrains those students who do not fit these labels.

For instance, Bartholdsson (2007: 135-143) explores the socialization process of "becoming a normal student" in two Swedish primary schools. Drawing on Bourdieu, Foucault, Hacking, and others, Bartholdsson shows how the Swedish school system facilitates student socialization through processes of "benevolent government" in which successful students display "subordinate", "emotionally mature", "positive" and "empathetic" behaviours. Students who do not adjust to this socialization are categorized and then treated as "problematic".

Hatt (2012: 438) explores smartness as a cultural practice in an American kindergarten classroom. Drawing on Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain, Sternberg and others, Hatt finds that within the culturally predominant structure, students who speak only when called upon by the teacher and display "docile" and "compliant" behaviours become labelled as the smart students. Moreover,

smartness works as a "mechanism of control and social positioning along racial and class lines" (see also Hatt 2007). Students of colour and working class background are identified in subordinate or problematic positions, whereas white, middle class children are categorized as "smart" and "responsible".

Thornberg (2009: 257-258) explores the hidden curriculum of school rules in two Swedish schools. Drawing on Atkinson and Housley, Berger and Luckmann, Bourdieu, and others, Thornberg shows how the rules of the school system "[mediate] a moral construction" of two types of "good" students, that is; "the benevolent fellow buddy" and "the well-behaved pupil". This mediation process contributes to "the social and cultural reconstruction processes" of students' "cultural capital", that is; "middle-class" students "match" the school's curriculum, and are likely to gain social status and educational opportunites from this match.

Most of this research seeks to demonstrate how smartness translates from societal and institutional macro structures (though see Bartlett 2007). In these studies, the smart student is depicted as the gold standard against which students in other roles are measured, and this comparison makes these other roles problematic. What is missing, however, is the problematic nature of the smart student role itself (though see Bucholtz 2011 and Eckert 1989). In the following, I discuss how my study further develops what we know about smartness.

### 2.3 Rethinking smartness

I posed the question of how the researcher should balance the relationship between micro-social processes and particular socio-historical circumstances to better understand smartness. While the research above tends to view smartness as unproblematic for students socially identified as smart, my observations during ethnographic fieldwork show that smartness generates its own set of problems (for the "smart" student and for the researcher). The smart student role may evolve, or "thicken", into a favoured role, which places the student at odds with their peers and places an added burden on the student to perform for the teacher, as I document in chapters four and five. The smart student role may also devolve into inferior roles of the quiet or disruptive student, as a result of linked identification, as I describe in chapter six.

One aspect of these findings confirms previous sociolinguistic studies. It is a common pattern that "nerds" and "teacher's pets" pay a price for their academically successful roles. For instance, Bucholtz (2011: 105) writes that students who are identified as "nerds" might encounter social exclusion among peers, a familiar theme in popular culture as well (hence films such as "Revenge of the Nerds"). Benwell and Stokoe (2006) show how academically successful students who prepare well for classes can become the subject of their peers' ridiculing and irony. Martin (1984: 93) demonstrates that "students who were defined as teacher's pets found it difficult to gain classmate acceptance … [and] were often on the receiving end of jokes amongst their peers".

Another aspect of these findings remained a puzzle for me for some time. Inspired by Hatt (2012) and Bartlett (2007), I originally undertook my research to tell an optimistic story, that of Mohsen, a linguistic minority boy, who was socially identified as smart and who ostensibly benefitted from this identification by achieving good learning opportunities. Instead, I discovered that Mohsen and his parents reported that he was not learning, and that Mohsen's empty exercise book revealed that he often did not prepare for school. I found it hard to believe that Mohsen encountered good learning opportunities when he often did not prepare for school. In addition, the classroom routines Mohsen and teachers engaged in to move forward the teaching activities are known to constrain students' learning (e.g. Bloome et al. 1989; Rymes and Pash 2001).

Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) study on the influence of teachers' expectations on children's performance has had a major effect on how we think about the relationship between teacher's expectations, smartness and educational inequality in the classroom. However, as I argue in chapter five, the teacher's presupposition of a student as smart does not always generate successful performance. In fact, it may inadvertently constrain that student's learning opportunities. As I began to explore the heterogeneous pattern of my data through the theoretical lenses of Holland and Lave (2001) and Wortham (2006), I discovered that the implications of the individual's social identification could not be explored a priori.

In reviewing my data, I will argue that exploring how the smart student role evolves across time and space, rather than how it translates from macro structures, helps us to understand smartness in a more nuanced way. This does not obviate the need to study how societal and institutional processes inform, configure and constrain local processes of identification. The smart student studies

described above are useful for my study, as they provide descriptions of widely circulated socio-historical smart student models. I draw from these studies, and those of other scholars, in my analyses of how the participants in my own classroom ethnography articulate socio-historical mainstream models of smart students.

Nevertheless, we need to reconsider what smartness is all about. Constructions of smartness do not merely, or a priori, derive from societal and institutional discourse. Smartness is also constructed, and contested, in the "contentious local practice" (Holland and Lave 2001: 5) that invokes, and accompanies, broader processes. In order to combine the socio-historical context of smartness with smartness as social construct, we need to employ theoretical and methodological frameworks that are sensitive to how micro-social processes evolve across time and contexts, and frameworks that can connect these local processes to institutional discourse and to broader socio-historical processes and practices.

Studies within North American linguistic anthropology (Holland and Lave 2001; Wortham 2012; Wortham 2006) and European linguistic ethnography (Rampton 2007a; Rampton, Maybin and Roberts 2015) argue that contexts for interaction, such as overall structures or macro/micro dynamics, should be investigated rather than presupposed. Instead of reducing the complexity of social events by defining a priori structures or processes, these approaches seek to explore micro level social events in all their complexity, and then connect them to larger-scale socio-cultural processes. Thus, these approaches are better able to show how micro-social processes relate to socio-historical circumstances than the research that emphasizes the structural imposition of smartness discourses.

Informed by these overall epistemological tenets, I situate my exploration of smartness at the intersection of linguistic anthropology of education and linguistic ethnography. I use the term "linguistic anthropology of education" as an umbrella for my theoretical approach because the concepts that I employ in my analyses derive from scholars within this field. I use the term "linguistic ethnography" as an umbrella for my methodological approach because my empirical work is informed by linguistic ethnography, not anthropology. Also, linguistic ethnography offers tools that help me advance my microanalyses. In this spirit, chapter three describes how I "do"

linguistic ethnography. The subsequent section details my affiliation with the linguistic anthropology of education.

## 2.4 Linguistic anthropology of education

Linguistic anthropology of education is a longstanding interdisciplinary field that emerges from mid-19th century antecedents. According to Copland and Creese (2015: 17-22), it derives from Hymes's (1974) ethnography of communication, Gumperz's (1982) interactional sociolinguistics, Goffman's theories of face (1967) and participation framework (1986) and Erickson's (1985) micro-ethnography. Hornberger (2003: 266) describes linguistic anthropology of education as "a field that seeks to understand … societal phenomena, and in particular societal inequities, in terms of micro-level person-to-person interaction, in the hopes of enabling work for change from both the bottom up and the top down". In what follows, I focus squarely on the bottom-up linguistic anthropological approaches. I employ concepts from these approaches because they enable me to explore how smartness is constructed and contested in local practice.

### 2.4.1 History in person

In their anthology, *History in Person*, Holland and Lave (2001: 5) draw from Bloch, Bakhtin, Bourdieu, Holquist, and others. The notion of "history in person" refers to the heterogeneous relations between participants' "intimate self-making", "their participation in [local] contentious practice" and the broader recognizable historical structures that inform these local practices. Holland and Lave emphasize the agency of the individual more than scholars such as Enoma, Varenne and McDermott, Sternberg, and Thornberg. I acknowledge that individual agency, psychological aspects, and other aspects of self, play a role in social identification. However, a discussion of individual agency in social identification is beyond the scope of the present study (but see Perregaard 2016). As discussed above, in this study, I focus on the social construction and contestation of smartness.

Holland and Lave (2001) highlight the indeterminacy of the relationship between historical structures, local practice and participants' social identity formations. Because of this indeterminacy, they suggest that ethnographers begin by identifying identity formations in local situated struggle and then explore how these local processes are informed by, and accompany, broader social processes. Hence:

beginning with local contentious practice leaves the extension of relevant connections among practical settings open-ended and the boundaries of the relevant participants reconfigurable. To talk of hegemony and resistance presumes nation-states or something like them as units of social existence and turns attention to relations between the powerful and the oppressed *pre-categorized* as such, rather than defined in terms of the characteristics of the struggles in which they are engaged: multiple, diverse, and interconnected. (Holland and Lave 2001: 23).

Holland and Lave (2001: 18-22) note that the identities of participants "emerge" and "thicken" in these local practices. In describing emergence and thickening, they emphasize that "persons and lived struggles are unfinished and in process" (2001: 9). According to Holland and Lave (2001: 22), the emphasis on identities in transformation is crucial because it invites open-ended explorations of identity formation. Moreover, it helps the researcher to avoid ahistorical, asocial, and essentialist perspectives on identity. Identity is a process of emergence, becoming, congealing (thickening) and transformation. Identities are dynamic. In this study, I discuss various transitions in the students' identities. In some cases the identity will consolidate or congeal, such that the individual's role becomes more salient and unambiguous. It is this process I call "thickening".

Emerge and thicken are not unproblematic concepts. For a social identity to emerge typically requires some kind of transition or event, such as students beginning in high school, birth of a child, marriage, or new job. However, minor transitions, such as a class getting a new teacher or changing their groups during a term (Wortham 2008b), could also be relevant. It is an empirical question as to whether a social identity emerges out of a given event or situation, or whether an incipient identity "thickens" into a more established identity. In the mainstream classroom that I studied, August 2011 saw the arrival of a new teacher, Lene. At the same time, Mohsen's ascription as "smart" began to emerge (see section 4.5.1).

I do not claim that there is a one-to-one causal relationship between the new teacher's arrival and Mohsen's identification as smart. But my data indicates that unlike some of the previous teachers, Lene had a very high and articulated opinion of Mohsen as smart. I also found a great difference between the ways in which Lene and Mohsen collaborated in fourth form classes (see section 4.5.1)

and the ways they collaborated by the end of fifth form classes (see sections 3.2.11 and 4.5.2). For me, this transition became one where Mohsen, as smart, now became who was smart and favoured. The perspective of emerging and thickening identities are useful to my study because they enable me to shed light on such differences.

Smartness does not always emerge and thicken. Students may become less "smart", or adopt some other identity. There may also occur a process of recombination, whereby two roles combine in certain configurations, such as the composite identity of being smart and favoured. In this this dissertation, I will observe a variety of such identity processes taking place. From this overall vantage point, I am seeking to understand the construction and contesting of smartness, as a social identity that evolves in local struggle about who comes to inhabit the role of the smart student, how these struggles delineate locally salient understandings of smartness, how smart students should behave and how they should display knowledge in classroom interaction.

I seek to understand how these local conflicts and tensions reflect broader socio-historical processes, which during the course of decades and centuries have shaped our understanding of what it means to be a smart student. Smartness has a history, to be sure, but it is also created and reproduced in the classroom on a daily basis. Wortham's (2006) conceptualization of social identification has proven an effective tool to analyse the heterogeneous relations between participants' identity formations, local practice and broader socio-historical processes. In the following sections, I discuss how my theoretical framework draws from the work of Wortham and other scholars.

**2.4.2 Social identification in schools**

Drawing on Foucault, Hacking, Holland and Lave, Lemke, Silverstein, and others, Wortham (2006) explores how social identification and academic learning unfold as interdependent social processes in an American high school classroom. Wortham underlines that using detailed classroom interaction to analyse how individual students' trajectories of identification emerge and thicken across time enables the researcher to capture how these processes invoke broader social processes. My study draws from Wortham's conceptualization of social identification in order to explicate and better understand how smartness is heterogeneously constructed and how smartness can evolve and become coercive over time (see also Brubaker and Cooper 2001: 1).

In this study, I define "social identification" as the interpersonal, socio-historically permeated processes through which individuals identify and are identified as instantiations of socially recognised models of identities. When I refer to the "social identification of a student" (for instance, in my research questions), I mean the process throughout which teachers, students, and the focal student, co-construct a social identity for this individual by positioning her or him in comparable ways in different situations that reoccur over time.

According to Wortham (2006):

> Social identification happens across a trajectory of events as signs of identity and … models [of identities] are consistently applied to and inhabited by an individual. Widely circulating categories and models are essential to social identification, but only as they are contextualized within local settings and particular events. In settings like a classroom, local versions of more widely circulating models often develop, and participants in these settings draw on those models as they identify themselves and each other. (Wortham 2006: 49).

Thus, social identification develops in students' trajectories over time, and it is a process that relies on widely recognizable but not pre-established, socio-historical processes. Turning now to the description and discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of the social identification approach, I begin at the level of micro events.

### 2.4.3 Sign of identity

An individual's actions, utterances, looks, and stances, can be interpreted as "signs of identity" (Wortham 2006: 31). These signs serve as an "index" (Blommaert 2007: 4), that this person is a certain type of social persona (Agha 2007), such as "smart student" or "disruptive student". For instance, the action of a student delivering the desired answer to the teacher's question may count as a sign of the social persona "smart student". I understand "indexicality" in the vein of Blommaert (2007: 4), who defines indexicality as "the ways in which unique instances of communication can be captured (indexically) as 'framed' understandable communication, pointing towards social and cultural norms, genres, traditions, expectations – phenomena of higher scale level".

Wortham (2006: 30-34) strongly highlights indeterminacy as a basic condition for the interpretation of signs of identity. The interpretation of actions as signs of identity is validated when more than one participant consistently, and in recurrent situations, reacts in comparable ways. In this way, the social pattern of signs "come[s] collectively to presuppose a particular model" of identity and the "indeterminacy gets overcome". Goffman's (1981) classic conceptualisation of "participation framework" offers an apt tool for the further analysis of how participants consistently enact and interpret each other's actions as signs of identities. I describe this approach in the following section.

### 2.4.4 Participation framework, frame, keying and face work

Goffman's (1981) concept of "participation framework" refers to the structural relations of a face-to-face encounter. This includes the participants' social status in relation to one another, to the activity they engage in and to the utterance of a moment of talk. Hence:

> observe that if one starts with a particular individual in the act of speaking  - a cross-sectional instantaneous view - one can describe the role or function of all the several members of the encompassing social gathering from this point of reference (whether they are ratified participants or not), couching the description in the concepts that have been reviewed. The relation of any one such member to this utterance can be called his "participation status" relative to it, and that of all the persons in the gathering the "participation framework" for that moment of speech. The same two terms can be employed when the point of reference is shifted from a given particular speaker to something wider: all the activity in the situation itself. The point of all this, of course, it that an utterance does not carve up the world beyond the speaker into precisely two parts, recipients and non-recipients, but rather opens up an array of structurally differentiated possibilities, establishing the participation framework in which the speaker will be guiding his delivery. (Goffman 1981: 137).

According to Goffman, the participation framework can cover the activity, a smaller set of subactivities or an interactional sequence in the encounter. The participation framework concept thereby invites the researcher to to work simultaneously at the levels of turn taking, activities and social relations between the participants. In the participation framework analysis, Goffman (1981:

132) distinguishes between different types of participants. From an overall perspective, participants can enact, or be perceived by others as, "ratified participants" or "unratified participants". Ratified participants will often be the speaker and addressee, but present participants who are not explicitly addressed can also be ratified participants. Unratified participants are those "whose access to the encounter, however minimal, is itself perceivable by the official participants" (Goffman 1981: 132). This category can be further differentiated into "bystanders", who unintentionally overhear an utterance or "eavesdroppers", who intentionally listen. Through these different ways of participation, participants aim to achieve, and to ascribe to each other, social roles. Those participant types, roles and social relations can change from one moment to the next. But they can also become habitual in the thickening of an individual's social identification as a smart student.

According to Goffman (1986 [1974]: 10-11), activities in a participation framework are framed by the participants: "I assume that definitions of a situation are build up in accordance with principles of organisation which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements". In this study, I understand "frame" as the situational expectations participants presuppose when they engage in an activity. A frame can change from one moment to the next when participants "key" the activity with alternative meaning. According to Goffman (1986: 45), "keying" is involved when a "systematic transformation … alter[s] … the activity … [and] utterly changes what it is a participant would say was going on".

In teaching activities we typically expect participants to engage in institutionalised and unequal power relations. We expect the teacher to demonstrate leadership, for instance by giving instructions, asking questions and evaluating contributions, and by referring to these types of actions as his or her responsibility and obligation. We expect the students to demonstrate deference by following the teacher's instructions, answering the questions and accepting the evaluations. Yet, participants may act differently than expected from their institutional roles. As we will see, students may fail to give the correct answer, and they may key an activity framed as teaching into a joke. Moreover, teachers may, in part, transfer the responsibility for moving the teaching activities forward to students.

Using Goffman, I will analyse how a student can be a ratified participant in one participation framework and an unratified participant in another (section 4.5.3). We will se how teachers can frame a teaching activity through known-answer-questions in one participation framework. How the student can take the teachers' hints, and provides the desired label in collaboration with the teachers whitin this framework. How other students, in a complementary participation framework, may key the activity as jeering and ridiculing of the smart and favoured student (see also section 5.6).

I will also attend to how students can attempt to key teaching activities, and how teachers may respond in different ways to such actions. We will see how Iman interrupts a teaching activity by bursting into a story (section 6.5.2). The teacher then keys the activity into academically relevant story telling, with Iman as the main ratified participant. Iman continues to narrate, and the teacher interprets her actions as signs of the smart student. In another situation, occurring approximately two years later, Iman also interrupts another teaching activity. This time, however, the teacher rejects Iman's attempt to key the activity as a parody and interprets her actions as signs of the disruptive student (section 6.5.3). The presence of many such comparable interactions can contribute to the documentation of how a student's smart identity may change over time.

Besides using his participation framework, I employ Goffman's concept of "face work". Goffman (1967: 5) defines "face" as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". The face work concept is useful because it enables me to analyse how the teachers protect and improve Mohsen's face as a smart student in teaching activities. For instance, the teachers answer on Mohsen's behalf when he is unable to do so himself. Thereby the teachers secure the positive value of Mohsen's smart student face (section 4.5.2).

Davies and Harré (1990) criticise Goffman's theoretical apparatus of being vaguely described. I follow this criticism to the extent that Goffman defines participation framework ambiguously. As mentioned, Goffman suggests that a participation framework can cover both the action and utterance of the individual participant in a turn of talk and the entire encounter. Inspired by Madsen (2015), I aim to overcome this inherent ambiguity of the participation framework by distinguishing between what happens in the situation, during the moment of a participant's turn, in the social

relations between the participants, and how these local interactions invoke larger socio-historical understandings.

Madsen (2015: 23) attends to the "situational context", the "sequential context", the "relational context" and the "socio-cultural context". The situational context includes the activities the participants are engaged in. What kind of teaching activity is going on? What is the topic of conversation? Were does the activity take place? The sequential context refers to how individuals relate to one another in a stretch of talk. What actions do they perform? How do other participants respond to their utterances? The relational context involves the social relationship between the participants, which can be traced in their former interactional history. The socio-cultural context refers to the institutional and societal norms, values and identities that are made relevant by the participants in the interaction. According to Madsen (2015: 23), these four levels of context should be understood as "simoultaneous perspectives which inform and influence each other, and … correspond to particular analytical conceptions. Incorporating such different analytical perspectives is a way of grasping the multiscalar layering of social interaction (Blommaert, 2010)". Although these levels overlaps in multiple ways in social practice (Madsen 2015: 23), they provide relevant analytic distinctions that can help the researcher to overcome the mentioned ambiguity of participation framework.

In the articles I describe the situational context of the excerpt before analysing it. I then attend to what happens in the sequential context by conducting linguistic ethnographic turn-by-turn analyses[11] of selected transcripts. In these analyses I trace social relations between the participants by attending to how the participation frameworks they engage in reflect their social relationship. For instance, I show how the teacher and the student collaborate in a participation framework, throughout which the teacher keys the student's storytelling as a relevant teaching activity, and how this framework indexes a successful teacher and student relationship (section 6.5.1). Finally, I take into account that local interaction index socio-cultural context by including the perspective of socio-historical identity models, to which I now turn.

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[11] I describe this in section 3.1.

**2.4.5 Model of identity**

Scholars suggest different conceptualizations of model of identity. My definition draws on the work of Agha (2007), Wortham (2006: 37) and Bartlett (2007). I define a "model of identity" as a social identity that people co-construct and possibly contest in local practices, through the systematically perceivable signs of identities that operate for a small or large subset of people, or a "social domain" (Agha, 2007: 125) as signs of a certain type of social persona. As Agha emphasizes, a social domain is a dynamic notion, it is not necessary that every member of a domain recognizes, or enacts, exactly the same model.

My analyses operate with three types of identity models: 1) the local model, which teachers and students co-construct across the social domain of a classroom, 2) the institutional model, by which the understandings of the smart student predominate across the social domain of the school, and 3) the socio-historical model, that is; widely recognized models of smart students, and the signs, roles, expectations and ideologies that people associate with these models across social domains that span decades and centuries. Local and institutional identity models invoke socio-historical models in so far as they can use these as a basis for projecting institutional or personal authority or legitimacy.

Wortham (2006: 6-16) observes that models of identities develop historically. Drawing on Foucault, Hacking, and others, Wortham refers to how models of identities emerge, evolve, and change over decades and centuries. During the nineteenth century in Europe, there developed institutionalized technologies for classification of people and social categories (Foucault 1977). The institution of schooling developed classifications of students. Thus, the perception and categorization of students as "smart", "normal", "deviant" and "disruptive" evolve from, and accompany, the institutional arrangement of schooling. The history of any institution is also the history of its categorizations and classifications. Changes in categories or the emergence of new labels provide a mirror to changes in institutions.

Wortham focuses on how models of identities evolve in the social domain of the classroom, as evidenced by detailed analyses of transcribed whole-class talk and references to scholarly accounts of socio-historical models of identities (Wortham 2004, Wortham 2005, Wortham 2006: 10), whereas Bartlett and her colleagues focus on how an institutional model of school success provides resources for student identification (Michael, Andrade and Bartlett 2007; see also Creese, Bhatt,

Bhojani and Martin 2006). The individual student draws on the institutional model to successfully self-identify as a smart student, as Bartlett (2007) shows using observational data and interviews. In the present study, I emphasise the importance of attending both to how models of identities can be derived from interaction analysis, and from broader ethnographic data that covers the larger social domain of the school.

I analyse models of identities as they are articulated in local practice by attending to participants' "explicit account[s] of what some people are like" across various data sources, such as whole-class talk, informal talk, interviews with students, teachers, and parents, but also peer talk and "tacit account[s] that analysts can infer based on people's systematic behaviour toward others" (Wortham 2006: 6), such as the afore mentioned participation frameworks. I do not employ categories like "smart student" or "nice boy" as empirical descriptions. Rather, I examine the local specificity of these categories, associated models of identities, and how participants orient to these categories and models in interactions, and how such orientations change over time.

I trace indexical connections between local models, institutional models, and socio-historical models by attending to how enacted participation frameworks invoke such more widespread smart student models. In chapter four, for instance, I show how Mohsen's social identification increasingly points towards a local smart student model that indexes socio-historical models of well-behaved and docile students. In chapter six, I show how this analytic approach enables the researcher to accommodate indeterminacy in the analysis of identity formations while revealing the way in which schools are sites where particular ideologies and practices predominate – not least when it comes to the social identification of smart students. In what follows, I describe how social identities can thicken, change and link in students' trajectories and how these processes should be analysed.

### 2.4.6 Trajectory of identification

My definition of a "trajectory of identification" draws on the work of Wortham (2006) and Dreier (2003). I define "trajectory" as a "chain of events" throughout which an individual, across time and space, enact signs of identities "that more and more participants" come to presuppose as evidence of a local thickening model of identity (Wortham 2006: 47)

Wortham (2006: 48) highlights the indeterminacy of students' trajectories of identification, and focuses on trajectories across time to "trace the actual models of identity that are applied to individuals and that often could not be predicted out of context". Dreier (2003) presents the concept "trajectories of participation" to describe how participants achieve learning across contexts, such as school and home. Dreier also mentions the indeterminacy of social processes, but indeterminacy is not so crucial for him as it is for Wortham. This is because Dreier focuses on how an individual's mode of participation across contexts helps construct their learning, personal stances and life trajectories (this is also emphasised by Bartlett 2007).

My study is to a high degree informed by Wortham's work. I foreground indeterminacy by following individual students' trajectories across time. However, unlike Wortham, I follow students' trajectories across classroom contexts, and include the perspective of the home, whereas Wortham focuses on single classroom settings. Moreover, I attend to institutional models, whereas Wortham focuses on classroom models and how those index socio-historical models. Thus, my study emphasizes indeterminacy to a smaller extent than Wortham. My study is informed by Dreier's work; as I focus on how the social identification of smart students evolves across different contexts. In this study of social identification, I show not only how models of identities can be depicted from detailed transcription of classroom talk and socio-historical accounts of models of identities, as does Wortham (2006), but also how individual trajectories can be influenced by institutional models that span the social domain of the school, as suggested by Bartlett (2007) and Creese et al. (2006). I also suggest that attending to data from students' homes enables a more holistic exploration of social identification processes.

The trajectory notion has its limitations. It rests on the assumption that the individual is moving forward in some kind of more or less steady transformation. However, students' identity constructions, like their academic performance, hardly ever take linear paths. In this study I could have emphasized more the multiple and multimodal aspects of academic identification that individuals construct in and out of classrooms, as Pérez-Milans and Soto (2016) do. I could probably have told another story by looking into how Iman "self-identified" in interviews, on Facebook, in her written assigments and how she employed different linguistic and multimodel resources in interaction with different participants across time (Pérez-Milans and Soto 2016: 49). This approach would have enabled me to depict the contradictions, multiplicity and fluidity of

identity trajectories to a larger degree than I do in the present study. However, I feel an obligation to explore and illuminate the problems of smartness that were so pertinent at the school of my study. One relevant way of doing this is to focus on how Mohsen and Iman's smart identities evolve and become socially consequential over time. But I do of course not view these student trajectories as finished. The trajectory notion provides a critical analytic lens for my study, enabling me to explicate how the construction of smartness can connect to other conditions of privilege and constraint.

Secondly, and relatedly, the trajectory framework shapes the ground for my explication of how success and failure operate as interdependent social phenomena in schools. Tracing Mohsen and Iman's trajectories of identification across time and classroom contexts enables me to provide an empirical account of how students' different projections of their smartness interact with each other, and with socio-historical recognizable models of smartness (chapter six). I label this phenomenon "linked identification", which I define as the interpersonal socio-historical processes throughout which two, or several, individuals' trajectories of identification intertwine. Turning now to the last analytical concept, timescale, I focus on how scale serves as a useful analytical tool with which to clarify how processes of social identification heterogeneously draw from larger socio-historical processes.

### 2.4.7 Timescale

My definition of timescale draws on the works of Lemke (2000) and Wortham (2006). Lemke (2000) argues that an analysis of identity formation must attend to a configuration of interconnected processes across several timescales. Relatedly and drawing on Lemke, Wortham (2006: 46) argues that social identification evolves when "configurations of cross-timescale resources" accumulate across time and space in individual students' trajectories of identification. Following Wortham (2006: 44), I define "timescale" as a "spatiotemporal niche" in which a process evolves. Approaches within linguistic ethnography use scale as an analytical tool to identify hierarchical ordering (e.g. Blommaert 2007). I acknowledge this perspective, but in the present study, I focus on the temporal scope of scale, as this is most relevant to my exploration of how identities emerge and thicken during local practice (but see Canagarajaha and De Costa [2016] for a review of scalar analysis in educational linguistics).

Critical to my analysis of how smartness is constructed and contested are three such timescales: 1) the situational scale, 2) the intermediate scale, and 3) the socio-historical scale. When I refer to the situational scale in the subsequent analyses, I mean a spatiotemporal niche bounded spatially by the given classroom context and temporally by the interactional moment. When I refer to the intermediate scale, I mean a niche bounded spatially by the various places the focal child of the analysis has been in their life so far and temporally by their life span. When I refer to the socio-historical scale, I mean a niche bounded spatially by the institution of schooling, and temporally by the decades and centuries in which the meaning of "smart student" has gained a relatively stable cultural significance, assisted by European institutionalized technologies for classification. In practice, these three scales overlap in various ways; in some data, the models emerge from one, or several, scales. But not all scales overlap in all data examples, of course.

I do not claim that the time scale notion is unproblematic. One limitation of this concept is that it is not entirely clear what cross-timescale resources would cover. In Wortham's account, curricular categories and identity models are treated as such resources. However, identifying which cross-timescale resources may turn out to be relevant in a given case might pose a challenge for the researcher. I argue that one way of determining such relevant resources is to immerse oneself in various ethnographic data sources (field notes, recordings and literacy artefacts) that span the contexts of school and home, not only classroom data, as Wortham (2006) has done.

First, during the researching of this study, I immersed myself in recordings, field notes and literacy artefacts. These included students' textbook material and assignments, audio and video recordings from classroom observation and observations of how the teachers and Mohsen collaborated in known-answer-question participation frameworks (various observations over a period from August 2011 to November 2013[12]. During group work Mohsen occasionally engaged in comparable participation frameworks with peers. For instance, one day Mohsen "taught" his classmate William through known-answer questions during group work[13]. In addition, much of the teaching materials used in classes invited such collaborative participation frameworks.

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[12] For instance, I noticed such collaboration between Mohsen and the teachers in my transcriptions of recordings collected on 23/4/13, 2/5/13, 17/5/13, 12/6/13, 13/6/13, 9/10/13, 10/10/13, 21/10/13, 30/10/13, 18/11/13.
[13] Cf. my transcription of a recording collected on 28/10/13.

Reviewing field notes, recordings and photos from my fieldwork in Mohsen's home, I observed that the teaching materials that Mohsen's mother, Haifa, used when teaching her children Arabic also invited teaching practices involving known-answer-question participation frameworks[14]. This framework also formed part of Haifa's home teaching practices. Sometimes she playfully taught Safiya, Mohsen's younger sister, while I visited[15]. Haifa described to me how she taught her children Arabic and how when visiting Lebanon on holiday, Mohsen's grandfather taught Mohsen and his siblings Arabic. Haifa told me that her father taught the children through "fun quizzes" in which he asked them questions for which they were expected to "guess the answers to"[16].

