Blind spots of internationalization

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Lived experiences of students in three versions of the international classroom
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<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIP</td>
<td>Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIL</td>
<td>Content and Language Integrated Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECTS</td>
<td>European Credit Transfer System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELF</td>
<td>English as a Lingua Franca</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMI</td>
<td>English Medium Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Grade Point Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTA</td>
<td>Face Threatening Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICLHE</td>
<td>Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>The International English Language Testing System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>Intended Learning Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>First language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE</td>
<td>Linguistic Ethnography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFA</td>
<td>Logistical Framework Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>Non-Native Speaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Native Speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLO</td>
<td>Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDS</td>
<td>Theory of Didactical Situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td>Test of English as a Foreign Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCPH</td>
<td>University of Copenhagen</td>
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1. Introduction

During the recent decades, universities have undergone a number of changes that affect both the student population and the conditions for being a university student in the 21st century. Universities have transformed their role in society, from predominantly catering for an elite to providing mass education, which means that more students attend higher education. The student population is not only larger but also more heterogeneous as to academic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds than ever before (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2012; van der Walt, 2013). Furthermore, universities are increasingly structured to meet the changing expectations of a rapidly changing labor market, which has fueled a debate as to what kind of institution they are and should become. And, we have witnessed a shift towards a political and economic ideology based on free trade and profit generation. This has put “internationalization” on the agenda of most European universities (Hultgren, Thøgersen & Gregersen, 2014, p. 4, see also Altbach & Knight, 2007).

In non-Anglophone settings, internationalization is more often than not realized by implementing English-medium instruction (EMI) (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 303). That universities are international is not a new phenomenon. Rather, it is a reinvention of what European universities need to be. However, now internationalization happens through the use of English (Gregersen, 2012). Mortensen and Haberland (2012) refer to today’s university as a post-national university, thereby indicating a replacement of an institution with a predominantly national orientation, e.g. in Denmark, Danish-medium language practices and educating for a national job market by an internationalized institution. Thus, we have witnessed a shift in the medium of instruction which, as Wilkinson puts it, “has been driven by economic, social and political forces, and sometimes even educational” (Wilkinson, 2012, p. 3).

Successive surveys have documented the expansion of EMI across a number of European countries (cf. Maiworm & Wächter, 2002; Wächter & Maiworm, 2008, 2014), but, at least in numbers, “the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, in that order, are the European leaders in the provision of higher education in English” (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014, p. 46). The University of Copenhagen (UCPH), which was the site for data collection for this thesis, is no exception. The university has witnessed a drastic increase in courses offered with EMI. According to the UCPH’s recently
announced new strategy, referred to as Strategy 2023\(^1\), the university is and will be more internationally oriented in the future. This means that the university has a stated aim of being “among the best in the world for the benefit of society at large, and this requires continued focus on attracting and retaining the best” (University of Copenhagen, 2018, p. 5). For universities, internationalization is partly to attract international students and staff and partly to increase the national students’ competitiveness on a global job market (Thøgersen, 2013), or, as Wächter and Maiworm put it, to “make domestic students ‘fit’ for the global/international labour market” (2014, p. 54). In order to survive in a highly competitive arena, universities believe they need to internationalize in order to attract “the best brains” and thereby to attract funding in order to feature prominently on worldwide ranking lists, which feed back into being an attractive place to study and work. As suggested, there are a number of possible motivation(s) behind the internationalization of higher education, which seem to be influenced by a long range of agents and interests. However, as Wilkinson (2012) points out, purely educational aspects often seem secondary.

An obvious but somewhat overlooked issue by decision-makers is that reforms tend to look different before and after they have been implemented: A simple principle becomes “more complex when it is applied to organizational reality with all its conflicts and practical problems” (Edström, 2018, p. 67). This is no less true when talking about internationalization of higher education. Increased student and staff mobility has both been presupposition for, and in itself contributed to, an increase in courses and programs offered in an additional language. We have seen a clear difference across disciplines in embracing the very idea of internationalization and the concomitant EMI – a difference that has been connected to knowledge structures of the disciplines (Kuteeva & Airey 2014). However, what internationalization and the use of an additional language means for classroom practices in different disciplinary settings and for different (types of) students has thus far received little attention. Thus, even though challenges and opportunities of “internationalization” have caught the eye of an increasing number of researchers, we still need to know more about the cultural and linguistic consequences of the admission of non-local students (cf. Fabricius, Mortensen and Haberland, 2017) – across disciplinary settings.

\(^1\) https://about.ku.dk/strategy2023/
Universities include classrooms of all sorts. Common for them all is that they are the physical and mental space where complex interactional processes unfold. The shift towards EMI has itself led to a more linguistically and culturally diverse student cohort in many sectors of higher education, and thus in the university classrooms. This is the basis for a clash between students’ experiences stemming from other (teaching) cultures and the local way of doing things. These clashes are what I have called “the blind spots of internationalization”. It is the aim of the researcher, in this case me, to try and grasp what is going on. However, what is going on is typically different viewed from the vantage point of the student and from that of the teacher. In this dissertation, I aim to take the student point of view. This is basic for the enterprise: I took part in the classrooms that I observed not as a teacher but as a (specific kind of) student, a participant-observer student. Thus, in thesis I will offer insights into the classroom reality for university students of the 21st century with a specific focus on internationalization by providing analyses of "handling" internationalization in three different disciplinary contexts from the vantage point of students.

1.1 Purpose and research question(s)

This study thus aims to provide an insight into the complexity of what happens in different learning situations, across disciplines, in “the international classroom” located at the University of Copenhagen. For this purpose, I have chosen to dive into three disciplinary settings to provide as nuanced a contribution to the debate on internationalization of higher education as possible (cf. Flybjerg, 2006). Accordingly, my inquiry started from the broad research question of: “What actually happens in an international classroom taught through English?”. To narrow down this question, I more specifically look at the study reality of students influenced by: 1) studying content courses taught in English, 2) in specific disciplinary settings and 3) in so-called “international environments”.

I have chosen to explore this question in a linguistic ethnographic study of three courses that are part of three different international master’s programs at University of Copenhagen. My approach has thus been to follow the data and the processes studied rather than to apply a specialized theoretical framework a priori. However, the broad research question that represents my initial wondering is explicated through two sub-questions that guides the two analytical chapters of this thesis (Chapters 5 and 6):
• How do students in international courses handle their experiences of specific activities that have a strong cultural flavor, in this case, the oral exam?
• Which roles are available to students in particular teaching and learning activities that involve students’ active participation, especially, in group work settings?

1.2 Outline of the thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters and is structured as follows. In this introductory chapter, I have situated the study within the general context of internationalization of higher education. The following chapter (Chapter 2) will provide an overview of research into the consequences of internationalization in relation to studying content 1) through English (the role of language), 2) in different disciplines (the role of discipline(s)) and 3) in an international classroom setting (the role of experiences and expectations). These three factors will serve as a frame for understanding the foci of the thesis. Chapter 2 is followed by a thorough account of my methodological choices throughout the study (see Chapter 3). Chapter 4 will provide an in-depth description of the three courses that make up the sites in which I have conducted fieldwork. In this chapter, I also provide the necessary preliminary insight into three disciplinary settings and students’ everyday lives as students of those specific international courses. This chapter also functions as a contextual gateway into two analytical chapters (Chapters 5 and 6), which explore two aspects of student participation in the international classroom: oral exam interaction and classroom interaction (incl. group work), respectively. In these chapters, I present students’ actual practices in different situations of learning in international classrooms in a Danish context across the three courses; oral exams is the focus of Chapter 5, whereas classroom interaction, including group work, is the focus of Chapter 6. This is followed by a discussion of the findings and concluding remarks in Chapter 7.
2. Research background

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the various ways in which the internationalization of higher education in a classroom context and its consequences for students studying in content courses taught in English in non-Anglophone countries can be and has been studied. There seems to be a conspicuous lack of consensus in the (use of) terminology used to describe this area, and I start this chapter by briefly addressing terminological issues and by positioning my research in relation to the most relevant terms (Section 2.1). As touched upon in the previous chapter, this thesis focuses on the perspective of students. Thus, I review the research literature in terms of our existing knowledge of what it entails for students to study content through English, in different disciplines, and in an international classroom setting. Even though this chapter is to a large extent a literature review, it also provides a theoretical and contextual framing of the study. The structure of the chapter is built on the overlap between language and pedagogical issues in relation to (understanding) students’ learning and to pedagogical organizations of university practices and processes. I first review literature focusing on the role of language(s) in order to function in an internationalized university (Section 2.2). Academic disciplines make up the theme for the following section (Section 2.3). The following section (Section 2.4) will discuss the role of experiences and expectations as closely linked to students’ previous experiences of learning and their expectations of what constitutes learning. I end the chapter by providing an overview of how this thesis may contribute to an existing and increasing amount of literature into EMI and the international classroom (Section 2.5).

2.2 EMI, CLIL, and “the international classroom”

A general problem of research into what can broadly be described as ‘content courses in internationalized university settings through English as a medium of instruction’ is the lack of consensus on how to label this phenomenon. The various labels tend to imply particular pedagogical approaches or research agendas as well as different views on language, culture and learning. These labels seem to include three different foci: 1) internationalization as a shift in language, 2) internationalization as shift in content and 3) internationalization as the inclusion of international students.
Henriksen, Holmen and Kling (2018) list the labels that content courses taught in a language other than the home language have been given in volumes compiling research on the use of English as a part of internationalization of higher education. These include:

- **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)** (Fontanet-Gomez, 2013; Nikula, Dafouz, Moore & Smit, 2016; Smit & Dafouz, 2012)
- **Foreign language use in globalized Higher Education** (Cancino, Dam & Jæger, 2011; Gregersen, 2014; Haberland et al., 2008; Haberland, Lønsmann & Preisler, 2013; Hultgren, Gregersen, & Thøgersen, 2014; Kuteeva, 2011; Preisler, 2008; Preisler, Klitgård & Fabricius, 2011; Wächtter, 2008; Wächtter & Maiworm, 2014)
- **English Medium Instruction (EMI)** (Bradford & Brown, 2017; Dimova, Hultgren & Jensen, 2015; Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2012; Fenton-Smith, Humphreys, & Walkinshaw, 2017; Macaro, 2018; Zhao & Dixon, 2017).

This list can be expanded with *parallel-language tertiary education* (Pecorari et al., 2012) and *English taught programs* (Wächtter & Maiworm, 2014) and *English Medium Education in Multilingual University Setting (EMEMUS)* (Dafouz & Smit, 2016). Furthermore, *the international classroom* has been used as a label for describing a multilingual and multicultural learning space.\(^2\)

The label of EMEMUS was introduced as an alternative notion embracing the different labels, and to encourage an organic understanding of the university setting as “a multilingual situation where students, using the languages they know and those they are getting to know, are enabled to succeed” (van der Walt, 2013, p. 12). Van der Walt’s definition is somewhat idealistic, but most English medium education (outside of the Anglophone context) is in fact placed within a surrounding society with another dominant language than English, and that is what Dafouz and Smit try to acknowledge by including “multilingual” in the acronym. The acronym was proposed in the process of developing

\(^2\) See for example the IntlUni project

a dynamic conceptual framework for studying “EMEMUS”, called ROAD-MAPPING. The ROAD-MAPPING framework consists of six dimensions (making up the letters in the acronym) that operate across higher education institutions using an additional language as the means of instruction: Roles of English (RO), Academic Disciplines (AD), language (in) Management (M), Agents (A), Practices & Processes (PP), and Internationalization and Glocalisation (ING). The framework was developed as a counter reaction to a lack of consensus in terminology and theoretical orientations in a rapidly expanding research field, and it offers a view on language practices in a specific context based on socio- and ecolinguistical as language practices are constitutive of and constituted by the broader social realities. While there is thus good reason for using the EMEMUS-acronym, it has only recently entered the research field and therefore I will primarily position the contributions of this thesis in relation to the labels EMI and CLIL (also referred to as ICLHE) and “the international classroom”. These three labels are all used in research for describing the learning space in focus in this study. However, in line with Dafouz and Smit (2014), I argue that neither of these may be entirely fitting for the complexity of the reality. In this chapter, I thus use the labels as describing certain research foci.

The label EMI is often applied to address challenges in non-Anglophone countries related to globalization, internationalization, and mobility (Hultgren, Gregersen & Thøgersen, 2014). Macaro, Curle, Pun, An and Dearden (2018) define EMI as “the use of English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English” (p. 37). Macaro et al.’s definition of EMI attempts to make a distinction between English-speaking countries and non-traditional English-speaking countries. Hultgren, Jensen & Dimova (2015) mention as important criteria for EMI: the use of English for instructional purposes in academic subjects other than English itself in non-English dominant contexts and in higher education. According to Airey (2016), the notion of EMI includes a tendency to view language as a fairly unproblematic tool for teaching; English is simply the language in which the course is taught. That perception is also reflected in Kling’s (2013) description of the goals of EMI courses. The goals are said to be parallel to “traditional L1 [first

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3 See Komori-Glatz (2017) for the (for the time being) only study built on the framework.

4 The authors note that Australia may be seen as an EMI country since a substantial proportion of its HE population consists of international students whose L1 is not English.
language) content instruction”, that is transfer of content knowledge. However, the teaching is done in a second language (L2), meaning English. This means that EMI courses tend to be a translation of content knowledge with no specific focus on the language needs of students or acknowledgement of differences in teaching procedures related to meeting the requirement of a presumably different learning space. Changing the medium of instruction and assessment without attention to the pedagogical affordances that follow has made critical voices argue for a pedagogically more reflective approach towards integrating language and content (cf. Coleman, 2006).

While the notion of EMI is traditionally seen to pay little attention to language outcomes, researchers within the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) framework, as the name suggests, emphasize how this label defines the teaching and learning of language and non-language subjects simultaneously. In most cases, the Language in CLIL is synonymous with English (Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2013). At the tertiary level, the label Integrating Language and Content in Higher Education (ICLHE) is often used to refer to the same dual focus on language and content. However, researchers still seem to use CLIL and ICLHE as synonyms. Both CLIL and ICLHE refer to courses with both language and content learning outcomes, where EMI only has content outcomes. Content and language integrated learning is based on the notion that students acquire disciplinary knowledge and academic language skills together and therefore should be offered together throughout the curriculum. Hüttner and Smit (2014) return to Marsh’s (2002) earlier description of CLIL as an umbrella term for a range of pedagogical activities with a dual focus on developing the students’ content knowledge as well as their academic language competence in the relevant learning situations of the specific field in question (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010).

As suggested above, there seems to be little consensus on the terminology. Researchers have only recently begun to address this lack of consensus through theoretical discussions (see e.g. Smit & Dafouz, 2012). EMI is sometimes used as an umbrella term that encompasses CLIL and ICLHE. Seeing EMI as an umbrella term can, however, be problematic if we subscribe to the definition of EMI introduced above, as this entails a simplistic view of language as a neutral medium. Offering a theoretically based angle on higher education seen as social practices, Airey (2016) states that “it’s a fallacy to think that language and content can be separated” (p. 73; see also Laursen, 2013). This view finds support in the view of language adopted by Halliday & Martin (1993): “[…] language is not passively reflecting some pre-existing conceptual structure, on the contrary, it is actively engaged in bringing such structures into being” (p. 8). It also mirrors the Vygotskian
assumption that knowledge is created in dialogue between people and social contexts, and that learning primarily happens through language. Thus, content and language are seen as inextricably linked, and “students cannot develop academic knowledge and skills without access to the language in which that knowledge is embedded, discussed, constructed, or evaluated. Nor can they acquire academic language skills in a context devoid of content” (Crandall, 1994, p. 256). According to Airey, disciplinary learning can to a large extent be seen as learning to communicate discipline-specific knowledge; an academic is a person who can inconspicuously participate in an academic discussion (Airey, 2011). To learn a discipline is thus to learn language – even if not all content teachers realize it. Whether taught in their L1 or L2, students have to acquire disciplinary literacy, and, as Airey argues, content teachers should think of themselves as CLIL teachers – even in L1 settings (Airey, 2012). Airey’s study, however, also shows that this is often not the case. Few courses in higher education actually meet the criteria of focusing on both content and language. In universities (at least in a Nordic setting), students are expected to have the necessary language skills. In that sense, CLIL and ICLHE offer a perspective based on language awareness, but in reality the use of English often is seen to have nothing to do with disciplinary language learning goals (cf. Airey, 2016).