I compared these school and home data with other scholars' accounts of worldwide recognizable teaching routines, such as Bloome, Puro, and Theodorou's (1989: 271) description of "procedural display", Rymes and Pash's (2001: 280) description of "passing", Mottelson's (2003: 125) description of "flow", Rymes's (2004: 326) description of "comfortable competence" and Carhill-Poza's (2015: 9) description of a "three-part … rigid discourse". This analytic move made me realize that known-answer-question participation frameworks indeed represented a relevant resource, which re-occurred on the situational scale, the intermediate scale of Mohsen's 12-year-old life and on the larger socio-historical scale.

Secondly, In reviewing the school data, I noticed how Mohsen displayed docility, friendliness and teacher alignment[17] and how teachers labelled Mohsen "smart", "good", "master", "sovereign" etc.[18] and assigned him special privileges. In addition, in peer talk, Mohsen told William that the teacher, Sanne, answered her own questions on his behalf during the school-home conference[19]. As I immersed myself in field notes and recordings from Mohsen's home, I noticed how Haifa explicitly identified Mohsen as a "nice" and "amiable" boy and a "smarter student" than his brothers[20].

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[14] 30/4/13.

[15] E.g. on 4/2/14 and 1/4/14 (cf. my field note entries).

[16] As it appears in the interview with Mohsen's parents I collected on 30/4/13.

[17] E.g. on 15/4/13, 23/4/13, 17/5/13, 12/6/13, 16/9/13, 30/9/13, 10/10/13.

[18] E.g. on 19/4/13, 23/4/13, 14/5/13, 13/6/13, 30/9/13.

[19] As it appears from my transcription of the recording collected on 21/10/13.

[20] E.g on 3/8/12, 12/9/13, 8/1/14.

I compared the examples in which Mohsen's mother and teachers identified him as smart, nice and special with other scholars' accounts of the smart student as social constructs, such as Hatt's (2012) portrait of how docile and compliant kindergarten students become socially identified as smart, Bartholdsson's (2007) portrait of how subordinate primary school students come to be seen as normal, and Thornberg's (2009) portrait of how well-behaved and benevolent individuals are regarded as good students. On the background of this comparison, I realized that identity models of smart students as docile, friendly and nice was another relevant cross-time scale resource.

Thus, the timescale approach is useful to my study because it helps me illuminate how individual's trajectories can help us understand larger societal processes in multiple and diverse ways, rather than assuming a one-to-one relationship between certain types of individuals and the macro structure (see chapter four). I now turn to how social identification can contribute to shape learning opportunities.

### 2.4.8 Learning opportunities

Varenne and McDermott (1998) separate social identification and learning, whereas one of Wortham's (2006) major arguments is that teaching activities shapes opportunities for social identification and that social identification influences who learns what. My definition of learning opportunities draws from Wortham and Carhill-Poza's work. Carhill-Poza (2015) explores students' opportunities to learn academic language and curriculum through different interactional formats, in particular through peer interaction. Drawing on Mehan, Cazden, Gutiérrez, and others, Carhill-Poza (2015: 9) illustrates that the classic initiation-reply-evaluation (IRE) format "limits opportunities to deeply engage in the linguistically rich interactions around academic content that students need to learn both content and language". Taking this viewpoint, I define "learning opportunities" as participants' possibilities to actively display understanding of the discussed academic concepts or topic in teaching activities.

This definition informs my discussion of how Mohsen's participation in classroom talks is likely to influence his learning opportunities. I will document how Mohsen and his teachers collaborate in habitual known-answer-question participation frameworks. We will see that these frameworks enable Mohsen to extract the desired answers from available literacy resources, rather than develop his understanding of the academic content. These classroom routines compare to interactional

patterns that are known to constrain students' learning opportunities (Bloome et al. 1989: 282; Rymes and Pash 2001: 280; Rymes 2004: 326).

In order to discuss how my study has implications for education, I find Erickson's (2001: 175) notion of "wiggle room" helpful. Following Erickson, I define "wiggle room" as the capacity of teachers to interrupt and manipulate the habitual and coercive patterns in which they inadvertently may be stuck. This notion helps me discuss how the findings of my study can inspire teachers to create wiggle room for students in their classrooms and schools (chapters four and six). Next I lay out my research questions.

## 2.5 Research questions

In this chapter, I have asked how the researcher should balance the relationship between micro-social processes and particular socio-historical processes to better understand struggling around smartness. Approaches within linguistic anthropology of education (Holland and Lave 2001 and Wortham 2016) and linguistic ethnography (Rampton, Maybin and Roberts 2015) suggest that context for communication should be investigated from the level of micro social events, rather than presupposed through overall macro structures. Inspired by Dreier (2003), Bartlett (2007), Creese et al. (2006), I have also highlighted the importance of attending to institutional smart student models and data that spans school and home. In this vein I have argued that an exploration of how smartness evolves across time and space, rather than how it translates from macro structures, helps us to understand smartness in a more nuanced and dynamic way. Moreover, I have argued that the social identification and participation frameworks are useful because they enable us to further understand the "dark side" of smartness, including how established identities can change because of the way they link up with other identities.

In this study, I explore the following questions: how does the smart student role evolve over the course of fourth -, fifth -, and sixth form classes in a primary school setting? More specifically, I investigate:

1.  How can one student's social identification change from being smart to being favoured?

2.  How can one student' social identification as smart and favoured become socially consequential in unintended ways?

3.  How can the social identification of one student come to link with the identification of another student?

**3 Methodology, data and field site**

This chapter presents the linguistic ethnographic approach, data, the research process and ethnographic setting of my study. The chapter argues that my investigation of how the smart student role evolves represents a high degree of validity. I begin with an account of linguistic ethnography, which offers relevant sociolinguistic tools for my exploration of how smartness evolves in local practices. This is followed by a description of methods, including researcher positionality, field access, fieldwork, collection and processing of data, selection of foreground and background data, and focal participants, transcription, translation, ethics, data analysis and selection of excerpts for the articles. I close with a description of the setting for the study, providing a description of the school where I carried out my fieldwork.

**3.1 Linguistic ethnography**

European linguistic ethnography emerges, to a large degree, from the same North American predecessors as the linguistic anthropology of education (cf. section 2.4). However, linguistic ethnography has also been shaped by current European socio- and applied linguistics, particularly the research evolving from British universities (Copland and Creese 2015; Creese 2008; Rampton 2007a). Rampton (2007: 3) describes linguistic ethnography as an "umbrella term… wide-ranging in its empirical scope". Following Rampton, and other linguistic ethnographers such as Copland and Creese (2015), I define linguistic ethnography as an umbrella term covering an eclectic range of interpretive approaches within the broader field of sociolinguistics, "which studies the local and immediate actions of actors from their point of view and considers how these interactions are embedded in wider social contexts and structures" (Copland and Creese 2015: 13). Thus, the most salient difference between linguistic anthropology and linguistic ethnography is the latter's affiliation with sociolinguistics (Creese 2008: 9; Rampton 2007a: 590-591). The following section explicates how my study draws from the eclectic linguistic ethnographic toolbox.

Rampton (2006: 24) has further developed "Goffmanian interaction analysis" by combining Goffman's concepts of frame and face with interactional sociolinguistics, conversation analysis (CA) and micro-ethnography. Inspired by Rampton, I zoom in on the nitty-gritty interactional details of classroom talk. Interactional sociolinguistics, most basically, explores how people cue meaningful contexts in talk, how these contextualization cues are picked up by relevant others, and

how such sequences of talk influence subsequent talk. Moreover such communication invokes broader sociocultural discourse (Jaspers 2012).

Gumperz (1982: 131) promotes contextualization in relation to discourse analysis as the process through which participants in face-to-face encounters "foreground or make relevant certain aspects of background knowledge and underplay others". As linguistic ethnographers, we look for contextualization cues so that we can define what the participants see as relevant to the context. According to Gumperz (1982: 131), a contextualization cue is "any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signalling of contextual presuppositions", such as gaze, gesture, posture, intonation or vocal effort. As we will see, a student may apologize and demonstrate respect for the teacher by saying, "=☺sorry:☺". S/he thereby creates a contrast between her words (sorry) and vocal signs (latched pronunciation, smiling voice and prolonged vowel). This is a common way to signal irony (see chapter five). Although I do not explicitly employ the notion of contextualization cue, it is a prerequisite for my interpretations of how participants interpret each other's utterances and actions as signs of identities.

In order to trace how participants pick up cues, or signs of identities, the linguistic ethnographer often analyses how talk proceeds in sequences of turns (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2001 [1998]: 47). This analytic perspective corresponds to Madsen's (2015) level of sequential context (section 2.4.4). A given turn, such as a teacher's question in whole-class talk, typically invites a range of expected responses, including students uttering the correct or incorrect answers. By providing the desired second part to the teacher's question, a student may signal that she is a smart student. The teacher can confirm that this is the desired answer, and thereby accept the suggested smart position for the student in the moment of the interaction. The teacher can also decline to acknowledge the student's response, reject it out of hand and select someone else, or acknowledge the answer but give the student a change to provide an alternative answer that is more precise.

In this study I analyse, turn-by-turn, how Mohsen and Iman position themselves, how teachers and students respond to those two students' turns and actions and how teachers position Iman and Mohsen relative to one another. Thus, I use linguistic ethnography as a methodological umbrella for my study, because this approach offers a useful sociolinguistic toolbox to advance the

microanalyses of classroom talk. Now let me turn to the constituent method of any ethnographic exploration: fieldwork.

### 3.1.2 Fieldwork

Fieldwork is the umbrella concept for the various ethnographic methods, the ethnographer can employ (Gulløv and Højlund 2003: 17), such as participant-observation, field note entries, semi-structured interviews and audio- and video-recordings of these activities. The concept of fieldwork has roots in social anthropology and builds on the basic assumption that ethnography takes place in a reflexive circle of proximity and distance (Todorov 1988). The fieldworker goes to the (often distant) field and conducts participant observation, that is; in situ observations of the unique, and (often strange), objects of study, as opposed to the research methods that can be employed at the office table, the laboratory or in the library (Hastrup 2010: 57).

It is the goal of all anthropological fieldworkers to achieve an insider perspective in order to understand the behaviour of the group being studied. Therefore s/he immerses themselves in local practices, across time spans, such as months and years, long enough to come into proximity with the unfamiliar social phenomenon in the field (Geertz 1988). Then s/he returns home to their own culture of academia, where they can analyse their data while maintaining some analytical distance to the field in study. Thus, fieldwork is conducted in a cycle of proximity and distance, both of equal importance (Todorov 1988).

Rampton (2007a: 590-591) distinguishes between the anthropological fieldworker's endeavours of "*trying to get familiar* with the strange" in an often distant field with the linguistic ethnographic fieldworker's endeavours of "*trying to get analytic distance* on what's close-at-hand" in an often recognizable field, such as a school. For someone like myself, a teacher-educator-becoming ethnographer, following more than a decade of collaboration with teachers and aspiring student-teachers, the endeavour of obtaining analytic distance to the familiar field of a primary school is indeed a relevant issue. Thus, I also use linguistic ethnography as a methodological umbrella for my study because my basic research position in the field is that of the linguistic ethnographer, rather than that of the anthropologist.

The point that remains from classic anthropology is that the fieldworker needs to, at the one hand, establish proximity to the field, as to reach a valid understanding of the focal phenomenon, in my case the construction and contestation of smartness, based on the research participants' emic categories and perspectives, rather than apply my own pre-determined (etic) categories (e.g. Erickson 1985: 2), and, on the other hand, establish sufficient analytic distance so as not to get carried away and uncritically report the participants perspectives. The linguistic ethnographic fine-grained analysis of face-to-face interaction helps the ethnographer to create distance to her taken-for-granted and common-sense understanding of what goes on in the school or classroom setting (Erickson 1985: 11; Jaspers 2012; Rampton 2007a: 591).

Recalling the thread of commensurability between epistemology, methodology, and theoretical framing as discussed in section 2.1, my overall constructivist stance guides me to understand empirical data as constructed, not objective. This means that my observations, field notes, recordings, transcriptions, etc. are not pure, or "interpretation-free" data sources (Rampton 2006: 386). However, even though I as an ethnographer can contribute to the construction of data, I do not regard those data to be my speculations. I have studied a school in which teachers and students interact, understand, construct, and contest smartness in everyday academic activities. These social practices are the object of my study, and they cannot be reduced to my interpretations.

Although I adopt different strategies in order to write a reflexive research study, I cannot escape the fact that my experience, ideologies, and researcher positionality influence what I observe and contribute to shape my data selection and interpretation. However, I can greatly enhance ethnographic validity by demonstrating awareness of, and reflecting upon, how the fieldwork and data analysis, including the subjective value of my perspective as researcher, have influenced my research findings (e.g. Erickson 1985; Gulløv and Højlund 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Rampton 2006: 392; Rampton, Maybin and Roberts 2015: 16). In what follows, I give such an account of my own linguistic ethnography.

## 3.2 Methods

This section presents my linguistic ethnographic fieldwork, beginning with researcher positionality and field access. I then describe methods, data sources, ethical issues, the data analysis process and

how I developed my research focus, theoretical framework and selected excerpts for the articles during the course of this study.

### 3.2.1 Researcher positionality

I arrived to the field as a researcher in the field of language in education, with a masters degree from the University of Copenhagen and more than a decade of professional working experience as an associate professor in a Danish teacher training college. I had worked as an educator, supervisor, consultant in, and leader of, developmental projects, aiming to improve education for linguistic minority children, in a variety of contexts and collaborative constellations. I had more than four years of experience with participant observation from a range of action research projects, in which I engaged in a plethora of different types of collaborative data collection activities with students and teachers.

I was excited about the advantages, on the one hand, of being an experienced educator-turning-into-fieldworker, and, on the other hand, arriving in an unfamiliar educational environment. Due to my professional background, I felt a particular obligation to raise societally relevant and pertinent questions in relation to education. I strongly believed, and still believe, that supportive relationships between educators and students and methods that value students' linguistic background as a resource can facilitate students' educational success. My professional practice was profoundly informed by these basic assumptions, as evidenced by my publications at the time (e.g. Lundqvist, 2008 and Lundqvist 2013).

However, as I taught courses, attended conferences and advised teachers, I felt that there were questions that escaped my attention. I had a hunch that changing my tools, by reducing my facilitator and consultancy responsibilities, and by becoming ethnographic fieldworker in the more traditional sense, that this would enable me to raise other types of questions than those with which I had been preoccupied with for more than a decade. There were questions that could improve education for children along pathways that my existing assumptions about education and language could not accommodate. I knew that helping teachers make wriggle room for students was a major priority for me, but my theoretical conceptions at the time could not fully articulate this concern. I had a hunch, an intuition, but did not have the data or conceptual tools to convince others of why wriggle room was so important.

In this respect, one episode from my professional life in teacher's college stands out in my memory. As a consultant in an action research project, I was conducting the data collection activity "reading aloud" (Laursen 2011: 5) with a first form class (approx. seven years old students) in a school in central Copenhagen. I asked the students to read aloud in Danish from the picture book, *I want fish* (Jónsdóttir 2007). I knew that one of the students, whom I call Ellanur, a girl of Turkish decent, had severe reading difficulties, as she barely mastered the Danish or Turkish alphabets. The teachers regarded Ellanur as a poor reader and likely to fail in school.

I carefully prepared for the session with Ellanur. She was, as I expected, not interested in participating in the activity. She told me that she could not read, and did not want to. I asked her to try reading the book aloud to me. I told her that I would be sitting next to her throughout the session, that she could ask me whatever question came into her mind, if she needed help. Finally, Ellanur agreed to give it a go. She carefully decoded the text, letter by letter. Ellanur continuously asked me questions like "how does this letter sound?" I answered all of her questions, and she read the entire book aloud. Having climbed this mountain, Ellanur spontaneously burst out, "I read the book. Thank you" and hugged me.

Subsequently the rumour went among the teachers that Ellanur could in fact read. Ellanur gradually came to be regarded as a smart student, and a good reader, throughout her subsequent years of primary school, as evidenced in the subsequent years of data collection. Ellanur's trajectory was, of course, not merely facilitated by a single reading episode. I do not mean to underestimate the hard work Ellanur, and her skilled and empathetic teachers did in the years that followed to develop her reading and writing competence. But it is not random that the reading episode stands out in my memory, or that my doctoral dissertation explores social identification. This study is influenced, in part, by my belief that children's educational trajectories are strongly affected by the academic roles they habitually are ascribed or acquire, in school.

### 3.2.3 Field access

I first met the research participants of my doctoral study in August 2011, when I conducted initial fieldwork. I met the teachers in the staff room, the parents at parents' meetings, and the students in classes and during breaks. I introduced myself as a researcher interested in language and education. I arrived to the field as a new member of a team of language researchers, who had carried out

fieldwork in the school setting from 2009 (Madsen, Karrebæk and Møller 2015). This ensured my formal access to the field, and it indeed supported my informal access. The staff, teachers and students were used to having participant observers in and out of classrooms, and most of them were familiar with the identity label, "language researcher".

From the beginning of my fieldwork, I deliberately conceived of myself as an "instrument of the ethnography" (Heath and Street 2008: 57). I strived, on the one hand, to establish trustful and respectful relationships with the research participants in order to gain understanding of their world views, and, on the other hand, to establish analytical distance to what I observed, and the lenses through which I observed, as shaped by my previous experiences, in order to facilitate a reflexive research process. Although the school that was the setting of my study constituted an unknown field to me, my background as a student in various educational settings, and as an educator in a teacher's college shaped familiarity. Throughout fieldwork, I strategically worked on establishing analytical distance in order to enhance the validity of my study, by placing myself in a position comparable to what Corsaro (1996: 425) has labelled the "atypical adult". The atypical adult is a person who strives not to enact like what children may conceive of as typical adult roles in the field. In the school setting the typical adult would be the teacher. In the home the typical adult would be the parent.

I arrived in school with my black backpack filled with notebook, pens, camera, and audio- and video-recording devices. I distributed microphones among children, took notes, followed cohorts of students across mainstream classes and Arabic heritage language classes, remained silent as far as possible and communicated according to what I perceived as local norms. Hence, I made myself available for questions from the research participants. Most of all, I observed and listened patiently and extensively to students, teachers and parents. I did not engage in typical adults' activities, such as teaching, praising or disciplining students in the school, nor did I enact in maternal ways towards children in the home. Unless situations of force majeure emerged, I refrained from helping children manage conflicts. I sidestepped invitations to engage in intimate friendships, and I did not advise the teachers.

It was easy for me to build rapport with the research participants. I had children around the same age as the focal participants, and I was about the same age as many of the parents. This

demographic mutuality shaped trust. Several research participants volunteered to be my gatekeepers (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). For instance, a couple of parents invited me to visit their homes. The relationships I established with the participants also varied with the contexts. For instance, during home visits I engaged extensively with children and parents, whereas during classroom activities I could take a more distanced and observant position.

In short, I strived to strike a balance between proximity and distance by participating according to local norms, being aware of, and distinguishing between what I observed and my interpretations of the research participants' actions. For instance, in school I took notes during observations, but in the home of Mohsen, I made field entries after leaving, as the participant-observation I conducted there entailed by a larger degree of close involvement. I strived to "resist my preconceptions" during fieldwork (Heath and Street 2008: 42) by avoiding socially irresponsible entries and distinguishing verbatim respondent items from my own interpretations during data collection. My colleague Hyttel-Sørensen (2017), commenting on my field diaries, noted that they were:

> "extremely thorough and detailed, with objective descriptions of what the pupils say and do. Her field notes often contain examples of writing made by either teachers or pupils. Her observations also involve several meta-comments relating to the ethnography itself, such as deliberations on how the pupils react to the presence of the ethnographer, or what status the ethnographer has in comparison with a teacher". (Hyttel-Sørensen 2017: 32-33).

Hyttel-Sørensen notes that I describe the actions of the research participants and reflect upon the ethnographic process itself while observing. Thus, I aimed to establish a balance between proximity and distance by distinguishing between what I observed (what students and teachers said and how they behaved) and how I interpretated the situations I observed and participated in. Students, teachers, and parents, positioned me in a variety of roles, at different times, that can be described along a continuum ranging from insider and outsider positions, as well as novice and expert positions. For instance, students positioned me as a teacher, friend, ethnic Dane, adult caretaker and researcher. Teachers positioned me as a researcher. As the fieldwork progressed, the teachers increasingly trusted me. After classes they often contributed unsolicited comments on what had taken place and provided me with their views on the students. In these situations, the teachers were

using me as a vehicle to unburden themselves after what may have been a frustrating or stressful situation. Parents positioned me as a friend, an ethnic majority Dane, adult caretaker and researcher. Across time, my role as atypical adult thickened, and turned out to be a helpful aspect of the research process.

I have only very limited linguistic knowledge of Arabic language and literacy. In particular, the children, but also their parents, came to see me as an "incompetent" adult (Corsaro 1996: 449) who did not master the linguistic repertoires they practiced daily. For instance, on home visits in several families, the children arranged informal and playful teaching activities so that I could improve my poor Arabic skills. These activities provided a window for me to better understand the parents and children's understandings of language and schooling. It was during such activities in Mohsen's home that Mohsen's mother repeatedly told me about her views on schooling, language, her concern for Mohsen not learning, and his transnational family history of schooling that – as I later figured out - helped shape Mohsen's trajectory as a smart student. Thus, the role I came to inhabit across time, as an imcompetent adult, helped me gain insight into crucial issues.

### 3.2.4 A longitudinal collaborative fieldwork

This dissertation draws on longitudinal linguistic ethnographic fieldwork based in a primary school in Copenhagen, Denmark. My study started out as an exploration of linguistic minority children's literacy socialization in three settings: mainstream classes, Arabic heritage language classes and the home. Accordingly, I conducted participant observation in mainstream classes (e.g. Danish, mathematics, history, science), Arabic classes (supplementary classes offered by the municipality), and the home of one child, supplemented by data collected by several of my research colleagues.

During the period in which I carried out the fieldwork in mainstream classes, two of my colleagues (Line Knoop-Henriksen and Liva Hyttel-Sørensen) also followed some the same research participants, and two other colleagues (Lamies Nassri and Martha Karrebæk) conducted fieldwork in Arabic classes. In addition, we collected Facebook data, as described under the section on data collection. In total, our fieldwork spanned approximately three years, from the beginning of the students' fourth to the end of the sixth form (10-13 years old students).

From June 2011 through December 2012, I conducted 15 initial visits across cohorts of students in second form mainstream classes and Arabic language classes, and in the homes of two immigrant families from Iraq. These visits helped me access the field and to identify possible focal participants and families. Moreover, I used this initial phase of fieldwork to develop my data collection tools. At first, I visited the families, and asked students to do self-recordings at home. However, the recordings the students provided me with were difficult to understand, transcribe and interpret. There was much background noise on the recordings, making it difficult to identify speakers and speech. In addition, a recording might contain long sequences of activities such as watching television or playing video games. Therefore, I decided to carry out participant observation in home and school and to collect video-recordings of classroom activities rather than merely audio-recordings. Moreover, the initial phase of fieldwork allowed me to observe common teaching practices, and understandings of schooling across classroom settings. This turned out to generate valuable insights in my analyses of smart student models in the school setting (chapter four).

From January 2013 through April 2014, I conducted 51 days of participant-observation in the school and in Mohsen's home, supplemented by follows up visits. In the spring of 2013, contract negotiations with between the schoolteachers' union and the Danish public authorities collapsed, and there was a 4-week national lockout in Danish schools. Most classes at the school were cancelled, including all Arabic classes. However, the teachers in the fifth form mainstream classes were able to continue their teaching. The labour crisis forced me to revise my plans for conducting fieldwork among the second form cohort, and having already selected a fourth form cohort, I narrowed my fieldwork to this cohort, who were now in their fifth form classes.

The lockout turned out to be an advantage. Line Knoop-Henriksen and Liva Hyttel-Sørensen had already carried out fieldwork among the fifth formers since 2011. In addition, Mohsen had a younger brother, Abdullah, who I knew from fieldwork in second form classes, and I had met the family during my initial fieldwork. Knoop-Henriksen had visited Mohsen and Abdullah's family in August 2012, and Mohsen had already made a couple of self-recordings at home. I conducted my first home visit with Mohsen's family in April 2013 and continued to visit approximately once a month for a year. I usually conducted participant-observation in Mohsen's home during the afternoon, after the children had returned from school. Most activities occurred in the kitchen,

where Mohsen's mother was cooking and his younger siblings playing. On a couple of occasions, I stayed for dinner by invitation of the family.

The fieldwork carried out by my colleagues and I was collaborative in the sense that we shared field notes and recordings in a data base (which contains over a thousand hours of recordings from the school setting), and we regularly discussed data and themes evolving around data. However, we worked in different constellations of teams, Knoop-Henriksen and Hyttel-Sørensen left the field in 2013, and Karrebæk and Nassri conducted fieldwork in another Arabic class than myself. This meant that I was conducting fieldwork alone in Arabic and mainstream classes for most of the year of 2013.

### 3.2.5 Data sources

This study draws from a variety of data sources: audio- and video-recordings from school and home, field notes of observations and informal conversations, semi-structured interviews with students, parents and teachers, teachers' self recordings of school-home conferences with students and parents, transcriptions and translations of the audio- and video-recordings, the students' text books, workbooks, and written assignments, photographs (my own and the students self-elicited photos), and the students' Facebook profiles. In the research team, we created a researcher Facebook profile and told the students they could invite us to be Facebook friends, if they would agree that we could "follow" them. Most of them did so. All the quotes that I attribute to teachers, students and parents when talking about themselves and others are originally in Danish that I have translated to English. Table 1 provides an overview of the data sources used in the present study.

*Table 1. Overview of data sources*

| Site of fieldwork | Data sources |
|---|---|
| School | 80 field note entries |
| | 40 of my photos |
| | 80 hours of classroom audio- and video-recordings |
| | 4 teacher interview audio-recordings |
| | 6 student interview audio-, and video-recordings (individual and group interviews) |
| | 50 roughly transcribed recordings (with translation of Arabic speech) |

| | More than 80 documents (students' working books, written assignments etc.) |
| --- | --- |
| | 6 school home conferences self-recordings |
| | Approx. 235 photos taken by the students |
| | 4 group interviews about the students' photos |
| Mohsen's home | 10 of my field notes entries |
| | 22 hours of audio-recordings |
| | 2 family interview audio-recordings |
| | 11 roughly transcribed recordings (with translations of Arabic speech) |
| Facebook | 45 students' Facebook profiles |

### 3.2.6 Selecting foreground vs. background data

In this study, fine-grained transcribed recordings from mainstream classes and Arabic classes stand in the foreground, as these data are most appropriate for illustrating the pattern of how smart student roles evolved. The importance of the microanalyses is further supported by my analyses of the other data sources. I would have liked to attend much more to the home data, as well as to several other data sources, such as the Facebook data, the students' written work, and the photos of literacy artefacts, I asked the students to take, and subsequently discussed with them in group-interviews.

However, I decided to focus on what turned out to be a prevalent social pattern of school socialization across my various data sources, that is; the construction and contestation of smartness, and foreground and background data in order to analyse this pattern. The background data, i.e., the home recordings, Facebook data and children's exercise books are nonetheless crucial to my study, as they constitute a window for me to better understand the every-day practices and worldviews of my research participants. The following section accounts for my selection of focal participants.

### 3.2.7 Selecting focal participants

The four-week-long national lockout of school teachers narrowed down the possible focal participants to the four students from the fifth form cohort who attended Arabic classes: Dina, a girl of Lebanese decent, Iman, Mohsen, and Nada, a girl of Iranian decent. The families of Dina and Iman were not interested in participating in collecting home recordings. This narrowed the possible focal participants to Dana and Mohsen. I selected Mohsen as my focal participant for practical

reasons. We already had data on Mohsen, and his family was interested in participating. But I also decided to focus on Mohsen because the teachers' and students' labelling of him as a particularly smart student struck me during fieldwork.

I selected Iman as my other focal child because I kept wondering about why my observations of her classroom behaviour conflicted with the observations of the previous fieldworkers. Hyttel-Sørensen and Knoop-Henriksen reported that Iman was viewed (by both teachers and fellow students) as one of the smartest students in class. During fieldwork, however, I noticed how the teachers often overlooked or dismissed Iman's efforts and achievements. I felt an urge to understand this contrast between my research colleagues' observations and my own observations.

### 3.2.8 Transcription

In this study, I use the transcription program CLAN. I have transcribed a substantial part of the Danish speech. I spent over 120 hours on turning audio- and video-recordings into fine-grained transcriptions. I use CA transcription conventions (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2001: vii), but I do not necessarily transcribe in the detail characteristic to CA. Although CA inspires my transcriptions, this study is not a CA study. I strive to represent what I hear the participants actually say, rather than what I mean they should have said. Moreover, I include hesitations, loud speech, smile voice, and the like.[21]

In a critical comment on linguistic ethnography, Hammersley (2007: 693) points out that linguistic ethnography, "stresses the methodological role of linguistics in 'tying ethnography down'. The implication is that without linguistics, ethnographic accounts will be speculative… what appears to be underdetermined at present, is exactly what the distinctive practices of LE are as regards the use of evidence". Hammersley's critique poses important questions for a linguistic ethnographer like myself: What counts as valid evidence and transcription in linguistic ethnography, and why? Moreover, if the goal is to explore, rather than assume, contexts for communication, why should one type of data representation (the fine grained transcription) a priori be more valid than other types of data representation? I do not claim that my transcriptions constitute a fully objective account of the verbal interactions that I recorded. However, I claim that my fine-grained

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[21] Transcription conventions are in Appendix A.

transcribing of audio- and video recordings has been a most helpful methodological tool for creating the kind of analytical distance to what I observed as everyday academic activities.

During fieldwork, I often observed Mohsen providing desired answers to the teacher's questions. I felt that something odd was going on in these encounters. But during observation, I could not grasp what it was. Transcribing recordings of these situations advanced my understanding of what happened. Observing in a Danish lesson on September 30th, for instance, I wrote in my field notes:

> "Steve activates the digital whiteboard. Sanne asks, "What is a short story?" Mohsen delivers another correct answer. Narges comments. Noise. Several students comment on the incident. More noise. What are they saying? What is going on? Steve and Sanne continue with the teaching". (Field note entry, 30/9/13).

Subsequent to this observation, I repeatedly listened to my audio recording of the situation and carried out a detailed transcription of the recording. This process enabled me to create analytical distance. I realized that the teachers and Mohsen collaboratively constructed Mohsen as smart, and that Mohsen's classmates co-constructed a jeering parody of this collaboration (see section 4.5.3). I could hardly have understood the meanings, positioning, and nuances signalled by Mohsen, his teachers and his classmates in their linguistics fine-grain without my detailed transcription.

For instance, while transcribing, I realized that Narges used low pitch and prolonged vowel while commenting on Mohsen and the teachers' actions, "Oh yea::h ↓ Mohsen he can learn Latin". Nor could I have conducted the subsequent turn-by-turn analysis of how the encounter unfolds through one participation framework in which Mohsen and the teachers collaborate, and a subversive participation framework in which Narges, and several other students, tease Mohsen as a ridiculous and childish student. Likewise, I could not have documented the process of how teachers gradually position Iman relative to Mohsen without the detailed transcriptions.

### 3.2.9 Translation

My study draws from audio-recordings of speech in Danish, a bit of Swedish and various Arabic dialects. I decided to employ transliterated translations of Arabic speech[22], instead of using the

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[22] Transliteration is Arabic speech represented by the Latin alphabet instead of the Arabic alphabet.

Arabic alphabet. I could have insisted on representing the Arabic alphabet, but that would have caused substantial muddles of representing the translations, for instance in terms of directionality.[23]

Whereas I transcribed the Danish speech myself and then translated the Danish into English, my research assistant, Hamida Naji, cleared my way into understanding recordings of Arabic speech. Naji has native competence in Moroccan Arabic, and she also masters Syrian, Lebanese dialects and standard Arabic (fusha). Naji holds a MA in language psychology. Naji and I met regularly throughout the first year of my doctoral research, with many follow-up meetings in 2014 and 2015. We discussed transcription conventions for the Arabic speech and possible translations of Arabic to Danish and Arabic to English.

Naji and I collaborated on the translations. First, we watched all recordings with Arabic speech together, and Naji reported the content of the interaction to me. Next, we identified sequences of analytical interest, I bullet pointed[24] the participants' turns in CLAN, and transcribed Danish (and some Swedish) speech. Subsequently, Naji transcribed and translated the Arabic speech to Danish. Naji transcribed a substantial part of the recordings from the Arabic classroom and from Mohsen's home. Subsequently, I translated Naji's translations into English. I discussed all of my English translations with her, and with my former colleague Iman Alhayali, a native speaker of Iraqi Arabic. This double-checking of translations with different Arabic experts served to create the most nuanced and accurate representations of what the participants said. I translated Danish speech into English myself. Before I discuss the process of data analysis, I turn to ethical issues.

**3.2.10 Ethics**

This research adheres to core ethical precepts of educational and social research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2010: 51). The protection of the privacy of the participants is a basic ethical concern. All participants in the study have been anonymised. All data are kept confidential. When I entered the field, the research team had already collected informed consent from the parents. In addition, I provided teachers, students and parents with oral and written information on my research project (in Danish and Arabic) on several occasions. I participated in several parental meetings in both the Arabic classes and the mainstream classes. At these meetings, I informed the parents and teachers

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[23] The Arabic alphabet has left direction, whereas the Latin alphabet has right direction.
[24] CLAN offers the possibility of bullet pointing a participant's turn. The transcriber can then listen to the turn over and over again, while transcribing it.

about the research project, and their rights to determine their own participation in the project. While visiting families, I repeated this procedure and collected signed consent forms. All participants volunteered to participate in my project. In other words, I followed standard procedures.

Moreover, on several occasions I have told the children that if they wanted me to delete a recording, or part of a recording, I would, of course, do that. But the children never asked me to delete anything. As mentioned, for the online fieldwork on Facebook, we created a researcher profile, and then told the student that if they did not mind us seeing their Facebook activities, they could send us a friend request. Most of the students did. We emphasized that it was "safe" not to befriend us, if they would rather not participate. Also, I was careful not to talk about families with other families or with teachers. Finally, I have striven to maximize benefits of my research for the wider society by disseminating my preliminary findings at conferences and seminars aimed at teachers, teacher educators, educational policymakers and educational scholars throughout the project period. This includes national, European and international events.

### 3.2.11 Data analysis

What would be a fair and compelling way to write up an ethnographic account of the contingent social pattern of my data? And how could I figure out which local struggles concerning the smart student role are merely idiosyncratic quarrels and fights, and which struggles illuminate more important social processes? I worked with these questions throughout a considerable part of the research process.

I moved from preliminary observing, then to analysing audio- and video-recordings, making coding lists, and transcribing possible examples for analysis, to making more analyses, revising the coding lists, transcribing new examples, and then to trying out possible theoretical framings, comparing my results with the results of previous smart student studies, and then back again to data, and so forth. In short, the analytical process I engaged in alternated between reading and reflecting on theory and interpreting my data (Heath and Street 2008: 32). In addition, I presented and discussed my preliminary findings with other scholars at several conferences and seminars, and as a visiting scholar at the University of Pennsylvania, and at King's College London in order to attract and address critical comments on my work.

I find that Hornberger's (2013) notion of "methodological rich points" is an apt tool to capture how the process of data analysis served to be a productive, although chaotic, journey that enhanced the rigor of my study, compelled me to reorganize my data material, and revise my research focus and theoretical framing during the course of enquiry. Hornberger defines methodological rich points as:

> those times when researchers learn that their assumptions about the way research works and the conceptual tools they have for doing research are inadequate to understand the worlds they are researching. Methodological rich points make salient the pressures and tensions between the practice of research and the changing scientific and social world in which researchers work. When we pay attention to those points and adjust our research practices accordingly, they become key opportunities to advance our research and our understandings. (Hornberger 2013: 102).

I will illustrate how I advanced my research and understanding through my work with such methodological rich points. This section describes and discusses the data analysis process that leads up to the writing and publication of my article "Smart, smarter, smartest: Competition and linked identities in a Danish school" (chapter six).

This article focuses on one of these methodological rich points already described above: the contrasting descriptions of Iman, who my colleagues observed as being considered the smartest student in her fourth form class by her teachers, but whose participation was ignored or dismissed by teachers during my own observations[25]. Based on previous smart student accounts (e.g. Hatt 2012; Korp 2011), I initially expected that students socially identified as smart, such as Iman, more or less would maintain their role.

I immersed myself in field notes and audio recordings from fourth form classes, and noticed that Iman often participated in teaching activities. She was eager to contribute in whole class talk and prepared carefully for classes (as documented in her written assignments). The teachers explicitly appreciated Iman's contributions in teaching activities[26]. The apparent change in Iman's role led to another significant rich point. I realized that I needed to revise my theoretical framing to attend to

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[25] E.g. from 22/2/13, 23/4/13, 29/4/13, 13/5/13, 14/5/13, 17/5/13, 12/6/13, 13/6/13, 21/6/13, 9/9/13, 10/10/13, 18/11/13.
[26] E.g. on 22/8/11, 15/11/11, 22/11/11, 1/3/12, 15/3/12.

temporality in order to grasp how Iman's social identity changed during fifth form classes. Accordingly, I included the social identification approach (Wortham 2006).

As I embarked on the story of Iman's trajectory I found myself compelled to reorganize my data. I drafted a taxonomy over "events of identification" (Wortham 2006: 30) that included events in which Iman was identified as smart, but also quiet and disruptive. The taxonomy was an attempt to organize approximately 79 situations that I had selected from field note entries and while listening to recordings. I organized these situations into categories such as "Iman positions herself smart", "teachers' labelling of Iman as smart.", "teachers dismissing Iman", "teachers overlooking Iman", "other students identifying Iman", "conflicts", etc. I transcribed the recorded encounters. I printed out all these event narratives on paper, and using a scissors organized them according to their date, constructing a hard copy chronological timeline lying on the table before me.

I was struck by the finding that the teachers often positioned Mohsen and Iman relative to one another. Iman was ascribed what we could call "disapproved identities", whereas Mohsen achieved more favourable identities. The relative positioning occurred in comparable ways across mainstream classes and Arabic classes. For instance, in a Danish lesson on June 21st, the teachers, Lene and Sanne, reviewed homework on Danish grammar in whole-class talk.[27] The textbook presents these assignments in the form of a treasure hunt. When an assignment has been correctly solved, a so-called "control word" appears. During the first fifteen minutes of the lesson, the teachers initiated approximately forty-seven IRE-framed questions. Mohsen, Iman and other students recurrently indicated their readiness to speak by raising their hands. Iman raised her hand no less than 14 times. The teachers, in particular Lene, ignored her attempts to get the floor 11 times out of 14. Mohsen, in contrast, was given the floor 19 times.

The teachers prompt additional questions and explicitly ask students to answer from memory. That is, students are not allowed to search for the correct answer in their textbook. However, Lene adds a prompt, and allows Mohsen to identify the correct answer in the book, while Iman simultaneously raises her hand. As the activity is about to end, Lene says, "It's good that you're here, Mohsen, because everyone else is asleep." This situation illustrates how Mohsen was often granted the floor

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[27] This episode is summarized from my transcription of the recorded situation (collected on 21/6/13).

more frequently than Iman, and he was allowed to draw on available literacy resources (the book) in order to enhance his chances of delivering the correct answer.

I provide this example in order to show how I needed to revise my theoretical approach in order to grasp what was going on in the field. Drawing from Varenne and McDermott's (1998) theoretical framework of mutuality of academic success and failure, I formulated a simple research hypothesis: when the teacher positions one student, s/he also positions other students. Moreover, such positioning can become habitual over time, and students' trajectories may thereby link. I identified more than thirty such linking events, which I then labelled "events of linked identification". Twenty-two of these events occurred from the latter part of the fifth form classes to the beginning of the sixth form classes (March to October). Thus, it became clear to me that Iman and Mohsen's linked identification thickened over time.

In those events of linked identification, the teacher typically ignored Iman's attempt to get the floor, while Mohsen was given the floor. The teacher and Mohsen collaboratively produced the desired answer, or the teacher allowed Mohsen to identify the answer by means of available literacy resources (the digital whiteboard, the board or a book), while Iman's attempts to contribute were systematically overlooked. Iman attempted to instruct Mohsen, or to gain access to the literacy resources he controlled, and the teacher rejected her efforts.

Revising my theoretical framework to include the perspective of institutional identity models (Bartlett 2007; Creese et al. 2006) helped me understand that the linked identification was not a single classroom phenomenon. Rather, Iman and Mohsen's trajectories of identification became tied up with one another vis-à-vis an institutional smart student model that predominated across the "social domain" (Agha 2007: 125) of the school. Reviewing previous smart student accounts enabled me to understand that such processes index widely recognizable socio-historical smart student models (e.g. Hatt 2012; Korp 2011). I was thus able to utilize the methodological rich points that I had encountered during participant observation and data analyses to advance my research. Since my material contains many examples, I had to select the most appropriate cases for the articles. In the following section, I reflect upon that in continuation of the above-discussed analytical process.

### 3.2.12 Selecting excerpts for the articles

The article that emerged from the above-described process of data analysis (Lundqvist 2017) has been through a thorough peer review process facilitated by the anonymous reviewer, my contact editor Jeniffer Phoung and the WPEL[28] editorial team. The allowed numbers of words for the journal is 7500. I was eager to demonstrate the variety of my ethnographic material, and my first article draft analysed no less than six excerpts. The peer reviewer suggested that I discarded some of these, and instead deepened and targeted the analyses. S/he wrote:

> You have so many great examples, but it would be better for you to focus on the three excerpts that you have instead of introducing those excerpts with further examples. This way, you can engage in a deeper analysis of those three excerpts instead of trying to include so many examples. I want to add here that you have so much rich data, but this is only one of many articles I'm sure you will write about this work… Please include a discussion section after you review your examples. The less examples you have, the deeper and more targeted your analysis can be."[29]

In addition, my contact editor recommended me to shortening my description of the more than 30 examples of linked identification. These comments helped me along in the process of selecting the most apt examples, and analyse those in more depth rather than include many data examples. I discarded examples of linked identification in the mainstream classroom, which I instead have used in my discussion of the thickening concept (section 2.4.1) and in the above discussion of the data analysis process (section 3.2.11). I also discarded an illustrative example of linked identification in which Iman and Mohsen quarrel during a break. Although this example was great to document the linking, it did not illustrate the constrained participation possibilities Iman encountered as a consequence of her and Mohsen's linked identities. Instead I draw on this example in my subsequent description of Mohsen and Iman's social relationship changed (section 3.3.3).

In the forthcoming version of the article, I ended up selecting the three examples that were best to document the linking in teaching activities. My analyses of these examples create the basis for the article's final discussion of how linked identification is likely to constrain students' participation

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[28] *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education.
[29] E-mail correspondence with my contact editor Jeniffer Phuong on 10 September 2016.

possibilities. Thus, discarding data helped me to deepend the analyses and strengthen the overall argument of the article. This process compares to Copland and Creese's (2015: 217) reflections upon data selection for the research article. The authors note, "transcriptions of interactions take up space, particularly when the analysis of these data is also given… Sometimes the decision will be to introduce fewer but more in-depth examples of data and argumentation". I will now turn to the description of the primary school in which I conducted my study.

### 3.3 Field site, classroom contexts and participants

In Denmark approximately 81% of all students attend the free primary and secondary education offered by the public school system (*folkeskolen*). The primary school system encompasses nine years of school, and is equivalent to the primary and middle schools elsewhere. The school where I conducted fieldwork is a public school is situated in central Copenhagen in a former working class area characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity. The school, a red brick building, houses approximately 700 students from kindergarten to ninth form (ages 6 to 16). The number of students of immigrant background corresponds to the average for schools in the area. The school comprises students of more than 20 heritage language backgrounds. The school accommodates primary and middle mainstream education and offers classes in Arabic heritage language for students who want it. The Ministry of Education regulates mainstream education and heritage language education with similar sets of curricular guidelines (in Danish: Fælles Mål, UVM 2009). Although mainstream classes and Arabic classes are housed in the same building, and regulated by the Ministry of Education, they are conducted under very different conditions.

### 3.3.1 Mainstream education

Mainstream education is taught from the levels of kindergarten to ninth form classes, and comprises subjects such as Danish, English, history, mathematics, geography, biology and physics/chemistry. At the conclusion of the ninth form, students sit for compulsory school-leaving examinations in mainstream subjects (*folkeskolens afgangsprøve*). Moreover, obligatory national tests are conducted in Danish (form levels 2, 4, 6, and 8), English (form level 7), mathematics (form level 3 and 6), geography (form level 8), biology (form level 8) and physics/chemistry (form level 8). A successful school-leaving examination provides access to secondary education (vocational or academic preparatory (*gymnasiet*)).

Mainstream classes took place from the morning to the afternoon. During the three years of fieldwork, there were from 42 to 45 students in the cohort. The students were dispersed over two forms (A and B), but joined together for the majority of their lessons. This organization is uncommon in Danish schools. One of the teachers, Sanne, told me that from the beginning of the first form, the two primary teachers had decided to combine the two classes in all mathematic and Danish lessons. During the fifth form, the teachers decided to extend this arrangement to all classroom lessons. The argument was that it was easier for the teachers to maintain order when the two forms were combined. During lessons, they would sit in seats assigned by the teachers, dispersed in two rows of four seats, A and B students intermingled. During recess, many of the students engaged in activities across A and B forms, for instance soccer or foursquare.

The students had five teachers: Sanne, Marie, Pia, Lene and Steve. They were all of Danish majority background, and had an education from a Danish teacher training college. The head teacher, Sanne, ran joint math classes with Pia in fourth form, joint Danish classes with Lene throughout fourth and fifth form classes, joint mathematics and history classes with Marie from fourth through fifth form, and joint Danish classes with Steve in sixth form. Pia ran science classes in fourth and sixth form classes. The majority of the students were born in Denmark and had several different heritage language backgrounds (Pashto, Mandarin, French, Icelandic, Berber, Turkish and Iraqi and Lebanese Arabic dialects). In almost all cases, the students' command of Danish had surpassed their command of their heritage languages.

### 3.3.2 Arabic heritage language education

The institutional name for heritage language education is mother tongue education (*modersmålsundervisning*). This refers to the teaching of a (supposedly) first language to children with immigrant backgrounds and not to the teaching of Danish to children of what is generally regarded as a majority Danish background. The municipality of Copenhagen offers mother tongue language classes to non-EU/EØS children below form sixth (12-13 years old students) where there is a certain number of recognized immigrant groups. These classes do not lead up to any examination.

Arabic language classes were taught from the levels of first form to fifth form classes. The students were divided into two classes. One comprised students from first and second form, and another

comprised students from third to fifth form. The Arabic classes took place after the conclusion of the mainstream classes, twice a week. The classes lasted one hour and ten minutes. During this time, the students also attended after school-leisure activities. Hence, students often did not show up for class because they were engaged in other activities.

The students had two teachers: Aslan and Noor. The head teacher, Aslan, had a Kurdish Iraqi background. During school and teacher training in Iraq, he practised the Kurdish Sorani dialect, Iraqi Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. Aslan taught Arabic language classes and Danish as a second language classes. Danish as a second language is a supplementary course intended to support children with linguistic minority backgrounds who encounter problems in their school career. Noor, one of the mothers to children in both older and younger group of students, taught the Arabic classes during the fifth form spring term. Noor had a Lebanese background. She came as a teacher as part of a job-training course. During school in Lebanon, Noor spoke Lebanese Arabic dialect and Modern Standard Arabic. In addition, Noor had been teaching Arabic classes for children, including her own, on a private basis at another school in 2011.

The group of older Arabic students, whom I followed, consisted of six third form students and four fifth form students. The students had backgrounds from different parts of the Arabic speaking world: Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Morocco. Yet, many of them shared similar variants of Arabic, Iraqi (Mesopotamian) dialect. The students' command of Arabic varied. Some of them used it on a daily basis in communication with their parents, whereas others rarely used Arabic at home, and attended classes to acquire Arabic. My focal students, Mohsen and Iman, had attended Arabic for five years. According to Aslan, they both had a good command of Arabic.

As mentioned, there was a four-week-long lockout during the beginning of my fieldwork among the fifth formers. Due to union issues, the fifth form teachers were the only teachers who were allowed to teach. This meant that the fifth formers were taught, whereas all other classes were cancelled, including Arabic classes. After the lockout ended, all mainstream classes were compensated with extra hours. The Arabic classroom hours, however, were not compensated. The Arabic teacher told me that he was very frustrated over the low status of Arabic classes at the school[30]. I will now provide some background information on my focal participants, Mohsen and Iman.

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[30] Cf. my field note entry from 17/7/13.

### 3.3.3 Focal participants

Iman and Mohsen were twelve years old (fifth form) at the time of my fieldwork. They lived with their families in apartments in public housing blocks near the school, as did most of the other students in their class. Mohsen was born in Denmark as the second of four children. He came from a family with a Lebanese Muslim background. Mohsen was a friendly and calm boy. Several of the other boys, Aurelio and Naveed, for instance, engaged in horseplay and spoke in a local vernacular, which they labelled "gangster-language" (Hyttel-Sørensen 2017). In contrast, Mohsen displayed docile and polite behaviours, and he rarely used swear words or other linguistic resources associated with this vernacular. He mainly used Facebook for polite greetings, such as "Eid mubarak" [Happy eid[31] holidays]. During fieldwork, I noticed that Mohsen acted differently at home, "Mohsen is more relaxed at home. He argues with Abdulla [his brother]. Mohsen does not seem to worry about me sitting next to him and overhearing it all. I have not seen Mohsen behave like that in school" (field note, 20/11/13). Thus, Mohsen's social behaviours were, naturally, more relaxed at home.

Mohsen was a very school-oriented student. On Facebook, he identified himself as a member of the group "Danish students" (danske skoleelever). During classroom observation, I often noticed how Mohsen strategically volunteered answers in whole-class talk in a docile and self-confident way. He did not ask questions, or display non-understanding of academic content in other ways. If Mohsen needed help, he would rather ask me, the observing researcher, rather than the teacher[32].

In fourth form classes, other students called Mohsen a "nerd" (Knoop-Henriksen 2013: 29). Although such identity labels are known to foster peer exclusion (Eckert 1989), Mohsen was part of a peer group consisting of several of the boys in form A. Mohsen played soccer with his friends during recess. Mohsen also had friends among the girls. In fourth form, Mohsen played with Dina and Iman. Sanne reported that Mohsen was someone with whom other students wanted to work and hang out. Moreover, Iman and Mohsen had been best friends since kindergarten. Mohsen seemed to balance his peer identities and academic identities. On the one hand, he positioned himself as cool among peers, for instance by making discreet parodies of teachers[33].

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[31] This is an Islamic holiday.
[32] E.g. I note this in my field note entry from 12/6/13.
[33] As I notice in my field notes on 23/4/13 and 5/2/13.

For instance, I write in my field note entry, "Lene, the teacher, has arrived. Mohsen quietly mimics what she says and does in the moment before she does it. It seems like he parodies her "who has done their homework routine[34]"" (field note, 19/4/13). On the other hand, Mohsen was hyper alert to the teachers' expectations and displayed enthusiasm during teaching. For instance by whispering, "Yes. I love spelling tests". During the spring term of the fifth form, Mohsen became more peripheral in the boys group. He occasionally played with Dina, but he also spent much time alone during recess. The teachers also noticed this. In informal conversation after class, Sanne told me, "Mohsen has withdrawn from the boys group" (field note, 14/5/13). Mohsen's mother told me that she was worried about Mohsen not playing with the boys anymore (field note, 12/9/13).

Iman was born in Denmark, the youngest of three siblings. She came from a family with an Iraqi background. Iman was declared Muslim. She wore a headscarf (hijab) throughout primary school. Iman was an outspoken and active girl. Many of the other girls in the cohort were quiet, but Iman displayed assertive behaviours in and out of the classroom. She could be opinionated and did not back down from an argument, whether it involved a classmate or even a teacher. In fourth form classes, Sanne characterized Iman as "wonderful", "not rude" but someone capable of "making her point" (5/6/12)[35]. Iman was also a very school-oriented student. She would often volunteer answers in whole-class talk, and her answers were more often correct than wrong[36]. Iman enthusiastically marked her readiness to speak by waving her hand at the teacher. When she did not understand academic content, she did not hesitate to ask clarifying questions.

Iman sized any possible chance to participate actively in teaching activities (group work as well as whole-class talk). It also happened that Iman interrupted and suggested changes in classroom procedures. In addition to the mainstream and the school's own Arabic classes, Iman attended Arabic Quran classes after school. She proudly told me about her good examination results and command of Arabic. Iman's outgoing behaviour changed during fifth form classes. She became quiet and tended to withdraw from whole-class talk.

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[34] All mainstream classes commenced with the teachers publicly checking whether the students had prepared for class. The teachers said the name of each student. The student answered yes/no.
[35] My transcription of an interview with the teachers.
[36] For instance, on 26/9/11, 15/11/11, 1/3/12, 15/3/12.

Iman was part of a peer group consisting of the girls in form A. She participated in play activities during recess. In fourth form classes, Mohsen and Iman were best friends. During fifth form classes, however, their relationship became increasingly tense. They would often argue, not only during recess, but also in the classroom. On 21/6/13, for instance, in a break between two mainstream classes, Mohsen and Iman enter the classroom from opposite ends. Iman loud addresses Mohsen, "YOU SAY BECAUSE ASLAN YESTERDAY HE SAID THAT I CUT CLASS" Mohsen downplays his role in the event by saying, "the thing about cutting class it was just for fun". The implication of Mohsen's utterance is that his action should be interpreted as a funny move. However, the situation evolves into a quarrel about who of these two students have the best reason for not attending Arabic.

It is a sine qua non among ethnographers that reflexivity on the research processes greatly enhances validity (e.g. Erickson 1985; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Rampton, Maybin and Roberts, 2015: 16). In this chapter I have written an "ethnography" of my ethnography in order to ensure such research validity. I have also provided a context for the subsequent articles by introducing the educational context, the school of my study and my focal participants. In the following chapter I turn to Mohsen's smart student identification in mainstream classes.

**4 The burden of smartness: Teacher's favourite and classmates' teasing in a Danish school**

## 4.1 Introduction

Schools are socio-historically situated battlefields of what it means to be a smart student, what smart students should know, and which students come to be viewed as smart (Hatt 2012). This is a pertinent problem for educational scholars, teacher educators and teachers because struggles around smartness foster social inequity. Several educational studies address this problem through the exploration of smartness and comparable indices of school success as socio-historical constructs. These studies show how the socio-historical roots of categories such as giftedness (Borland 1997), genius (McDermott 2006), intelligence (Sternberg 2007) and student success (Enoma 2006) evolve. Other studies show how categories of smart students (Hatt 2007; Hatt 2012; Korp 2011), gifted students (Sapon-Shevin 1994), normal students (Bartholdsson 2007), and good students (Thornberg 2009) are practiced in various educational settings.

The vast majority of this complex strand of work show how smartness is a socio-historical construction, pointing to its capacity to shape social stratification in classrooms. For instance, Hatt (2012: 438) finds that within the culturally predominant structure of an American kindergarten classroom, smartness works as a "mechanism of control and social positioning along racial and class lines". Students of colour and working-class background are identified with positions of academic failure, whereas white, middle-class children are labelled "smart" and "responsible". While these studies help us understand the social inequity that can occur when smartness works as the gold standard against which disadvantaged students are measured, and how students who do not fit the smart category may be harmed or constrained in those processes, we know less about the social inequity that can emerge from the process whereby the smart student is transformed into a favoured identity (though see Bucholtz 2011 and Eckert 1989).

An account of this process would assist researchers and educators in understanding how students' trajectories of identification, vis-à-vis socio-historical understandings of smartness, often evolve into favoured identities, and how those trajectories can become socially consequential in highly unfortunate ways. To this end, I will tell the story of how Mohsen, a linguistic minority boy who undergoes such an evolution, from fourth through six form classes of a Danish primary school. Over the course of two years and two months, Mohsen comes to inhabit the smart role, but then

changes from being viewed as smart to an identity that alternates between being favoured by the teachers and ostracised by his peers.

I will show how Mohsen's trajectory of identification increasingly points toward a local identity model of the smart student. This model includes being docile, polite, and collaborating with teachers on constructing desired answers in whole class talk. As Mohsen's trajectory evolves into a favoured identity, he experiences common social consequences for teachers' pets including social vulnerability and "ridicule of one's peers, and greater pressure from teachers than normal concerning academic performance and classroom demeanour" (Martin 1984: 89).

Beginning with a review of previous research on smartness as a socio-historical construct, I show how many studies describe the smart student role as fostering positive consequences, such as high social status and educational success. In the subsequent section, I outline a theoretical framework that can account for how micro-social processes evolve across time in order to trace Mohsen's identity formation and how it becomes socially significant. This is followed by data from the ethnographic study, data analysis and microanalyses of the three phases of Mohsen's trajectory. I conclude the article by discussing findings and implications for education and research.

## 4.2 The smart student
Many of the above-mentioned studies depict the smart student as well behaved, docile, compliant and normal. For instance, Bartholdsson (2007: 135-143) portrays how academically successful individuals display subordinate, "emotionally mature", "positive" and "empathetic" behaviours. Hatt (2012: 438) describes how students who act "docile" and "compliant" become labelled as smart. Thornberg (2009: 251-252) draws attention to how "good" students are described by teachers and students as "benevolent" and "well-behaved".

Moreover, this research depicts the smart student in a role that is likely to foster positive consequences for students who fit the category. For instance, Enoma (2006: 179) depicts the "successful student" as being in a privileged position that is passed on from one generation to the next with "kith and kin" by means of the cultural capital shaped by meritocracy. McDermott (2006: 184-191) portrays how the concept of "genius" historically makes available a social position at the top of the social order. He depicts genius, and related roles, such as smart and intelligent student, as

"monopole[s] of intelligence" that serve "to keep everyone in place" in society. Thus, genius and smartness are imbued with power and privilege. Sternberg (2007: 148) argues that students perform well in school when their parents' conceptions of intelligence match the teacher's conceptions of intelligence. Hatt (2012: 455), in her empirical account of an American kindergarten, portrays smart students as imbued with "social power", popular among, and "befriended" by peers and likely to become high achievers (see also Hatt 2007 and Korp 2011).

The present article builds on this research by highlighting that Mohsen's identification compares to enduring socio-historical understandings of smart students as docile and compliant. However, I expand this research perspective by demonstrating empirically that becoming the smart student does not necessarily foster only positive consequences. While students who are socially identified as smart by teachers or peers, can benefit from such identification, there is also the risk of social inequities that can harm and constrain these students (see also Bucholtz 2011 and Eckert 1989). In what follows, I push the exploration of smartness into the field of linguistic anthropology of education (Wortham and Rymes 2003). I do this by showing how the smart student role can be transformed over time, or be overshadowed by other roles.

## 4.3 Theoretical frameworks
### 4.3.1 Social identification
This article explores smartness from the standpoint of social identification theory (Wortham 2006). The social identification approach is useful in tracing how Mohsen's identity as a smart student evolves over time. Drawing on Holland and Lave, Dreier, and others, Wortham (2006: 49) conceptualizes social identification as the interpersonal socio-historical permeated trajectories throughout which individuals, across time and situations, identify, and are identified, as habitual instantiations of socially recognized models of identities.

I understand model of identity as a social identity that people recognize, co-construct, and contest in "contentious local practice" (Holland and Lave 2001: 5). The identity takes shape when a smaller or larger group of people recognize certain utterances and gesturing as signs of a certain type of social persona (Agha 2007: 233-277; Wortham 2006: 37). The model of identity concept is useful here in that it can elucidate how teachers increasingly operate with a smart model for Mohsen, and then how Mohsen's peers contest this favoured role. For instance, Mohsen's action of consistently

delivering the desired answer to the teacher's question count as a sign of the social persona of the smart student. Local models of identities index socio-historical models; i.e. publicly recognized models, and the signs, roles, expectations and ideologies that people associate with these models on the socio-historical timescale.

Wortham (2006: 31-47) highlights how social identification emerges in the form of trajectories of identification, which he defines as "chain[s] of events" throughout which students enact signs of identities "that more and more participants" come to presuppose as evidence of a local thickening model of identity. For example, the teacher interprets the student's actions as smart by comparing the student's personal stances and actions with those of other students, and with socio-historical models of how smart students should behave and what knowledge they should display. When such interpretations occur repeatedly, over time, the attributed social identity becomes consolidated, a process that Holland and Lave (2001: 19) call "thickening". The teacher, the student, and other students develop existing socio-historical models into local models of identities, as they come to view the individual as smart.

Wortham (2006: 6) traces how models of identities evolve in the classroom, as evidenced by detailed analyses of whole-class talk. In this article, I will describe the identity thickening process by focusing on participants' "explicit account[s] of what some people are like". To do this, I will use a variety of data sources, such as classroom conversation, informal talk, interviews with students, teachers and the parents of my focal child, and peer talk, as well as "tacit account[s] that analysts can infer based on people's systematic behaviour toward others" through enacted "participation frameworks" (Goffman 1981: 137), as I detail in section 3.2. I thereby demonstrate how models of identities can be derived not only from classroom interaction across time, as Wortham does, but also from broader ethnographic data that spans the contexts of school and home. This combination of data allows me to demonstrate how social practices from Mohsen's home contribute to shape his smart student identification in school.