EMI and CLIL are both concepts used to describe a research interest in the linguistic changes of internationalization and pedagogical adaptations (or lack thereof) to fit the change of language (and content). A concept that focuses on the potential cultural diversity of student populations (including differences in the levels of linguistic proficiency) is “the international classroom”. As stated in Chapter 1, the use of English in university teaching has been equated with internationalization, and the influx of students from a range of countries in EMI programs creates a change of conditions for teaching and learning, in what has been coined “the international classroom” (Teekens, 2000). The term “international classroom” emphasizes creating an international milieu by engaging students in discussions in a multicultural environment that has the potential for advancing student learning and international understanding. The University of Groningen, for example, state on their website that “the international classroom” means:

*inclusive, activated learning in which we use diversity as a resource through purposeful interaction, based on a program vision on internationalization,*
Thus, an ideal of “the international classroom” seems to be the integration of an international or intercultural dimension into the teaching and research of an institution (cf. Deardroff, 2006; Knight, 1994). Knight defines internationalization “as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003, p. 1), and this is often seen as increasing the quality of an education even though research has primarily focused on the challenges of a diverse student cohort. From a governmental point of view, internationalization of Danish higher education has been presented as having strong potential to improve the quality of higher education: “An international environment of learning promotes disciplinary quality within the individual programmes and international competences in the students” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 25). However, this statement does not include a clear definition of what “an international environment” actually comprises besides the presence of “international students” (or maybe even just besides courses being offered in English), nor does it state how disciplinary quality and international competences can be promoted.

The Netherlandish universities, alongside with the IntlUni-project⁶, have been frontrunners in developing guidelines for teaching in an intercultural context (cf. Cozart et al., 2015). These includes, amongst others, creating an inclusive learning space and development of internationalized curricula and learning outcomes⁷. However, the purpose and enactment of internationalization may, as I also argued in the previous chapter, vary across academic disciplines. I discuss this further in section 2.3.

I have now introduced three labels used to describe research agendas in the investigation of consequences of internationalization in a university classroom context. As indicated here, there seems to be little consensus on the labeling and on the major theoretical constructs the labels rest upon concerning language, content and culture (and the integration of these). The purpose of this thesis is not to offer any solutions to this problem, but rather to bring up the discussion whenever necessary.

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⁵ https://www.rug.nl/about-us/where-do-we-stand/education-policy/international-classroom/
it is relevant for the learning processes explored in this thesis. In the following sections, I will turn to research on the role of language (in content learning), the role of disciplines (in language use), and the role of student (and teacher) experiences and expectations (in engaging in academic activities). At a conceptual level, it is important to foreground the dynamic complexity inherent in content, language and culture – and acknowledge that neither comes in clearly measurable or bounded units. Thus, even though I treat them as separate entities here, this is only possible in theory.

2.2 The role of language(s)

This section will primarily focus on EMI research. The field of EMI represents an international area of inquiry. However, the areas of interests in EMI research differ in the different geographical regions as they are faced with different issues concerning language. Even though the motivations behind the increase in EMI across countries are similar, the local realizations are diverse and reflect sociocultural and linguistic specificities of higher education institutions (Smit & Dafouz, 2012), which makes it difficult to compare findings from different geographical settings. The Nordic countries and the Netherlands were among the first to implement EMI in higher education (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014), and researchers in these countries were among the first to investigate the impact of EMI. English may be considered an additional language for most citizens in these countries, and they are commonly known to have a fairly high level of English proficiency (Eurobarometer, 2006, 2012); English is the first foreign language in school, and there is a high level of English input found outside of the classroom as well in film, media, gaming and traveling. The Nordic countries and the Netherlands have thus also appeared to be embracing EMI as an option (Ammon & McConnel, 2002). It is from the geographical context of Nordic countries, specifically Denmark, that I present EMI research in what follows.

For a short overview of the research interest represented in the Nordic literature on EMI, I will turn to the results of a systematic review conducted by Ulriksen and myself (Nissen & Ulriksen, 2016). In this study, we categorized 212 peer-reviewed publications according to the national context in question and the research foci. The aim of the review was to uncover consequences of EMI for students’ learning practices and processes as reflected in the literature. We found that the areas of interest seemed to be similar in the entire Scandinavian area. Admittedly, the research conducted is bound up on a somewhat small number of individual researchers, which is a possible bias in terms of describing the full scope of research interests. The categories identified included:
attitudes; experiences; learning outcome; teaching, learning and participation; language problems; language and identity; linguistics\(^8\); and language policy. A number of studies reviewed focused on attitudes of teachers and students towards being taught or teaching in English (Gunnarsson & Öhman, 1997; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999; Hellekjær & Westergaard, 2002; Carroll-Boegh, 2005; Jensen et al., 2009; Tange, 2010; Jensen & Thøgersen, 2011, see also Didriksen, 2009; Jakobsen, 2010; Westbrook & Henriksen, 2011; Kling, 2013; Larsen, 2013), while others explored the linguistic environment in English-taught courses (e.g. Ljosland, 2008; Söderlundh, 2010; see also Kiel, 2011; Nissen, 2015). Fewer have looked at learning outcomes (Airey, 2009, 2010; Thøgersen & Airey, 2011\(^9\)) or measured students’ comprehension of lectures (Hellekjær, 2010\(^10\)).

Before turning to describe research findings on EMI more specifically, I will shortly mention the issues addressed by the publications in the category of language policy. In Denmark, as in the other Nordic countries, higher education is not only considered a commodity but also a public good, and the introduction of English has been counterbalanced by a democratic concern for the local languages and their role in the national and global knowledge economy.\(^{11}\) A debate on the use of English in higher education thus seemed to dominate the research (cf., Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999; Högl, 2002; Hyltenstam, 2004; Philipson, 2006; Preisler, 2008; Shaw, 2008; Mortensen & Haberland, 2009; Harder, 2009; Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012; Hultgren, 2014; Kuuteva, 2014). These discussions of the use of English in higher education focused on domain loss and parallel language use and policy (see Airey, 2011). One definition of domain loss is that a given language loses a given domain to another language, e.g. in higher education. To address concerns of domain loss and still promote internationalization (as Anglicization), the principle of parallel language use was introduced as an element in official or semi-official strategies in the Nordic countries to maintain a balance between the national language(s) and English in academia.

\(^8\) This category consists of studies using Higher Education as a site for studying language use, e.g. English as a Lingua Franca-studies.

\(^9\) This is also the focus of Klassen (2001).

\(^{10}\) See also Vinke (1995) and Dafouz, Camocho and Urquia (2014) for studies outside of the Nordic context.

\(^{11}\) This concern has been voiced in, for example, the contribution of the The Danish Language Council, cf. https://dsn.dk/vi-arbejder-ogsa-med/sprogpolitik/udgivelser-om-sprogpolitik#rapporter-fra-dansk-sprogn-1.
The principle of parallel language use is meant to reflect an ideal linguistic situation where two (or more) languages are used for equivalent academic (and administrative) purposes: “The concurrent use of several languages within one or more areas. None of the languages abolishes or replaces the other; they are used in parallel” (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2007, p. 93). In the strategy of UCPH, the term seems to be used by university management for the promotion of English, where it for the government and possibly a number of employee groups is seen as a tool for promoting Danish (Hultgren, 2014). This conflict of interest is also voiced in Tange (2010) looking at another Danish university. For the same reason (amongst others), the concept of parallel language use is widely discussed. Kuuteva and Airey have called it “an unoperationalised political slogan” (Kuteeva & Airey, 2014), and Philipson (2006) called it “an intuitively appealing idea (but) a somewhat fuzzy and probably unrealistic target” (Philipson, 2006). The inconsistencies of the concept and its implementation have thus been addressed by a great deal of the Nordic research into internationalization of higher education. It is, however, outside the scope of this study to go further into such discussion.

This short overview can be seen as a frame for understanding the interests of earlier research in the Nordic countries, and I will now review studies on students coping with studying in a foreign language paying special attention to studies conducted in a Northern European context. I will start by describing the linguistic environment in EMI courses.

### 2.2.1 The linguistic environment

This section focuses on language practices (in contrast to ideologies). As previously mentioned, the EMI classroom is characterized by encompassing students (and teachers) with different levels of linguistic proficiency in English. Here, the EMEMUS-acronym makes itself especially relevant,

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12 Parallel language use is the principle behind the language policy at UCPH, and the UCPH Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use (CIP) maintains a webpage where the many definitions of the term ‘parallel language use’ are documented, cf. [https://cip.ku.dk/om_parallelsproglighed/](https://cip.ku.dk/om_parallelsproglighed/).

13 Inspired by Hultgren, Gregersen and Thøgersen’s (2014), the notion of ideologies is here understood as “the ways in which English at Nordic universities is explicitly or implicitly talked and written about in the Nordic debate” (p. 2).
as it acknowledges the actual multilingual setting which is the reality of most EMI classrooms (cf. Ljosland, 2008; Söderlundh, 2012; Mortensen, 2014; Nissen, 2015).

To make a rather sharp and widely debatable division, the EMI classroom may in principle consist of three groups of students: 1) Students who are native speakers of the language of the surrounding society, but non-native speakers of English. 2) Students who are neither native speakers of the local language nor English; and 3) students who are native speakers of English (see also Kling, 2013). In theory as well as in practice, these students have very different linguistic prerequisites for engaging in a Danish EMI classroom. Assessment and improvement of EMI teachers’ language proficiency play a role in EMI research (Kling & Stæhr, 2011), while students’ language proficiency seems to be presupposed (Jakobsen, 2010). When (Non-Native Speaking [NNS]) international students enter a university program in Denmark, they are usually tested by using TOEFL and IELTS despite the fact that these tests are not developed for EMI purposes (see e.g. Dimova et al., 2015).¹⁴

If we start by looking at research on native speakers of English studying in an EMI context, these are rare. Gundermann is one of the few who have looked into perceptions of the native speaker in an EMI/ELF context. Gundermann’s study (2014) is a case study of an MSc in Renewable Energy Management at the University of Freiburg, and according to her, native speakers are considered linguistically privileged by their peers for studying in an EMI program. Native-like competence is considered an advantage in connection to reading and writing faster and native-like ways of expressing oneself are perceived as automatically evoking an impression of academic competence, which might result in better grades. Gundermann’s study, however, does not provide empirical evidence that native speakers actually do receive better grades.

The role of the local language is also central, as the local language continues to play a prominent role in nominally English Medium programs (Söderlundh, 2010; Mortensen, 2014). These studies suggest that language at a policy level and practice level has different realities, and it is thus not surprising that researchers find that students use more languages than the language(s) present in local policies. What is interesting is what this means for classroom practices where monolingual

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¹⁴ See Section 4.1 of this thesis for the specific language requirements of the courses in this study.
norms meet multilingual practices. Studies of EMI in a Danish context have thus also found that Danish is used by Danish students as a support language in international study programs (Nissen, 2015; Haberland, 2011; Mortensen 2014) as is Swedish in Sweden (Söderlundh, 2010, 2013) and Hungarian in Hungary (Kaloscai, 2009). And given that the EMI classroom consists of other students than students with a high level of the local language, one of the “challenges” documented in Denmark and Sweden has been the use of the local language for academic and personal conversations among students and between students and teachers (see also Smit, 2010, for an Austrian study).

The division of students into three groups according to their linguistic prerequisites (backed up by empirical findings) might leave us with the impression that native speakers of Danish have a social advantage and native speakers of English an academic advantage, whereas non-native speakers of either language have no advantages when it comes to functioning in an EMI classroom setting. This statement seems to be mirrored in a focus in the international literature on the linguistic difficulties of international students (see Nissen & Ulriksen, 2015, for an overview of such studies), and according to Henriksen et al.’s (2018) review, these studies tend to focus on challenges rather than opportunities of linguistic diversity of the student cohort. Either way, the differences in linguistic repertoires (Gumperz, 1964) of students (and teachers) form a complex linguistic environment for students to navigate in.

One situation where this linguistic diversity plays a role is in classroom interaction, and I will end this section by touching upon studies focusing on oral face-to-face interaction such as discussions in class and group work interaction. Studies of classroom interaction in EMI are relatively rare, even though questions about the quantity and quality of interaction in EMI courses have been raised. Furthermore, most studies are conducted in a lecture setting and not in, for example, seminars. The existing studies of interaction have primarily focused on language choice in e.g. group work (Söderlundh, 2010, Mortensen 2014) or the use of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Mortensen, 2010; Björkman, 2010; Hynninen, 2012; see also Smit 2010; and Komori-Glatz, 2017). In this thesis, I will not go further into a discussion of specific linguistic traits of English used as a Lingua Franca, but ELF-studies do form a substantial part of the research field. However, there is still very little work on peer-to-peer interaction. I will briefly touch upon findings in studies of interaction in EMI settings essential for the study presented in this thesis.
Björkman (2011) compared occurrence of pragmatic strategies in EMI lectures and students’ group work activities and found that students used more pragmatic strategies than their lecturers. In Björkman’s view, a speaker is effective if s/he “employs appropriate pragmatic strategies frequently in his/her speech to create transparency for the listener” (p. 87). This view is based on the finding that perceived miscommunication was rare in student-student interaction despite a non-standard use of English, and Björkman sees this as being connected to the use of pragmatic strategies. It should be stressed that we need to consider that pragmatic strategies are not necessarily universal, but culturally constrained, and that there might be different opportunities for the use of pragmatic strategies in different settings, for instance in lectures versus supervision sessions. In a study of language expertise in ELF interaction in EMI settings, Hynninen (2012) found four types of language expert roles based on 1) subject expertise, 2) L1-based expertise, which means that the authority was allocated to a native speaker of English, 3) negotiation between speakers, where any of the speakers could comment, and 4) language professionals (p. 8). Hynninen’s study was carried out in a group work setting attended by teachers. What is specifically interesting from the findings is how roles are assigned according to specific (linguistic) prerequisites and institutional roles. However, the focus of the study was metalingual commenting and/or language correcting and negotiating language expertise, and it did not include group work dynamics as such.

To look outside a Nordic context, Komori-Glatz (2017) is an Austrian based study investigating the use of ELF in two groups of business students. Building on the work of Smit (2010), Komori-Glatz’ study looks at student-student interaction without the presence of teachers. The study shows that international students learned to use some German words, and some students took on a “bridging function”15 explaining in English some words or phrases in German used by themselves or other students. The use of German primarily took place in informal situations; in the formal situations, students seemed to have an understanding of using only English. The groups in question were heterogeneous in the sense that the students had different national backgrounds. However, they had other things in common such as being highly educated and highly proficient English speakers. These things made them, in the author’s words, “successful”, which leaves us with the question of what constitutes an unsuccessful group.

15 See Section 6.2.5 for a discussion of this function, in the present study referred to as a ”broker” (cf. Kraft, 2017).
I have now presented studies of language use in nominally English taught courses. Having recognized the differences in students’ linguistic prerequisites in connection with social integration and potentially also to content learning and presented studies on interaction in EMI settings, I will now turn to findings in EMI research on how students cope with EMI in relation to content learning.