Moreover, my exploration attends to timescales because this concept helps me to grasp and explicate how Mohsen's trajectory connects to social practices and smart student models at micro-, intermediate-, and macro levels. Following Wortham (2006: 44), I define timescale as a

"spatiotemporal niche" in which a process evolves[37]. Critical in my analysis of how smartness emerges and thickens in the social identification of one child are three such timescales: 1) the situational scale, 2) the intermediate scale, and 3) the socio-historical scale. By situational scale I mean the spatiotemporal niche bounded spatially by the given classroom context and temporally by the interactional moment. By intermediate scale I mean the niche bounded spatially by the various places the focal child of the analysis has been in its life and temporally by its life span. By socio-historical scale, I mean the niche bounded spatially by the institution of schooling, and temporally by the decades and centuries throughout which the concept of smart student has attained its cultural significance.

In what follows, I use Goffman's (1981) notion of participation framework to further explicate how signs of identity and models of identities are consistently applied to individuals in the thickening of their trajectories of social identification.

### 4.3.2 Participation framework

According to Goffman (1981: 137) participation framework refers to the structural relations of face-to-face encounters among participants. This includes the statuses of the participants in relation to each other, to the activities they engage in, and to the utterances for that moment of speech. Participation framework may refer to a recognizable activity in its entirety, to a smaller set of sub-activities or merely to an interactional sequence (Goffman 1981: 137). Thus, participation framework refers to the participants' interactional work in a given situation and directs the researcher to simultaneously operate on the analytical levels of turn taking, activities and relations between participants. In the analysis that follows I trace how the teachers and Mohsen collaborate to construct the desired answer in whole class talk in one participation framework, and how this collaboration is ridiculed and contested by Mohsen's class mates in another participation framework.

In this article, I employ the conceptual tools presented here to trace how smartness emerges, thickens and transforms in one student's trajectory, and how other students subsequently ridicule

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[37] Other scholars highlight scale as an analytical tool to identify hierarchical ordering (see Canagarajaha and De Costa 2016 for a review of scalar analysis in educational linguistics). I acknowledge this perspective, but in this article I focus on the temporal scope of scale, as this is most relevant to my exploration of how Mohsen's identity evolves.

and contest this identity. The goal is to show how teachers and students struggle around what it means to be smart, who gets to be viewed as smart, and how such struggles can foster unintended inequities in classrooms.

## 4.4 The ethnographic study and methods

In this section, I introduce the ethnographic study, describing the fieldwork, data, classroom contexts, and research participants and data analysis.

### 4.4.1 Fieldwork and data

This article is part of a larger study on the construction and contestation of smartness in primary school (Lundqvist 2017). It draws on almost three years of collaborative linguistic ethnographic fieldwork (e.g. Copland and Creese 2015) in and out of a primary school (11 to 13 years old students) in Copenhagen, Denmark[38]. I conducted participant observation in mainstream classes, Arabic language heritage classes, and in Mohsen's home. Accessing the field and building rapport with the research participants, I deliberately positioned myself as an ethnographic researcher interested in schooling and language. The role I came to inhabit, throughout my period of participant observation, can be compared to the role Cosaro (1996: 425) coined as an "atypical adult". The data for this study includes field note entries, audio and video recordings of teaching activities, and semi-structured interviews with teachers, students, and parents, participants' self-recordings of school-home conferences, and transcripts of those recordings, children's exercise books, textbooks, photographs and Facebook profiles. All transcriptions and translations of Danish speech are mine. All the quotes that I attribute to teachers when talking about students are originally in Danish that I have translated to English. All research participants are anonymised.

### 4.4.2 Classroom context and participants

This article focuses on data from fourth through sixth form mainstream classes (Danish and mathematics lessons). Teaching activities in these classes usually included written assignments and whole-class talk around textbook material. Whole-class talk, as well as other teaching activities, was usually framed around the initiation-reply-evaluation (IRE) format (Mehan 1979). The students had four teachers: Lene, Marie, Sanne and Steve. Sanne, the head teacher, ran joint Danish classes with Lene from fourth through fifth form classes, joint mathematics and history classes with Marie

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[38] See Madsen et al. (2015) for more information about the school.

from fourth through fifth form classes, and joint Danish classes with Steve in sixth form classes. The students had different linguistic heritage language backgrounds (several Arabic dialects, Chinese, Danish, French, Icelandic, Irish, Pasto and Turkish).

Mohsen was twelve years old (fifth form) and from a family with a Lebanese background. He was born in Denmark as the second out of four children. Mohsen's mother, Haifa, had taught Mohsen, and his siblings, some basic Modern Standard Arabic at home. Haifa's parents were teachers. The family visited Lebanon every second or third year. During these visits Haifa's parents taught Mohsen, and his siblings, Arabic. Those home teaching practices often included quizzes, where adults and children engaged in known-answer-question participation frameworks. Mohsen was therefore familiar with the participation framework from home, and it was this framework that was frequently used in school.

### 4.4.3 Data analysis

The analyses of this article focus on puzzles that I encountered during my fieldwork and while reviewing the data. I consistently wondered about why both the teachers and Haifa labelled Mohsen as a particularly smart student. What was it about him, and his interactions with the teachers, that confirmed this view of him? Moreover, while previous studies, as mentioned, depict the smart student as an auspicious role imbued with social status, my data revealed that Mohsen was increasingly placed at odds among his peers. With these recurrent puzzles in mind, I thoroughly reviewed the entire data corpus in search of "events of identification" (Wortham 2006: 30) that included Mohsen. I transcribed a substantial part of the audio and video recordings.

As I immersed myself in data and attuned my theoretical tools to attend to temporality, I articulated the hypothesis that Mohsen's identity was in fact changing from smart to favoured across time. I selected four examples to illustrate the pattern of how Mohsen's identity emerged, thickened, and became socially consequential. My analysis of teachers' and students' face-to-face interaction is warranted by ethnographic description of the broader bulk of data. In this article I ask how one student's identity can change from being smart to being favoured. In my discussion of the empirical findings, I will argue that when a student becomes socially identified as smart, and begins to actively collaborate with the teacher to construct desired answers to the teacher's questions, and when the teacher comes to rely habitually on this collaboration in their teaching activities, the role

of the smart student is then transformed into a new role, which I call the favoured role. Such changes in role attribution are likely to place students at odds among their peers.

## 4.5 How Mohsen changed from smart to alternating between favoured and ostracised

This section illustrates how the social identification of Mohsen changes across the course of a three-phased trajectory: the emerging identification of a smart student (fourth form classes), the gradual thickening of the smart student identity (March through June fifth form classes) and the alternating between being favoured by teachers and ostracised by peers (June fifth form through December sixth form classes). The three phases are detailed below.

### 4.5.1 The emerging identity of a smart student

This section illustrates the emerging identification of Mohsen as a smart student. Whereas the other boys in the cohort would regularly display boredom in class by laying their heads on the table, throwing paper balls and engaging in physical horseplay or pushing during breaks, Mohsen was polite and amenable to the teachers' expectations. He sat upright in his chair, looked attentively at the teachers and laughed at their jokes. Mohsen displayed discrete enthusiasm in classes, for instance by reminding the teachers about the relevant page number, or through whispering comments like, 'square roots, yes'. Mohsen did not speak often, but when he discretely indicated his readiness to speak, the teachers usually gave him the floor, and both teachers and students listened attentively to him. Mohsen delivered carefully timed, measured contributions in whole-class talk. While other students would ask clarifying questions, Mohsen rarely asked questions, nor did he display other kinds of non-understanding of academic content. When Mohsen was unable to solve an assignment, he would not ask the teacher; instead, he would ask another student or the observing researcher[39].

In interviews and informal talk the teachers labelled Mohsen 'nice and orderly boy', 'sociable', 'friendly', 'humorous', 'indulgent', 'a man of few words', 'skilled' and 'smart', whereas many other boys were labelled 'trouble-maker boys'[40]. In the fourth form classes the teachers noticed that Mohsen was 'popular' and 'someone with whom other students want to do group work'. In addition, the teachers reported that Mohsen came from 'such a nice family'. During my

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[39] For instance, I noticed this in the field note entry I collected on 12/6/13
[40] Cf. my field note entries from e.g. 19/4/13, 14/5/13, 16/9/13, 10/10/13.

conversations with Mohsen's mother, Haifa, she often stated that he was a 'nice boy', 'special', 'friendly' and a 'smarter student' than his brothers[41]. In the following excerpt, I exemplify how this depiction of Mohsen as nice, smart and moderated emerges in classroom talk.

The first excerpt comes from one of the first fourth form Danish lessons, at the beginning of the school year (August 24th). The teachers, Lene and Sanne, review homework assignments in whole-class talk. The topic is a Danish fantasy novel *One like Hodder*. The students have been asked to answer the textbook prompt, 'Is One Like Hodder realism or fantasy, and why?' In addition, Lene has asked the students to find out what the 'overall genre' is. The participating students are Iman, Imran, Mohsen and Narges (LEN stands for Lene, SAN stands for Sanne, INA stands for Iman, MOH stands for Mohsen, IMR stands for Imran and NRG stands for Narges, the English translation is below the Danish original, transcription conventions are in the appendix).

Excerpt 1: That's exactly right, it's an excerpt from a novel

| 01 | LEN: | hvad er det her for en genre? hvad for en sla:gs historie er det her (.) øh |
| | | *what sort of genre is this? what ki:nd of story is this (.) eh* |
| 02 | | [Iman? |
| | | [*Iman?* |
| 03 | NRG: | [°fantastisk° |
| | | [°*fantasy*° |
| 04 | INA: | det er faktisk øh fan [fantastisk |
| | | *it's actually eh fan* [*fantasy* |
| 05 | LEN: | [det var ikke det (.) nej det var ikke det du |
| | | [*that wasn't it (.) no that wasn't that you were* |
| 06 | | skulle svare på (2.7) |
| | | *supposed to answer (2.7)* |
| 07 | | < er det et eventyr? er det et digt? er det en sang? er det en avisartikel |
| | | <*is it a fairy-tale? is it a poem? is it a song? is it a news paper article?* |
| 08 | | eller hvad er det her for noget? > Imran |
| | | *or what is this? > (.) Imran* |
| 09 | IMR: | et digt |

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[41] Cf. my field notes from 12/9/13, 18/1/14.

*a poem*

| 10 | LEN: | >prøv lige igen< |
| | | *>just try again<* |

| 11 | IMR: | et digt |
| | | *a poem* |

| 12 | SAN: | [det står under Hodder er det et digt? |
| | | [*it's under Hodder is it a poem? ((the textbook passage "under Hodder" says, "The text you are about to read is an excerpt of the novel Someone like Hodder"))* |

| 13 | LEN: | [nej det er ikke |
| | | [*no it's not* |

| 14 | MOH: | nej |
| | | *no* |

| 15 | LEN: | Mohsen nede bagved |
| | | *Mohsen in the back* |

| 16 | MOH: | et uddrag |
| | | *an excerpt* |

| 17 | | (1.2) |

| 18 | MOH: | et uddrag |
| | | *an excerpt* |

| 19 | SAN: | af hvad? |
| | | *of what?* |

| 20 | LEN: | af hvad? |
| | | *of what?* |

| 21 | NRG: | °af en historie historie° |
| | | *°of a story story°* |

| 22 | LEN: | uddrag betyder jo bare at det er en de:l af noget |
| | | *excerpt just means that it's pa:rt of something* |

| 23 | | [at det ikke er det hele man har |
| | | [*that it isn't the whole thing you've got* |

| 24 | NRG: | [et uddrag af en historie |
| | | [*an excerpt of a story* |

| 25 | MOH: | =AF ROMANEN |
| | | =*OF THE NOVEL* |
| 26 | LEN: | <de:t nemlig rigtigt det er uddrag af en ROMAN> |
| | | <*tha:t's exactly right it's an excerpt from a NOVEL*> |

This example shows how the two teachers, Lene and Sanne, and Mohsen co-construct Mohsen as the smart student by collaboratively constructing the desired answer (novel) to the teacher's question. From lines one through eleven, one of the teachers, Lene, and three students, Narges, Iman and Imran zoom in on what is expected from students in this activity. Lene frames the activity as teaching with utterances falling within the IRE format. At the beginning of the excerpt it is unclear what information she aims to elicit from the students. Her question may refer to the textbook prompt, or it may refer to her own additional prompt (what is the overall genre?).

Situated in different places in the classroom Narges and Iman interpret Lene's question as referring to the textbook prompt (1:3-4). By delivering the correct answer to this prompt (fantasy), Iman positions herself in accordance with expectations at the level of the IRE format and at the content level (providing the correct answer to the textbook prompt). Thus, Iman acts in accordance with expectations to a competent student participating in a teaching activity (Mehan 1980). Lene rejects Iman's answer, however, and adds a known-answer-question (MacLure and French 1980) to the activity (1:5-8). Thereby the teacher makes it clear that the desired answer is a specific literary genre label. It appears that Imran does not understand the structure of the known-answer-question participation framework. If this were the case, Imran would not have reused a label (poem) from one of the teacher's rhetorical questions (to which the correct answer is 'no'). But Imran's answer shows that he accepts being part of the same participation framework, and that he would like to answer.

From lines 12 through 26 the two teachers and Mohsen collaboratively produce the desired answer to Lene's initial elicitation (novel). The other teacher, Sanne, asks, 'it's under Hodder is it a poem?' Thereby Sanne explicitly directs the students' attention to the passage in the textbook where the answer can be found. Lene interprets Mohsen's 'no' as a potential sign of success and elicits Mohsen to speak. Mohsen retrieves information from the textbook (an excerpt). Although this is not the desired answer both teachers further direct Mohsen's search for the answer in the text by

providing additional information (1:19-20). In lines 22 through 23 Lene explains the meaning of an excerpt. This seems to be a response to Mohsen, as he is offered further help to identify the correct answer. Narges twice demonstrates that she would like to answer the question (1:21 and 1:24). The teachers ignore Narges. Mohsen delivers the appropriate second part to the teachers' elicitation (1:19-20), '=OF THE NOVEL'. Mohsen's latched and loud speech shows that he is diligent in providing the correct answer. At this point Mohsen has impropriated the teachers' repeated hints of what is expected in order to identify the required label in the textbook.

Lene evaluates Mohsen's answer as 'exactly tha:t's correct'. Her choice of adverb, slow speech and use of emphasis underlines that this is indeed a positive evaluation. Thus, the teacher positions Mohsen as knowledgeable and compliant. Next, she adds a strip of reported speech, 'it's an excerpt of a NOVEL'. Reported speech is a powerful indicator of alignment or dis-alignment with other participants (Goffman 1981). Lene does not merely voice Mohsen's response, or the correct answer (novel), she also conveys the textbook sentence thereby summing up the result of the teachers' and Mohsen's collaboration in zooming in on the correct answer. In this layered strip of reported speech Lene aligns Mohsen's voice with the voices of Sanne and herself, and with the textbook. Lene thereby interprets Mohsen's actions of accepting her own and Sanne's repeated hints of retrieving the desired answer from the textbook as signs of the smart student.

This excerpt, in conjunction with several comparable situations, demonstrates the emerging identity of Mohsen as a smart student. Mohsen, unlike Iman and Imran, demonstrates hyper-alert to retrieving and reproducing the required answer (novel), from the textbook in collaboration with Sanne and Lene. According to MacLure and French (1980: 76) such action works as a well-proven student strategy to produce correct answers. The teachers treat Mohsen differently than other students. Like Mohsen, Narges is alert to the known-answer-questions, yet the teachers overlook her efforts (1:21-26). Although the teachers and Mohsen collaboratively produce the correct answer, Lene gives full credit to Mohsen for this action. The teachers thus arrange a significantly better face (Goffman 1967: 6) for Mohsen than he would otherwise have been able to take. Thus, the enacted participation framework indexes a successful teacher – student relationship in which the teacher and the smart student collaboratively construct the desired answer and the student's display of the academic content is limited to few words. A year and eight months later, Mohsen's smart student identity thickens, as evidenced from excerpts analysed in the following section.

## 4.5.2 The thickening identity of a smart student

This section illustrates how Mohsen's identity as a smart student thickens into a favoured role resembling that of the teacher's pet (Martin 1984). I have identified more than 30 situations in which the teachers explicitly or implicitly treat Mohsen as smart and favoured. Many of these situations occur from March through May when Mohsen is in the fifth form. In interviews, informal talk and whole-class talk the teachers increasingly report or indicate Mohsen to be particularly smart. For instance, after one lesson Sanne mentions that Mohsen has become the 'smartest student' in class[42]. In whole-class talk the teachers make comments such as 'you're so smart Mohsen', 'Mohsen I'm so glad you're here so you can say it [the correct answer]', 'it would be nice if the rest of you would wake up, otherwise I'll think Mohsen is the only one who learned anything this year', or 'good you're here Mohsen because everybody else is sleeping'[43].

Moreover, the teachers begin to provide Mohsen with the desired answers, when he does not deliver those himself, and they award Mohsen special privileges that other students do not have. Amongst others, Mohsen is allowed to speak more frequently than other students. For instance, in a Danish lesson on June 21st the teachers, Lene and Sanne, review grammar homework in whole-class talk. The teachers initiate forty-five questions falling within the IRE format. Several students recurrently mark their readiness to respond. One student, Iman, raises her hand fourteen times. The teachers ignore Iman's attempts to get the floor eleven times out of fourteen, whereas they acknowledge Mohsen's responses to nineteen of their initiations[44]. Mohsen is thus granted the floor more often than all the other students. In what follows, I show how the identifying of Mohsen as smart thickens in classroom talk.

Excerpt two is from a mathematics lesson on April 23rd where Mohsen is in the fifth form. The teachers, Sanne and Marie, are reviewing homework in whole-class talk. The assignment is to calculate the surface area of a living room with eight corners: (2m x 5m) + (3m x 2m) + (3m x 8m) = 40 m$^2$. This is a difficult task for the students. Many students, including Mohsen, have solved the assignment incorrectly in their exercise books. Before excerpt two begins Sanne and several students have zoomed in on what is expected from students in a way that compares with the

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[42] Cf. my field note entry from 14/5/13.
[43] The teacher Lene makes these comments in whole class talk (cf. my stranscription of audio recording collected on 21/6/13).
[44] Iman and Mohsen's trajectories of identification are thereby linked. This becomes socially consequential for Iman who encounters limited participation possibilities (see Lundqvist accepted).

previous excerpt (1:1-12). The participating students are Mohsen and Naveed, and Marie is also present (MAR stands for Marie).

Excerpt 2: Let me guess was it like this?

01    SAN:    ↑jo (.) har du forslag hvad gør jeg?
              *↑yes (.) do you have any suggestion what I should do?*

02    MOH:    jeg delte dem op i tre tre        [rum
              *I divided them into three three [rooms*

03    SAN:                                      [du delte den op i
                                                *[you divided it into*

04            tre (.) okay må jeg høre?
              *three (.) okay let me hear?*

05            hvad det var for tre du  d[elte den op i?
              *which three did you     d[ivide it into?*

06    MAR:                              [Naveed
                                        *[Naveed ((Marie snaps fingers))*

07    MOH:    altså den øverste
              *well the upper*

08    SAN:    må jeg gætte var det sådan her?
              *let me guess was it like this?*
              *((Sanne divides the figure on the board into two rectangles, my field note*
              *entry))*

09    MOH:    ja
              *yes*

10    SAN:    >ja<
              *>yes<*

11    MOH:    <og så den til venstre nederst> (1.2) ja
              *<and then the one at the bottom to the left> (1.2) yes*
              *((Sanne adds another rectangle to the figure, my field note entry))*

12    SAN:    okay nu har vi da i hvert fald tre pæne firkanter
              *okay at least now we have three neat squares*

This example illustrates how the teacher interprets Mohsen's actions as signs of the smart student by assuming him to know the desired answer although his actions do not justify this interpretation. In fact, Mohsen delivers only a small part of the answer. Sanne elaborates her elicitation. Mohsen responds more minimally. He is demonstrating compliance to the known-answer-question participation framework. However, it is unlikely that Mohsen knows the correct answer[45]. Sanne divides the figure on the board. Simultaneously she asks Mohsen, 'let me guess was it like this?' Sanne is providing Mohsen with the correct answer herself. The teacher is attempting to guess what Mohsen wanted to say.

Mohsen confirms, 'yes'. Mohsen continues, 'and then the one at the bottom to the left' This utterance responds to Sanne's simultaneous action of drawing the third rectangle on the board (2:11). In addition, it serves as another appropriate second part to her question (2:8). Finally, Sanne sums up the preliminary result of her and Mohsen's collaboration. This enacted participation framework compares to excerpt one, with the significant difference being that in excerpt two, the teacher does not merely help Mohsen find the desired answer in the book, but fills in the answers for Mohsen twice. Thus, the participants jointly construct Mohsen as a smart student capable of delivering the correct answer, although his actions do not justify this positioning. Following the interactions in excerpt two, Sanne numbers the rectangles on the board and explains that one needs to proceed the length and the width of each rectangle in order to get on with the assignment. A few moments later, the teacher again gives Mohsen the floor.

Excerpt 3: How did you figure it out?

01  SAN:  hvad kan målene være? hvad siger Mohsen?
        *what can the measurements be? what says Mohsen? ((freezes in chair, my*
        *field note entry))*

02  MOH:  altså hvad mener du?
        *well what do you mean?*

03  SAN:  ja men hvordan har du regnet det ud?
        *yes but how did you figure it out?*

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[45] As mentioned, Mohsen has miscalculated the assignment in his book. Moreover, throughout participant observation I regularly observed that Mohsen delivered the desired answer to the teacher's question, whenever he was capable of doing so.

| 04 | | nu har du delt det op hvad har du så gjort? |
| | | *now you have divided it what did you do then?* |
| 05 | MOH: | så gangede jeg rummene |
| | | *then I multiplied the rooms* |
| 06 | SAN: | så gangede du rummet ja |
| | | *then you multiplied the room yes* |
| 07 | | men hvad er det for nogle mål du har du ganger med? |
| | | *but what measurements do you have that you are multiplying?* |
| 08 | | (3.1) |
| 09 | MOH: | °ø:h° |
| | | *°e:h°* |
| 10 | MAR: | hvor mange meter er siderne (.) i hvert enkelt rum? |
| | | *how many metres are the sides (.) of each individual room?* |
| 11 | | (1.3) *((Mohsen looks down, my field note entry))* |
| 12 | SAN | °ja:° (2.8) >hvad siger Dennis?< |
| | | *°ye:s° (2.8) >what does Dennis say?<* |

In this excerpt we see the teachers face work on Mohsen's behalf when it turns out that he is unable to provide the correct answer. Mohsen has not signalled readiness to speak, and he freezes, clearly uncomfortable, when Sanne gives him the floor. She places Mohsen in the position of ratified participant (Goffman 1981: 132). The teacher thereby signals that she expects Mohsen to provide the correct answer. Mohsen politely asks Sanne to clarify. He thereby does not run the risk that the teacher might interpret his question as a challenge of her authority. Sanne repeats her elicitation, 'how did you figure it out? now you have divided it what did you do then?' The teacher is positioning Mohsen as someone who knows how to divide the octagonal figure. For the fourth time within one minute Mohsen demonstrates his compliance to the known-answer-question participation framework, saying, 'I multiplied the rooms'. As he has done in his previous responses, Mohsen does not qualitatively contribute to solving the problem, instead delivering short responses that serve to maintain the collaborative frame.

Sanne provides Mohsen with further guidance, 'what measures do you have that you are multiplying?' Thus, she continues to assume that he has relevant information (the measures) with

which he can assist. Notice the remarkably long pause (3.1) that follows Sanne's elicitation, and Mohsen's minimal response, '°e:h°'. Sanne's question seems to have put Mohsen in an awkward and uncomfortable situation. He is expected to explain to the class a calculation that he himself does not understand. Marie provides Mohsen with further guidance (2:10). But there is complete silence. Mohsen embarrassedly looks down. Finally Sanne gives Dennis the floor.

Why does Sanne fill in answers for Mohsen, and why do both teachers consistently select Mohsen to provide the desired answers? Having already assigned Mohsen a position as ratified participant the teacher has established the expectation that he will answer correctly. In their effort to collaborate with Mohsen in constructing the desired answer, the teachers' actions serve to maintain the participation framework that move on teaching activities. Answering the teacher's question successfully is an aspect of successful academic participation that has been presupposed for Mohsen, by this time, for more than a year. And when Mohsen is unable to answer the teachers feel uncomfortable. The interpretations about Mohsen to which they have been committed appear to be unfulfilled, so they feel compelled to conduct extra face work on his behalf. The teachers' behaviours seems to be an indication of a thickening of their identification of Mohsen as a smart student.

This interpretation of the teacher's frantic effort to help Mohsen shine as a smart student is furthermore supported five minutes after this excerpt ends, when Sanne summarizes the situation by saying, 'Mohsen helped us figure out that room b was like this', and pointing to one of the rectangles she drew on the board herself. Sanne again positions Mohsen, her smart student, as having provided the correct answer, although she did so herself. Moreover, in an interview, later that day, Sanne remarks that, 'it is not so often that he [Mohsen] bothers to raise his hand, but he does know the answer when you ask him'.[46] These examples, in combination with many comparable examples, point towards the thickening of social identification of Mohsen that follows a local smart student model. This model of identity entails demeanour, which is polite, docile and compliant towards teachers, and it is enacted though the participation framework in which the teacher and student collaboratively construct the desired answer, and where the student provides academic content in a few words or sentences. The thickening of Mohsen's smart student

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[46] A couple of weeks later, I showed Sanne Mohsen's exercise book. She was struck by surprise, when she realized that Mohsen had miscalculated, and – as it appeared from his book - did not understand the assignment.

identification becomes socially consequential when other students challenge his favoured position, as evidenced in the following section.

### 4.5.3 The alternating between being favoured and ostracised

This section illustrates how other students contest Mohsen's social identification as a smart, special and favoured. This third phase, in part, overlaps with the second phase of Mohsen's trajectory of identification. As Mohsen's smart student status thickens from the spring term of the fifth form through the fall term of the sixth form, Mohsen's classmates increasingly contest his favoured status. For instance, in peer talk Mohsen's classmates ironically label him 'the sma:rtest of us all (.) you little piece of shit', 'model student', and compare themselves with him in comments such as 'I had a better result than a certain person' etc. Moreover, other students contest Mohsen's favoured role in the classroom setting, with comments to the teacher such as, 'Sanne, Mohsen has got a wrong answer'[47].

Mohsen's smart identity has the dual effect that he is favoured by the teachers while being ostracized by his peers, as exemplified in the following. In a sixth form Danish lesson on September 30th the teachers, Sanne and Steve, elicit generic characteristics of short stories from the students during whole-class talk, including the Latin notion 'in medias res', which means 'in the middle of things', referring to the narrative technique of opening a story with some dramatic action. Before excerpt four begins the teachers attempt to elicit the notion from the students several times hinting at what the desired answer is. For instance, Sanne asks, 'what is it called when a story begins in the middle of the action?' She thereby, in part, reproduces the content of a poster hanging on the wall in the classroom. The poster reads, 'In medias res = when a story begins in the middle of the action'. The participating students are Daniel, Mohsen, Narges and several unidentified students (STE stands for Steve, DAI stands for Daniel, MIK stands for Mikael, NRG stands for Narges, and UNI stands for unidentified student). The interaction is as follows.

Excerpt 4: In medias res says the master

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01      SAN:    [>det er latin det er latin<(.)         [Daniel
                [>it's latin it's latin< (.)            [Daniel

02      STE:    [det er sådan et lidt fikst øh (.) latin [udtryk
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[47] Cf. my field notes, e.g. from 12/6/13.

|     |      | [*it's such a little stylish eh (.) Latin  [phrase* |
|-----|------|---------------------------------------------------|
|     |      | ((*several students raise their hand, my field note entry*)) |
| 03  | DAI: | ?ordenssans? |
|     |      | *?sense of order?* |
| 04  | SAN: | =Mohsen |
|     |      | *=Mohsen* |
| 05  |      | ((*at least two unidentified students laugh jeering*)) |
| 06  | MOH: | in medias res |
|     |      | *in medias res* |
| 07  | SAN: | <in media res (.) siger herren> |
|     |      | *<in medias res (.) says the master>* |
| 08  | STE: | lige nøjagtig |
|     |      | *exactly* |
| 09  | UNI: | jah |
|     |      | *yeah* |
| 10  | SAN: | tak |
|     |      | *thank you* |
| 11  | MOH: | [°det var så lidt° |
|     |      | [°*you're welcome*° |
| 12  | NRG: | [åh ja::h ↓ Mohsen han kan lære latin |
|     |      | [*oh yea::h ↓ Mohsen he can learn Latin* |
| 13  | SAN: | den har vi også her henne |
|     |      | *we have that over here* |
| 14  | UNI: | hvordan siger man hej på lati::nsk Mohsen? |
|     |      | *how do you say "Hi" in Lati::n Mohsen?* |
| 15  | MOH: | mm |
|     |      | *mm* |
| 16  | STE: | har vi den oven i købet? |
|     |      | *do we have this on top of it?* |
| 17  | UNI: | det er så grimt lati::nsk |
|     |      | *it's so ugly Lati::n* |
| 18  | MOH: | hold kæft |

|     |      | *shut up* |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 19 | NRG: | [du ligner <u>sate</u>me en på fire år |
|    |      | [*you <u>fuc</u>king look like someone at four years old* |
| 20 | UNI: | [du ligner en på fem xxx |
|    |      | [*you look like someone at five xxx* |
| 21 | MIK: | la vær med at kigge på ham |
|    |      | *don't look at him* |
| 22 | UNI: | [det kan være lige meget han er så grim |
|    |      | [*it doesn't matter he's so ugly* |
| 23 | STE: | [DER SKAL I SGU VÆRE LIDT SKARPERE |
|    |      | [*THERE YOU GOTTA BE A LITTLE DAMN SHARPER* |
| 24 |      | [IN MEDIAS RES OG DEN STÅR ENDDA PÅ TAVLEN |
|    |      | [*IN MEDIAS RES AND IT'S EVEN WRITTEN ON THE BOARD* |
| 25 | UNI: | [?latin? det så grimt |
|    |      | [*?Latin? it's so ugly* |
| 26 | SAN: | [SHY: |
|    |      | [*SHUSH:* |

In this example the teachers and Mohsen co-construct Mohsen in the role of the smart, favoured and superior student (4:4-11). In response several students jeeringly co-construct a parody of the collaboration between the teachers and Mohsen thereby aligning Mohsen with the social persona of a ridiculous, childish and ugly Latin student (4:12-25). The teachers simultaneously provide the students with another hint (the desired answer is a Latin phrase), and Sanne elicits Daniel to talk. Daniel gives a wrong answer. He is not offered a second chance to produce an alternative. Several students demonstrate their readiness to speak, but Sanne selects Mohsen as the "ratified participant" (Goffman 1981: 132). Sanne thereby signals that she expects Mohsen to provide the correct answer. Several unidentified students express their disapproval of the teacher's selection of Mohsen through laughter. In consideration of the teachers' habit of giving Mohsen the floor more often than other students, the most likely interpretation is that the students' laughter serve as a critique of the

teachers' preference for Mohsen. Mohsen takes the teachers repeated hints and information from the classroom poster and successfully identifies the required Latin label (in medias res)[48].

Sanne evaluates Mohsen's response as successful. The Danish word *herre*[49] is slightly antiquated and signals male superiority and elegance. The teacher's reference to Mohsen in the third person as 'the master' signals playful appreciation, and her slow reported speech and straightforward intonation makes it entirely clear that she interprets Mohsen's response as a sign of the smart student. Although the correct answer has already been publicly displayed and evaluated, Steve, the other teacher, adds another positive evaluation, 'exactly'. Moreover, Sanne thanks Mohsen for his contribution, thereby positioning him as helpful. Mohsen adds the appropriate response (you're welcome). He thereby politely reaffirms his role as a smart, helpful, and polite master. In this remarkably long appreciative evaluation sequence (4:7-11) the participants jointly reaffirm Mohsen's qualities as smart and his status as favoured and superior.

Two participation frameworks follow this sequence. In one participation framework Sanne and Steve realize that the desired answer is displayed on the board (4:13, 16 and 23). In another framework several students co-construct a parodic subversive participation framework. Narges places Mohsen in the position of an "overhearer" (Goffman 1981: 132) with a double-voiced utterance: 'oh yea::h ↓Mohsen he can learn Latin'. Bakhtin (1984: 193-195) describes double voicing as the presence of one, or several, conflicting voices within the same utterance. On the one hand, Narges admires Mohsen's apparent capacity to learn Latin. On the other hand, Narges's falling pitch and prolonged vowel strongly suggests that her admiration should rather be interpreted as a subversive parody of the preceding framework, and the superior role Mohsen plays in it.

An unidentified female student adds, 'how do you say "Hi" in Lati::n Mohsen'. Her prolonged vowel in itself signals distance and irony. The lack of rising pitch at the end of the sentence indicates that this is not a sincere question. I find it noticeable that the unidentified student sets up Mohsen as an answerer within the known-answer-question format that characterises Mohsen and the teachers' habitual collaboration. Moreover, the elicited vernacular phrase (Hi) suggests a frame

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[48] Moreover, in a group interview on 24/6/13, Mohsen spontaneously tells me how he often provides correct answers to the teachers' questions by looking at the classroom posters, which hung on the classroom wall from fourth through sixth form classes. Mohsen explains that this tactic helps him to do well in school.
[49] The Danish word *herre* translates to various English words, such as 'master', 'lord', 'gentleman' or 'God'.

that subverts the academic content (in medias res), which the teachers had elicited from Mohsen in the preceding moments. The unidentified student thereby reaffirms the subversive framework that serves to undermine Mohsen's status as smart and favoured.

Mohsen responds minimally, 'mm'. This seems to serve as an attempt to avoid confrontation with his classmates. However, an unidentified female student adds to the parody by explicitly labelling Latin as 'ugly'. This label seems to serve as a counterpoint to Steve's identification of Latin as 'stylish'[50]. This utterance furthermore adds to the subversive framework that places Mohsen in the position of the ridiculous Latin-speaking student. Mohsen takes the bait and defends himself (4:18). This suggests that the teasing makes him uncomfortable.

Simultaneously, Narges and an unidentified female student explicitly claim that Mohsen looks like a (four/five years old) child. This seems to serve as agitated responses to Mohsen's defending himself. Narges's emphasised 'fucking' underlines that her utterance should be interpreted as an insult, and not as friendly teasing. The positioning of Mohsen as childish appears to establish a counter position to his superior position in the preceding interaction with the teachers. Mikael comments on Narges and the unidentified student's insults 'don't look at him', he says. It appears as if Mikael sides with Mohsen and attempts to stop the other students' mocking of him. In response, the unidentified girl explicitly identifies Mohsen as 'ugly'. Thus, several students co-construct a parody of the collaboration between the teachers and Mohsen, thereby constructing Mohsen as a ridiculous and childish student, who speaks an ugly language.

In another framework Sanne and Steve realize that the desired answer is displayed on the board. In lines 23 through 24 Steve publicly comments on this discovery. Although several students demonstrated their readiness to speak (4:2), Mohsen, most likely, identified the desired answer from the poster on the wall, and the teachers' appreciation of Mohsen's actions appears slightly awkward, Steve publicly reprimands all of the students who did not succeed in identifying the desired answer (you gotta be a little damn sharper). The implication of Steve's utterance is that the action of identifying the desired answer on the board is a sign of the sharp student. Sanne loudly shushing the students follows this. Moreover, it is noticeable that both teachers suppress the

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[50] This cohort of students, in general, associates "ugly" language with lack of intelligence and education. See more in Hyttel-Sørensen (2017: 121).

students' jeering parody (4:23 and 4:26). This example, together with comparable situations, shows how other students increasingly contest Mohsen's favoured role, and forcing Mohsen into contradictory positions. During the fall term of the sixth form Mohsen withdraws from classroom talk and is less to mark his readiness to speak. Moreover, his male classmates, who ignore him during breaks, marginalize him. This is also noticed by Mohsen's mother who worries about Mohsen not being part of the boys group anymore[51].

## 4.6 Discussion

We have seen how Mohsen comes to inhabit the smart student identity, and how, over the course of two years and two months, his status as smart leads to him being favoured by the teachers and ostracised by peers. How does this trajectory help us illuminate the kind of teaching practices associated with smart student models? So far I have discussed how signs of identities and enacted participation frameworks reoccur on the situational time scale and accumulate over time in Mohsen's trajectory to increasingly presuppose a local smart student model for him. This model includes being alert to the teachers' expectations, being well attuned to the IRE format, and acting as a nice, docile and polite student. These situational scale events connect with several models and practices on the intermediate and socio-historical scales[52].

The teachers, in part, select Mohsen to play the role of the smart student because his participation helps move the teaching activities along. Although other students also contributed to create flow in the teaching, they asked more clarifying questions than did Mohsen, thus slowing down the flow of teaching (Lundqvist accepted). We have seen how the teachers come to rely on a collaborative participation framework in which Mohsen takes on the teachers' repeated hints of what the desired answer is, is positioned as smart and then obtain favoured status.

Jumping to the intermediate scale, the teaching practices in which Mohsen participated at home, and on family trips to Lebanon, provided him with savoir-faire for the IRE format and traditional teacher expectations. The collaborative participation framework revealed by my analyses also invokes teaching routines that have been widely recognizable for decades on the socio-historical time scale. For instance, Bloome et al. (1989) describe how teachers depend on students'

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[51] Haifa, Mohsen's mother told me this on a home visit (cf. the field note entry I collected on 12/9/13).
[52] In Lundqvist (2017: 32) I detail the process of identifying collaborative participation frameworks and smart models as cross-time scale resources.

collaboration to move on the teaching activities to subsequent phases. Mottelson (2003) describes how teachers depend on students' participation to create flow in the teaching activities. Docility and compliance index socio-historical smart student models (Bartholsson 2007; Foucault 1977: 136; Hatt 2012: 453–255; Korp 2011: 30; Thornberg 2009: 251). Moreover, I find it possible that being a so-called "nice and orderly boy" etc. with a docile, compliant classroom manner in stark contrast to the class's many "trouble-maker boys"[53], who were so often disturbing during teaching activities, made it easier for Mohsen to enact the smart student role. We have seen how the teachers sometimes used gendered labels in their explicit identification of Mohsen (e.g. master). In some ways, Mohsen's being a nice and helpful boy who aligned with the teachers compares to Rampton's (2006: 48-75) account of how teachers in boisterous classrooms had to rely on boys' exuberant comments to move the class forward since the girls tended to remain silent.

However, I do not want to over-emphasise the possible gendered aspect of Mohsen's identification, since this is not documented in the data presented here. Mohsen's trajectory can be seen as a configuration of teaching practices and smart student models that accumulate over time in situational events, and reflect practices and models that are widely recognizable on the intermediate and socio-historical time scales.

How does Mohsen's smart student trajectory become socially consequential? At first, I thought that I could predict the consequences of Mohsen's trajectory. Given Mohsen's docility, classroom participation and adaptability to teacher expectations, and the matching labelling of him as smart and nice across school and home, it seemed plausible that Mohsen's smart student role would foster positive consequences for him. However, contrary to the expectations raised by previous smart student accounts (Sternberg 2007), the data from my study revealed that Mohsen encountered commonly described teacher's pet consequences (Martin 1984). We have seen how Mohsen faced uncomfortable situations in teaching events because the teachers held greater expectations for him to provide correct answers and help move their teaching along, than they did for other students. Mohsen was publicly expected to contribute answers that he clearly was unable to provide. Thus, the reinforcement of Mohsen's smart student role placed a certain pressure on him. The pressure was so great that Mohsen ended up being marginalized by his peers. Mohsen became the object of

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[53] The teachers' use of the label "trouble boy" is reminiscent of the predominant public discourse that ethnic minority boys represent a central problem for Danish society (cf. Madsen 2015: 5).

his classmates' jokes, ridicule and teasing. These examples, and comparable examples from the broader ethnographic material, strongly suggest that Mohsen's classmates made him pay for becoming the teacher's favourite by being ostracized. Students like Mohsen who receive special privileges and favours from teachers are commonly disliked among their peers (Martin 1984: 93). In addition, Mohsen's revelling in the teachers' praise (4:11) rather than demonstrating awareness of the risks to peer friendship of becoming teacher's pet might also have fuelled his classmates' contestation of his role (compare Eckert 1989).

I find it plausible that Mohsen's retreat from classroom talk during the fall term of the sixth form can be interpreted as an attempt to escape from the pressure imposed upon him by his favourite role and compensate for the social exclusion he experienced from his classmates. In the long run, Mohsen, and other students in comparable situations, might become educationally discouraged when they face such negative consequences of their smart student identification. In a setting where a supposedly individual quality (smartness) leads to a new social status (teacher's favourite), the resulting tensions can create problems for both the student and the classroom.

## 4.7 Conclusion and implications

In this article I ask how one student's identity can change from smart into a favoured identity. I argue that when a student becomes socially identified as smart, and begins to actively collaborate with the teacher to construct correct answers to the teacher's questions, and the teacher comes to rely habitually on this collaboration to move the teaching activities along, the role of the smart student thickens into a favoured role. As discussed above, such trajectories of identification are likely to foster unreasonable pressure on these students for a docile classroom demeanour and to place them at odds among their peers.

What is the general value of these findings? Several studies highlight that teacher's favourites are students whom teachers regard as smart (e.g. Hatt 2012: 455; Luttrell 1993; Martin, 1984: 94). In this article we have seen how one student transforms from smart to favourite throughout a trajectory that invokes worldwide recognizable teaching routines and enduring socio-historical smart student models. I therefore find it most likely that comparable student trajectories occur in other school settings.

This study has implications for education and research. According to Erickson (2001: 175), teachers have "wiggle room", by virtue of their individual capacity to interrupt and manipulate the habitual and coercive patterns in which they may be inadvertently stuck. In this spirit, I hope that Mohsen's story will inspire teachers to create wiggle room for their students by becoming aware of the social consequences of operating with the celebrated smart student models of their classrooms. My findings show how the enactment of those models can place pressure on students and foster social inequity among peers.

This study highlights how detailed attention to identity transformation in micro-level classroom discourse and across broad ethnographic data, over time, can help researchers to detect unpredictable shifts in established identities that result from wider scale enduring teaching routines and identity models. This analytic lens could be helpful in studies of the relationship between students' smart identities and their further learning. Many studies have highlighted the collaborative interactional routines of the kind that facilitated the thickening of Mohsen' smart identity. Such routines constrain students' acquisition of academic content because students habitually complete "an interactional sequence that counts as a component of the lesson", rather than developing "additional skill" (Bloome et al. 1989: 282).

Such teacher–student collaboration often "limits opportunities to deeply engage in the linguistically rich interactions around academic content that students need to learn both content and language" (Carhill-Poza 2015: 9). Mohsen and other students who collaborate with the teachers in similar ways are at risk of reproducing the desired answers from the available literacy resources and classroom interaction without understanding, rather than developing their understanding of the academic content. The larger issue that needs to be further researched is the degree to which students' academically successful identities (being considered smart) might actually conflict with further learning. Being smart has its downside.

**5 Becoming a "smart student": The emergence and unexpected implications of one child's social identification**

**5.1 Introduction**

Critical studies within linguistic anthropology of education show that teachers and students co-construct identities and learning (Bucholtz et al. 2012; Wortham 2008b: 102; Rymes and Pash 2001). Some of these studies find that teachers and students jointly orient themselves moment by moment to local actions, and that they compare these local actions to metapragmatic models of identities. Across moments in time teachers may ascribe comparable, or even similar, school-relevant identities to particular students, for example "disruptive" or "unpromising" or, conversely, "smart" and "promising". These processes of social identification may constrain or support learning in the classroom (Wortham 2006, 2004).

Although such social regularities are pedagogically problematic, they are common in Western societies. Both models of disruptive and smart students are widely circulated and culturally predominant in Western school settings. We know much about the unfortunate situations of students who are labelled and identified as "clueless", "dumb", "silent", "learning disabled" or "learning deficient" (Heyd-Metzuyanim 2013; Ogbuagu 2013; Hirst 2007; Varenne and McDermott 1998; Mehan 2001). But we know less about the situations of students who are identified as "smart", "intelligent", "good" or "gifted".

The limited existing literature on "smart students" mainly describes how the cultural production of "intelligence" or "smartness" in schools involves labelling of students along with institutional and societal expectations of students' class, racial or gender identities (Hatt 2012, Korp 2011). These explanations generally describe typical patterns of identity construction, and they generally describe participants as homogeneous groups who follow predictable trajectories of success. But trajectories of identification are heterogeneous, contingent and likely to deviate from typical patterns. The present article takes a first step to fill this gap in the existing literature on "smart students" by taking a closer analytic look at one child's atypical trajectory of identification.

As we will see, the social identification of my focal child increasingly points towards a metapragmatic model of the smart student. But, noticeably, his trajectory of identification becomes

socially and pedagogically consequential in unexpected ways. I suggest that teachers' positive identification of certain children may constrain these children's learning chances. I argue and provide evidence that when a teacher, as a rule, identifies a student as "smart" and assigns him or her a favoured position and special rights within the classroom, that student is likely to become socially vulnerable and his or her learning chances may subsequently be reduced. In addition, in this situation the overall learning environment becomes less responsive to other students' initiatives and efforts.

This chapter covers one child's trajectory of social identification in an Arabic heritage classroom in Copenhagen, Denmark. The focal child, Mohsen, shifts between being a student among other students – although he is a smart and favoured student – and a different and qualitatively more privileged position in which he has rights to symbolic and material resources. Other students in the classroom do not have these rights. We will see that the regular identification of Mohsen as a smart student is so strong that the teacher draws on it even when Mohsen's actions are not in accordance with the local smart student model. My analyses build on recordings from three Arabic classes, in particular from two classes taking place within a month. I focus on these specific classes because they constitute a trajectory during which the identification of Mohsen increasingly points towards a metapragmatic model of the smart student. Thereby, the identification of Mohsen as a smart student solidifies. The solidification of Mohsen's identification becomes socially consequential when other students in the class contest his favoured position and special rights.

I do not claim that background characteristics and personal properties, such as intelligence, family background, academic and linguistic experience etc., are without significance for Mohsen's social identification. Rather, I turn attention to classroom *processes* of social identification in order to understand how such processes are carried out, and how participants make characteristics and properties of these processes significant and salient. In so doing I draw on theories of participation (Goffman 1986, 1981, [1974]) and social identification (Wortham 2006). Although the case study involves an Arabic heritage classroom in Denmark, comparable processes and problems are likely to be widespread in other Western school settings.

## 5.2 Data and setting

During a ten months long ethnographic fieldwork I followed a group of fifth to sixth form students

(eleven to twelve years old) in their mainstream classes and in Arabic heritage language classes in a school in central Copenhagen. I followed Mohsen for a year in his home near the school. I conducted participant observation, interviews and other semi-structured activities. Data consists of audio and video recordings and transcripts of these, photographs, field notes and various other literacy artefacts. All participants are anonymised.

As mentioned, this chapter concentrates on the Arabic classes. Children officially identified as speakers of the Arabic mother tongue were offered free Arabic heritage language classes until the sixth form. Fourteen third to fifth form students (nine to twelve years old) followed the Arabic classes, but during the spring term approximately half of them left. The students had different national backgrounds (Iraqi, Moroccan and Lebanese), competences in different varieties of Arabic and to different degrees. Some children did not have an active command of Arabic at all, while others used it in everyday communication with their parents.

Mohsen was twelve years old (2013) and from a family with a Lebanese background. He was born in Denmark as the second of four children. In everyday communication Mohsen's parents mostly practised Lebanese dialect with their children. In addition, Mohsen's mother had taught him and his siblings some basic Modern Standard Arabic. The family visited Lebanon every second or third year. During these visits Mohsen mainly practiced Lebanese dialect with family and friends. According to Mohsen's parents and the Arabic teacher, Aslan, Mohsen had a good command of Arabic.

Aslan had a Kurdish Iraqi background. During school and teacher training in Iraq he practised Sorani, Iraqi dialect and Modern Standard Arabic. Aslan also taught Danish as a second language, and he knew most of the students from the mainstream classes. The class had an assistant teacher: Noor. She was in her forties, and had a Lebanese background. Noor was the mother of one of the students in the class, Duha. Noor had no formal education, and both Aslan and Noor talked about her as a "trainee". Usually, Aslan and Noor divided the class into two groups and taught one each. Class activities included grammar exercises and different types of assignments. Moreover, Aslan often engaged the children in quizzes, involving other languages than Arabic, typically Danish, Swedish, German and English. Aslan explained that this was a pedagogical strategy, which he used to make the children draw on all available linguistic resources in their acquisition of Arabic.

I participated, made recordings and observations during ten lessons and two fieldtrips in the spring term 2013. The term was severely affected by a month-long national lockout where the children hardly attended any classes (including the mainstream classes). In addition, the teachers cancelled a few classes. Consequently, my data covers almost all of the term's Arabic lessons. All fifth form students stopped after the spring term as this was the last year in which they were entitled to free Arabic classes.

## 5.3 Social identification

I consider social identification to be interpersonal processes through which individuals identify and are identified as instantiations of socially recognised "metacultural" or "metapragmatic" models of identities (Agha 2007; Wortham 2006: 32-40; Urban 2001). Metapragmatic models of identities are models of socially recognisable types of people, for instance "disruptive" or "smart students", and/or of characteristic actions that relate to such types. People orient towards metapragmatic models, but they are not necessarily conscious of doing so. A quick search on the Internet results in various instructions on how to become a "good", "smart" or "successful" student along with caricatures of such stereotypes. Good studentship is widely associated with modesty and friendliness, and with individuals who complete assignments on time, participate eagerly in class, answer correctly and demonstrate moderate behaviour.

Some scholars describe how notions like "giftedness", "intelligence" and "genius" emerge as culturally produced ideas, which influence social practice and understandings of success in school (Borland 2011; Sternberg 2007; McDermott 2006). In accordance with Agha, Wortham and Urban, I consider such notions to be heterogeneous models that may emerge from various and unpredictable practices and ideas of different socio-historical origins.

Moreover, social identification emerges and may solidify both in patterns and over time:

> Social identification happens across a trajectory of events as signs of identity and metapragmatic models are consistently applied to and inhabited by an individual. Widely circulating categories and models are essential to social identification, but only as they are contextualized within local settings and particular events. In settings like a

classroom, local versions of more widely circulating models often develop and
participants in these settings draw on those models as they identify themselves and
each other. (Wortham 2006: 49).

In a classroom setting, the act of delivering a correct answer to the teacher's question may be
regarded as a distinctive sign of the well-behaved and compliant student. It may also be part of the
local model of the smart student and, thereby, along with other behavioural signs, contribute to the
identification of a student as smart over time and across events. Some students may strive to be
identified as smart students; other students may not (seem to) aspire to it at all, for many different
reasons. Teachers tend to see the actions of some children as signs of the smart student, whereas
other students are rarely identified as such, although their actions could lead to such identification.
Thus, social identification occurs in moments, it is not pre-established, and yet it draws on already
existing understandings, models and resources. Importantly, local interactional processes are
constantly influenced by the unpredictability of the moment, and thereby social identification is
never entirely stable, unambiguous and predictable.

## 5.4 Frame, keying and participation framework

As tools for the analysis of social identification in the class interaction, this section introduces three
of Goffman's central analytical notions: frame, keying and participation framework. Goffman
(1986: 10-11) refers to frame as the 'principles of organization which govern events' including the
participants' subjective involvement in them. For example, frames can be transformed by being
*keyed* with different meanings (Goffman 1986: 45). When re-keying happens participants in a given
activity acknowledge that a systematic alternation reconstitutes what goes on. All activities can also
be described from a different, but complementary perspective, namely as enacted participation
frameworks (Goffman 1986: 3). A participation framework is a structural description of the social
organisation of situated encounters, including the relations between activities, participants and
participants' utterances and other actions. The notion may refer to an activity in its entirety or to
smaller subactivities or sequences, such as an interactional exchange.

Activities framed as teaching typically generate the expectation that they include a teacher, some
students and, in the case of literacy-oriented classes, literacy artefacts, such as pencils, papers and
books – and in the case I will analyse, a digital whiteboard. Frames also generate expectations about

the specific enactment of the participation framework and of interactional formats. For instance, the IRE format is common in classrooms (Cazden 1988: 29; Mehan 1979). IRE consists of teacher initiation, student response and teacher evaluation, and as I show, the format was practised in the Arabic classes.

In teaching activities we also expect participants to have institutionalised and unequal power relations. We expect the teacher to demonstrate what is regularly interpreted as superior status, for instance by giving instructions, asking questions and evaluating contributions, and by referring to these types of actions as his or her responsibility and obligation. The students demonstrate deference by following the teacher's instructions, answering the questions and accepting the evaluations. Yet, participants may act differently than expected from their institutional roles. As we will see, students may fail to give the correct answer, and they may re-key an activity framed as teaching into a joke. Moreover, teachers may transfer the responsibility for instructing the class to students.

## 5.5 Incipient social identification of a smart student

This section gives two examples (from May second) of what I saw during my fieldwork as a recurrent positioning of Mohsen. I argue that we here witness incipient identification of Mohsen as a smart student. This identification becomes even clearer and is solidified a couple of weeks later, as evident from the examples analysed in the subsequent section. In examples one and two there is still ambiguity and uncertainty in the interpretation of behaviour as signs of identity. The involved students are Duha, Mohsen and Sakira. Aslan, the teacher, introduces a reading exercise.

My transcripts place the English translation directly below the original example. The Arabic original is in dashed underline, the Danish original is in *italics*, and the Swedish original is in **bold** (transcription conventions are in appendix A).

Excerpt 1: (May second, audio recording)
Participants: Aslan (ALN), Duha (DUH), Mohsen (MOH), Sakira (AKI)
01   ALN:    okay (.) e:h u Sal=el bint ethaniya shu isemha Duha elli teh
             okay (.) e:h and Sal=the other girl what's her name Duha? that
02           ki ma'Aminah

```
              talks to Aminah?

03            (1.8)

04   MOH:     °Salma°
              °Salma°

05   DUH:     ahm s: °l°
              ahm s: °l°

06            (2.7)

07   MOH:     [°kom nu ha°
              [°come on ha°

08   DUH:     [Sarah
              [Sarah

09   ALN:     huh Sarah
              huh Sarah?

10   DUH:     ay
              yes

11   ALN:     ente shu raáyak Mohsen
              what is your opinion Mohsen?

12   MOH:     Salma
              Salma

13   ALN:     e:h Duha inte muqtun'a bi raí Mohsen (.) saḥih (.)
              e:h Duha are you convinced by Mohsens opinion (.)

14           elle Mohsen biúlu
              is it right? (.) what Mohsen says?

15   DUH:     e:hm (.) ay
              e:hm (.) yes

16   ALN:     okay (.) Sakira enti mettefá ma'ahum
              okay (.) Sakira do you agree with them?

17   AKI:     mm
              mm
```

In lines one and two Aslan asks Duha about the name of a girl in the text they are reading. Duha hesitates. Mohsen, whispering, gives Duha the correct answer, "°Salma°". Duha begins to answer,

but she hesitates, stutters and then she stops. With a token of laughter Mohsen encourages her to continue, probably because he is uncomfortable, but still wants to support her, "°come on ha°". Simultaneously, Duha responds, "Sarah", which is not the correct answer (the correct answer is Salma). Thereby, the two children construct Duha as a student who cannot answer for herself; Mohsen provides her with the answer, and yet she fails. In contrast, Mohsen demonstrates being a helpful and knowledgeable student.

Aslan says to Duha, "huh Sarah?" This sounds like an attempt to initiate a correction sequence in which Duha is given the chance to provide an alternative to her first answer, but she does not do that. She merely confirms her response. Aslan neither gives her a second chance nor a more specific indication of what she is expected to do. Instead he addresses Mohsen, "what is your opinion Mohsen?". By doing this Aslan puts Mohsen in a privileged position vis-à-vis the other students. Neither Duha nor Sakira, who is also present, are selected as addressees in this interactional exchange.

Notice also that Aslan asks for Mohsen's opinion. Aslan does not clarify of what Mohsen should have an opinion; however, the most likely interpretation is that he elicits Mohsen's evaluation of Duha's answer, i.e. whether he agrees with Duha or not. Again, this puts Mohsen in a privileged, although maybe also slightly awkward position, where he may have opinions (rather than just knowledge) that are worth listening to, and even opinions on the other students' contributions. Mohsen does not refer explicitly to Duha's answer, but circumvents the expectations of Aslan's question by providing his own answer, which is correct (1.12).

Although the required information is now publically available, Aslan asks Duha if she is "convinced" by Mohsen's contribution. Duha could have refused to answer, but by giving a successful or correct reply to Aslan's invitation she will most likely position herself as inferior and explicit acknowledge Mohsen's superiority. Thus, the relative hierarchy between the two students is established, confirmed and underlined, both through their publically available and different understandings of the text, and through the teacher's positioning of them. And it is validated once more when Sakira, on Aslan's invitation, demonstrates agreement too.

Mohsen is not only a knowledgeable student. He also receives rights that none of the other students have. This is illustrated in excerpt two, which is drawn from the same recording, half a minute after the first excerpt. Aslan asks the children how you say "good morning" in different languages.

Excerpt 2: (May second, audio recording)

Participants: Aslan (ALN), Duha (DUH), Mohsen (MOH), Sakira (AKI)

01  ALN:  *<godmorgen> hvad betyder det på engelsk?*
          <good morning> what does it mean in english?

02  MOH:  good morning
          good morning

03  UNI:  ah ha
          ah ha

04  ALN:  *på tysk?*
          in German?

05  MOH:  eischoschei ha ha [*jeg ved det ikke* ha
          eischoschei ha ha [I don't know     ha

06  ALN:                          [ha ha
                                  [ha ha

07        All participants laugh

08  ALN:  ☺okay okay☺
          ☺okay okay☺

Aslan initiates a teaching routine when he asks the students what the English equivalent to the Danish word "*godmorgen"* is. Mohsen replies with the correct answer ("good morning"). Thereby, he positions himself in accordance with expectations both on a structural level (on the level of the participation framework) and on the level of content (providing the requested information). Aslan asks another question, "in German?", and Mohsen replies, "eischoschei". This sounds German, but it is not a recognised German word, and much less the correct answer. Mohsen's response shows that he accepts being part of the same participation framework and frame; he answers the question and acts in accordance with expectations to a compliant student involved in teaching activities. Yet, he does not provide the requested information, probably because he does not know it; at least that is how he accounts for his "German" contribution (2.5).

Aslan's question seems to have put Mohsen in a difficult situation. Mohsen is willing and eager to answer the question, and he wants to give the correct answer, but he is unable to do both. As a solution he fulfils the structural requirements (by answering), but he contributes with clearly wrong, though socially harmless information, which, at the same time, demonstrates his phonological German skills. He also demonstrates that he is aware that his answer is wrong, and that it should be treated as a benign joke rather than as a threat to the teacher's authority; this is indicated by his discrete token of laughter and his mitigating "I don't know" immediately after the "German" turn.

Aslan accepts Mohsen's re-keying by laughing. In fact, everyone laughs, and Aslan once again ratifies Mohsen's contribution, this time with a positive evaluation in the form of a smiling voice, "☺okay okay☺". Unlike what is usually the case when the other students fail to answer a question, Aslan does not repeat his question when Mohsen fails to answer. Thus, no other student is given the chance to answer the question. Aslan acts as though the requested information is not missing, and he continues with the class.

These two examples show incipient identification of Mohsen as a smart student. In both examples the teacher treats Mohsen differently than the other students. Aslan asks Mohsen to evaluate another student's incorrect answer, whereas Mohsen's incorrect answer is treated as acceptable. The other students are asked to validate Mohsen's correct answers. Of course, Aslan's explicit questions to Mohsen could be interpreted otherwise; he might consider Mohsen a student who needs encouragement to speak (compare Wortham 2006: 31). However, from the mainstream classes Aslan is familiar with Mohsen's reputation as a good student. Teachers in the mainstream classes refer to Mohsen as one of the "best" students in class. This is also noticed by Knoop-Henriksen (2013). Moreover, Mohsen is a regular participant in classroom interaction in Arabic classes. Therefore, this seems to be an unlikely interpretation.

Mohsen demonstrates being compliant, eager to answer, friendly and funny. He also demonstrates being sufficiently knowledgeable to answer correctly and to give competent wrong answers. In addition, he demonstrates being aware that the answer is wrong, thereby not running the risk that anyone should believe otherwise. My argument is that this co-construction of Mohsen by all present participants – as knowledgeable and special – is part of a process throughout which he is

increasingly identified as smart. The model of the smart student involves all of this: knowing the answer, being compliant, friendly and fun etc., and it leads to special rights. We shall see that demonstrated in full force in the following section.