2.2.2 Students’ coping with EMI

The research on teachers is extensive and a thorough review of this research is outside the scope of this thesis (see Henriksen et al, 2018, for an overview). However, as teachers do play a central role in students’ learning experiences, I will briefly highlight some key findings.

In a survey of language use at Stockholm University, Bolton & Kuteeva (2012) found that only a minority of teachers felt they had language problems. Interestingly enough, however, a considerable number of students were less enthusiastic about their teachers’ level of English proficiency. It is possible, however, that the linguistic proficiency of teachers is not necessarily the core issue, but that it is the most obvious complaint, perhaps covering a range of other issues (cf. Jensen et al., 2013). Studies have shown that time is an issue when presenting content in English (as an L2) (e.g. Airey, 2009, 2011; Björkman, 2010; Hellekjær, 2009, 2010; Smit, 2010; Thøgersen & Airey, 2011; Wilkinson, 2011). Thøgersen and Airey (2011) investigate change in speech rate and rhetorical style in the delivery of the same subject taught in English and in Danish. They found that the (experienced) teacher had a much more formal style in English, similar to written English, and the speech rate was lower; the teacher used 25% more time to present the same thematic content in English. However, the amount of content delivered was roughly the same in the two lectures. In the Danish lecture, the teachers used more words and phrasings to explain the same concept, whereas the English lecture was actually more precise. However, EMI also requires teachers to have skills such as “different strategies to formulate questions, inclusive expressions [and] attitudinal markers” (Dafouz et al., 2007, p. 99), and Thøgersen and Airey (2011) found that teachers might also have a more formal pedagogical style in English. Studies have suggested that teachers feel a “lack of linguistic flexibility” in situations other than lecturing, for instance during group discussions (Hellekjær, 2007, p. 79). Moreover, Vinke (1995) found that teachers of agricultural science and economics believed that certain types of pedagogical tasks or activities could not be offered to the students in EMI, e.g. more student-centered, interactive
learning activities (Macaro et al., 2018, p. 55). In a study of teacher beliefs, Tange (2010) also finds that the shift to English happens at the expense of jokes, anecdotes and everyday examples.

After this short introduction on research findings concerning teachers in EMI, I turn to a seemingly less researched area: the students. Specifically, I focus on studies of study behavior and learning outcome in EMI. Several studies investigate whether or not study achievement in EMI courses is reduced when the language of instruction changes (Vinke, 1995; Klaassen, 2001; see also Gerber et al., 2005; Neville-Barton & Barton, 2005). These studies raise concern about negative student learning outcome, and Vinke’s early Dutch study comparing student performances in Dutch courses with student performances in an English-taught course discovered “a moderate decrease in student learning” (Vinke, 1995, p. 150). Klaasen (2001) finds similar negative effects, but suggests that these may be temporary and limited to the first year of studying in a second language. However, it is not possible to say if the results evened out because the weak students dropped out or the students adapted to studying in a second language. It should be noted that Vinke’s and Klaasen’s studies are some of the first in the field of EMI, and it is possible to assume that since then at least teachers have become more used to teaching through English. However, Bolton and Kuteeva’s more recent study also finds that time is a factor as postgraduate students reported higher levels of confidence and satisfaction when learning through EMI than undergraduates did (Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012).

In a Swedish study by Airey & Linder (2006), the authors found that undergraduate physics students in EMI lectures focused more on note-taking than understanding content. Interaction in these EMI lectures was found to be much lower than in L1-instruction; the students were less willing to ask and answer questions. Interestingly, the students did not recognize any difference in studying in their L1 (Swedish) or their L2 (English) when they were asked. However, when showed a video-recall of the lectures, they recognized a change in their study behavior. In an earlier study, Wilkinson and Hellekjær (2003) had found that the time invested by students in self-study was greater in English-medium programs than in courses taught in their mother tongue (see also

16 Here achievement refers to grades. Thus, Airey’s (2010) study of students’ ability to explain science concepts in two languages is not included here even though it can be argued that this was also a study of study achievement. Airey’s study will be presented in the next section.
Airey & Linder, 2006; Tatzl, 2011). The students had to do preparatory and follow-up work, including making sense of their lecture notes. In Norway, Hellekjær’s (2010) comparative study of students’ self-assessment of lecture comprehension in English and in their L1s (Norwegian and German) found that the majority of students could cope with lectures. However, a considerable minority had comprehension difficulties in EMI. Many of these difficulties, however, occurred nearly to the same degree in EMI lectures as they did in L1 lectures, even though these issues were even more problematic when lectures were held in English (Hellekjær, 2010, p. 240).

Moving to learning in the sense of being able to express knowledge, Airey conducted an experimental study of students’ ability to express content knowledge in English and in their L1 Swedish (Airey, 2010). The students in Airey’s study were asked to orally describe scientific concepts of their discipline, and their utterances were assessed in terms of fluency, code-switching and scientific correctness. Airey found that there was no significant difference between the students’ descriptions in English and Swedish, and that only students with insufficient proficiency in English had problems: “above an initial lower threshold of competence in disciplinary English, students give descriptions with similar levels of disciplinariness in both English and Swedish, regardless of the language used to teach them” (Airey, 2010, p. 44). However, the students spoke considerably slower in English than in Swedish. This is similar to findings of Hincks (2010), who showed that students speak more slowly in English L2 presentations. These findings suggest that reduced fluency should not be confused with reduced content knowledge (Airey, 2010, p. 45).

All of these studies show that the consequences of EMI for students’ learning are not straightforward. The studies reviewed in this section have primarily focused on natural and technical sciences, and predominantly through quantitative analyses. A relevant aspect is here that a change in medium of instruction might mean something different in different disciplines, and it is not necessarily possible to transfer results from one discipline to another. I will discuss this in Section 2.3. For now, I turn to studies of language and assessment, specifically in exams.

### 2.2.3 Exams

Evidence from research into the effect of EMI suggests that using a foreign language as the medium of instruction complicates learning processes. However, even though the learning process might be more complicated, the ultimate result may be comparable to learning through the L1 (cf. Dafouz et al., 2014). Dafouz and Camacho-Miñano (2016) have looked at student performance in
English and L1 (Spanish) using a comparable data set, and they found that both sets of students (EMI and non-EMI) achieved the same academic result. Gerber et al. (2005) in a study of achievement in math education suggest that if the language proficiency is above a certain level, mathematical ability seems more important. However, very few studies have analyzed authentic exams (with the exception of Breeze & Dafouz (2017) focusing on written exams). Research into authentic oral exam interaction is especially scarce. The number of studies of oral exams in general is small and in EMI research almost non-existent. Roberts et al. 2014 and Atkins et al. 2014 both on clinical skills assessment of doctors should be mentioned here even though the context of a simulated consultation is somewhat special, and the studies stem from an Anglophone context. Another study worthy of a comment with regards to the assessment of (oral) language and content is Airey’s (2010) study of students’ content expression, which was described in the previous section. This was, however, done as an experimental study.

The scarcity of studies on exam data (in general and in EMI settings) can be explained by the fact that data from exams is hard to get access to for confidentiality and technical reasons (see, for example, Sert, 2008). One of the few studies that has been able to do so is Breeze and Dafouz (2017), who compared written exams in Spanish and English. Their findings, based on qualitative and quantitative analyses, suggest that the students seemed to encounter the same types of problems in either language, but often to different degrees. These findings are similar to what Hellekjær (2010) has pointed out: some problems may be intensified by the use of L2.

In contrast to the written exam form, oral assessment creates an opportunity for a complex set of interactions between examiner and student. In that sense, a number of factors make oral exams very interesting to investigate – in general and in an EMI setting. The small number of studies may, however, also be explained by the fact that oral exam as a form of assessment outside of language subjects and in simulated consultations is not being widely used globally. This is also mirrored in the literature within general pedagogy primarily focusing on the reliability and validity of oral exams versus written exams – very often on an experimental basis (for a comprehensive overview of studies dealing with oral exams, see Joughin, 1998).

Studies of oral exams in EMI settings include Nevile and Wagner (2008), who analyze participation in a multilingual group examination at a Danish university with German and English as the official languages of the examination. The setting of their study was, however, extraordinary in it being a group examination and especially in it being multilingual. The exam interaction
between teachers and group members in their study showed language policy in micromanagement – local interactional policy suggesting that speakers are free to choose whatever language best suit them. The students seemed to choose language (German or English) according to an implicitly agreed upon pattern of language choice. One student, however, apparently found it hard to speak German, which made her silent whenever German was the preferred language of the situation. This made her appear less competent and created an issue for the examiners of determining whether her restricted participation was due to challenges with language or lack of competence.

My own study (Nissen, 2015, 2018) was an ethnographic study that included data from oral exams nominally conducted in English. The examiner was a native speaker of English with receptive competence in Danish (and other Nordic and Germanic languages). His receptive competences in other languages made him encourage students who seemingly struggled to convey a message in English to explain it in the language of their choosing (which in practice meant Danish). Some students chose that option with different results – some answered more precisely, while others still struggled. However, by having the option of using Danish, the students were provided with an opportunity to reach an answer – if not the correct one, then at least a reflected one. This study was conducted at the Faculty of Natural Sciences at UCPH and on a small scale suggesting further research.

To sum up this section, some studies have found the same problems in L1 teaching as in EMI settings, lending support to Airey’s claim that “changing the lecturing language merely accentuates communication problems that are already present in first-language lectures” (Airey, 2009, p. 84). However, studies have also reported that the (content) learning process is indeed influenced by the language backgrounds of students relative to the medium of instruction. Some studies have looked at academic achievement in a second language with different findings, ranging from negative results to no significant difference. I have, in this section, included studies of different classroom contexts, from group work to lectures and examination. A great majority of EMI studies has focused on lectures. This can have numerous explanations – one is connected to the fact that most studies are quantitative and survey-based. The studies that have looked at group work has primarily been ELF studies – probably because there, typically, is a larger amount of interaction in group work than in lectures. Few studies have looked at exams. The studies of each of the teaching and learning activities have had different foci and none of them has focused on all aspects of what constitutes being a student in an internationalized university setting. Furthermore, as I pointed out in Section 2.2.2, findings in one disciplinary context might not necessarily be transferable to other
disciplinary contexts. Thus, in the following section, I describe and discuss possible disciplinary differences in relation to EMI and internationalization.

2.3 The role of discipline(s)

When discussing internationalization and the use of EMI in higher education, it is important to acknowledge that there is a characteristic divide between the natural, technical and medical sciences (sciences) and the human and social sciences (humanities). Internationalization has thus long been a feature of research within the natural sciences, where internationalization has been viewed as “a means directed at producing knowledge in a universalistic field” (Hultgren, Thøgersen & Gregersen, 2014, p. 14). Whereas, in the humanities, the national languages have a more pervasive role as constituents of university studies and have remained “stronger” (cf. Salö & Josephson, 2014; Hultgren et al. 2014, p. 15). Differences of academic disciplines have thus begun to play a peripheral but acknowledged role in EMI research.

Academic disciplines are usually thought of in groupings of disciplines (Becher, 1989): hard pure (natural sciences, e.g. chemistry), hard applied (science-based professionals, e.g. engineering), soft pure (humanities and social science, e.g. anthropology), soft applied (social professionals, e.g. education). This is a somewhat simplified classification concerned with their epistemological characteristics. The soft disciplines tend to focus on the development of creative and analytical thinking skills, whereas the hard sciences tend to be more factual and focus on specific concepts (Kuteeva & Airey, 2014). While this classification does not take into account possible differences within disciplines, it remains useful for mapping out some fundamental differences. Bernstein (1999) also explains disciplinary differences through epistemological factors and distinguishes between differences in types of knowledge in horizontal discourses (“likely to be oral, local, context-dependent and specific, tacit” (p. 159)) and vertical discourses (“coherent, explicit, and systematically principled structure” (p. 159)). The horizontal discourses tend to be acquired at home or in the local community (social media and popular culture)\(^\text{17}\), and vertical discourses from formal schooling and academic study. These types of knowledge are further differentiated by Bernstein into knowledge structures: Hierarchical knowledge structure (test theories against data)

\(^{17}\) Bernstein’s concepts stem from a time before social media.
and horizontal knowledge structure (use theory to interpret texts) (Martin, 2011, p. 42). Hard sciences is typically associated with hierarchical knowledge structures, whereas humanities are associated with horizontal knowledge structures.

The distribution of EMI differs across disciplines, and Bolton & Kuteeva (2012) found a clear connection between the use of English as an academic language and the disciplines. Kuteeva and Airey (2014) shows that as language plays a role in the construction of disciplinary knowledge. It can be predicted that disciplinary differences will affect the use of English as an academic language. This hypothesis draws on data from a 2010 report on the use of English in PhD theses at a Swedish university, and the proportion of MA level lectures held in English across four faculties (Salö, 2010). The predicted use of English distributed over disciplines can be seen in Figure 1 below.

![Figure 1. Continuum of predicted use of English across disciplines (Kuteeva & Airey, 2014, p. 539)](image)

The tendencies found in Bolton & Kuteeva are similar to figures found in Denmark (Hultgren, 2013) and show that technical sciences have the highest number with 54% of programs offered as EMI, the number for natural sciences is 42 %, while health and humanities are in the opposite end with 12% and 10%, respectively. In the middle, we find social sciences with 26% of programs offered in English. Furthermore, only one of the six faculties at UCPH, the Faculty of Science (pure and applied natural science), has decided on a general policy for their degree programs, stating that undergraduate studies are taught in Danish, whereas graduate studies are taught in English.

As already suggested above, some differences in attitudes and usage of English in international universities across disciplines are reported from questionnaire surveys (Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012; Jensen & Thøgersen, 2011; Jensen et al., 2009; Pecorari, Shaw, Irvine & Malmström, 2011). This

means that EMI in natural sciences is seen as a pragmatic reality for students and teachers, where international terminology is often already being used in the L1. In contrast, in the soft disciplines, English is seen as problematic for students’ learning and active participation. Airey (2011) suggests a disciplinary discussion matrix with three angles (academy, society and workplace) on literacy in any kind of discipline, each with a local and an international dimension. The placement of the discipline between academy and society and the workplace is also seen to affect language use (and attitude) within any given discipline and educational program. According to Kuteeva and Airey (2014), the differences in attitudes are not arbitrary but rather a result of different knowledge making processes: informants in natural sciences (hard pure, hierarchical knowledge structure) tended to be more positive, and humanities (soft pure, horizontal knowledge structure) more critical towards using English as a medium of instruction. However, the principles of “the international classroom” is seen most clearly in subject areas where the content matter is related to international issues, which is often the case in the soft sciences (e.g. international law, migration studies). This also points to a tendency to see hard sciences as universal and soft sciences as (more) dependent on spatial location and cultural viewpoints (cf. Becher and Trowler, 2001).

Furthermore, there seems to be different patterns of language use related to disciplinary differences. In the words of Airey et al. (2017):

> Language is often viewed as a passive bearer of meaning [in the natural sciences] – an unproblematic means for reporting quantitative results. Clearly, this is not the case in humanities and the social sciences where languages is conceived as integral to thoughts and meanings being expressed. (p. 571)

Hard disciplines usually have an agreed upon set of terminology which has a direct correspondence to the concepts used by the discipline. They also tend to make use of established methods and procedures for conducting research. In soft disciplines, language more often serves as the direct means to construct knowledge and is therefore used in more flexible and creative manner. Hyland also shows that language is shaping and being shaped by disciplinary practices and epistemologies from sciences to humanities and suggests that this helps us to understand disciplinary communities and their knowledge construction (Hyland, 2000, p. 213).