**5.6 The solidification of social identification**

This section demonstrates (through five examples from May seventeenth and June thirteenth) how Mohsen's identification solidifies and increasingly points towards a local metapragmatic model of the smart student. On May seventeenth five students attended class. The class worked with Arabic flags and countries, which the students located on Internet sites. All teaching activities included and focused on the digital whiteboard.

In the beginning of class Aslan asked Mohsen to get the keyboard from the cabinet. Although Dina, Duha and Iman were all situated closer to the digital whiteboard than Mohsen, Aslan selected Mohsen for the task. Aslan told Mohsen to log on to the computer; subsequently, Mohsen started navigating the digital whiteboard, and he continued doing so throughout class. In excerpts three, four and five Aslan teaches a group consisting of Dina, Duha, Iman and Mohsen. Noor concentrates on the last student. The following situation happened six minutes after Aslan assigned Mohsen control over the digital whiteboard.

Excerpt 3: (May seventeenth, video recording)
Participants: Aslan (ALN), Dina (DIA), Duha (DUH), Iman (INA), Mohsen (MOH)
01   ALN:      eh (.) ya' ya'ni matʰalan teshtrun aiskrim aw
                      eh (.) for example you can buy ice cream or you
02                  [teshretun shaghlat
                      [can buy things
03   INA:      [°yes°
                      [°yes°
                      {raises head}
04   MOH:    ice cream Iman [*det er*
                                      [that's
05   INA:      ice cream Iman [ice cream *jeg ved godt det er is* ha ha
                                      [ice cream I know it's ice cream ha ha

100

06  ALN:   *ja*  (.) <u>ushu tssamena bil biswidi</u>

yes (.) and what would you call it in in Swedish?

07  INA:   *øhm*

ehm

08  ALN:   <u>min min menkum ye'raf</u>

who who of you know it?

09  INA:   [*slik (.) på sve øh svensk det betyder* (.) *øh* **godis**

[candy (.) in Swe eh Swedish it means (.) eh **godis**

{lifts hand, moves forefinger back and forth}

((godis = Swedish for candy))

10  ALN:   [*nej Iman*

[no  Iman


Mohsen says, "ice cream Iman [that's". Although officially addressing Iman, Mohsen speaks loudly and thereby constructs the other participants, including the teacher, as overhearers. Mohsen initiates an activity that focuses on linguistic form. He uses a part of Aslan's turn (ice cream) as a starting point for this and thereby demonstrates that he has important information related to what Aslan just said. Moreover, Mohsen positions himself as having the symbolic right to determine what information is important and what is not and to provide the other students with this information. Iman interrupts Mohsen to say that she already knows, "[ice cream I know it's ice cream ha ha". This seems to respond to Mohsen's contribution as an invitation to a knowledge competition between Mohsen and Iman, a regular practice between these two students. Iman smiles, raises her hand and gazes towards Aslan (3.5) inviting him to respond.

Aslan accepts the invitation to join the students and frames the activity as teaching adding the classic IRE format, "yes (.) and what would you call it in in Swedish?" Iman responds minimally, "ehm", probably because she does not know. Aslan repeats his question, this time addressing all the students, but Iman demonstrates that she does want to answer the question by replying, "[candy (.) in Swe Swedish means (.) eh **godis**". This is not the information Aslan asked for (*glas* "ice cream" in Swedish); it is related information and it falls in the relevant turn in the IRE format.

In many ways Iman's contribution resembles Mohsen's fake German in excerpt two, one significant difference being that Mohsen, unlike Iman, demonstrated awareness of the erroneous character of his answer. Whether this is the reason why Aslan treats the two children's contributions differently we cannot know, but it is evident that Aslan does not accept Iman's information in the same way as he did Mohsen's. Aslan interrupts Iman before she is able to reply, "[no Iman". Not only are Mohsen's contributions treated differently than Iman's, Mohsen also benefits from symbolic and material resources which Iman and the other students do not have. Excerpt four is from the same lesson and it occurs a few seconds after excerpt three.

Excerpt 4: (May seventeenth, video recording)
Participants: Aslan (ALN), Dina (DIA), Duha (DUH), Iman (INA), Mohsen (MOH)

01  MOH:  *jeg ved det godt*

        I know it

        {Mohsen > Aslan}

02  ALN:  [o o shu ismu bil swidi: (.) el e:h el el

        [and and what is it called in Swedi:sh? (.) the e:h the the

03         aiskrim

        ice cream?

        {Mohsen enters a search engine on the Internet}

04  MOH:  [*jeg ved det godt (.) >jeg ved det Asla=Asla=Asla<*

        [I know it (.) >I know it Asla=Asla=Asla<

              {Mohsen > screen}

            {enters Google Translate}

05  ALN:  *NEJ MOHSEN DU SKAL IKKE GOOGLE*

        NO MOHSEN YOU SHOULD NOT GOOGLE

06         {Aslan turns towards screen}

07  DIA:  ha ha

        ha ha

        {Dina, Duha and Iman turn towards screen}

08  MOH:  ☺*jo*☺

        ☺yes☺

09  ALN:  *NEJ MOHSEN*

NO MOHSEN

| 10 | | All participants > screen |
|----|----|----|
| 11 | | Dina and Iman laugh |
| 12 | | Aslan turns smiling towards Mohsen |
| 13 | MOH: | *<jamen ø:h>* |
| | | <but e:h> |
| | | {moves cursor back and forth between different language options in Google Translate} |
| 14 | | Aslan coughs |
| 15 | INA: | *PÅ SVENSK* |
| | | IN SWEDISH |
| 16 | | {Mohsen chooses "Swedish", writes something and clicks on "translate"} |
| 17 | MOH: | [*glas?* |
| | | [glass*?* |
| 18 | INA: | [**glas** |
| | | [ice cream |
| | | ((**glas** = Swedish for ice cream and Danish for glass)) |
| 19 | ALN: | *glas ja*   [ha ha |
| | | glass yes [ha ha |
| | | {turns away from screen} |
| 20 | MOH: | [☺ *er det glas? (.) glas?* ☺ |
| | | [☺ is it glass? (.) glass? ☺ |
| | | {Mohsen > screen, turns upper body forwards and backwards and smiles to Aslan} |
| 21 | ALN: | *ja det er glas* |
| | | yes it's glas |
| | | {smiles to Mohsen} |

In line one Mohsen claims that he has the requested information (*glas*, Swedish for ice cream).
Aslan ignores Mohsen and repeats his question addressing all the students. Simultaneously, Mohsen
conducts an online Google search. He excitedly repeats his claim, "[I know it  >I know it
Asla=Asla=Asla<". Mohsen speaks quickly, repeats Aslan's name three times and enters Google

Translate. It is not likely that Mohsen actually knows the Swedish word for ice cream. If that was the case, he could have given the answer immediately. Furthermore, Mohsen seems surprised when he realises that the Swedish word for ice cream is *glas*, which in Danish means glass (4.17-20).

In lines five to six Aslan responds ambiguously to Mohsen's claim. Verbally he participates as the thoughtful teacher attempting to limit Mohsen's right to material resources, "NO MOHSEN YOU SHOULD NOT GOOGLE". On the other hand, Aslan turns to watch Mohsen's Internet search. Dina responds by laughing, and she, Duha and Iman turn towards the screen (4.7). Now Mohsen has the attention of all the participants. He speaks in a smiling voice, "☺ yes ☺". This is probably to show that he is aware that he is transgressing classroom norms, but that his Internet search only constitutes a minor transgression. Once more Aslan makes an ambiguous contribution, "NO MOHSEN". This time all the participants immediately turn towards the screen. Dina and Iman laugh, and finally Aslan accepts Mohsen's search, as he turns smiling towards him. The others respond to Mohsen's performance as a funny move.

In the following moments Mohsen seems uncertain of how to continue the search; he speaks slowly and hesitantly, and he moves the cursor back and forth between different language options in Google Translate. Iman takes over the instruction and supports Mohsen with the relevant cue, "IN SWEDISH". Doing so, she demonstrates being friendly, supportive and knowledgeable. In lines seventeen and eighteen Mohsen and Iman simultaneously reaffirm that the requested information has been provided, and Aslan reaffirms this. Noticeably, Mohsen is struck by surprise: "[ ☺ is it glass? (.) glass? ☺".

Next, Aslan assigns different Arabic countries to the students, and Mohsen locates the flags of these countries on the Internet. Aslan assigns Tunisia to Duha. Twelve minutes later we see how Mohsen's right to both material and symbolic resources consequently makes the teacher struggle between two juxtaposed participation frameworks.

Excerpt 5: (May seventeenth, video recording)
Participants: Aslan (ALN), Dina (DIA), Duha (DUH), Iman (INA), Mohsen (MOH)
01          {All participants look at screen. Mohsen holds keyboard. Mohsen scrolls down
            through pages with flags}

02 MOH:   Tunis *jeg ved godt hvordan den ser ud*
          Tunis I know what it looks like
          {scrolls down a website with pictures}

03 ALN:   *ja det ved jeg også men m vi skal finde det til Duha ja* (1)
          yes I know too but b we have to find it for Duha yes (1)

04        *det er* <u>lah Tyrki</u>    [<u>je had</u>ʰa
          this is not Turkey [this is
          {Mohsen holds cursor on Turkish flag, half of it opens}

05 MOH:                      [*de:t Tyrkiet*
                             [i:t's Tyrkey

06 ALN:   *ja* (.) <u>byeshbah had</u>ʰa (.) <u>el'alam abyad</u>ʰ <u>fi eh</u> (.)
          yes (.) it looks like this one (.) a white flag in eh (.)

07        <u>elard</u>ʰ<u>iya bed</u>ʰ<u>a eh</u>
          white background
          {Mohsen removes cursor from Turkish flag, starts scrolling up again}
          ((side event has been cut out))

08 ALN:   [*ø:h:*
          [e:h:

09 MOH:   [*kan vi finde det her?*
          [can we find it here?

10        {Mohsen clicks on a photo}

11 ALN:   <u>Mohsen mumkin tekteb 'al al eh display</u>
          Mohsen can you please write on the eh display?
                       {Aslan points towards the screen}

12        {Mohsen closes a frame, half opens another frame, closes a frame and scrolls up and
          down again, looks at keyboard. A new Google links list appears. Mohsen moves
          cursor in Google list}

13 INA:   *Tunesien*
          Tunisia

14 INA:   *°flag (2.7) skriv fla:g°*
          °flags (2.7) write fla:g°
          {Pictures with maps of Tunisia, camels etc. appear. Mohsen scrolls up to top of page}

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 15 | MOH: | *°slap af Iman°* |
| | | °relax Iman° |
| 16 | | {Pictures of Tunisian flag appear. Mohsen scrolls to top of page} |
| 17 | ALN: | okay Duha shufti |
| | | okay Duha did you see? |
| 18 | DUH: | ay: |
| | | yes: |
| 19 | ALN: | okay |
| | | okay |

Mohsen claims, "Tunis I know what it looks like". Simultaneously, he tries to locate something on the Internet. In the beginning it is not clear what it is. Tunis may refer to the capital, the flag or a map of the country Tunisia. But Mohsen initiates a search on the Internet, and all the participants concentrate on his actions. Aslan responds, "yes I know too but b we have to find it for Duha". This utterance is ambiguous.

On the one hand, Aslan acts the institutional role as teacher, telling Mohsen that if it was a question of gathering this information he would have done so. Singling out Duha as the reason for this teaching activity may serve as a correction of Mohsen; Aslan may be telling him that this activity should include all of the students, not only Mohsen. If this is the case, Aslan's use of the first person plural pronoun "we" refers to all of the participants. On the other hand, Aslan's use of "we" may include only Mohsen and Aslan and thus establish the two of them in a unit of epistemic authority. An epistemic authority is, in Raviv et al.'s (2003) understanding, a reliable source of knowledge that defines the scope and enables the other participants to learn and access the information required in the situation. In this line of interpretation, Aslan not only emphasises Mohsen's role as a knowledgeable student expected to deliver the required information (Tunis), but also ascribes him a favoured position beyond his position as student.

I argue that Aslan struggles between the participation framework establishing himself and Mohsen as epistemic authorities, and another participation framework aimed at teaching all of the students.

Moreover, the participation of Duha and Iman, respectively, in the situation supports the interpretation that Mohsen participates in and is ascribed a favoured position. Consider this argument while looking at the continued interaction. In line four Aslan comments on Mohsen's finding, "yes (1) this is not Turkey [this is". Simultaneously, Mohsen reaffirms his finding, "[it':s Turkey". Noticeably, next Aslan switches to Arabic and explains colour similarities between the Tunisian and Turkish flags, "yes. (.) it looks like this one (.) a white flag in eh (.) white background". Thus, he performs his role as Arabic teacher and addresses all of the students in order to frame the activity as teaching.

In lines nine to eleven Aslan and Mohsen again work on two different participation frameworks. In line eight Aslan hesitates, and Mohsen suggests a strategy, "[can we find it here?". Moreover, he clicks on a picture and continues to search for the requested information on the digital whiteboard. Mohsen tries to solve the task, but he has difficulties. Mohsen displays one way of navigating, but Aslan guides him in a different direction, "Mohsen can you please write on the eh display?" Aslan continues to speak in Arabic, trying to steer and frame the activity as Arabic teaching of all the participants. All of the students will be able to see what Mohsen writes in the search line. Moreover, Aslan points to the screen of the digital whiteboard.

In line fifteen Iman challenges the epistemic authority of Aslan and Mohsen by giving an instruction, "Tunisia". Thus, she demonstrates being knowledgeable and having relevant information. Mohsen scrolls down, and Iman repeats and elaborates her suggestion in a lowered voice, "°flags (2.7) write fla:g°". Mohsen turns towards the keyboard and starts writing (5.14). Next, he locates pictures of the Tunisian flag (5.16). Aslan summons Duha, "okay Duha did you see", and Duha reaffirms. This is the first time Aslan addresses Duha during the activity. This is noticeable, because Duha was singled out as the reason for the activity. However, she is not invited to participate actively.

These three examples demonstrate that Mohsen increasingly is identified as a smart student. We have seen that the teacher treats Mohsen noticeably differently than the other students. Aslan accepts Mohsen's fake German. Although Iman demonstrates being knowledgeable in a comparable way, Aslan rejects her wrong answer (*godis*). Aslan selects Mohsen to control the digital whiteboard. Aslan grants Mohsen the symbolic right to select what information is relevant, thereby

providing the other students with the information, transgressing classroom norms and forming part of an epistemic authority including Mohsen and Aslan.

Mohsen demonstrates that he is eager to answer, friendly and funny. However, he does not demonstrate being knowledgeable, able to answer correctly or sufficiently skilful to navigate the digital whiteboard. Mohsen's special rights are not only a privilege; at this point they also become a burden, because the teacher transfers teaching responsibilities onto him (instructing the other students and controlling the digital whiteboard). Thus, we have seen examples of how Mohsen's social identification solidifies. His favoured position in the classroom fosters other students' contestation, and in the following we will see conflicts unfold with increasing force.

At least five conflicts occur in the lesson on May seventeenth. Conflicts emerge when other students attempt to gain the right to the material resources of the digital whiteboard and are denied this right. For example, Duha tries to take the keyboard from Mohsen fourteen minutes after the Tunesian flag episode. Aslan tells Duha that she cannot have it. Less than a minute later, Iman attempts to take over the navigation of the digital whiteboard, and both Mohsen and Aslan reject her attempt. Later, Duha makes another attempt to gain control of the keyboard while Mohsen is locating Arabic countries on the screen. Mohsen struggles with the task, and Aslan shows him where on the map he can find what he is looking for. Duha takes Mohsen's chair (by the keyboard) and is about to take control of the digital whiteboard when both Mohsen and Aslan tell her to "let go". When Duha does not react immediately, Aslan disciplines her: "NO IT'S NOT FUNNY".

In the beginning of the lesson on June thirteenth Mohsen asks Aslan if he wants him to navigate the digital whiteboard. Aslan confirms this, and Mohsen controls the digital whiteboard throughout the lesson. Eight minutes after the episode Aslan is about to initiate a teaching activity. Iman goes over to the screen, but Aslan asks her twice to sit down. Iman however continues to stand by the screen for three and a half minutes, and when Aslan comes over she addresses him.

Excerpt 6: (June thirteenth, video recording)
Participants: Aslan (ALN), Duha (DUH), Iman (INA), Mohsen (MOH), Zara (ZAR), unidentified speaker (UNI)

01              Iman and Aslan stand by screen. Mohsen controls digital whiteboard.

| 02 | | Aslan and Mohsen > screen |
|---|---|---|
| 03 | INA: | *Aslan (.) Aslan* |
| | | Aslan (.) Aslan |
| 04 | ALN: | [*ja* |
| | | [yes |
| 05 | ZAR: | [*ASLAN (.)*      [*ASLAN* |
| | | [ASLAN (.)      [ASLAN |
| 06 | INA: | *hvorfor gør vi ikke* [*ligesom vi plejer?* (.) |
| | | why don't we do    [like we usually do?(.) |
| 07 | | [*så vi skiftes?* |
| | | [so we take turns? |
| 08 | ALN: | [*Mohsen højreklik* |
| | | [Mohsen right click |
| 09 | MOH: | *ja men det er også højreklik* |
| | | but it's right click |
| 10 | ALN: | [*højreklik (.) sæt ind* |
| | | [right click (.) paste |
| 11 | ZAR: | [xxx *ve:nstre:* |
| | | [xxx le:ft: |
| 12 | | (0.9) Aslan and Mohsen > screen |
| 13 | INA: | *Aslan (1) du ved Aslan*     [xxx |
| | | Aslan (1) you know Aslan [xxx |
| 14 | ALN: |                    [*ja det (.) to sekunder* |
| | |                   [yes it (.) two seconds |
| | | {Turns towards Iman, raises both arms in an abrupt gesture} |
| 15 | | *IMAN DU PISKER MIG* |
| | | IMAN YOU ARE WHIPPING ME |
| 16 | INA: | =☺*undskyld:*☺ |
| | | =☺sorry:☺ |
| | | {Aslan and Iman > screen} |
| 17 | MOH: | ☺*du pisker ham*☺ |

☺ you are whipping him ☺

{Mohsen picks up a piece of paper from the floor}

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 18 | | All children laugh |
| 19 | MOH: | *se lige* |
| | | look |
| | | {Mohsen > screen} |
| 20 | INA: | °*jeg har ingen pisk så kan jeg ikke få den*° |
| | | °I don't have a whip then I cannot get it° |
| | | {goes around the table, smiles and sits down} |
| 21 | UNI: | ha ha |
| | | ha ha |
| 22 | ALN: | *jeg snakker med Mohsen så siger du hele tiden* |
| | | I talk to Mohsen and then all the time you say |
| 23 | | >*Aslan Aslan* [*Aslan*< |
| | | >Aslan Aslan [Aslan< |
| 24 | DUH: | [*årh:* ha ha |
| | | [arh: ha ha |
| 25 | | Duha and Iman turn towards each other |

Aslan and Mohsen concentrate on the screen. They engage in a cut-and-paste activity by the keyboard (6.8-10). In line three Iman addresses Aslan for the first time, "Aslan (.) Aslan". Aslan gives Iman permission to speak, "[yes", and simultaneously Zara loudly calls Aslan. Iman suggests that the students control the digital whiteboard in turns, "why don't we do [like we usually do? (.) [so we take turns?". In addition, Aslan's guidance of Mohsen overlaps with Iman's turn, "[Mohsen right click". I argue that in this moment two juxtaposed participation frameworks conflict. Aslan struggles between a participation framework aimed at preparing the teaching activity and a conflicting participation framework in which Iman challenges Mohsen's right to the digital whiteboard.

In line eleven Zara contributes with an instruction, "[xxx le:ft:". Neither Aslan nor Mohsen reacts. Iman resubmits her proposal, "Aslan (1) you know Aslan". Aslan's response to Iman supports my argument that he struggles between two participation frameworks, "[yes it (.) two seconds IMAN

YOU ARE WHIPPING ME". Although Aslan interrupts Iman, he initially acts the role of the thoughtful teacher, confirming her turn and asking her be patient, "[yes it (.) two seconds". Then, he seems overwhelmed and has an emotional outburst. Aslan raises his voice, turns towards Iman, clearly annoyed, and raises both arms in an abrupt gesture. Thus, he treats Iman's proposal as disruptive.

Iman takes advantage of Aslan's loss of control and rekeys his outburst into a parody, "=☺sorry:☺". On the one hand, Iman apologises and demonstrates respect for the teacher. On the other hand, her latched pronunciation and smiling voice suggest that her apology may be insincere. Mohsen is not late to join the parody with a double voiced contribution, "☺you are whipping him☺". Bakhtin (1984: 193-199) refers to the presence of different speaking positions within one utterance as double voicing. A double voiced utterance aligns with two, real or imagined, speakers or speaker positions. On the one hand, Mohsen's utterance reuses and aligns with Aslan's outburst. On the other hand, his smiling voice may be a parodic refraction of the teacher's voice. All of the children laugh, and Iman constructs the other participants as overhearers, "°I don't have a whip then I cannot get it°", as she walks around the table, smiles and sits down. Her smile and actions add to the impression that she is constructing a parody.

Moreover, Aslan's response suggests that he is affected by the children's parody, "I talk to Mohsen and then all the time you say >Aslan Aslan [Aslan<". Aslan teasingly reuses Iman's proposal, speaks quickly and repeats his own name three times. Again, he positions Iman as "disruptive". The implication is that Iman interrupts the two serious interlocutors, Aslan and Mohsen. Less than a minute later, the conflict escalates into a more explicit contestation of classroom order, including Mohsen's special rights.

Excerpt 7: (June thirteenth, video recording)
Participants: Aslan (ALN), Duha (DUH), Iman (INA), Mohsen (MOH), Zara (ZAR)
01  ZAR:    *nej du behøves ikke at gøre sådan der*
                no you don't have to do like that
                {Mohsen opens scroll bar in the word processing programme. All participants look at screen}
02          Duha turns towards Zara and winks

03  MOH:   *så prøver jeg igen*

          then I try again

04  ALN:   *ja så prøv lidt igen*

          yes then try a little again

05  INA:   °*det er der den skal være*°

          °that is where it is supposed to be°

                              {Mohsen inserts part of webpage in text}

06          Mohsen removes inserted part again

            (1)

07  ZAR:   *nej det er ikke så:dan*

          no it is not like tha:t

08  MOH:   *jeg får spat (.)*   [*gider du ikke blande dig udenom*

          I get annoyed (.)[will you just stay out of it

                    {Mohsen turns towards Zara}

09  ALN:                     [*Mohsen prøv lige langsomt*

                              [Mohsen just try slowly

10  ALN: *lad mig* [*lige låne låne låne musen*

        let me   [just borrow borrow borrow the mouse

                              {Points towards screen}

                        {Takes mouse out of Mohsen's hand}

11  DUH:        [*HALLO: HØJREKLIK*

                [HALLO: RIGHT CLICK

                {Looks at Zara and turns torso towards Mohsen}

12  MOH:   *hvad tror du jeg GØ:R*

            what do you think I am DO:ING

          {Mohsen turns towards Duha. Aslan puts mouse on the teacher's desk}

13  DUH:   *skrid med dig*

          you buzz off

          {Mohsen > Duha, Duha > Mohsen}

14  MOH:   *skrid selv Duha*

          buzz off your self Duha

          {Mohsen looks down and on screen, holds up piece of paper to his chin}

In line one Zara positions Mohsen as "unable" to solve the task (cut and paste) in a satisfactory manner, "no you don't have to do like that". Duha turns towards Zara and winks at her, probably because Duha supports Zara's contestation of Mohsen's favoured position. Mohsen makes another attempt to insert the clip, Aslan confirms, and Iman quietly positions Mohsen as able to perform the task, "°that is where it is supposed to be°". However, Mohsen has difficulties navigating the digital whiteboard; he inserts a part of a webpage in the text and removes it again (7, 5-6). Zara once again points to Mohsen's difficulties, "no it is not like tha:t". Mohsen abruptly turns towards Zara and exclaims, "I get annoyed (.) [will you just stay out of it". Mohsen is affected and under pressure – he is responsible for controlling the digital whiteboard. If this was not the case, he could have asked for help or not responded to Zara.

Aslan supports Mohsen, "[Mohsen just try slowly", and during the second part of his turn Aslan changes strategies and politely takes over from Mohsen, "let me  [just borrow borrow borrow the mouse". In this situation Mohsen is not allowed to stand out as the smart student. Why the teacher relieves Mohsen of the pressure, we cannot know. But noticeably, none of the other students are allowed to solve the task. Duha seizes the moment to retaliate. Mockingly she says out loud, "HALLO: CLICK RIGHT", elongating the vowels as she instructs Mohsen. The implication is that she is speaking to a dumb person. Mohsen returns the gesture, "what do you think I am DOI:NG", and turns sneering towards Duha. The conflict escalates further when Duha tells Mohsen to "buzz off", and he returns her insult.

We have seen how Mohsen faces uncomfortable moments of disqualification when he is unable to navigate the digital whiteboard, and how other students increasingly contest his favoured position, including his rights to material and symbolic resources. Moreover, how Aslan consequently rejects the other students' contestation of Mohsen's favoured position. Iman proposes a more equal distribution of the digital whiteboard, and her behaviour could have been interpreted in accordance with the local smart student model; she demonstrates being compliant and friendly. Nevertheless, Aslan treats her proposal as disruptive. In addition, Aslan spontaneously identifies Mohsen as a "very smart student", who "has found the path to language acquisition" in an interview in June 2013. This adds to the understanding that Mohsen is indeed identified as a smart student.

**5.7 Conclusions**

Mohsen's social identification increasingly points towards a metapragmatic model of the smart student. This local smart student model involves knowing the correct answer, being friendly, compliant and funny etc. Aslan grants Mohsen, and nobody else, the right to the material resources of the digital whiteboard. My material contains at least a dozen examples from May seventeenth and June thirteenth where Aslan asks Mohsen, if he has left his seat, to return to the keyboard. Mohsen's identification increasingly leads to rights to symbolic and material resources, and Aslan ascribes Mohsen epistemic authority. Thereby, Mohsen is granted the right to perform the role as expert and give instructions. This can be considered a symbolic resource that merely adds to the established hierarchy.

Mohsen is probably assigned the right to the digital whiteboard because he has a good command of Arabic, is knowledgeable and likely to act in accordance with the local smart student model and thus help the teaching activities along. Moreover, Mohsen already has a favoured position in class (the incipient identification). However, the skewed distribution of material resources certainly adds to the hierarchy in the classroom, as it enables Mohsen to deliver the required information on more than one occasion, and thus it reinforces his symbolic rights. Sometimes Mohsen's social identification overrules the locally most straightforward and reasonable interpretation of signs and actions. In several examples Mohsen is positioned as a smart student even when his actions can hardly be said to be in accordance with this local model. Noticeably, the locally constructed hierarchy is further validated when other students contest Mohsen's privileged position – and when the teacher rejects their contestation.

In this chapter I have covered one child's social identification in an Arabic heritage language classroom in Copenhagen. Although social identification in other settings, including mainstream classrooms, will not be identical to this case study, comparable processes of identification, involving models of good studentship, intelligence and smartness, are likely to be widespread in Western school settings.

Social identification involving models of smart, intelligent or good students may have highly unfortunate pedagogical implications. Teachers are at risk of transferring the responsibility of the teaching to smart and favoured students; we saw how Aslan transferred responsibility to Mohsen.

Favoured students are at risk of being given teaching responsibilities they are not qualified or supposed to hold; we saw how Mohsen faced uncomfortable moments of disqualification when he was unable to navigate the digital whiteboard. In addition, if learning is understood in terms of delivering the requested information in a given situation, students like Mohsen may learn less when they are given the information in advance or allowed to give wrong answers without being offered appropriate support to find the right answer. Moreover, favoured students may become socially vulnerable when they interact and engage with peers; we saw how Zara and Duha positioned Mohsen as unable. It is difficult to participate simultaneously as a friend and a smart and favoured student.

Moreover, the learning chances of students assigned inferior positions in the classroom are likely to be reduced. When the teacher favours certain students and assigns them special rights, the learning environment becomes less responsive to the initiatives and efforts of other students; we saw how Aslan singled out Duha as the reason for the activity involving the Turkish and Tunisian flags. Yet, Duha remained passive throughout the event. Had she been actively included in the activity, this would have increased her learning chances. The skewed distributions of material resources also reduces the learning chances of students like Iman, Duha, Zara and Dina, who are denied access to the digital whiteboard or other literacy resources. In the long term students who are assigned inferior positions in the classroom are likely be educationally discouraged.

## 6 Smart, smarter, smartest: Competition and linked identities in a Danish school

### 6.1 Introduction

When teachers and students interact in everyday academic activities, some students are ascribed social roles as "smart", which lead other students to contest these roles. Such struggles around what it means to be smart and which students come to be viewed as smart are a pertinent problem for students, teachers and educational scholars, because they create social inequities in schools. While much current research helps us understand how smartness, genius, intelligence or comparable categories delineating academic success are socially constructed and practiced in schooling (e.g. Korp 2011; McDermott 2006; Sapon-Shevin 1994; Sternberg 2007), none of the studies that I have come across discuss how a student comes to inhabit a disapproved identity relative to another student being viewed as smart and successful. Such an account would assist scholars, teacher educators and teachers in understanding how students' social identity formations often become tied to the identity formations of peers, vis-à-vis institutional conceptions of smartness, and how those connected processes of identification open up or close down possibilities of participation for students.

To this end, I will provide a detailed and longitudinal ethnographic description of how such identity transformation process can take place. In this article I tell the story of how Iman, a 12-year-old girl of Iraqi immigrant parents attending to primary school in Denmark, over the course of two years and two months, changes from being viewed by her teachers as smart and outgoing into being viewed as quiet and disruptive. Iman's change of identity is remarkable because it evolves in consort with the teachers' changing view of her classmate, Mohsen, who becomes regarded as smart, special and favoured.

Beginning with a review of research on smartness as a socio-historical construct, I argue that success and failure, rather than being characteristics of individual students, can better be viewed as interdependent socio-historically available positions in schooling. I then introduce the conceptual lenses of social identification (Wortham 2006) and participation (Goffman 1986), which I employ to show how children come to inhabit those positions through what I label processes of "linked identification". This is followed by accounts of the ethnographic study, data analysis, the institutional smart student model, and microanalyses of Iman's trajectory of identification. Finally, I

discuss my analytical findings, and in the conclusion I highlight some implications of the linked identification approach for research and education.