The nature of teaching is also seen to vary across disciplines, e.g. seminars in humanities and lab experiments in science (see Neumann, 2001). In a book used in teacher training in Danish
university settings, Rienecker et al. (2015, pp. 251-257) state that activities in humanities primarily entail discussion, reflection and interpretation and that instructive exercises in humanities comprise co-analyses in which the teacher and the students analyze together. In that way the teacher qualifies the students’ contributions for analysis and enhances their ability to discuss and argue. Like humanities, social science favors discussion and critical stance taking, and case work is an obvious teaching activity in social sciences. According to Dolin, in the same book on university pedagogy (Rienecker et al. 2015, pp. 254-256), in the natural sciences practical work is a central part of the disciplines and so is term building or the learning of disciplinary literacy (see also Airey, 2011). Lehtonen and Lönnfors (2001) stress that certain situations (favored by different disciplines) are more demanding than others and may be more challenging for the teacher and the student in the EMI context, e.g. the seminar format. Henriksen et al.’s (2018) review of teacher cognition finds that the strongest emotions and feelings of frustration and anxiety are voiced by teachers in disciplines favoring teaching based on argumentation and discussion, which are often in the form of face-to-face interactions and thus highly unpredictable and call for flexibility and ability to react quickly. In that sense, the humanities may place a higher demand on teachers and students in an EMI context. When we look at the EMI studies presented in the previous section (Section 2.2), there seems to be a majority of studies focusing on science and engineering, possibly because of the distribution of EMI. Furthermore, there is a general tendency towards more educational studies in the sciences.

This past section has touched upon the (EMI) research performed on academic disciplines. I have shown how attitudes towards the use of English have been connected to the knowledge structure of disciplines. Here, academic disciplines were understood in a broad sense and across disciplines. Impact of disciplinary differences on teaching and learning has been widely discussed in educational research (e.g. Becher, 1989; Becher & Trowler, 2001; Neumann 2001; Neumann & Becher, 2002). Little research has explored this issue in relation to EMI in Europe, however. We know there are disciplinary differences, but we do not what that means for classroom reality.

As a bridge to the following section on the role of experiences and expectations, I will add that students bring with them experiences from earlier educational settings. These experiences equip students with repertoires affecting their classroom behavior – some of which are discipline-specific. Moreover, some scholars note that content experts are often not aware that “meanings they take for granted may be impossible to construe from outside the specialized discourse of the discipline” (Airey, 2011, p. 21). Hellekjær (2010) reported that problems in lecture comprehension
were similar to problems found in students’ L1 and that these were connected with the specific language of the disciplines and with the process of “socializing students into domain-specific academic genres and registers with specialized vocabularies” (Hellekjær, 2010, p. 248). The IntlUni project’s findings suggested that some of the challenges of “the multilingual and multicultural learning space” in a HE context were increased by the differences not only in ethnic and local cultures, but also in academic cultures and practices and in disciplinary cultures (cf. Lauridsen & Lillemose, 2015). Socialization into a specific discipline or a disciplinary culture is in many ways the purpose of an education, and in that sense it is a basic pedagogical challenge that might be further complicated by some of the realities of internationalization such as using an additional language.

2.4 The role of experiences and expectations

In this section, I will focus on the experiences and expectations that students bring with them when entering a university program. At the same time, I turn from focusing on studies of EMI to a focus on studies of “the international classroom”.

When students (local or international) enter a university program, they have already gone through an extensive inter- and intra-psychological formation process, and they bring with them experiences and expectations regarding what is expected of them. As touched upon in the previous section on the role of disciplines, university education is governed by the social practices, and the rather tacit and implicit principle that governs the social practices of university education is acquired through socialization into academic communities of practice (Becher, 1989). Thus, learning to recognize and act in accordance with implied expectations is a process of socialization where the students learn to expect certain characteristics of teaching through experience. When entering a master’s degree program, students enter a new system with different rights and obligations – some of which are disciplinary, some local and some national or academic. Thus, when students enter university they meet modes of teaching and assessment embedded in an institutional and discipline-specific culture and tradition inhabited by teachers and other students who bring with them prior knowledge and experiences, anticipations and expectations. The encounter between student and university can be troublesome, and a concrete example is when students drop out. Furthermore, teachers and institutions may feel frustrated about students who act differently from their expectations. Both of which are central concerns in the research of internationalized university settings.
In international classrooms in particular, it is important to understand the tacit rule governing any classroom as these also govern the international classroom. For this purpose, I will draw on two concepts used in general education: the implied student and the didactical contract. As previously mentioned, students (and teachers) bring with them expectations towards what it means to be a part of a certain study program or study culture. These sets of expectations can be described by the concept of the implied student, and as the name suggests, these expectations are implied. The implied student can be understood as:

*the study practice, the attitudes, interpretations and behaviour of the student, that is presupposed by the way the study is organised, the mode of teaching and assessment, by the teachers and in the relations between the students, enabling the students to actualise the study in a meaningful way.* (Ulriksen, 2009, p. 522)

The concept of the implied student was developed by Ulriksen (2009) in a research project that studied the encounter between students and the subject of physics at two Danish universities, the University of Copenhagen and the University of Roskilde. It was developed to encapsulate the array of official and tacit expectations about what the student should be like and how. The implied student as a concept is inspired by Iser’s literary concept of the implied reader (Iser, 1984). The concept of the implied reader, as well as the implied student, finds its theoretical base in Becher, Bernstein and Bourdieu with an orientation towards socialization and culture as well as the unspoken, practice and power. According to Iser, the meaning of a literary text is not preordained but emerges in the meeting between the text and the reader. Inherent in a text there is certain “conditions for reception” (Iser, 1984, p. 60) in the sense that the text presupposes certain things about the reader, and what the reader has to bring with him/her in order to create meaning from the text. In an educational context, this idea of “.conditions for reception” translates into the “conditions for interacting with the educational form and content offered by the study” (Ulriksen, 2009, p. 522). The concept of the implied student differs from the implied reader by not only focusing on inherent expectations and assumptions of the text (or the study structure) but by integrating a range of perspectives into a comprehensive view of complex interrelation and interactions between expectations of students, teachers, the institutions and the educational system. These expectations altogether create the implied notion of what a student looks like in a given setting, which affects how the individual student will be assessed by teachers, the system, their peers and in turn how the student assess the setting (Ulriksen, 2009, p. 518). However, this also
means that the ideas of “the implied student” in an educational setting is not straightforward, and agreement between different ”implied students” within one classroom or educational setting is not a given.

In some ways, the concept bears resemblance with the concept of the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968/1990). The hidden curriculum refers to what the students/pupils learn (e.g. knowledge, abilities, attitudes, roles, values, types of behavior) without it appearing in the explicit curriculum (Forquin, 1983). However, as Ulriksen argues, focus has been on what is learned from the hidden curriculum and not on “life in classrooms” (even if this was initially Jackson’s focus). The focal point of the implied student is what it means for “what is taking place in the educational setting” (Ulriksen, 2009, p. 523). The concept of the implied student can thus be used to grasp the difficulties that students may encounter in trying to make expectations and the practice of study meet (cf. Johannsen, 2012, on pharmaceutical students). In that sense, a concept such as the implied student becomes extremely relevant in an internationalized setting.

Another concept relevant to describe the reality of a classroom is Brousseau’s (1997) concept of the didactical contract. The concept of the didactical contract was introduced to describe the reciprocal perceptions, attitudes and expectations of teachers and students characterizing specific situations in the field of mathematics, what is termed “didactic situations”. The concept of the didactical contract stems from the didactique tradition (includes the works of Amade-Escot, Balacheff and Astolfi, see Astolfi et. al., 1997) and is a core conceptual tool in the theory of didactical situations (TDS). The epistemological background of TDS is related to the Vygotskyan social-interactionism and Piaget’s idea of individual knowledge being constructed in certain situations and in the interaction between the situation and the person’s prior experiences. Brousseau’s theory of didactical situations is in some ways an expansion of Piaget’s description of learning in stressing the triadic nature of the teaching relationship. This relationship is bound by an implicit contract that concerns reciprocal and specific expectations with regard to the element of content knowledge taught and learned. The didactic contract should not be considered as a formal contract, rather Brousseau characterizes it as “habits of the teacher are expected by the student and the behaviour of the student is expected by the teacher; this is the didactical contract” (Brousseau, 1997, p. 225). The contract is only to a small degree explicit. Thus, the concept can be used to describe the mutual expectations and interpretations of teachers and students’ activities in classrooms built up over time and influenced by prior experiences with the school system.
Brousseau, who originally introduced the concept of the didactical contract, had a specific focus on the distribution of responsibility between teacher and learner in relation to specific content in mathematics, and the concept has been developed (and widely used) within mathematical didactics (primarily in primary- and secondary education). However, the concept has later been opened up to also include expectations to the educational and teaching situation in a broader sense, for example the way in which a social group expects to establish relationships and interactions among its members (cf. Balacheff, 1999, for discussion of the concept; Madsen, Christiansen & Rump, 2014 for a study on student engagement in the educational field of geography; Johannsen & Jacobsen, 2010, for a study of laboratory work in physics). In didactical situations, as in all situations where people meet, there are different types of expectations in play between participants. Some of them specific to the teaching situation, while some are similar to general interactional norms, which (like the teaching situation) is culturally bound. In that sense, it is a “contract” that frames (inter)actions between teacher and student as well as amongst students.

Before we turn to specific findings of the study experiences in international university settings, some notions of culture will be presented. Students in “multilingual and multicultural classrooms” face a number of challenges, some of which of course relate to all master’s level students regardless of the language of instruction (see, e.g., Paltridge 2001; Räsänen & Klaassen, 2006). In the literature on “the international classroom”, these challenges are often described as culturally anchored. Flowerdew and Miller (1995) suggest that there are cultural differences at several levels, which may affect student understanding in a “multicultural” learning environment. Building on Flowerdew and Miller (1995), Räsänen (2011) presents a cultural model of the international classroom showing the interplay between ethnic culture, local culture, disciplinary culture and academic culture. In Räsänen’s model, ethnic culture refers to the backgrounds of teachers and students, their values and experiences. This builds on Flowerdew and Miller’s description of ethnic culture as the social-psychological features which affect the behavior of students, including how the teacher is addressed as well as how, when and if student contributions are made. The local culture refers to the source of exemplification of concepts and terms as well as local communication conventions. Academic culture concerns teaching styles, beliefs, learner identities and academic practices, whereas disciplinary culture in Räsänen’s model refers to discourse conventions, conceptual frameworks and paradigms as well as to characteristics of soft versus hard disciplines such as the ones described above. These facets of culture are dialectical, and the sum of them makes up the culture the students will meet in the classroom, and at the same time they form the experiences that individual students take with them into the classroom. The different
facets of culture and traditions I have presented here may offer a frame for understanding the cultures and traditions that interact with one another and make up the set of expectations in a given classroom. In practice, however, it might be difficult to distinguish one from the other, and it should be stressed that it is not the purpose of this study to uncover different notions of culture.

A core issue when addressing internationalization in a classroom context is that of cultural diversity in EMI classrooms, which has been addressed in literature on “the international classroom” through looking at attitudes towards multiculturalism (e.g., through surveys). Wächter (2003, p. 104) reports that German lecturers are particularly aware of the challenges raised by students’ academic heterogeneity, which brings about a variety of opportunities but also some obvious pitfalls. Henriksen et al.’s review (2018) find that across a range of teacher-focused studies there is often a focus on lack of homogeneity found in relation to the students’ language skills, cultural backgrounds and their knowledge of the educational system and argue that this can create challenges for everyone involved. An example of such a study is Tange and Jensen (2012) who analyzed interviews on teachers’ perspectives on the international students in their classrooms and the perceptions of the students’ educational culture and expectations. Their findings pointed to a need for developing an inclusive pedagogy to meet the learning needs of all students. This request seems similar to what is suggested by principles of the international classroom.

In 2008, the Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use (CIP) was established at the University of Copenhagen and has since then been a core-player in the research and development of language policy and internationalization in Denmark. Two booklets have been made at CIP, UCPH, by Kling & Larsen (2017) collecting student perspectives on the international classroom and by Kling & Skardhamar (2015) collecting teachers’ perspectives. These booklets do not represent research, but they provide an insight into some of the issues at stake. When looking through the booklet on students, “the Danish way” is described as engagement between students and teacher and as expectations of sharing points and opinions, and the Danish educational system, including the grading scale and course structure, is characterized as confusing. Furthermore, a Spanish student expresses that there was a difference in teaching and learning styles compared to her experience in Spain, e.g. group work was something new to her. The challenges mentioned by the teachers in the booklet collecting teachers’ voices are a lack of shared understanding of formal requirements related to exams and different experiences with exam types. These issues are also voiced in Kling (2013) and Tange (2010) and are attributed to educational backgrounds, different learning styles and the academic norms the students have been used to, e.g.
non-domestic students in Denmark are often less acquainted with oral exam forms and oral group work discussions during teaching session (Auður Hauksdóttir, 2012).

Worth mentioning is also a study of cross-cultural doctoral supervision at an Australian university made by Winchester-Seeto et al. (2013). The authors point out a number of what they call *intensifiers*. Their study is based on semi-structured interviews with supervisors and candidates, and they found a substantial overlap between the concerns of all candidates, regardless of cultural background. This means that many of the difficulties reported were the same no matter the nationality, local or international, of the candidate. However, they also found a number of intensifiers making experiences in a cross-cultural contexts even more complex and potentially more difficult for the non-domestic PhD-candidates. These intensifiers counted: language, cultural differences in dealing with hierarchy, separation from the familiar, separation from support, cultural differences (excluding dealing with hierarchy), stereotypes, time, and what happens when the candidate returns home. Although the setting and research focus of Winchester-Seeto et al.’s study differ from those explored here, some of the findings are useful for the purpose of creating an understanding of the added complexity students may meet in an internationalized classroom setting. The idea of intensifiers is thus useful to keep in mind when investigating international classroom settings.

To make a final summary comment, this section on the role of expectations and experiences have described four facets of culture, national culture, local culture, disciplinary culture and academic culture, which may be used to describe the setting of an internationalized classroom. To help understand the complex matter of the teaching and learning situation, I identified two concepts from general education that can help us understand the difficulties/opportunities students meet in EMI contexts: the implied student and the didactical contract. Previous studies on the diversity of the student cohort all point to perceptions of challenges (or in some cases opportunities) of the clash between experiences and expectations, even if those seem to remain unaddressed in the actual practices of students.

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19 It should be noted that the use of culture in this study refers to differences in national descent.
2.5 Summary, research contributions and notes on methodology

In this chapter, I have outlined how the consequences of internationalization of higher education have been studied. Even though research in this field has expanded alongside the increasing number of EMI programs for the past decades, we know surprisingly little about students’ actions beyond language choice, and we know even less if we look across the range of learning situations found in these teaching contexts and across disciplines. Based on findings by Hellekjær and other researchers in the Nordic context, we can assume that some teaching and learning processes will be affected by the fact that they take place in a second language, and that this affect might be influenced by discipline-specific teaching traditions. Furthermore, the increased diversity of the student cohort makes for a complex teaching setting influenced by a great variety of expectations towards what constitutes teaching and learning. This leads us back to my initial research interest: What actually happens in an internationalized classroom taught through English? As Moore describes: There is still a scarcity of studies that reveal “how knowledge is constructed and of how learning may be studied […] in the complex context of multilingual, ‘internationalised’ university classrooms” (Moore, 2014, p. 605). For this purpose, I will focus my attention to the students as “it is helpful to remember that what the student does is actually more important in determining what is learned than what the teacher does” (Schuell 1986, p. 429). Adopting a student perspective may lead to an increased understanding of students’ prerequisites for participation and their motives for (inter)acting in certain (and sometimes inappropriate) ways. And while there are significant bodies of literature concerning the challenges that lecturers perceive when teaching EMI, very little research has been done on students (see also Henriksen, Holmen & Kling, 2018). Furthermore, as I argued in Section 2.3, little is still known on the role of disciplines; by including more than one disciplinary context, this study provides a unique insight into disciplinary differences in classroom practices in internationalized higher education. To my knowledge, this is the first ethnographic study of EMI to include more than one disciplinary context.

Before I end this chapter and move on to the methodology of and methods used in this study, some comments on methodology in previous research is in order. The bulk of studies in EMI and “the international classroom” has been quantitative studies comparing grades and language test scores, or attitudinal studies using interviews, surveys and questionnaires. Here, it should be noted that research in “the international classroom” has often been treated in combination with either EMI, CLIL or ELF. The value of ethnographic data in empirical explorations of EMI (as well as ELF) has been recognized, but to date the implementation of ethnography is still scarce. A number of studies have adopted a more ethnographically oriented approach (see, for example, Ljosland 2008;
Söderlundh, 2010; Smit, 2010; Gunderman, 2014; Komori-Glatz, 2017), and Dimova et al. (2015) call for “the field [of EMI research] to move towards more in-depth ethnographic and observational studies to improve our knowledge about the complexity of teaching and learning practices” (pp. 317–318). Thus, in that sense the study presented in this thesis may also contribute to an enhanced knowledge not only of teaching and learning practices, but also of how an ethnographic approach can be used to obtain that knowledge and which limitations and options this approach offers. In the following chapter, I will account for my methodological choices.
3. Methodology and research design

Whereas the previous chapter frames my study within the context of already existing literature, this chapter will explain how I approach answering the research questions proposed in Chapter 1. Thus, I will argue for the methodology considered the best approach to inform my interest in the classroom reality of students in internationalized university settings and discuss the methodological considerations this interest has given rise to. There is of course a considerable overlap between theory and methodology in this study, and I start this chapter with some overall methodological considerations that tie in closely with Chapter 2 – especially section 2.4. I then proceed to the methods, describing and discussing the design of the study, including the various data sources that have been collected and interpreted in a specific way. I will argue for the selection of site, discuss a number of ethical considerations, describe the different phases of data collection, and end with final comments on the selection and representation of data.

3.1 Methodological considerations

For a deeper understanding of the complexity of the realities that students face in an “international classroom” in different learning situations and across disciplines, one must adopt an approach that cover as many facets of being a student as possible and an approach that aims to understand their actions from an emic perspective. I have worked from the conviction that when you are exploring an abstract, social phenomenon, this requires a variety of data that aims to encompass a complex reality. I will argue that this is done best through linguistic ethnography. As Hymes argues: “the relations within a particular community or personal repertoire are an empirical problem, calling for a mode of description that is jointly ethnographic and linguistic” (1972, p. 39). I believe that, to put it simply, pedagogy and interaction are inextricably linked and both are realized through talk (Walsh, 2006, p. 2). In that sense, the classroom can be seen both as a pedagogical site and as a linguistic site. This is why the present study focuses on the intersection of two lines of research: linguistics and ethnography. As suggested in the previous chapter, there have been calls for EMI researchers to recognize the investigative benefits of ethnographic research (Dimova et al., 2015; Smit, 2010). In view of the fact that the emic perspective of students are at the center of this study, the label ‘ethnography’ practically suggested itself. And, even if it has only recently been introduced in studies of EMI, it is an established and well-described research method for qualitative educational interaction (e.g. Chaudron, 2000; Watson-Gegeo, 1997).
To make the individual ethnography substantial and comparable with other ethnographies, the use of contextualized “thick data” (Agar, 1993) is considered essential. Ethnographers tend to collect different types of data (video and audio recordings of interactions, field notes, interview transcripts, policy documents, letters and photographs etc.). These data types together help the ethnographer understand the complexity of social events (Shaw, Copland & Snell, 2015, p. 10). The aim of my data collection was to see the students in as many different learning situations as possible. This means students in different disciplinary settings and students within a given disciplinary setting in different learning situations such as group work, in lectures, in supervision, in exams, during breaks and on social media. The data of this study include the students’ own perspectives through interviews and questionnaires as well as my perspective through observation and field notes and lastly their actual practices through recordings. Thus, the data consisted of:

- observations (incl. Facebook and the intranet site for the University of Copenhagen’s, henceforth UCPH, courses)
- field notes
- video and audio recordings of
  - group work with and without the presence of a teacher
  - teacher-fronted lectures
  - individual- and group supervision
  - coffee-breaks
  - and oral exams
- course curricula
- conversations (face-to-face and e-mail/messenger correspondence with teachers and students)
- interviews

Additionally, a student questionnaire was introduced to get an overview of students of the three courses and to facilitate the process of selecting informants for interviews.

Before moving on to describe the methodological approach of this study, I have to establish what I mean when I talk about “classroom”, as this ties closely with my data collection. When talking about “classroom”, I adopt the concept of community of practice defined as “groups of people who
share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). This means that classroom activities refer to all social activity centered around a course involving students of the course and with the assumed goal of getting through the course. This includes informal activities; as Tinto (1987) has shown, successful social integration plays a role in student retention. This also means that the classroom is a social space that goes beyond physical location to include other forms of communication, for example social media. The course is also not just an organization of individuals for a common purpose but inevitably a goal-directed process that unfolds in time. Thus, there are three beginnings and three ends in my story of the international student.

3.1.1 Linguistic ethnography

Now it is only appropriate to introduce the methodology guiding this study. Linguistic ethnography (LE) has to date often been viewed as an umbrella term, as a number of different research traditions are used to interpret the discursive space provided by the combination of context analysis and interactional analysis, amongst others interactional sociolinguistics (for an overview, see Rampton, 2007, see also Creese, 2008, and Shaw, Copland & Snell, 2015). Common for all sub-traditions is that language is seen as a part of (and as mutually shaping) a social and cultural context, and that these “contexts for communication should be investigated rather than assumed” (Rampton, 2007, p. 585). LE positions itself in relation to work of scholars such as Erickson, Gumperz and Hymes within micro-ethnography and interactional sociolinguistics, respectively. Their theoretically informed ways of working provide a catalyst for investigating language and communication and linking it to wider social processes (Shaw et al., 2015, p. 9). However, LE claims distinctiveness by keeping the door open for wider interpretive approaches from other disciplines such as applied linguistics, educational linguistics and sociology (cf. Creese, 2008). Linguistic ethnography has been described as “tying ethnography down and opening linguistics up” (Rampton et al., 2004, p. 4). In short, this means that ethnography serves as a way of enriching fundamentally linguistic projects, while linguistics can be a way of helping researchers to reach deeper into the context description of social or institutional processes (Hymes, 1996). Linguistic analysis is a broad-based approach that, for the purposes of this research, includes micro-interactional analysis. Variants of ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, on the other hand, provide an opportunity to gain insight into social and cultural structures in social
interaction (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2007), thus making it possible to look at a context that may not be directly present, or at least not referred to, in interactional analysis.

From an ethnographic perspective, every act of language needs to be situated in wider patterns of human social behavior (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 11). In that sense, the distinction of linguistic and non-linguistic is an artificial one. When people act (or not), they do so in a social environment in which a complex of aspects operate: culture, language, social structure, history, political relations, and so forth (cf. Blommaert & Dong, 2010). As described in section 2.4, the educational setting encountered by the students is framed by specific expectations of (and to) the discipline, the educational field and by the institution bound by historical and political agendas preceding the specific situation, all of which also characterizes teaching and learning in a given context (cf. Ulriksen, 2009). In this study, I subscribe to the ethnographic principle of situatedness (cf. Blommaert, 2005). This means that I believe that every event is uniquely situated – even if they look the same (such as oral exams), they are happening at another time. A uniquely situated event is a crystallization of various layers of context from the changeable and unpredictable micro-contexts as well as the more stable historical, political and cultural macro-contexts. When talking about didactic aims, we can also refer to multilayered contexts. Here, macro-level concerns the teaching-objective of the activity, didactic aims at the meso-level deal with the realization of the activity, e.g. the organization, while at the micro-level didactic aims correspond to unities of interactions (see Johannsen & Jacobsen, 2010).

To capture how students participate in everyday activities of the classroom (and other educational and social situations), I thus draw on interactional and ethnographic approaches, which allow for a reconciliation of micro and macro perspectives that influence the everyday lives of students. Insights based on close analysis of audio- and video-recorded interaction are central in my attempt to uncover meaning-making processes in the international classrooms. The interactional analyses in this dissertation consists of sequential microanalyses of social interactions: “detailed and fairly comprehensive analyses of key episodes [of social interaction], drawing on a range of frameworks to describe both small- and large-scale phenomena and processes” (Rampton, 2006, p. 24). Thus, they are close analyses of situated language use providing a fundamental and characteristic insight into mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in classroom activities (Creese, 2008). These types of analyses are not approached as traditional conversation analysis (see Sacks, Schlegloff and Jefferson, 1974), but are informed by it. In line with the approach of LE, I incorporate a larger set of data than interactional approaches typically do to ensure that the analysis
of interaction remains “embedded in the processes and structures of the institution that has come to produce such interaction” (Roberts et al. 2014, p. 5). In terms of the breadth and depth of coverage, ethnographic methodology can be said to outperform other methods, as it uncovers categories and interrelations that would otherwise remain unknown. Rampton et al. (2004) argue: “[...] Ethnography tries to comprehend both tacit and articulated understandings of the participants in whatever processes and activities are being studied, and it tries to do justice to these understandings in its reports to outsiders” (pp. 2-3). Thus, ethnographies usually have an interpretative rather than objective approach to data analysis, and they typically draw on a wider set of data, paying attention to what their participants pay attention to, and what not. I will return to the discussion of analysis and what I mean by “key episodes” in section 3.6.

But before we move from methodology on to the description of methods used in this study, it is important to emphasize that in line with the ethnographic methodology, I consider the process as important as the product. As Blommaert and Dong argue: “the process is the product” (2008, p. 12, see also Blommaert 2001, 2004; Ochs 1979). The process of gathering and interpreting “knowledge” about a certain phenomenon is a part of that knowledge. Thus, ethnography has to attribute great importance to the history of what is commonly considered “data”. Furthermore, an ethnographic approach includes elements of choice, and a plan can never be settled beforehand. This means that ethnographic studies are influenced by a certain amount of “coincidence” in the field. This can be seen as a strength of the approach, as it implies openness towards all factors that may play a role, but it can also give the study a certain subjectivity. Making methodological choices explicit is therefore crucial, and in the following sections, I will thus make explicit the process of data collection in this study, including the choice of site, the ethical considerations and my fieldwork.

### 3.2 Choice of site

The design of the study is based on the idea that complex matters call for complex data sets, and, as noted in the previous chapter (Section 2.4), this study was designed as a multi-sited ethnographic study from the outset (cf. Marcus, 1995). Multi-sited here refers to different courses at different faculties at UCPH. I opted for multiple sites since having data from different courses offered at three different faculties representing three different disciplines would help me determine the disciplinary uniqueness of findings on each site. As also described in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3), internationalization and the spread of English taught programs differ from faculty to faculty, and
the multi-sited design thus provides an opportunity to look at internationalization in different contexts by obtaining information about the significance of various settings for student practices and academic culture. Each site is treated as a case, and having multiple cases involving more natural settings increases reliability as similarities across disciplinary contexts can be confirmed or dismissed (Silverman, 1993). However, as the cases represent real life situations, it is not the sole purpose of this study to compare for generalization, and the cases will thus not play an equal role in the analyses presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

Due to the inductive nature of the methodological approach, I consider openness important to exploring the complexities of the dynamics of the international classroom from a student perspective. However, you can only see something if you know where to look. This implies that an interest should be defined beforehand, and choice of site then reflects where the researcher expects to find knowledge about the phenomenon s/he is interested in (Wei & Moyer, 2008). Thus, I will here describe the reflections behind the carefully selected case design, which included three courses from three different faculties at UCPH. The three courses were selected so that they were non-language courses in the second semester of a 2-year international master’s program. As there are few international bachelor’s programs, the courses had to be found at master’s level. Since it was desirable that some degree of socialization into the specific setting had already taken place, courses on the second semester were chosen. This also meant that the courses had to be a part of a full degree program with an assumed progression throughout.

The process of selecting the three specific sites was based on an information-oriented selection, meaning that they were chosen on the basis of expectations about the information they would provide (Flyvbjerg, 2006). I first decided which faculties to include out of UCPH’s six faculties: Health and Medical Sciences, Humanities, Law, Science, Social Sciences and Theology. The criteria of the selected course being a part of a full-degree program ruled out the Faculty of Law, as there are no international programs. The remaining faculties counted (in a continuum ranging from most courses offered in English to fewest) Science, Social Science, Health and Medical

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20 In a Nordic collaboration, researchers have explicitly recommended that bachelor degree programs are not internationalized, see http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:730884/FULLTEXT01.pdf
sciences, Humanities and Theology. As the Faculty of Science has embraced the use of English to the greatest extent, this faculty was chosen as one of the three faculties. I had, however, not settled on the other two other faculties before the search for courses; only that the courses should be found on three different faculties for maximum variation (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The courses were selected by looking through the course catalogue for UCPH focusing on courses offered in English at each of the faculties in the given semester. A number of criteria guided my selection, e.g. that the teacher(s) should have (at least) receptive knowledge of Danish was chosen as a stable factor and as a variable that the stated teaching format should differ (e.g. lectures vs. seminars). As we saw in the previous chapter (Section 2.3), some teaching forms are considered more difficult than others are. The courses ended up having different exam forms as well (oral exam, project based exam, and written exam). As briefly touched upon in Chapter 2, oral exams are considered the ideal way to examine both interactional and pedagogical issues, as non-participation from the students is not an option.

It should be noted, however, that as I could only be in one place at the time, some logistical considerations were necessary such as time of teaching and geographical location. The faculties of UCPH are spread over different areas of Copenhagen. The selection of sites thus became a puzzle of sticking to the information-based selection and logistic factors, and some steps in the selection process might therefore more precisely be described as conscious coincidences on my hand. The choice eventually fell on three courses from the Faculty of Humanities, the Faculty of Science, and the Faculty of Health and Medicine, respectively, as these courses would represent three different levels of internationalization. Figure 2 below shows the three courses placed in the continuum of English taught program also presented in Section 2.3.
Course A (the Faculty of Humanities) was part of a program recently established with the purpose of attracting international students; course B (the Faculty of Health and Medicine) had been taught in English for a considerable period of time; while course C (the Faculty of Science) had just recently shifted to English. It should be noted that referring to the courses as A, B and C does not reflect a hierarchy between the courses, but merely the timeline for my entrance. The courses followed a module structure, meaning that one semester is split into two modules. The fieldwork was thus done over a duration of one semester (course A ran in the first module, and course B and C ran simultaneously in the second module). All courses were followed from the course start to exam (i.e. over 10-12 weeks). Further introduction to the courses will be presented in Chapter 4.

3.3 Gaining access - ethical concerns

An essential part of the study was getting access to the courses. Furthermore, in ethnographic research the well-being of the participating informants must permeate the research design as a constant consideration. Before I proceed to describe the actual data collection, I will describe the initial phase of gaining access and the ethical considerations made prior to and during the study.