## 6.2 Mutuality in success and failure

Varenne and McDermott (1998) have argued that the American educational system operates as a cultural fact that disables some students while enabling others. This fact arises from the students' socially and culturally structured world and is facilitated through the everyday academic practices of competition and measuring. Hence, "the success/failure complex will have its say. It will acquire people to be displayed as a success or failure even if there are only two persons to divide the spoils" (Varenne and McDermott 1998: 121–122). Thus, success and failure are described as particular positions available for students in schooling. Children come to inhabit these positions through construction of social identities such as "learning disabled student" or "smart student" in daily educational activities. While teachers and students are busy "doing this or that", they are "almost always doing one fateful thing: determining who is the most successful" (Varenne and McDermott 1998: xi).

Educational scholarship in North America, Europe and Scandinavia focuses on socio-historical constructions of smartness. Some scholars portray the construction of gifted students (Sapon-Shevin 1994), good students (Thornberg 2009), normal students (Bartholdsson 2007), smart students (Bartlett 2007; Hatt 2012; Korp 2011), or successful students (Michael, Andrade and Bartlett 2007) in educational settings. Other scholars historicize and discuss concepts such as genius (McDermott 2006), giftedness (Borland 1997), intelligence (Sternberg 2007), or student success (Enoma 2006). The vast majority of this work challenges the socio-historical construction of smartness, pointing to its capacity to foster social stratification in society and classrooms (but see Bartlett 2007; Michael, Andrade and Bartlett 2007).

This research reaffirms the mutuality of failure and success, as described by Varenne and McDermott (1998). For instance, accounting for the notion of genius, McDermott (2006: 202–203) finds that every myth has a "counter myth" and that "there is a label for everyone. From gifted and talented to LD and retarded". Korp (2011: 36) suggests that dichotomized constructions of "book smart" and "street smart" students in a Swedish school "reproduce class and gender habitus" of the broader society. Meanwhile, Hatt (2012: 457) argues, "the institution of schooling is intrinsically

connected to smartness and a key process by which students are sorted, inequalities in academic achievement (and treatment) justified, and social power ascribed across students" (ee also Enoma 2006: 169). In this article, I will argue that success and failure are interdependent socio-historical shaped positions that children can inhabit in schools through linked identification. In what follows, I discuss linked identification using conceptual approaches from the field of linguistic anthropology of education (Wortham and Rymes 2003).

## 6.3 Social identification, participation and linked identities in schools

Drawing on Foucault, Holland and Lave, Dreier, and others, Wortham (2006: 49) conceptualizes social identification as the interpersonal socio-historical permeated trajectories through which individuals, across time and situations, identify, and are identified, as habitual instantiations of socially recognized models of identities. For instance, the teacher interprets the student's actions as smart by comparing the student's personal stances and actions with the actions of other students and with mainstream models of how smart students should behave and what knowledge they should display. When such interpretations occur repeatedly, over time, social identification "thickens" (Holland and Lave 2001: 19), as the teacher, the student, and other students adopt and develop mainstream models into local models of identities. In our case, a specific student comes to be viewed as "disruptive", while another becomes the "smartest" student.

I define trajectories of identification as "chain[s] of events" throughout which students enact signs of identities "that more and more participants" come to presuppose as evidence of a local thickening model of identity (Wortham 2006: 31-47). Relatedly, I define models of identities as social identities that people co-construct and contest in "contentious local practice" (Holland and Lave 2001: 5) through the systematically perceivable enactment of identities, such as utterances and gesturing, that for a small or large subset of people, or a "social domain" (Agha 2007: 125) count as signs of a certain type of social persona (Agha 2007; Wortham 2006: 37). For instance, the action of delivering the desired answer to the teacher's question may count as a sign of the social persona of the smart student across the social domain of a school.

Local models of identities index mainstream models, which I define as publicly recognized models, which entail the signs, roles, expectations and ideologies that people associate with these models across social domains that span decades and centuries. Following Blommaert (2007: 4). I

understand indexicality as "the ways in which unique instances of communication can be captured (indexically) as 'framed' understandable communication, pointing towards" socio-historical enduring models of identities. For example, the teacher and the student may collaborate on producing the desired answer to the teacher's question in a participation framework that indexes widely recognizable teaching routines. Thus, the student's action of providing the answer from the teacher's repeated hints may index that she or he is a particularly smart student.

Wortham (2006) focuses on how models of identities evolve in the social domain of the classroom, as evidenced by detailed microanalyses of whole-class talk. Other scholars have focused on how institutional school models provide resources for student identification, and how students draw on those models to establish specific learner identities (teacher-endorsed or discouraged), as evidenced by broader observational data and interviews (Bartlett 2007; Creese et al. 2006; Michael, Andrade and Bartlett 2007).

In this article I trace the "career" of models of identities by attending to participants' "explicit account[s] of what some people are like" across a variety of data sources, such as recordings of whole-class talk, informal talk, interviews with students, teachers, and peer talk as well as "tacit account[s] that analysts can infer based on people's systematic behaviour toward others" (Wortham 2006, 6) through enacted participation frameworks (Goffman 1986). I thereby highlight the importance of attending both to how models of identities can be derived from classroom interaction over time, as well as from broader ethnographic data that span the social domain of the school. This combined approach allows me to demonstrate how Iman's trajectory of identification becomes tied to Mohsen's trajectory vis-à-vis an institutional smart student model.

I employ Goffman's (1981) concepts of participation framework and keying to further explicate how signs of identity are applied to and come to be inhabited by individuals in the linking of students' trajectories of social identification. "Participation framework" (Goffman 1981: 137) helps the researcher to better understand the various levels of face-to-face encounters. The participation framework may refer to a recognizable activity in its entirety, to smaller sub-activities or to a brief interactional sequence (Goffman 1981: 137). In so far as a participation framework may refer to the participants' interactional work in a given situation, it directs the researcher to simultaneously operate on the analytical levels of turn taking, activities and relations between participants.

Participants can, for instance, be "ratified participants" or "bystanders" (Goffman 1981: 132). Ratified participants are often speaker and addressee. Bystanders are typically participants who overhear an utterance.

Participants typically "key" activities with different meaning from one moment to the next. According to Goffman (1886 [1974]: 45) keying occurs when a "systematic transformation" changes the participants' understanding of what is going on the encounter. I trace how the teacher can interpret the student's contribution as a sign of smartness by aligning with her suggested keying of a teaching activity. Moreover, how the teacher works on one participation framework aimed at teaching, how the student in a conflicting framework challenges the special rights of another student socially identified as smart, and how such conflicting frameworks facilitate linked identification vis-à-vis the institutional smart student model.

## 6.4 Ethnographic context, methods and data

This article is part of a larger study on the construction and contestation of the smart student role in primary school (Lundqvist 2017). It draws on three years of collaborative linguistic ethnographic fieldwork (Copland and Creese 2015) centred on a primary school in Copenhagen, Denmark[54]. Accessing the field and building rapport with the research participants, I deliberately positioned myself as an ethnographic researcher interested in language and schooling. The role I came to inhabit, throughout time, compares to what Corsaro (1996: 425) coined as "an atypical adult"[55].

Data includes field note entries, audio and video recordings of teaching and semi-structured interviews with students, teachers and parents, self-recordings of school-home conferences and transcripts of those recordings, children's textbooks, exercise books, photographs and Facebook profiles. All participants are anonymised. All the quotes that I attribute to teachers when talking about students are originally in Danish (or in some cases Swedish) and have been translated in English for this article by me. As many of the students in the school are children of immigrants from Arab-speaking countries, and therefore bilingual, their Arabic speech was transcribed into English with the aid of my research assistant.

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[54] See Madsen et al. (2015) for more information about the school.
[55] I detail my field access in Lundqvist (2017: 42).

### 6.4.1 Classroom context and participants

This article focuses on data from fourth through sixth form mainstream classes (Danish, mathematics and history classes) and fifth form Arabic heritage language classes (supplementary education offered by the municipality). Teaching activities across the curriculum often included textbook assignments and whole-class talk around textbook material. Sometimes these activities involved a digital whiteboard, which students were able to operate in turns. Whole-class talks, and the main part of teaching activities, were usually framed around the classic initiation-reply-evaluation (IRE) format (Mehan 1979).

The students had two teachers: Sanne and Aslan. Sanne, the head teacher, taught Danish, mathematics and history classes from fourth through sixth form classes. Aslan taught Arabic heritage language classes and Danish as a second language classes. The students had different language backgrounds (Pashto, Chinese, Danish, French, Icelandic, Arabic, Irish and Turkish). The students of Arabic decent, including Iman and Mohsen, attended all classroom settings. Like most students in the cohort, Iman and Mohsen were born in Denmark. Iman was twelve years old (fifth form) and from a family with an Iraqi background. Mohsen, also twelve years old and in the fifth form, was from a family with a Lebanese background.

### 6.4.2 Data analysis

The analyses of this article focuses on puzzles I encountered during fieldwork and data analysis. When I entered the field, previous fieldworkers told me that Iman was viewed as one of the best students in class. During fieldwork, however, I noticed that the teachers often ignored or dismissed Iman's efforts and achievements. I kept wondering why my observations conflicted with the observations of my research colleagues. I thoroughly reviewed the entire data corpus, including the data collected by my colleagues. I immersed myself in data from fourth form classes, and noticed that Iman often participated in teaching activities. The teachers explicitly appreciated Iman's contributions. The apparent change in Iman's role compelled me to revise my theoretical framing to attend to temporality in order to grasp how Iman's social identity changed during fifth form classes. Accordingly, I included the social identification approach (Wortham 2006).

As I embarked on the story of Iman's trajectory I found myself compelled to reorganize my data. I drafted a taxonomy that included events in which Iman was identified as smart, but also quiet and

disruptive. The taxonomy was an attempt to organize approximately 79 situations that I had selected from field note entries and while listening to recordings. I printed out all these event narratives on paper, and using a scissors organized them according to their date, constructing a hard copy chronological timeline lying on the table before me. I was struck by the finding that the teachers often positioned Mohsen and Iman relative to one another. Iman was ascribed what we could call "disapproved identities", whereas Mohsen achieved more favourable identities. The relative positioning occurred in comparable ways across mainstream classes and Arabic classes.

It became clear to me that what initially seemed to be a puzzle of conflicting observations turned out to be a process by which Iman's school identity was changing relative to Mohsen's identity across time. I identified more than thirty such linking events. Twenty-two of these events occurred from the latter part of the fifth form classes to the beginning of the sixth form classes (March to October). I labelled this social phenomenon "linked identification", which I define as the interpersonal socio-historical processes throughout which two or more individuals' trajectories of identification are connected. I selected three examples to illustrate the pattern of how the linked identification emerged, thickened and how they became socially consequential for Iman. My analysis of the participants' face-to-face interaction is supported by ethnographic description of the broader bulk of data.

How can the social identification of one student come to link with the identification of another student? In answering this question, I will argue that while Mohsen's smart student role thickens into a favoured role, Iman struggles to maintain her role as smart relative to Mohsen. The teachers come to view Iman's actions relative to Mohsen and increasingly overlook or dismiss her efforts and achievements. Iman then comes to be seen as troublesome. Moreover, such linking of students' social identities evolves vis-à-vis institutional conceptions of smartness.

**6.4.3 The institutional smart student model**

This section sets the scene for the microanalyses by accounting for the smart student model that predominated across the school of my study. The smart student was associated with docile and compliant behaviours, and in classroom talk, this model of a smart student was often enacted by the action of the student delivering the correct answer to the teacher's question. I derive this model

from interactional data in great detail elsewhere (Lundqvist 2015; Lundqvist 2017a). Moreover, the model is evidenced across a variety of data sources.

In terms of docile behaviours, recordings of school home conferences show teachers explaining to students and their parents that students should behave "nicely," "accept the school's offers," "obey instructions," "listen to the teacher," and display "moderate" behaviours. These behavioural expectations are reiterated in interviews with students, parents, in many of my field note entries, and in teachers' disciplining students in whole-class talk. Docility and compliance index mainstream smart student models (Bartholdsson 2007, 137-139; Foucault 1977, 136; Hatt 2012, 449; Korp 2011, 30; Thornberg 2009, 251).

With regard to answering the teacher's question correctly, I observed a plethora of comparable situations across classes and cohorts in which teachers made comments such as "If you don't raise your hand, it must mean that you don't know anything" or "Raise your hands, you ought to know this." This feature of the model is further evidenced in interviews with students, informal conversations with teachers and during home school conferences. This feature also fits mainstream models. For instance, Mehan (1980) describes how the competent student is constructed through interactional alignment of the student's participation, display of academic knowledge and the established classroom discourse. MacLure and French (1980) show how students' systematically draw on the teachers' hints in classroom interaction and thereby try to guess what the teacher wants in terms of desired answer. The teachers view these student strategies as competent. I now turn to Iman's trajectory of identification from fourth through sixth form classes.

**6.5 How Iman changed from smart to alternating between disruptive and passive**
This section illustrates how Iman changed. From being considered smart, she took on a role where she alternated between being disruptive at times, or overly passive. This transition took place across the course of a three-phased trajectory of identification: the social identification of a smart student (fourth form classes), the emerging linked identification with Mohsen (from March through May during fifth form classes) and during the thickening of her linked identification (June in the fifth form through October in sixth form classes).

**6.5.1 The social identification of a smart student**

In her fourth form classes, Iman showed herself to be a competent, diligent and outspoken student. She carefully and competently prepared for classes, as evidenced by her written assignments. In whole-class talk Iman took pride in answering the teacher's questions correctly, and she would often show her readiness to speak through gestures, burst into stories or suggest changes in classroom procedures. Usually, the teachers willingly gave Iman the floor.

In informal talk and interviews, the teachers explicitly reported Iman to be a smart student. The Arabic teacher, Aslan, labelled Iman "smart" and "skilled," and emphasized that she had "good command of Arabic literacy and grammar." The mainstream teacher, Sanne, labelled Iman "smart" and "outgoing," saying that she "speaks a clear language," "stands up for her opinion," and emphasized that Iman "isn't rude," but "good at making an argument." In addition, Sanne pictured Iman achieving a high status profession of a lawyer. In the following excerpt, I explain how this identification of Iman as smart and outgoing occurred in classroom talk. This example focuses squarely on Iman, as she and Mohsen shared a reputation of being smart, and their identifications did not yet link in fourth form classes.

Excerpt 1 comes from a history class in March of the fourth form year. Sanne, the teacher, is introducing the production of Scandinavian clothing from 300–400 BC in whole class talk. The history textbook includes a picture of a loom. Before the excerpt begins, Iman loudly outbursts, "AH I've seen those on Bornholm [a Danish island]. You can exchange them right, so that you get nice colours." The participating students are Iman and one unidentified student (SAN stands for Sanne, INA stands for Iman, UNI stands for unidentified student, the English translation is in *italics* below the Danish original: transcription conventions are in the appendix).

Excerpt 1. You explain wisely (March 15th, audio recording)

| 01 | SAN: | kan du fortælle os noget om hvordan man v↑æver? |
| | | *can you tell us something about how you w↑eave?* |
| 02 | INA: | de har sådan en stor (.) væv ikke? |
| | | *they have such a large (.) loom right?* |
| 03 | SAN: | ja |
| | | *yes* |

| 04 | INA: | så er det de sætter så sætter de den der snor ind ikke? |
|----|------|---|
|    |      | *so that's what they so they put that line in here right?* |
| 05 | SAN: | ja |
|    |      | *yes* |
| 06 | INA: | og så øh så er det så skal de så skal man gøre sådan her |
|    |      | *and then eh then so it's then you have to do like this* |
| 07 |      | ind i fisken op ad søen og så |
|    |      | *into the fish up from the lake and then* |
| 08 | SAN: | hvad sagde du (.) ind i ↑hvad? |
|    |      | *what did you say (.) into ↑what?* |
| 09 | INA: | ind i fisken op ad søen sådan lærte jeg det |
|    |      | *into the fish up from the lake that's how I learned it* |
| 10 | SAN: | oka↑y: |
|    |      | *oka↑y:* |
|    |      | *((20 seconds of Iman asking for confirmation and Sanne confirming)* |
| 11 | INA: | jeg lavede en øh sådan noget til en kjole som damerne meget gik rundt med |
|    |      | *I did one eh such a thing to a dress like the women a lot walked around in* |
| 12 | SAN: | ja |
|    |      | *yes* |
| 13 | UNI: | du forklarer klogt |
|    |      | *you explain wisely* |
| 14 | SAN: | *((30 seconds of describing weaving, draws loom on board))* |
| 15 |      | nu må du rette mig hvis det er forkert Iman |
|    |      | *please correct me if I'm wrong Iman* |

This example shows how Sanne, Iman and the unidentified student co-construct Iman in the role of the smart student. The teacher and Iman collaborate on a participation framework in which Sanne scaffolds Iman's narrative (1:1-10). Sanne does not interpret Iman's unsolicited outburst as disruptive. Instead Sanne keys the teaching activity by eliciting a narrative of how one weaves from Iman (1:1). Sanne's high pitch signals that this is a sincere question. As it appears the teacher expects Iman to respond successfully to the elicitation. Sanne thereby interprets Iman's outburst as a potential sign of the smart student.

Iman embarks on her narrative and asks for confirmation several times (1:2 and 4), which Sanne willingly provides. Iman then uses a metaphor describing how she passes the shuttle back and forth through the threads of the warp (1:9). The teacher asks Iman to clarify. Sanne reuses part of Iman's turn (into) and high pitch. The teacher thereby signals alignment with Iman. It is unclear whether Sanne cannot actually hear what Iman is saying, or whether she invites Iman to elaborate on the metaphor. In any case Sanne's utterance signals that she attentively listens to Iman's narrative. The implication seems to be that if Iman repeats or elaborates her utterance the other students will benefit from listening to her narrative. This can be seen as another sign of Sanne expecting Iman to enact the smart student role.

Iman repeats her utterance adding an explanation of what she just said. Sanne acknowledges that Iman's response serves as an appropriate answer: "oka↑y:". By using high pitch and prolonged vowel Sanne signals that her "okay" should indeed be interpreted as a positive evaluation of Iman's contribution. This reaffirms that the teacher interprets Iman's contributions as signs of the smart student. At the same time providing a short response, Sanne encourages Iman to continue with her narrative. An unidentified student, who explicitly identifies Iman's narrative as a wise explanation (1:13), further affirms Iman smart student status. Finally, having added a short explanation of weaving, the teacher mitigating asks Iman to correct her in case she is wrong. Thus, by signalling that her own addition should not be interpreted as a devaluation of Iman's narrative Sanne carefully ensures not to damage Iman's face (Goffman 1967: 5).

This interaction, in conjunction with a plethora of comparable examples, demonstrates that there is an unequivocal social identification of Iman as a smart and outgoing student. Iman was on the move during teaching activities. She diligently participated in classroom talk, asked questions and loudly burst into stories in whole class talk. In the example Sanne systematically positions Iman according to the correct-answer aspect of the smart student model. Iman positions herself in a comparable way by diligently telling about weaving, thereby delivering a successful response to the teacher's elicitation. The unidentified student explicitly reaffirms Iman in the role of the knowledgeable student. This enacted participation framework thus indexes a what educators regards as a successful teacher and student relationship, in which it is Iman who enacts the role of the smart student. A year

later, Iman's role begins to transform, and the key to this transformation is how her identification becomes tied up with the emerging favouritism shown to her classmate Mohsen.

### 6.5.2 Emerging linked identification

During the fifth form spring term, Mohsen's role began to change from being one of a group of well-behaved smart students into a favoured role that has been described as the teacher's pet[56]. Interviews and informal talk reveal that the teachers began to change their view of Iman relative to Mohsen. For instance, in one lesson, Sanne reports that Mohsen and Iman used to be the "best students", but that things have changed; "Mohsen has become a better student than her". I also noticed that Iman struggled to maintain her smart student role relative to Mohsen, and the two classmates began a competition to become the smartest or most preferred student by the teacher. In peer talk, for instance, Iman and Mohsen compared their spelling tests to measure who had the greater number of correct answers.

In whole class talk, Mohsen and Iman competed to provide the teacher with the desired answer to her questions. As mentioned, I have identified more than thirty events in which Mohsen and Iman's participation possibilities became skewed because the teachers positioned Iman relative to Mohsen, and twenty-two of these events occurred during the period from March in the fifth form through October in the sixth form classes. In these events, the teacher would allow Mohsen to identify the correct answers from available literacy resources (the digital whiteboard, the board or a book), or would actively fill in the answers for Mohsen, while Iman's attempts to participate actively in the teaching activity were ignored or dismissed. The teacher's attention to the two competing students compares to a zero-sum game, were every gesture toward Mohsen is one less toward Iman. In what follows I explain how this linked positioning of Mohsen and Iman emerges in classroom talk.

Excerpt 2 comes from an Arabic lesson during May of the fifth form. The class plays a familiar game of identifying false cognates. Mohsen controls the digital whiteboard. Before the excerpt begins, the teacher elicits a Swedish translation of the English word ice cream, "what would you call it in Swedish?" (Glas = Swedish for ice cream but in Danish is glass). (The teacher sometimes engaged the students in quizzes, involving other languages than Arabic. Aslan explained that this was a pedagogical strategy that he used to make the children draw on all available linguistic

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[56] I account for Mohsen's social identification in Lundqvist (2015) and Lundqvist (2017a).

resources in their acquisition of Arabic). Aslan thereby adds a known-answer-question (MacLure and French 1980) participation framework to the activity. The participating students are Dina, Duha, Iman and Mohsen (ALN stands for Aslan, DIA stands for Dina and MOH stands for Mohsen, the transliterated Arabic original is in dashed underline and the Swedish original is in **bold**).

Excerpt 2. Who of you would know this? (May 17th, video recording)

01  ALN:    min min menkum ye'raf
            *who who of you would know this?*
            *{gazes alternately at Mohsen and Iman}*

02  INA:    slik (.) på sve øh svensk      [det betyder (.) øh
            *candy (.) in Swe eh Swedish* [*it means (.) eh*

03          **godis**
            *godis ((godis = Swedish for candy))*

04  ALN:                                   [nej Iman
                                           [*no Iman*

05  INA:    ja det
            *yes that*

06  ALN:    ja   [o o shu ismu bil swidi: (.) el e:h
            *yes* [*and and what is it called in Swedi:sh? (.)*

07          e:h el el aiskrim
            *e:h the the ice cream?*

08  MOH:        [jeg ved det godt
                [*I know it*
                *{Mohsen gazes at Aslan and enters a search engine on the Internet}*

09          jeg ved det godt (.) >jeg ved det Asla=Asla=Asla<
            *I know it (.) >I know it Asla=Asla=Asla<*
            *{Mohsen gazes at screen, enters Google Translate}*

10  ALN:    NEJ MOHSEN DU SKAL IKKE GOOGLE
            *NO MOHSEN YOU SHOULD NOT GOOGLE*
            *{Aslan turns towards screen}*

11  DIA:    ha ha
            *ha ha*

*{Dina, Duha and Iman turn towards screen}*

12   MOH:   ☺ jo ☺

☺ *yes* ☺

13   ALN:   NEJ MOHSEN

*NO MOHSEN*

14   *All participants gaze at screen*

15   *Dina and Iman laugh*

16   *Aslan turns smiling towards Mohsen*

17   MOH:   <jamen ø:h>

<*but e:h*>

*{moves cursor back and forth between different language options in Google*

*Translate}*

18   INA:   PÅ SVENSK

*IN SWEDISH*

19   *{Mohsen chooses "Swedish", writes something and clicks on "translate"}*

20   MOH:   [glas?

[*glass?*

21   INA:   [**glas** ((Swedish for ice cream and Danish for glass))

[*ice cream*

22   ALN:   glas ja    ha ha

*glass yes ha ha*

This example shows how Iman and Mohsen competitively aspire to the smart student role, and the teacher provides Mohsen with a competitive advantage by allowing him to identify the desired answer using the digital whiteboard. While eliciting his request, the teacher alternately gazes at Mohsen and Iman. This signals that Aslan expects these two students to be potentially willing to engage in a competition as to who can answer successfully, while Dina and Duha are positioned as bystanders. Iman takes the bait. She provides a Swedish translation of a related word (*candy*). Iman complies with the teacher's agenda on the formal level (by offering an answer). However, candy is not the desired answer. Aslan interrupts Iman, and repeats his elicitation. Mohsen claims that he knows the answer, but this is unlikely. If that were the case, he would most likely have provided it. Moreover, Mohsen is struck by surprise when he identifies the answer in Google Translate (2:20).

Mohsen's quick speech, repetitive formulations, calling the teacher's name, and entering Google translate strongly suggests that his response should be interpreted as an agitated taking up of the challenge of a knowledge competition between Iman and himself. Mohsen and Iman thereby competitively aspire for the role of the smartest student.

Mohsen and Aslan work on two conflicting participation frameworks (2:10-13). In one framework Aslan, in part, attempts to frame and steer his teaching activity to include all the students, and in another framework, Mohsen systematically utilizes his control of the digital whiteboard trying to identify the desired translation on the Internet. Aslan loudly asks Mohsen to stop his Google search activity. The implication seems to be that if Mohsen follows the teacher's instructions and stops his search, the chances of identifying the correct answer will be more equally distributed among the students. However, the teacher simultaneously turns towards the screen to watch Mohsen's search. Moreover, he switches from Arabic to Danish speech. Aslan thereby signals his alignment with Mohsen's project. The ambiguity of Aslan's request and gesture signals that his stopping Mohsen should not be taken too seriously. Dina reaffirms this through laughter. Dina, Duha and Iman follow the teacher and turn to watch Mohsen's search.

Mohsen responds to the teacher with a mitigating "☺ yes ☺." Mohsen's use of smile voice suggests that his transgressions of classroom rules should be interpreted as harmless and funny moves, not as a threat to the teacher's authority. Aslan loudly reiterates his instruction. However, all the participants turn to watch Mohsen's search, and Dina and Duha laugh. Aslan smiles at Mohsen, confirming the participants' acceptance of Mohsen's transgression. Therefore, the participants jointly interpret Mohsen's actions as a sign of the entertaining and amusing student. Moreover, the participants' joint keying of the activity as amusing seems to legitimize Mohsen's control of the digital whiteboard to reach the desired answer, whereas Iman and the other students do not have this right. The teacher makes no further attempts to stop Mohsen's Internet search.

Mohsen appears uncertain of how to continue the search; he speaks slowly and hesitantly while moving the cursor back and forth between different language options in Google Translate. Iman seizes the chance to contribute to the contest between Mohsen and herself; she loudly provides Mohsen with the relevant cue, "IN SWEDISH." Doing so, Iman positions herself as a knowledgeable and supportive student. Mohsen utilizes Iman's cue and identifies the required

answer. Equally diligent in providing the correct answer in whole-class talk, Mohsen and Iman simultaneously read aloud the Swedish translation from the screen (2:20-21). With a token of laughter, the teacher acknowledges this as the desired answer.

I argue that excerpt 2, in combination with the many comparable situations from my ethnographic observations demonstrates an emergent linking of Mohsen and Iman's identities. The enacted participation framework involves two students competing for the teacher's approval by delivering the required response to the teacher's known-answer question, and thus performing the distinctive smart student action. Mohsen systematically turns his control of the digital whiteboard into a competitive advantage, and Aslan, Dina and Duha express their approval. Mohsen thereby acquires the role of the diligent, fun-loving, emancipated and smart student capable of attracting the teacher's attention, whereas Iman struggling to demonstrate her smart abilities is disadvantaged relative to Mohsen because she cannot identify the answer on the whiteboard. A month later, Iman increasingly struggled to maintain her smart student role relative to Mohsen, as their linked identification thickened.

### 6.5.3 The thickening of linked identification

The thickening of a link between Iman and Mohsen's trajectories of identification takes place over a five months period, from June of the fifth form through October in the sixth form classes[57]. During this time span, the teachers and other students increasingly operated on the premise that Mohsen was the smartest student, as evidenced by the teachers filling in answers for Mohsen, doing face work (Goffman 1967) on his behalf and assigning Mohsen special rights and duties, while peers identified Mohsen as "the smartest of all of us." Relative to the thickening of Mohsen's smart student role, Iman assiduously strived to access the floor and provide answers to the teachers' questions during whole-class talks, and in other ways demonstrate that she was the smartest student. In some moments, Iman's actions ended up positioning her as quiet; at other times the linking positioned Iman as disruptive. The latter positions emerged when Iman challenged the teachers' differential treatment of Mohsen and herself, as illustrated in the following example.

Excerpt 3 is from an Arabic lesson during June in the fifth form. The students work with flags from countries in which Arabic is spoken. All teaching activities include and focus on the digital

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[57] Danish schools close for the summer for seven weeks, normally resuming in early August.

whiteboard. At the beginning of the lesson, Mohsen asks Aslan, the teacher, to navigate the digital whiteboard. Aslan agrees, and then Mohsen takes control of the digital whiteboard. Before excerpt three begins, Iman has attempted to gain control over the digital whiteboard from Mohsen several times. Mohsen tells Iman to stop. Aslan responds to the exchange between Mohsen and Iman by telling Iman to let go of the whiteboard and that she is "not being helpful." This suggests that Aslan expects Mohsen to successfully navigate the digital whiteboard and to help along teaching activities, whereas Iman's actions are seen as potentially disruptive. But Iman continues to stand by the screen. The participating students are Iman, Mohsen, Zara (ZAR) and an unidentified student.

Excerpt 3. Why don't we do like we usually do? (June 13th, video recording)

01  INA:    hvorfor gør vi ikke ligesom vi plejer? (.)
            *why don't we do like we usually do?(.)*

02          [så vi skiftes?
            [*so we take turns?*

03  ALN:    [Mohsen højreklik
            [*Mohsen right click*

04  MOH:    ja men det er også højreklik
            yes *but it's right click*

05  ALN:    [højreklik (.) sæt ind
            [*right click* (.) *paste*

06  ZAR:    [xxx ve:nstre:
            [*xxx le:ft:*

07          (.) *Aslan and Mohsen gaze at screen*

08  INA:    Aslan (1) du ved Aslan    [xxx
            *Aslan* (1) *you know Aslan* [*xxx*

09  ALN:                              [ja det (.) to sekunder
                                      [*yes it* (.) *two seconds*

10          IMAN DU PISKER MIG
            *IMAN YOU ARE WHIPPING ME*
            *{turns towards Iman, raises both arms several times in abrupt gesturing}*

11  INA:    =☺undskyld:☺
            =☺*sorry:*☺

*{Aslan and Iman gaze at screen}*

12  MOH:   ☺ du pisker ham ☺

  ☺ *you are whipping him* ☺

13  *All children laugh*

14  MOH:   se lige

  *look*

  *{Mohsen gazes at screen}*

15  INA:   °jeg har ingen pisk så kan jeg ikke få den°

  °*I don't have a whip so I can't get it*°

  *{goes around the table, smiles and sits down}*

16  UNI:   ha ha

  *ha ha*

17  ALN:   jeg snakker med Mohsen så siger du hele tiden

  *I talk to Mohsen that's what you're always saying*

18  >ASLAN ASLAN ASLAN<

  >*ASLAN ASLAN ASLAN*<

In this excerpt we see how Mohsen performs the smart student role by complying with the teacher's agenda and helping along teaching activities, whereas Iman challenges the teacher's differential treatment of Mohsen and herself. This results in positioning of Iman as disruptive. In one participation framework the teacher, Aslan and Mohsen collaboratively work to move the teaching activities along in a cut and paste activity by the digital whiteboard, while in a conflicting participation framework, Iman challenges Mohsen's special access to the whiteboard.