After course selection, the first step of the data collection was to obtain permission to attend and observe them. To this end, I sent e-mails to the course administrator (and teacher if this was not the same person) of each course and the head of study of the program. All the course
administrator/teachers I asked gave their permission based on the assumption that participating in the study could inform future course planning and development. Like all ethnographic studies, my data collection relies crucially on establishing a trust relationship with the participants of the study. This gives rise to a number of ethical considerations that need to be taken into account, including the responsibility to inform and protect my participants. This is often done through oral or written information and afterwards signing of a consent form where participants sign that they have been informed and that they can withdraw whenever they would like to. Thus, I had to make sure that all participants entered the research voluntarily and with sufficient information. To inform the students, the teachers posted a message written by me on the course’s intranet, Absalon, prior to course start. The message said that I would be attending the class, and it included a short description of the purpose of my study and my contact information (see Appendix 1). I also stated that the students could contact me if they did not want to participate in my study – an option no students made use of. I would then attend the first lecture and present myself and my project briefly to the class, and I would always make myself available for questions concerning the research process and the project. It was also stressed that the participants could at all times withdraw from the study. A more thorough description of the project was provided for the students (and teachers) in the consent form. The consent form included half an A4 page of information and was written in English (see Appendix 2). All participants of this study have given their consent to being audio- and video-recorded and that these recordings are used for research purposes.

In course A and C, I also observed oral exams. As the exam situation is very sensitive for both students and examiners, I was careful not to overstep any boundaries. The approach for getting access to oral exams depended on my rapport with the teacher and students of the two courses, and was thus a bit different in each course. As was the number of exams, I was allowed to observe and record, and in course C I was not allowed to record any of the exams. In course A, I started by asking the teacher if I could observe and record the exams, as I was interested in exam interaction. He immediately agreed and asked the external examiner who also agreed. Furthermore, I asked the head of study with the same result; he had no problem with it as long as the students did not either. We agreed that the best approach was for the teacher to write a message on the intranet site asking the students’ permission, on my behalf, to observe and record their exams. The message stated that the students could write to either the teacher or me if they did not want me there. Three students did that. The students who regularly attended class, I was also able to ask in person in class. The small number of students not available for me to ask before the exam were all asked on the day of the exam. This was, however, not preferable because the students might be nervous
about the exam and thus not in need of having to decide on anything concerning the process of the exam at that point. The students I had already asked once were also asked on the day of the exam to make absolutely sure that they were not uncomfortable with my being there. A small number of students did not want me in the room, whereas the students I did observe found that it was a good experience to have me there. I ended up observing and recording 25 oral exams in course A. The recording procedure is described in Section 3.4.2.

In course C, the approach was slightly different. I once again started by asking the teacher if I could observe and record the oral exams. The teacher would ask the external examiner and the other teacher attending the exam. Where the teacher in course A immediately agreed, the teachers of course C were a bit more hesitant, and asked if it would be okay if I did not record it and only sat in with five exams (equivalent to the number of students in the study groups). The exam was done individually by students who would be presenting a group project (for further description see Section 4.3), and I chose five students from the same group whose exams I wanted to observe – the same group I had observed throughout the course. The teacher then asked those five students individually on my behalf stressing that they could at all times change their minds about my presence. All five students agreed that I could observe their exams. As I only observed five students, my observations were only discussed with these students and not the entire class, and the teacher mediated the discussion. The benefit of having the teacher approach the students was that it might be easier for the students to turn down the teacher than me.

Another ethical consideration is the process of anonymization. Due to the sensitive nature of the data, great care has been taken in this process. The process of anonymization and the aim of presenting thick description (Davis, 1995) are not irreconcilable, but they do place the researcher in the recurring dilemma of wanting to provide as much information as possible without compromising the anonymity of the participating informants. This proved especially challenging when writing Chapter 4 on the introduction to the courses. I limit all information on the courses to the bare necessities and have left out the year of my data collection. The teachers are generally easier to identify than the students are. In course A where data from the oral exam are presented, this is especially important to consider since the content of the utterances cannot be censured. To minimize the possibility of identification, basic information, such as the gender of the teacher and internal examiner, is not provided. Even though gender issues might be extremely relevant for studies with another research focus, this information is considered less important for the purpose of this study. The focal students have been given pseudonyms reflecting their ethnic background.
In Chapter 5, which presents the results of the analysis of the oral exams, no pseudonyms are used in the interactional data, and information on the students is restricted to their linguistic prerequisites and, if relevant, academic background.

Having described the initial phase of the fieldwork and the ethical considerations, I will in the following section describe the practicalities of my observations and discuss my role as a researcher.

3.4 Participant observation and my role as a researcher

In ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher must try to experience the world as it is viewed by the members of the researched milieu. Participant observation is a key method in ethnographic research and in educational contexts, as it can provide in-depth information about phenomena such as the types of language use and variety of events that occur in classrooms. Every human being participates in and observes their everyday interactions but only few use their observations systematically with a social scientific purpose (Hong & Duff, 2002, p. 190). To this end, ethnographic fieldwork is continuous with ordinary life (Hymes, 1996), and our ability to learn ethnographically is an extension of what every human essentially must do, that is, learn the meanings, norms and patterns of a certain way of life. Much of what we seek to find out in ethnography is, in that sense, knowledge that others already have.

The idea with participant observations is that the researcher participates in the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people as one of the ways in which the researcher can get to know both explicit and intrinsic aspects of their routines and culture (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). Observation thus also makes available indirect information as opposed to self-report accounts such as questionnaires and interviews (Dörnyei, 2007). Being a student involves different types of settings and activities, including more formal activities such as lectures and group work and more informal extracurricular activities such as student initiated events and Friday bar and the use of social media (cf. Tinto, 1987). Thus, I did participant observation of group work, classroom teaching, coffee and lunch breaks, met with students outside class, and I was enrolled in intranet sites for the courses and in Facebook groups, as both informal and formal situations give access to understanding study culture and study practices, including language practices, in everyday contexts.
When doing participant observation you combine two contradictory processes of participation and observing, and it is always difficult to balance those processes. Dewalt and Dewalt has defined a continuum for participant observation going from non-participation to complete participation (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2010, pp. 22-24). My aim for participation in classroom settings was to participate as a student, and my role was thus closer to complete participation where the researcher becomes a part of the studied community. As my focus was on the students, I would physically and psychologically be placed with the students. In this regard, it is important to note that I have a quite neutral Scandinavian look, and at the time of my fieldwork I was 25 years old, approximately the same age as the students, both of which made it possible for me not to stand out as a researcher and thereby an outsider. However, I did not try to hide my identity as a researcher, and even though I would participate in social interaction and occasionally in academic activities, including preparing for class, I was not taking the exam. In that sense, I was a ratified member having the role of a non-contributing student.

As indicated above, the overall idea with my observations was to go along with the routines of the students so that they would accept me as a part of their community of practice. This meant that I had to adapt my observations for each course due to factors such as, amongst others, the classroom size. These adaptations were not formalized but merely a part of my participation in each class. For example, initially I would sit where there was vacant seat, and I would try to place myself in different areas of the classroom for each session. However, as the students found their favorite seats, I would accommodate my practices to that, and after a number of lectures I would also sit in the same seat in each session. In relation to group work, I would also follow the teaching practices. In course A, the groups were predominantly organized by random selection, e.g. by the teacher counting to five and then starting over. I would then be included in the count and placed in a random group. In course B and C, where the groups were stable throughout the course, I chose to follow one group throughout the course in course C and different groups in course B. In partner exercises, I would partner up with the student sitting next to me. Where it felt natural, I would participate in academic discussions with the students, but I neither asked nor answered questions in teacher-fronted lectures. Feedback sessions and supervision happened individually in course A and in groups in course B and C. The individual supervision in course A took place in class and was thus recorded (see Section 3.4), but in order to respect the dialogical space of the teacher and students, I sat with the rest of the class as they waited for their own supervision. In group supervision and feedback, I would follow the group to which I was assigned.
Being present in a setting inevitably has implications and consequences for what is taking place, as the observer must necessarily interact with those studied (Emerson, 2011). Data provided through observation are, thus, more precisely described as generated rather than collected, as the researcher’s personal experiences to some extent shape the material (Saville-Troike, 1997; Aspers, 2007). Earlier, anthropologists thought they could present an open window to another world. However, in today’s ethnographic research, it is widely accepted that the researcher’s background, interests, personality and theoretical knowledge should be included in the research account through reflectivity (Blommaert & Dong, 2010), e.g. by considering what aspects of the research situation might have influenced the research participants’ doings and sayings, cf. the observer’s paradox (cf. Labov, 1984).

As the context of each course observed in my study was different, so was my role in the field. My level of knowledge in the field studied influenced both my participation and observations. In the humanities case (course A), I had extensive background knowledge as it is my work place, and I have been a student of humanities myself. To study already known environments can be a problem since you risk taking habitual practices for granted (Aspers, 2007). It also meant that I was in the privileged position of being within my own comfort zone, which, in turn, meant that building rapport became very natural. As it was an international study program, the most obvious habitual practices would be questioned and negotiated, and it thus became a very personal experience challenging my own tacit assumptions. In course A, students (both local and international) immediately accepted me, and I was even invited to private events of the class (e.g. exam celebration). Furthermore, I was able to participate in academic group discussions in class whenever I considered it appropriate. In the two other courses, I did not have the same a priori experiences of the field in question, which meant that my experiences in the field were more from an outsider’s point of view. Furthermore, in course B (the health case), I fell academically short due to my lack of knowledge of the statistical program R. However, in this course, the fact that I was a (young) researcher was considered of high prestige, and the students seemed to feel obliged to contribute to the research. Thus, there was a general interest in me and my project. However, I was never a ratified member in the same way as in course A. In course C, I had the hardest time becoming an active member of the community. I found that my experience of remaining on the periphery in this course resembled the experience of being an international student in this course.

It should be mentioned that in course C my colleague, Pete Westbrook, also did classroom observations. Pete Westbrook is a language consultant at the Centre for Internationalisation and
Parallel Language Use (CIP) \(^{21}\). The CIP centre was essentially established to monitor and support the university’s parallel language strategy, including the process of implementing EMI across all university faculties. Pete’s classroom observations were carried out as a part of a research-supported development project referred to as The Language Strategy\(^{22}\) focusing on needs analysis in relation to the linguistic consequences of internationalization of Higher Education. I did not know this before starting my fieldwork, and it was thus not a part of the research design. However, as Erickson and Stull (1998) argue, there are benefits of team ethnography such as being able to share, interpret and discuss field observations. Thus, Pete and I would discuss certain observations. The purpose of Pete’s observations was, however, different than mine, as Pete was not there for research purposes but for teaching development and thus had a teacher focus, whereas my focus was on the students. Moreover, Pete’s observations were not as extensive as mine were; I observed most of the lectures and group sessions in course C alone. Even though I felt less accepted in course C than in the other courses, I was still closer to the role of a fellow student than that of a researcher, a claim that I am able to support as I could observe a difference in behavior whenever Pete was there. As Pete is a native speaker of English, an “adult” and a linguist, his presence completely overshadowed mine. In some ways, he became an undisguised foreigner representing the institution of UCPH and a language expert. More than once, students and teachers would turn to him to ask “Is that good English?”. In group work, students would switch from Danish to English whenever Pete was there. My experience of this change in behavior corresponds with Pete’s own reflections on his observations. I did not observe this kind of obvious change in behavior in my presence – in any of the courses. That does not mean, of course, that my presence did not affect the situation. As Blommaert and Dong stress: “There is always an observer’s effect, and it is essential to realize that.” (2010, p. 29)

In the classroom setting, it was possible for me to go along with the routines of the classroom. This was not possible in the exam situation, as it was intrinsically unnatural to have an extra non-contributing person present. My role in the exams was thus limited to observing. To describe my observations of the oral exams, I have to talk about the actual examination and the time just before and after the exam. In both courses, the oral exams started with a short briefing between teacher

\(^{21}\) https://cip.ku.dk/english/

\(^{22}\) https://cip.ku.dk/english/strategicinitiatives/languagestrategy/
and external examiner, then proceeded to the actual examination followed by a discussion of the grade and ended with delivery of the grade along with a short justification. The student was not present during the briefing and the discussion of the grade, and neither was I. The procedure I found most appropriate in both courses was to wait with the student as s/he waited to enter the exam room, observe the exam and then leave the room with the student. I would not observe the briefing and the discussion of the grade to ensure the privacy of the teacher and the internal examiner. The same applied to the grading and feedback. I did not want to place the students in the situation of me knowing their grade if they did not want to. Furthermore, the time leading up to and following the actual examination represented essential periods of observation, as the students would express their immediate reaction to the experience, and almost all students did tell me their grade. In course A, the day of the exam was divided into a morning session and an afternoon session, including a lunch break. During the lunch break, I would eat with the teachers and talk about the exams. In that way, I also got an insight into their experiences.

Before the exam, I discussed the procedure of observation with the teacher of each course, and we decided beforehand on the most expedient place to sit. Figure 3 shows where I sat in course A. Initially, I had doubts about sitting opposite to the students at the exam table, as this could seem intimidating. However, the students of course A all expressed that it felt like having a friend at the exam. This seating also allowed me to observe their reactions to the exam situation and events in more detail.

![Exam observation in course A.](image)

In course C, I observed five students from the same group while they individually presented a group project. Afterwards, the students got feedback on the project report as a group. I observed

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23 The exam is discussed further in Chapter 5.
this feedback session, but did not observe when the students received their individual grades. Although the students consented to my presence, they expressed concern about the number of people in the room, as there would be two teachers, an external examiner and then me. The teacher, the students and I therefore agreed that I would be placed behind them, so they would not notice me (see Figure 4).

In addition to the ethnographic methods accounted for above, my data gathering included digital ethnography in order to extend my offline data collection to include online communication (Varis, 2014). Each course at UCPH has an intranet site, and in the courses I observed the site used was called “Absalon”. The site is used for messages from the teacher, such as the one announcing my presence in the course, but it can also be used for peer feedback and student discussions. I was enrolled in the intranet site on par with the teachers and students of the courses. This meant that I would get the same messages and notifications as the students (and teacher) would. As classroom interaction is not limited to the formal classroom but includes informal situations and, in today’s digital world, also social media, I also included interactions on Facebook in my data collection. In all three courses, Facebook was used for practicalities of group work, i.e. for sharing documents and planning meetings. In course A, the students also used a Facebook page for all students starting the program. This page was used very actively and was managed by students, one of whom enrolled me. As the teacher was not enrolled in that page, this gave access to communication with students as the only participants.

Figure 3. Exam observation in course C.
3.4.1 Field notes

My observations were written up as field notes either in class or immediately after a given situation to help me generate ethnographic rich points (Agar, 2006). The observations were unstructured and written down as narrative field notes, meaning that they were not driven by fixed parameters or measuring points, but rather motivated by open research questions (Dörney, 2007, p. 179). The field notes were not used directly in my analysis, but informed my interpretations and functioned as a diary. The choice of what to write down reflects “the ethnographer’s changing sense of what might possibly be interesting […] such writing is an interpretive process: it is the very first act of textualizing.” (Creese et al., 2008, pp. 202-203). In the beginning of fieldwork, usually you make descriptive and general observations, and eventually you begin to (be able to) identify what social processes are interesting (Adler & Adler, 1994). As course A was the first course I observed, my observations of course B and C were influenced by my experiences in course A. This is, however, not considered a problem as the researcher always brings with them their previous experiences (Postholm, 2005). With regard to the quality of the field notes, there is not much difference to be found from course to course. However, the quantity of field notes differ as I participated more in course A than in the other courses.

I provide an example of my field notes below. The example is from course B almost mid-way through the course and from group work.

Example, field notes, course B

De snakker om noget, og så siger Anna: ”how would you write that?”. William siger at han lige kan prøve. Anna siger “I’m so confused and also I’m on Facebook”. Jonas og Marokko snakker sammen. De snakker lidt om nogle s’er og suffikser der skal på. William går over til Anna og siger at det er ”just easier”, men så snakker de på dansk om hvad fejlen er, og hun siger at hun har talt forkert. ”Hvad er suffiks?” William kommer over og forklarer Anna det, men på engelsk denne gang. De er igen i tvivl om spørgsmålet. Denne gang et andet. Måske er det et trickspørgsmål.

They talk about something, and then Anna says “how would you write that?”. William says that he can try to do it. Anna says “I’m so confused and also I’m on Facebook”. Jonas and Marocco talks. They talk about some s’es and suffixes. William approaches Anna and says “it’s just easier”, but then they speak Danish about what the error might be, and she says that she has counted wrong. “What is
suffix?" William approaches Anna but explains in English this time. They are once again in doubt about the question. Maybe it’s a trick question.

For an outsider, it could seem as if the students described in this field note are talking about linguistic issues when they talk about “s’es and suffixes”. However, they are actually talking about the statistical program R. Field notes thus often only make sense if you have sufficient information about the context. At the same time, this example is suggestive of the use of field notes as a small but necessary part of the data interpretation process (see more in Section 3.6).

3.4.2 Recordings
To gain knowledge of the everyday life of students in an international classroom, including their communication practices, a core source of data was interactions (student-student and student-teacher) in different activities (lectures, breaks, group work, supervision, exam). These interactions were audio and/or video-recorded. Three video cameras were used to capture what happened inside the classroom: one in the front of the classroom and two in each corner at the back of the room to provide the greatest possible overview of the classroom. The cameras were stable and recorded through all classroom activities, including breaks. As earlier mentioned, breaks are considered just as important as formal teaching activities, as students often debrief each other about academic activities – and talk to their friends – during breaks.

The video recordings of classroom interaction helped my observations, as I could revisit a given situation. The recordings also allowed me to see a lot more than my actual focus in class as well as interactions that took place without my presence. For example, during breaks, I would often join students in getting a coffee or a few minutes of sun, while the cameras would still record students staying inside the classroom. The cameras were not introduced until after I had observed the course for a couple of weeks, allowing the students to be acquainted with me without the cameras (inspired by Söderlundh, 2010). As the cameras would inevitably draw attention to the fact that I was observing them, I attempted to become accepted by the students as a fellow student rather than a researcher. I have good reason to believe that this strategy worked as me setting up cameras became a comic feature for the students – especially in courses A and B. Furthermore, a relatively late introduction of cameras gave me the opportunity to notice any change in behavior before and after the cameras were introduced. In that sense, I have, to the extent it was possible, tried to attend to the observer’s paradox in the research design. In the recordings, the students do
mention the cameras a few times, but they do so either as a joke “haha she got that on tape” or as an evaluation of their own group effort as “not worth recording”. My general impression was that as the cameras became a part of the interior of the classroom, the students did not pay much attention to them. As one student from course A said, commenting on the cameras recording her and a friend eating lunch: “I hardly even notice it”.

In addition to the video cameras (which would capture sound in the area close to the camera), six microphones were placed around the classroom in a box that looked like a pencil case. Furthermore, as the video cameras could only record what happened inside the classroom, I would audio record group work happening outside the room if needed. This depended on the practices of the course in question and of the specific group. The oral exams in course A were also audio-recorded, as I felt that video cameras would attract too much attention in a vulnerable situation. In that situation, I placed the audio recorder on the exam table in front of me, trying to make it look as natural as possible. Interviews were also audio-recorded.

3.4.3 Questionnaire
The data material also included a questionnaire. The questionnaire was not a part of my initial plans for the data collection. When I started my fieldwork in course A (the first course I observed), I fairly quickly got an overview of the different types of students. I learned their names quickly, and I became friendly with a relatively large number of students. At the same time, it became clear to me that a questionnaire based on these initial observations would provide me with an even better overview of the students. The questionnaire turned out to be even more relevant in course B and C than in course A. Course B was much bigger, which made it very difficult to gather basic information about the students. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, I did not manage to establish as friendly a relationship with students in course C as in the other two courses, which also hampered the gathering of basic information about a large number of students.

The aim of the questionnaire was thus to gather background information on the students (see Appendix 3 for the complete questionnaire). The questionnaire consisted of five sections: basic information, national identity, language, academic background and future, and personal questions such as marital status and living conditions for an insight into their lives outside of class. The sections basic information, national identity and language, contained factual questions such as gender, age, citizenship and self-reported first language(s) (Kruuse, 2005). The questionnaire’s
section on academic backgrounds included questions concerning the subject of the students’ bachelor degrees and previous university enrollments. This type of information became essential for future analyses (see Chapter 6) and would have been difficult to obtain through other sources than a questionnaire. This section also included questions such as: “Have you been studying abroad (apart from your time at UCPH)?” Additionally, questions concerning which sector (public, private or university) the students’ saw themselves working in and which language(s) they imagine will be their work language(s) were included. Furthermore, the students’ were asked if they planned on staying in Denmark after graduation and if they saw it as an advantage to know Danish. These questions were closed, with students choosing an answer from a predefined set of categories including the category “other”. Additionally, the section on academic background and future included two open questions on motivations for choosing EMI (only asked of the local students), and for choosing to study in Denmark (only asked of the international students). The questionnaire’s last section containing personal questions did, in addition to the questions introduced above, also include an option for the students to write their names and e-mail addresses if they were willing to be interviewed; information important for the selection of interviewees described below.

Small adaptations in the formulation of questions were made to make the questionnaire suitable for each course. It should be noted here that the questionnaire for course C included a section not included in the questionnaires handed out in the other courses concerning “learning through English”. As I have described in the previous section, Pete Westbrook also observed course C with a purpose different from mine, and to avoid overloading the students, we decided that it would be best to combine our questionnaires. The answers from these questions were thus also available for me to see.

The questionnaire was used to provide an even deeper insight into the context of each course and functioned as a supplement to my observations. The questions were asked so that I, in principle, would be able to compare the courses, but the questionnaire was not meant for extensive statistical analysis. I handed out the questionnaire in a paper version in the lectures where the largest possible number of students were expected to attend, for example when exam information was planned to be presented. This approach was considered useful in providing the largest possible response rate, but it also includes a potential bias in not encompassing students rarely attending class. However, as the questionnaire was handed out in class in an essential lecture, the number of respondents can
arguably be seen as representing the number of active students. In course A, 24 students answered; in course B, 50 students answered, and in course C, 30 students answered the questionnaire.

### 3.5 Interviews

In the previous sections, I described the data collection of documented practices, e.g. recordings, and I described participant observations and field notes, which can be said to represent my interpretation of a given situation. This section will describe data representing the core source to understand the students’ own perspectives: interviews. No one knows more about being a student at a time of internationalization than an actual student, and asking the students about their experiences provides an insight into their thoughts about them. The combination of interviews and participant observation helps the researcher gather rich data and thus “get beneath the surface of social and subjective life” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 13). In this study, the interviews were conducted in connection to the ethnographic fieldwork to provide an insight into a world not accessible through observations only, because it relates to the “inner life” of the students (Thøgersen, 2003). There are good reasons for combining interviews with other data sources, as sole reliance on interviews is problematic. By using interviews, researchers carry out an analysis of a piece of data that they themselves have created – an issue that can be overcome by reflectivity, however. Furthermore, even though students know more about being a student than I do, they lack the instruments (and the interest) to “grasp it” (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1994). Bourdieu argues that when asking people about their point of view, this must be supplemented with an understanding of the point of view from which it is stated (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 34). To illustrate the importance of this point, I will show two interview excerpts (see excerpts 3.1 and 3.2 below) from interviews conducted in this study. Excerpt 3.1 shows a student, Gabriela’s, response to my question on group work. Gabriela identifies herself and is identified by other students, as a “native speaker” of English, as she is born and raised in the USA.

**Excerpt 3.1, interview, Gabriela, course A**

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24 As registration lists for courses are often misrepresentative of the actual students enrolled in a course and the number of students taking the exams, I have not included this as a measure of the total number of students in class.
“In our first module we worked in groups often, and they made me write because they [the other students] said I was a native English speaker. So that was kind of exhausting because they would just talk to me, and I had to type away. Or they would make me change sentences to be more grammatically correct, or they would come to me with questions whether something was correct or not. […] Some of the stuff you can hear that’s just not correct. Like don’t use that.”

In this excerpt, Gabriela tells me about a specific episode of group work that she experienced as “kind of exhausting” because the other students in her group would, in her own words, make her “change sentences to be more grammatically correct”. She ascribes this to the fact that she is a native speaker of English, and that this comes with certain obligations. When reading this excerpt, it is easy to conclude that native speakers in EMI settings become ghost writers and editors because they are linguistically superior. In an interview, however, with a Danish student who is a non-native speaker of English student, the same episode comes up on the student’s own initiative, but with a different view on it, see excerpt 3.2.

Excerpt 3.2, interview, Ingrid, Course A

“Jeg var i gruppe med Gabriela, og der kunne jeg mærke, at ”wow hun er bare virkelig dygtig til at formulere sig”. Selvfølgelig. Og mange af mine sætninger, de blev bare sådan slettet ”ej det der det kan man ikke sige, og det der det lyder lidt dumt” og sådan noget. Så jeg tror… ja det var sådan lidt intimiderende, synes jeg, at skulle skrive med nogle andre, fordi man blotter virkelig sig selv, og hvor dygtig man nu er til at formulere sig på engelsk.”

"I was in a group with Gabriela and I could feel that “wow, she is just really good at writing”. Of course. And a lot of my sentences were just deleted “you can’t say that or this sounds a bit stupid” and things like that. So I think… it was kind of intimidating, in a way, to write together since you really expose yourself and how good you are at writing in English.”

Ingrid tells me about the very same group work, but her experience of the situation is quite different. Where Gabriela felt obliged to correct the sentences, Ingrid experienced it as intimidating and as an exploitation of incompetence, as the native speaker, Gabriela, would assess her writing as “sounding stupid”. If we only had one perspective on this episode, the story might
be different. In this way, these excerpts exemplify a situation interpreted differently by different students. Gabriela’s experience is from the point of view of native speaker, where Ingrid’s experience in this particular situation is the one of a non-native speaker. The international students are not all of them native speakers of the medium of instruction (in fact actually most of them are not), but the excerpts make visible how students are inevitably positioned in the international classroom by their varying competencies in for example the medium of instruction. The interview format is well placed to give us an insight into how these various positioning are interpreted in terms of role rights and privileges – and the resulting psychological assignations they lead to.

At different stages of the interview process, different methodological choices have to be made, e.g. how many interviews are needed, who should be interviewed and when (Kvale, 1997). By spending time in the milieu in which the interviews would be conducted, the interviewer is able to get an insight into everyday routines and power structures, and thereby get a sense of what is essential for the interviewee to talk about (Kvale, 1997). Thus, I considered that he best time to interview was at the end of the fieldwork. Furthermore, participant observations were used as basis for selection of informants. As it would be practically impossible to conduct formalized interviews with everyone, I chose a number of students to interview. In course A, nine students were interviewed, and in course B six students were interviewed. In course C, however, I only interviewed one student individually, and three students participated in a focus group interview conducted by Pete Westbrook and his colleague Sanne Larsen from CIP. The focus group interview is not directly used for analysis, as I was not present when the interview was conducted. The transcription of the focus group interview is, however, used as context information. I would have preferred to interview an equal number of students on each course, but the choice of interviewing students at the end of the fieldwork turned out to cause problems in courses B and C. In the first course I observed (course A), the interviews were conducted in the weeks following the oral exams, but in course C (and partly course B) I ran into a problem, as the course ended right before the exam, and the international students would leave right after the exam. This would compromise the number of willing interviewees since they felt stressed about the exam, hence the smaller number of semi-structured student interviews in course B and C.

The interviews were conducted on an individual basis and in a location of the students’ choosing. The interviews were audio-recorded (after confirmation with the students), and they lasted 30-60 minutes (some longer). Table 1 below provides an overview of the number of students interviewed. Interviews were conducted in Danish if possible, otherwise in English.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course A</th>
<th>Course B</th>
<th>Course C</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students (based on questionnaire answers)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of interviews</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of these: 3 NS</td>
<td>Of these: 1 NS</td>
<td>Of these: 1 Rumanian</td>
<td>1 Spanish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *One of the students grew up in Spain, but is a Danish citizen and grew up as a bilingual
**Conducted as a focus group interview by Sanne Larsen and Pete Westbrook

Table 1. Overview of interviews.

As touched upon above, interviewees were selected partly on the basis of participant information and declaration of interest in the questionnaire. It was thus in principle an informed selection (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This was the case more so in course A and less in course B and C due to the circumstances described above. Additionally, the larger number of students in course B made it harder for me to handpick students for formal interviews than in course A. This means that in courses B and C I had to rely more on the expressed interest in the questionnaire. I opted for interviewing students with assumingly different linguistic prerequisites of studying in an EMI classroom in Denmark, meaning local students, native speakers of English, and “other” international students. These categories are of course very rough and debatable in theory, but in practice, it seemed like a beneficial division to help me choose informants (see also Section 2.2).

The number of formal interviews shown in Table 1 does not do justice to the reality, as the students interviewed were of course not the only ones I talked to. It is hard to distinguish “in-field conversation” from non-structured interviews since a large portion of the data from participant observations comes from unpredicted conversations in the field (Postholm, 2005). These conversations are documented in field notes (see Section 3.4.1). Given the enormous amount of data and the various types of interactions that I have data from (student-student interaction during breaks, in groups, during lectures, teacher-student interaction during supervision, exam, breaks and in groups), I concluded that the number of formal interviews I was able to conduct would be adequate. Furthermore, I could have interviewed the teachers about creating a space for discussion.
or their reflections on the pedagogy used, but this was outside the scope of the student focus of this study. However, as also described in Section 3.4, I did talk to the teachers on a regular basis.

All interviews were conducted as semi-structured (Kvale, 1997) and thus took their point of departure in an interview guide formulated beforehand (see Appendix 4) but with an openness towards going where the individual interviewee goes. I was aware of the pitfall of guiding participants into saying whatever I wanted them to say, and I tried to counter this by keeping the themes relatively broad, e.g. linguistic background, strategies regarding note taking, reading or differences in study culture. The interview guide was intended to structure the interview, and sometimes it would provide particular questions that I wanted to ask (Blommaert & Dong, 2010). However, none of the interviews were similar, and they also depended on my relationship with the individual interviewee and my experience with interviewing. This also meant that the first interviews were more structured than the last ones, and that some interviews gave access to more personal information than others did (see Blommaert & Dong, 2010, for discussion on this matter).

3.6 Representation of data – analytical considerations and selection of data excerpts

Before ending this chapter on methodology and methods, I will discuss the analytical process that generated the chapters that follows. For this purpose, I find it useful to distinguish the research process from the writing process, even though these processes are indeed intertwined. It should here be stressed, that ”analysis is entangled in every step we take, all decisions we make are choices of in- and exclusion and thus steps in the analytical process” (Bundgaard & Mogensen 2018, p. 75, my translation). To describe what I mean, I will point to a very useful soccer-analogy used by Blommaert and Dong (2008, p. 13) in their book on ethnographic fieldwork.