Iman proposes a different distribution of the digital whiteboard, "why don't we do like we usually do so we take turns?"; Iman interposes herself as a candidate to control the whiteboard. In consideration of previous events, the most likely interpretation is that Iman attempts to access the whiteboard to improve her possibilities for active participation in the teaching activity. In another participation framework (3:3–7), the teacher instructs Mohsen to insert an image of the flag of Sudan in a word processing document in order to move on the teaching activity. Aslan explicitly selects Mohsen to perform this activity (3:3). This places Iman and the other students as bystanders, which is furthermore underlined by Aslan and Mohsen ignoring Iman's proposal.

Iman again summons Aslan. This signals that she is about to resubmit her proposal. Aslan initially signals that he is about to listen to Iman, but he then seems to be overwhelmed by an emotional outburst, "IMAN YOU ARE WHIPPING ME." In terms of social relations this metaphor indexes an abnormal and unsuccessful teacher-student relationship in which the student displays disrespect, deviant behaviour and causes the teacher pain. Aslan's loud speech, abrupt gesturing, and choice of words strongly suggest that he is angry. This is validated by the students' reaction. None of them laugh (compare 2:10–13). The teacher thereby interprets Iman's actions as signs of a disruptive student, which is underscored by Aslan selecting Iman as ratified participant.

Iman takes advantage of the teacher's loss of control and rekeys his outburst into a doubled voiced parody, "=☺sorry:☺." Bakhtin (1984) refers to the presence of different speaking positions within the same utterance as double voicing. A double voiced utterance aligns with two or more, real or imagined, speakers or speaker positions. On the one hand, Iman demonstrates her respect for the teacher by apologizing. On the other hand, her latched pronunciation and smile voice suggest that her apology might be insincere. Mohsen adds another double voiced contribution, "☺you are whipping him☺". Mohsen's reuse of Aslan's metaphor reaffirms Iman in the role of the disruptive student. This suggests Mohsen aligns with the teacher. Conversely, Mohsen's smile voice signals that he may align with Iman's parody of Aslan. After this interaction, Mohsen immediately tries to draw all of the participants' attention to the screen (3:14). This suggests that is Mohsen attempting to re-establish the participation framework aimed at teaching, and that his action should not be interpreted as a challenge of the teacher's agenda, but rather as a move serving to relieve the tension and to continue with teaching activities. Mohsen is in effect acting like a teacher's assistant.

However, Iman adds, "°I don't have a whip so I can't get it°." In terms of social relations Iman's reinterpretation of Aslan's whipping metaphor indexes an unjust teacher–student relationship in which the student has to take it to extremes (and whip the teacher) to gain access to the whiteboard. Iman's smile and walking around the table add to the impression that her actions should be interpreted as a parodic-keyed challenge of the teacher's differential treatment of Mohsen and herself. Iman's lowered voice signals that she is aware the teacher may interpret her move as face threatening. Aslan outbursts, "I talk to Mohsen and then all the time you say ASLAN ASLAN ASLAN." The teacher's loud, quick speech and mocking reuse of Iman's proposal strongly

suggests that he interprets Iman's move as a face threatening challenge to his pedagogical agenda. Aslan not only reaffirms his positioning of Iman as disruptive, but he also positions Iman relative to Mohsen. The identification of one is a mirror image of the other; Mohsen is what Iman is not.

This example and the additional data show how Mohsen and Iman increasingly compete for the smart student role and how Iman struggles to maintain her rights to participate. Furthermore, Iman does not simply lose the contest. Her entire position changes. The teachers dismissing or overlooking Iman, now interpret her actions as disruptive. The enacted participation framework of the third excerpt should be compared with that of excerpt 2, the difference being that now we have the teacher forming an alliance with one student (Mohsen), while another student challenges this alliance and is disciplined by the teacher for doing so.

## 6.6 Discussion

At the outset of my study, I thought that students were assigned the smart role once and for all. However, I did not anticipate the extent to which the linking of Iman and Mohsen's trajectories would transform Iman's identity from being one of the smart students to a disruptive student. Many connected puzzles followed throughout the data analysis. Why, for instance, did the teachers so often accept Mohsen's rule transgressions and assign him special rights, as illustrated in excerpt 2, while disciplining Iman's attempts to participate actively, as shown in excerpt 3? The reasonable answer is that during the fall term of the fifth form, the institutional smart student model was increasingly presupposed in the teachers' social identification of Mohsen. When Iman challenged the teacher's alliance with Mohsen, for instance by suggesting more equitable access to the digital whiteboard, the teacher felt uncomfortable and angry because he had come to view Iman's struggle to maintain her rights to academic participation as a challenge to his authority and as a contestation of the prevalent institutional smart student model.

The differential treatment of Mohsen and Iman could be attributed to several factors. First, I find it most likely that the teachers, in part, selected Mohsen for the role as the smartest student because his participation helps move the teaching activities along. We have seen how both Mohsen and Iman act in conflicting participation frameworks with teachers. One significant difference, however, is that Mohsen, although he transgresses rules, also collaborates with the teachers in order to move teaching activities on to subsequent phases, whereas Iman slows down teaching activities by telling

stories, asking questions and challenging the teacher's agenda. Teachers depend on students' collaboration to move the teaching activities to subsequent phases (e.g. Bloome, Puro and Theodorou 1989; Knobel 1999). Understandably, teachers adopt habitual procedures to maintain a flow of their teaching activities and achieve their pedagogical goals. These procedures not only offer categories for student identification, such as orderly student or disruptive student, they may also compel teachers to ignore, or even reprimand those students who do not support the flow of teaching activities (compare Mottelson 2003: 197).

Secondly, I find it possible that the differential treatment of Iman and Mohsen, in part, can be attributed to gender. The teachers described Mohsen as a "master" and "a man of few words," whereas they label many other boys in the cohort as "trouble boys." Although we have seen Mohsen transgressing rules, his behaviour appears docile and compliant in comparison with the other boys who regularly display boredom during teaching activities by being restless, throwing paper balls, laying their head in arms on the table, or engaging in horseplay during breaks. Thus, the teachers come to form a habitual alliance with Mohsen who is alert to the teacher's agenda and helps keep the teaching on track with an authority over the other boys that Iman seems to lack (compare Rampton 2006: 48–75).

Compared to many other girls in the cohort, who often displayed quiet behaviours, Iman's diligent attempts to contribute stood out (as also noticed by Hyttel-Sørensen 2017: 46). Moreover, during the fall term of the sixth form the teachers on several occasions publicly discussed the girls in ways that suggest that docile behaviour had become a sign of the academically successful female student. For instance, in whole class talk the teachers described some girls' actions as "foolish" and "irresponsible". In a fifth form interview the teacher said that Iman "can be a witch" in comparison with Mohsen, who at the same moment was labelled an "orderly boy." Thus, I find it likely that mainstream models of inappropriately loud female students (Fordham 1993) pushed the teachers to view Iman as an inappropriately assertive girl in comparison with Mohsen. However, I do not want to over-emphasize this possible gendered aspect of how Iman was viewed, since this is not consistently documented in the data presented here.

How does the linking of identities become socially consequential? We have seen how Iman, in fourth form classes, diligently took the floor and often contributed in whole-class talks. By the sixth

form the thickening of linked identification had taken place, and Iman's possibilities of active participation were severely constrained. In such situations, Iman, and other students in comparable situations, are likely to be educationally discouraged. If (female) students learn that they are compelled to take docile or silent positions in order to be taken seriously in academia, that they must change their identities in order to succeed, they are likely to feel less motivated than those whose identity behaviours are encouraged. Moreover, being identified as disruptive is likely to severely constrain these students' possibilities of achieving academic success in the long run (Fordham 1993).

## 6.7 Conclusion and implications

This article focuses on how the social identification of one student can link up with the identification of another student. I have argued that students' trajectories of identification become linked when a student struggles to maintain her or his role as smartest relative to another student's thickening identification as smart, special and favoured, and when teachers treat the actions of the struggling student as inappropriate and disruptive. Iman, and students like her, struggle not just with schoolwork, but also with overcoming the identification of them as disruptive by teachers when all they really want is to participate actively in the teaching activities.

This study highlights the importance of the researcher attending carefully both to the detailed interaction and broader ethnographic material across contexts and time. This study has also shown the connected relationship between success and failure within a linguistic anthropology of education framework (Varenne and McDermott 1998; Wortham 2006). Although success and failure as interdependent social positions were promoted by Varenne and McDermott (1998), a perspective that incorporates how these positions influence one another over time through linked identification, as I have proposed, explicates the phenomenon. This study demonstrates that attending to contradictory or competing voices across time enables researchers to detect unpredictable shifts in established identities contingent upon linking of identities. This approach would be relevant to research on children's academic trajectories both in and out of school. Exploration of linked identification among siblings across home and school could help us better understand the frequent phenomenon where one child in a family does "well" in school, while another is doing "badly" (Varenne and McDermott 1998: 60).

Incorporating the perspective of how two or more students' trajectories link, rather than analysing a single individual's trajectory, expands the focus of the social identification approach (Wortham 2006) to include the complementary nature of academic failure and success. The inclusion of institutional identity models opens new possibilities for the application of the identification approach to include participants' cross-contextual trajectories in and out of social and educational spaces beyond classroom contexts. In this way we can better understand how struggles around smartness are contingent, but are also influenced by the institutional school settings in which they take place. Such struggles also take place because "particular ideologies dominate [in schools] and children, adolescents, teachers and parents interact to reproduce and reaffirm or resist and challenge these ideologies" (Creese et al. 2006: 24).

Erickson (2001: 175) argues that teachers have "wiggle room", which is, the individual capacity to interrupt or slide around the habitual and coercive socio-historical or institutional patterns in which they inadvertently may be stuck. In this spirit I hope that Iman's story will inspire teachers to create wiggle room by becoming aware of how the smart student models operate in their classrooms and schools, how the enactment and contestation of those models fuel unhealthy comparison and competition among individual students and how the intertwined construction of success and failure that evolves from such linked identification may facilitate or constrict possibilities for student participation.

**7 Summary, conclusions and implications: The problem of smartness**

There are many more stories that could be told about smartness and evolving identities in the school where I did my fieldwork. Here I will summarize the contribution and implications of this study. This is followed by a critical discussion of the wider relevancy of this research. I close by discussing how this research has motivated the development of an agenda for future research.

**7.1 Summary and major conclusions**

I set out to explore the overall question of how the smart student role evolves over the course of fourth, fifth, and sixth form classes. In broad ethnographic scope and interactional detail, we have seen how the smart student role can evolve into favoured roles, become contested by other students, and change into disapproved roles contingent upon linked identification. More specifically, I have sought to understand how one student's identity can change from being smart to being favoured. I have shown that when a student becomes socially identified as smart, and begins to actively collaborate with the teacher to construct required answers to the teacher's questions, and the teacher begins to rely habitually on this collaboration with the student to move the teaching activities along, the role of the smart student changes. It "thickens" into a favoured role (chapter four). I also asked: What are the unintended consequences of a student being identified as smart and favoured? I have shown that when a teacher consistently ascribes a student in the role as smart and assigns her or him a favoured position and special privileges, that student is likely to become not only socially vulnerable but may also find their learning opportunities constrained (chapter five). This is what happened to Mohsen.

In an empirical study based on twelve Danish schools, Mottelson (2003) carefully maps out the "choreography of teaching" as enacted in lessons of the Danish school system. Mottelson (2003: 223) demonstrates how teachers depend on "a flow" that helps them "smoothly" carry out the teaching. In order to achieve such flow, the teachers "can make use of different forms of rhythmic repetition and sequencing of time into specific units, each containing implicit demands regarding the behaviour of the students". However, the need to sequence of teaching compels teachers to "ignore" those students who do not support the flow of teaching (Mottelson 2003: 197). As mentioned, the fifth form cohort was taught across A and B forms because this made it easier for the teachers to manage the group (cf. section 3.3.1). It is reasonable to conclude that Mohsen's

docility and savoir-faire for traditional classroom interaction also helped the teachers to maintain discipline.

Finally, I have asked: How can the social identification of one student be linked to the identification of another student? In answering this question, I have documented that students' trajectories of identification become linked when one student struggles to maintain his, or her, role as smart relative to another student's trajectory as smart and favoured. We have seen how teachers increasingly presuppose an institutional smart model in their identification of one student, Mohsen, and rely on their interactional collaboration with him. When another student challenges such identification and collaboration fighting for her rights to participate in teaching activities, the teachers feel uncomfortable because they inadvertenly view her struggle as a challenge of their authority and the predominant institutional smart model. What happens is that the teachers treat the actions of the struggling student as inappropriate and disruptive. A student with obvious abilities is ignored or relegated to a role as disruptive or otherwise problematic. This is what happened to Iman (chapter six).

The empirical contributions of this study include the documentation and analyses of Mohsen and Iman's social identity formations, the common patterns of classroom interaction, teaching practices, teacher and student collaboration, and finally, the institutional smart student model as it revealed itself at the school over the course of three years' fieldwork. I document how these local findings reflect widely recognizable socio-historical processes, confirming the observations of other scholars as to the association of smart students with docility, friendliness etc. However, in contrast to the depiction of the smart student as an individual who benefits from good learning opportunities and a social position at the top of social order (cf. section 4.2.), I have shown that smartness also has its "dark side". I have documented the common process of one student whose identity changes from a position of success to failure (Iman) relative to another who comes to be seen as the most successful student (Mohsen), with both students linked by complementary identification trajectories. Identities, as this study shows, are not individual but social.

The theoretical contribution of this study sheds further light on the interconnected relationship between success and failure within a linguistic anthropology of education framework (Varenne and McDermott 1998; Wortham 2006). Although success and failure, as interdependent social

phenomena, were carefully described by Varenne and McDermott (1998), incorporating the perspective of how these two socio-historical positions connect and influence once another over time through students' trajectories of linked identification, as I have proposed, explicates the social phenomenon of mutuality in success and failure. Incorporating the perspective of how two or more students' trajectories link, vis-à-vis institutional identity models, rather than analysing a single individual's trajectory, expands the focus of the social identification approach (Wortham 2006) to include the common process of two or more students' identities evolving relative to one another, on opposing or complementary trajectories. Moreover, the inclusion of the perspective of institutional identity models opens new possibilities for the application of the identification approach to include participants' cross-contextual trajectories in and out of social and educational spaces beyond classroom communities.

### 7.1.1 Implications

The dark side of smartness (its unintended, negative consequences for the student) turned out to be a key issue that spans the various data sources and sites discussed in the three articles. This dark side has several aspects, which I will discuss in turn: 1) smart students are at risk of becoming at odds with their peers, 2) smart students are at risk of being placed under unnecessary pressure on their academic performance, 3) smart students are at risk of suffering reduced learning opportunities, and 4) smart students are at risk of developing inferior, undesired identities by means of linked identification and subsequently having their participation possibilities constrained.

Smart students are at risk of coming into conflict with their peers. I have shown how Mohsen becomes the subject of his classmates' jokes, teasing and ridicule in mainstream classes and how Mohsen's classmates position him as poor in Arabic classes, thereby contesting his favoured role and special privileges. Mohsen's classmates have "made him pay" for becoming the teacher's favourite by ostracizing him. Also, Mohsen's revelling in the teachers' praise instead of demonstrating awareness of the risks to peer friendship in becoming teacher's pet may have nourished his classmates' contestation of his favoured role. Mohsen, and other students in comparable situations who receive favours and special privileges from teachers, are often disliked among their peers. This is the price they pay for their preferred treatment.

Smart students are at risk of being subjected to unnecessary pressure on their academic performance. We have seen how the Arabic teacher consistently assigns Mohsen the right to control the digital whiteboard, and how Mohsen repeatedly faces uncomfortable situations in class because the teachers publicly expect him to contribute answers that he is clearly unable to provide. Across classroom settings, the teachers hold greater expectations for Mohsen to provide correct answers and help move the teaching activities along than they do for his classmates. The teachers thereby, at least to some extent, transfer responsibility for their teaching activities on to Mohsen. Most likely, Mohsen's retreat from classroom talk in mainstream classes during the fall term of the sixth form represents his attempt to escape from the pressure imposed upon him by his "teacher's favourite" role.

Smart students are at risk of encountering reduced learning opportunities. I have documented how the teachers and Mohsen collaboratively provide desired answers, and how teachers habitually fill in desired answers for Mohsen. The collaborative participation frameworks in which the teachers and Mohsen engaged are similar to widely recognizable teaching routines known to constrain students' learning opportunities (e.g. Bloome et al. 1989; Carhill-Poza 2015; Knobel 1999; Rymes 2004; Rymes and Pash 2001). The question is whether these interactional routines offered Mohsen opportunities to actively display understanding of the discussed academic concepts or topics? I find it more likely that Mohsen, and other students in comparable situations, are at risk of focusing solely on reproducing the required answers from classroom interaction and available literacy resources without really understanding the taught academic content. Moreover, both Mohsen and his parents reported that he did not learn what he should in these years of primary school (chapter one). Mohsen told me that he "didn't bother to do his homework because he didn't have to". He also reported that the new seventh form teachers asked other questions. This suggests that Mohsen probably became aware that he had been participating in teaching routines in which he performed student-like behaviours but not necessarily aquired the academic content.

When students retreat from classroom talk, as did Mohsen and Iman, they may become educationally discouraged. I find it likely that Iman, Dina, Duha, Sakira, and other students in comparable situations have also encountered reduced learning opportunities. After all, the teacher assigns them inferior positions (as "silent" and "disruptive"), and Iman is regularly compelled to be silent or simply ignored in whole class talk in fifth and sixth form classes. However, I do not want

to overemphasize this possible implication of Iman and her classmates' identification, as the analyses presented in this study do not focus explicitly on their learning opportunities or eventual obstacles.

Smart students are at risk of being caught in linked identification, so that their roles may change to a less desired role, and they may encounter severely constrained participation possibilities. I have shown how the teachers in mainstream and Arabic classes accept Mohsen's transgressions of classroom rules and classroom discipline or ignore Iman's attempts to participate actively in teaching activities. In fourth form classes, Iman assiduously participates in teaching activities. But as her link to Mohsen's identity thickens, Iman faces uncomfortable moments. She alternates between being seen by the teachers as overly quiet or disruptive. Iman and Mohsen's increased tense social relationship (cf. section 3.3.3) was most likely fostered by their linked identities. When girls like Iman are compelled to take silent roles in order to be taken seriously in academia, they are most likely to become educationally discouraged. Being ignored is a poor motivator for learning. Thus, this study opens up for further debate the crucial issue of the dark side of smartness. I now turn to the wider relevancy of those aspects.

### 7.1.2 Wider relevancy

The methodological rich points I encountered during the research process motivated this study. The pattern turned out to be teachers and students local struggles around smartness. The classroom contexts I observed were very different in terms of teachers, students and taught curriculum. Nevertheless, similar trajectories of social identification unfolded in these contexts. Those trajectories index recognizable teaching routines and enduring socio-historical smart student models that we know from many other settings. I therefore find it most likely that comparable, although not entirely similar, struggles and problems occur in other classrooms and schools around the world.

How do these findings illuminate broadly relevant social processes? The in-depth analysis I carry out in the articles relies to a large degree on Wortham's (2006) conceptual approach to social identification. Given my theoretical and methodological affiliation with fine-grained linguistic ethnographic analysis of small-scale processes, I need to consider how I fulfil my social responsibility of offering a "balanced perspective" on compelling "issues of power and inequality" (Creese 2008: 237). I adopt this question from Creese, who poses it as a central challenge of

linguistic ethnography. The question is particularly relevant because it also addresses the criticism of the social identification approach. Collins (2009: 43) argues that the social identification lens (cf. Wortham 2006), while "acutely aware of language use by persons and creativity in small group processes [is] inattentive to the nature of institutions and vague about hierarchy or power".

During the research process, I have been concerned with what "a balanced perspective" would be, and how I could pay justice to the contingent social patterns of my data, as I have discussed throughout the study. I have, in part, accommodated Collins's criticism by combining Wortham's conceptualization of social identification with the works of Bartlett (2007), Creese et al. (2006) and Dreier (2003) to pose a more holistic theoretical framework that attends to both how smartness evolves and draws from the institutional model of identity that predominated at the school of my study. I find that Collins's criticism applies to my own study to the extent that I do not reveal predominant societal patterns of hegemony. As I discuss in chapter two, I could have chosen to explore the Danish educational system as a cultural fact (cf. Varenne and McDermott 1998). This approach would probably have enabled me to depict a Danish macro model of smartness, and understand how students like Mohsen and Iman struggle to fulfil such structural expectations of how smart students should behave. However, the presupposing of such a cultural fact would not have enabled us to understand the heterogeneous pattern of ethnographic rich points that enhance the rigour of this study, including how the established roles of Mohsen and Iman evolve and how Mohsen, in winning the competition between himself and Iman, ends up with a pyrrhic victory.

Moreover, the researcher might ask herself whether it necessarily is more just, balanced and socially responsible to explore top-down hegemonic patterns that shape social stratification than it is to explore bottom-up general patterns of human behaviours that, vis-à-vis socio-historical identity models, shape widely recognizable social inequities in schools? Much research has already shown how smartness may serve as a means of control, as a tool for maintaining predominant societal hegemony of social class, gender (Hatt 2012; Korp 2011), the Swedish educational system (Bartholdsson 2007) and hidden curriculum (Thornberg 2009). In this study, I have focused on how smartness can evolve over time, and in this way explore and document the social inequities that are likely to emerge from local struggles around smartness.

Committing myself to a more nitty-gritty exploration of the changing identities that students occupy over time has enabled me to demonstrate how smart student identities can be reinforced, contested and profoundly changed in everyday interaction. We have seen how Mohsen changed from smart and appreciated by peers to alternating between favoured and ostracized, and how Iman changed from smart and outgoing to alternating between quiet and disruptive. There has been a conventional wisdom that the smart student role is imbued with power and privilege (cf. sections 2.2.2 and 4.2, though see Bucholtz 2011 and Eckert 1998). In fact, we need also recognize that the smart student role is also likely to foster unintended, negative social consequences. In order to elucidate these consequences, we thus need to pursue studies of individuals' trajectories of social identification. It is hoped that the issues brought up in this study can help teachers to become aware of the habitual role formation patterns that, vis-à-vis socio-historical enduring understandings of smartness, contribute to shape unintended inequalities among children in schools.

## 7.2 An agenda for future research

This study has planted some seeds for future research. In the short term, I have some plans to conduct additional analyses to further consider and document the question of whether students' who are ascribed identities as scholastically "successful" may actually encounter obstacles in their learning precisely because of this label. Moreover, I aim to further explore the potential gendered aspect of Iman and Mohsen's identification. As mentioned, several girls in the classroom settings of my study are pushed into silent and passive positions relative to Mohsen's trajectory into becoming smart and favoured. This gendered perspective also open up the opportunity to explore linked identification among several students.

In the long term, I also hope to engage in further exploration of linked identification. The data I have already gathered from Mohsen's home setting reveals quite a few signs of linked identification in the trajectories of Mohsen, and his two brothers, Faris and Abdullah. For instance, Haifa, their mother, often compares Mohsen with his brothers, labelling Mohsen as a "smart student", whereas Mohsen's older brother Faris is labelled as a "lazy student". Based on these preliminary observations, I have formed the research hypothesis that these siblings trajectories may be linked, as may often be the case in families. My plan is to submit a proposal for a two-year research project that would explore the social phenomenon of one child coming to inhabit an unsuccessful role, such as "lazy student", relative to a sibling being consistently labelled "successful". With this future

research project, I hope to shed light upon the common social phenomenon of one child in a family is doing "well" in school, whereas their sibling does "bad" (Varenne and McDermott 1998: 60).

This exploration includes the use of the social identification approach (Wortham, 2006). Methodologically, my plan is to continue the linguistic ethnographic fieldwork in and out of the home of Mohsen's family for another five months, and then use these data in combination with the data already collected (transcribed and translated). This also includes data from the mainstream and Arabic classes that Mohsen's brother Abdullah attended while I conducted fieldwork for the present study. My hope is that this future study will assist parents, educators and researchers in understanding how children's academic trajectories across home and school are often tied to the positioning of siblings vis-à-vis institutional and societal conceptions of smartness, and how those processes of linked identification can open up or impede learning opportunities for children.

**Appendix A Transcription conventions**

| | |
|---|---|
| [rooms | overlapping speech |
| [you | |
| >ggg< | segment quicker than surrounding talk |
| <ggg> | segment slower than surrounding talk |
| xxx | unintelligible speech |
| ?there? | unsure speech |
| ((ggg)) | comments |
| (2) | pause (two seconds) |
| (.) | pause less than one second |
| ↑ | rising pitch |
| ↓ | falling pitch |
| ? | question asked |
| UNI: | unidentified speaker |
| °quiet° | segment quieter than surrounding talk |
| LOUD | segment louder than surrounding talk |
| INA > ALN | INA looks at ALN |
| emphasis | emphasis |
| = | latching between utterances |
| : | prolongation of preceding sound |
| ☺ | smile voice |
| {raises head} | action, gesture and gaze simultaneous with speech |
| shu | transliteration of Arabic original |
| *yes* | English translation [article 2 uses *italics* for Danish speech and plain text for English translation] |
| **glass** | Swedish original |

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**Summary**

Title: Becoming a smart student: The construction and contestation of smartness in a Danish primary school

When teachers and students interact in everyday academic activities, some students are ascribed social roles as "smart", which lead other students to contest these roles. Such struggles around what it means to be smart and which students come to be viewed as smart are a pertinent problem for students, teachers and educational scholars, because they create social inequities in schools. This study explores how smart student roles evolve over the course of fourth -, fifth -, and sixth form classes in a Danish primary school. Theoretically, the study draws from the frameworks of "social identification" and "participation framework". Methodologically, the study is based on three years of linguistic ethnographic fieldwork in a public primary school in Copenhagen and with students and their families. This study documents - in broad ethnographic scope and interactional detail - how smart student roles evolve into favoured roles, and become contested by other students. While focusing on "smartness", this study also describes how a student come to inhabit disapproved identities, such as "disruptive" and "passive" student, relative to a classmate come to been seen by the teachers as the "smartest" student in class. Such linking of students' social identities evolves vis-à-vis institutional conceptions of smartness. This study has implications for education and research. It shows how being labelled a smart student can have unintended, negative consequences. Students socially identified as smart and favoured by the teacher are at risk of being ostracized by peers, of encountering greater pressure for classroom performance and of suffering reduced learning opportunities. The study inspires teachers to create wiggle room for their students by becoming aware of the conventional definitions of the smart student in their classrooms and schools, and how the enactment and contestation of the smart student role may either encourage or constrain possibilities for student participation. This study points out that educational scholarship can gain a better understanding of children's educational socialization through future explorations of children's academic trajectories in and out of school, and on how those trajectories often become linked to the trajectories of siblings, vis-à-vis institutional conceptions of smartness.

Key words: Smart students, disruptive students, linked identities, social identification in schools, participation possibilities, classroom interaction

**Dansk resumé**

Titel: At blive en dygtig elev. En undersøgelse af hvordan "dygtighed" konstrueres og udfordres i den daglige undervisning på folkeskolens mellemtrin

I skolens daglige undervisning tilskrives nogle børn sociale roller som "dygtige elever", mens andre børn udfordrer disse rolledannelser. Definitionskampe om hvad det indebærer at blive en dygtig elev og hvilke elever, der opnår status som dygtige, er et problem for elever, lærere og uddannelsesforskere, fordi disse kampe skaber social ulighed i skolen. Dette studie undersøger, hvordan roller som dygtige elever etableres og ændrer sig i løbet af folkeskolens fjerde, femte og sjette klassetrin. Studiet er forankret i sprogantropologisk teori om deltagelse og social identifikation. Metodisk trækker projektet på tre års sprogligt etnografisk feltarbejde på mellemtrinnet i en københavnsk folkeskole. Studiet dokumenterer, hvordan rollen som dygtig elev kan blive selvforstærkende og udvikle sig til rollen som lærerens favorit. Det viser desuden, hvordan en elev kan gå fra at blive opfattet som en dygtig elev til at blive opfattet som en stille eller forstyrrende elev. Det sker som en konsekvens af, at en anden elev gradvist overtager rollen som klassens dygtigste elev. Sådanne relationer mellem to eller flere elevers rolledannelser udvikler sig i samspil med institutionelle forståelser af, hvad det vil sige at være en dygtig elev. Dette studie har implikationer for uddannelse og forskning. Studiet viser, hvordan det at opnå rollen som dygtig elev kan få utilsigtede negative konsekvenser. Elever, der tilskrives roller som dygtige, risikerer at blive socialt sårbare i elevgruppen. De kan desuden blive pålagt et uhensigtsmæssigt ansvar for at hjælpe læreren med at drive undervisningen fremad og få deres læringsmuligheder reduceret. Dette studie inspirerer lærere til at skabe bedre deltagelsesmuligheder for deres elever ved at blive bevidste om, hvordan definitionskampene om hvad det indebærer at blive set som en dygtig elev, udspiller sig på deres skole. En sådan bevidsthed kan klargøre, hvordan disse definitionskampe understøtter eller begrænser elevernes deltagelsesmuligheder. Studiet peger på behovet for fremtidig forskning i, hvordan børns elevroller udvikler sig på tværs af skole og hjem i samspil med søskendes roller og institutionelle forståelser af, hvad det vil sige at være en dygtig elev. En sådan forskning kan skabe værdifuld indsigt i børns skolefaglige socialisering.

Nøgleord: dygtig elev-roller, forstyrrende elev-roller, relationelle identiteter, social identifikation i skoler, deltagelsesmuligheder, klasserumsinteraktion