When we watch a soccer game on TV, we rarely see all players and all activities of the play in the same TV-shot. Rather, we are focused on the movement of the ball and a limited number of players. This is orchestrated by the TV, which through the camera lens (and – I would add – sports commentators) directs our attention to a subset of space, actors and activities of the soccer game. However, the soccer game includes a complex of interlocking activities that produce the game, and the 22 players (and the coaches) perform all sorts of activities simultaneously: They give directions (by shouting or making specific gestures), and they position themselves in order to what comes next. Furthermore, we can expand Blommaert and Dong’s soccer analogy by pointing to
the fact that soccer games inevitably are the culmination of many hours of training and prior games, just as exams are of teaching and learning and prior exams. For a full account of a soccer game, all of this should be included, as it is essential in understanding what happens during the game. Many scientific approaches aim to simplify and reduce complexity, whereas ethnography aims at precisely the opposite: It aims to describe the complex activities that make up social action. Reality is chaotic and complex, and this is reflected in the data. As Blommaert and Dong point out: “as ethnographic researcher’s you collect rubbish” (2008, p. 44) in an attempt to get as rich a picture as possible of the environment in which the fieldwork is done. However, in the written presentation it is impossible (and not constructive) to present everything. You necessarily end up showing parts of the soccer game (and/or the training leading up to) while aiming at accounting for the patchwork of complex and complicated contexts of that specific part. This means that when producing a written presentation of an ethnographic study, you act simultaneously as a sports commentator and a producer. The TV-transmission of a soccer game has several camera angles that the producer chooses between when she is deciding the best way to illustrate the game. Similarly, as a researcher you have produced a range of different empirical elements that you have to choose between and put together in a way that gives the reader an understanding of the complexity of the situation – and in accordance with the research question of, in this case, the thesis. Thus, other camera angles could also have given the viewer an idea of the game, and the selection and combination of other parts of my data could have provided the reader with an insight into “what happens in an international classroom taught through English”. However, this necessarily calls for a strategy for singling out what excerpts of your data to present. My aim with this section is thus to show the process on which my ethnographic account is based, or as Kraft puts it “my way through the wilderness” (Kraft, 2017, p. 46).

A first and elementary point to remember is this: ethnography is an inductive science. As I have mentioned earlier, it is not constructive to follow a clear, pre-set line of inquiry or pre-established

25 Here it might be useful to keep in mind that the data transformation, in Wolcott’s words (1994), frequently shifts back and forth between descriptive and analytical. This means: letting the data speak for itself – fully recognizing, nevertheless, that a descriptive strategy can never simply be a clear window on reality or truth; systematically identifying key features of the data, the themes or patterns the researcher discerns; and explaining the data attempting to specify what is to be made of it.
truths. Rather, ethnographic analysis works with what can be described as sensitizing concepts “suggest[ing] directions along which to look” rather than with definitive constructs “provid[ing] prescriptions of what to see” (Blumer 1969, p. 148). I have already described a number of choices made that influence the directions along which I look, such as the choice of site and selection of interviewees. Analysis and interpretation take place parallel to the data collection, which means that in practice there is no such thing as a data collection phase and an analytical phase, but the project design is in itself a process of analysis and choices. Thus, it can be argued that the process of analysis started with reflections on and decision-making regarding observations, but the importance of the final stages of the selection of data excerpts (what belongs to the writing process) should be acknowledged (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 257).

Ethnographic studies are known to produce massive amounts of data, which is also the case in my study (see Table 2 below). What remains to be discussed is how to handle such a substantial amount of data in an appropriate manner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Course A</th>
<th>Course B</th>
<th>Course C</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16 interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire respondents</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant-observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral exams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work (in and outside of class)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Group presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervision on assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee breaks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal activities on campus, e.g. beer after class</td>
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</table>
In the chapters that follow, I have carefully selected pieces of data which illustrate and exemplify my ethnographic account. Figure 5 below shows a time line for interpreting data as a part of a selection process; the analytical process of how the data presented in Table 2 above has informed the story presented in the following chapters and especially Chapters 5 and 6. In line with hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1960), I see the analysis as an inductive process “hopping back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts that actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole which motivates them” (Geertz, 1979, p. 239). The process of interpretation is thus not linear, as Figure 5 suggests, but the linear graphic is used to offer a more simplistic representation than the rather messy reality of the process.

I will start with the choices made in the phase of transcription. Transcription is a transformation of data since translating spoken language to written language involves interpretation (Kvale, 1997). A transcription is a textual representation of audio data and is meant to communicate a message (Karrebæk, 2012, p. 49). In that sense, it is also important to make clear the choices made when transcribing. As transcriptions can never contain the same information as the situation, one
must choose which elements are important for understanding and for analysis and, in turn, which elements can be left out (Karrebæk, 2012). The transcripts can be infinitely refined, and this is where the disciplinary technique of transcribing enters the picture: Conversation analysis has elaborate techniques for doing so, interactional sociolinguistics likewise, and several other branches of discourse studies offer specific forms of transcription. For the purpose of this study, all transcriptions were made in accordance with standard Danish and English orthographical norms to support readability, as e.g. pronunciation is not the core interest of my study (see Appendix 6 for the transcription key). Furthermore, due to the multilingual nature of the study, translations were sometimes needed. When data excerpts feature in the chapters, the original data appears first followed by an English translation. Sometimes the translation is included in the original transcript. Translations from Danish to English were made by me. Recordings of Spanish and Arabic were transcribed and translated by proficient speakers of each language, living in Denmark. The interviews were transcribed in order to represent the interviewee’s understanding, and my questions would not be transcribed fully unless considered important for the interpretation of the interviews. All interview transcriptions were later open-coded (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1998) according to the themes emerging (Appendix 5 offer an overview of the themes) – the same procedure was used for the coding of field notes.

Transcription requires an enormous amount of time, and as the amount of recordings in itself was tremendous, it would be too time-consuming for me to transcribe all recordings. Therefore, I prepared a précis of the recordings of interactional data (Blommaert & Dong, 2010). In these ‘summaries’, I made detailed notes about each recording and noted time codes for the most “important parts”, which were then transcribed more thoroughly at a later stage. What was considered “important parts” was informed by my field notes as well as the interviews, which were transcribed and coded before I transcribed the interactional data. All transcriptions and coding was done manually by me. Below you find an example of a précis.
Example 1: Précis of “Recording C4 front, course C, group 3”, time 42.40

*interesting, collaborative writing

Student 1: men I stedet for at skrive [but in stead of writing]26 it’s very important kan vi så ikke skrive [couldn’t we write] dietary counseling of overweight and obese pregnant women would solve the problem

Student 2: that’s a good idea it’s very specific that it’s this target group

Now, the last consideration of this chapter concerns the final selection of the excerpts shown in Chapters 5 and 6. First of all, a clear strength of this study is the variety of contexts providing a unique insight into different kinds of students in different situations and in three disciplinary settings, which in turn, however, also means that I have a large amount of data that could be used to tell a more detailed story about a number of issues (see for example the themes in Appendix 5). The interpretive timeline showed in Figure 5, is thus an important part of identifying “a number of potentially important aspects to be identified more thoroughly, and some potentially useful analytic ideas” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 36). Bundgaard and Mogensen (2018) talks about systematic and episodic approaches to analysis in anthropological research. The systematic approach refers to organizing, categorizing and coding the data material for patterns; and the episodic approach refers to a part of the process where you employ a number of somewhat intuitive strategies to look for episodes with a strong interpretive potential (Bundgaard & Mogensen, 2018, p. 74). An episodic approach does not mean that an analysis and later the written argument can be build up on episodes, but that some instances of social action have the ability to open the entire material because they are extraordinarily clear, saturated, dramatic or even quietly expresses the ordinary in a forceful way (Bundgaard & Mogensen, 2018, p. 84). This is also the case in this thesis. Thus, when including snippets of data in a written presentation, you necessarily exclude something else. As suggested, this does not mean that the excluded material tells a contradictory story. Rather, it means that the included excerpts are exemplary for the purpose of accounting for the complexity of the event. The inclusion of excerpts is thus based on the aim to present data and analyses in a transparent and coherent way, whereas the exclusion of data excerpts concerns material that is less suited for presentation of the analyses (for example if too many omissions are necessary in a lengthy excerpt, or if the excerpt contains part of the point, but not all of it etc.).

26 The translations are not included in the original précis.
The data selection process is, as all other processes not linear, but represents hopping back and forth between a systematic approach and episodic approach. This also means that the data excerpts presented in the chapters are not the only ones, I have analyzed, and the story told in the chapters would not have been possible without the massive data set. Several episodes of social interaction, such as group interactions and oral exams across and within the courses were analyzed in accordance with the principles mentioned in Section 3.1.1 to provide the greatest insight possible, and to serve as the basis for the identification of “key episodes” (Green & Bloome, 1997, p. 186). Furthermore, I have explored “key linkages” (Erickson, 1986, p. 147) between the data sources. For example, the interview excerpts serve as an insight into a given perspective: that of students’ experience of the event. In contrast, interactional data serve as examples of actual practices. To a large extent, I have let my data selection be guided by the concept of rich points (Agar, 2006), e.g. what participants put emphasis on, or not, and what the researcher in turn needs to understand. Agar discusses rich points as one of the three important pieces of ethnography: participant observation makes the research possible, rich points are the data you focus on, and coherence is the guiding assumption by which you seek out a frame within which rich points make sense (Agar, 1996, p. 32).

I will end this chapter with providing more concrete examples of the process of the final selection of data excerpts for Chapters 5 and 6. I chose to focus my attention on two specific types of situations in this thesis: oral exams in Chapter 5 and active participation and group work in Chapter 6. The oral exam situation (and even exams as such) immediately revealed itself as a possible “blind spot”. Students asked their teachers and peers about the exam, they wrote about it on Facebook, and they looked for clues in group assignments on what to expect in the exam. More specifically, the international students mentioned oral exams as something extraordinary in the interviews. Just as oral exams, group work is a unique way of gaining insight into otherwise “quiet students”. At the same time it is both a central way of organizing teaching in Denmark and a possibly difficult one. This, I will return to in Chapters 5 and 6. Thus, these two foci served as “directions along which to look”. As I have described throughout this chapter, ethnography is influenced by a certain amount of coincidence, and serendipity is sometimes described as one of the key characteristics of the ethnographic method (e.g. Rivoal & Salazar 2013). Serendipity can be described as “happy coincidences” and is often seen as shaping the ethnographic encounter, as something previously hidden comes into view (Tilche & Simpson, 2017). For example, in Chapter 5, one exam stood out, as it became obvious that the teacher and internal examiner had a different
understanding of what was going on than the student had (see section 5.3.2). Similarly, in Chapter 6, I describe a group work situation, where the didactical design served as a trigger for one student to get an epiphany of what was to be learned (see section 6.2.4). Such situations are examples of serendipity, and they cannot be planned. However, they serve as episodes that open the material and, for the purpose of this section, as examples of how the selection process is also a hermeneutic process. Bundgaard and Mortensen (2008) point to Max Weber when arguing that epiphanies do not happen when you search for them at the desk. However, they would not have happened if one had not been at the desk asking the right questions. Similarly, serendipity involves the accumulated knowledge to make the connections that appear serendipitous. As Tilche & Simpson writes: “The fieldworker is endlessly surrounded by potentially serendipitous moments, but only as she learns more of the relevant and contextualizing prerequisite knowledge, can she or he understand these as serendipitous”. (2017, p. 692) Throughout the chapters, I will argue for my choices of data excerpts.

In this chapter, I have argued for methodological choices and presented methods to generate and work with data. Furthermore, I have accounted for my study design, data generation and analysis. In the following chapter, I will account for the study sites.
4. Introduction to the courses

In this chapter, I present the three courses in which I have conducted my fieldwork to provide contextual information needed to understand the analyses and discussions in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The aim of this chapter is to render a detailed and insightful picture of the classroom practices. Furthermore, by providing a detailed description of local specificities, my aim has been to make it possible to evaluate the extent to which the insights gained from this study can be transferred to similar contexts. Whereas Chapter 1 presented the wider context of the study, I here give a short presentation of the Danish educational system and the University of Copenhagen and a thorough description of the three specific courses. As the three courses should not be seen as representatives of faculties but rather as representing different disciplines, I limit my description of context at the level of faculties to central differences in language political initiatives that have affected the choice of the language of teaching. Every detail included is relevant for understanding the students attending the courses and their everyday lives as students in internationalized university settings. However, as also described in Section 3.2, a study such as this one faces a dilemma of anonymity. Thus, I have decided to include details relevant for the ethnographic descriptions, but kept identifiers as vague as possible, e.g. time markers or national identifiers of the teachers. Furthermore, I refrain from referring to official documents of the programs. The structure of the chapter is as follows: I will start by a short presentation on the Danish educational system and the University of Copenhagen (4.1). Then I will present course A (Section 4.2), followed by a description of course B (Section 4.3) and finally, a description of course C (4.4). The course introductions will include information on the program(s) of which the course is a part.

4.1 The Danish educational system and the University of Copenhagen

Before turning to the actual presentation of the courses, I will make some initial comments on the Danish educational system, the common requirements for the teachers and students, the University of Copenhagen, followed by a short contextualization of the three courses.

First, a short explanation on the Danish educational system is in order. At the primary level, there are 10 years of elementary school. The secondary level comprises three years of gymnasium (equaling high school) as a minimum requirement for being accepted into a Danish university. At the tertiary level, a bachelor’s degree is three years and typically is followed by a two year master’s degree; the typical Bologna pattern. Vocational educations (often four years professional
bachelor’s degree) are not a part of the university education in Denmark, and there are independent business schools and technical universities.

In high school, Danish students usually have a fair amount of lessons with compulsory attendance, mandatory written assignments and oral exams. In that sense, the Danish students are from a young age woven into a system where their time and activities are sanctioned and controlled and the students have a great deal of experience in dealing with such assessment and demands. Furthermore, within recent years a number of reforms have been implemented to make Danish students graduate faster, including a GPA-bonus for entering a university degree program within two years of graduating from gymnasium. Students are admitted to university on the basis of their high school GPA, and if they want to choose freely, they have to get good grades. This may produce students who are exam-oriented and thinking strategically. When entering university they may be met with new ways of studying (cf. Ulriksen, Holmegaard & Madsen, 2017), and again when they pass from bachelor’s level to master’s level.

In this thesis, I have focused my attention to the University of Copenhagen (henceforth UCPH), thus a more thorough introductory contextualization of this institution follows. UCPH was founded in 1479 by King Christian I and is the oldest university in Denmark. Furthermore, the university was a core institution in building the Danish national state with its focus on training professionals for public service and contributing to the creation of national identity. Today, the tenured staff of the university have three areas in their job description: to provide higher education, carry out research and disseminate knowledge to society. These three areas are mandated by the Danish government. The university consists of approximately 38,000 students (at bachelor’s level and master’s level) and 7,000 employees (faculty, PhD students and administrative staff).

As I have described in Section 3.2, bachelor’s degrees in Denmark are almost exclusively offered in Danish. This is the same for all faculties at UCPH, but the Faculty of Science has as its stated policy to offer all master’s level courses in English. Thus, passing from bachelor’s level to master’s level for the students of this faculty also means changing language of teaching and learning to EMI. And, for students entering an international master’s program at University of Copenhagen the same apply. In this thesis, I am solely focusing on master’s level programs. At the time of my observations, which were at the second semester of two-year international master’s programs, the students had half a year to get used to the new language, and were in the middle of a process of being socialized into a certain discipline. And for the full-degree international students this also
meant that it was their second semester of being in Denmark. At the faculty of humanities only a handful of the many master’s programs are taught in English. Here, it is thus a conscious choice on the part of the Danish students to change their language of instruction as they enter the program of course A.

The higher education degree programs are offered as full-time programs with a starting point in a Danish frame of qualification for life-long learning following the Bologna model (Brøgger & Clausen 2017). As a Danish citizen or EU/EEA-citizen, degree programs in Denmark are free. Due to a Nordic collaboration, Nordic students are treated on par with Danish students and thus have the same privileges for entering a Danish university degree program. Non-EU students, however, must pay a tuition fee. Danish students are eligible for a monthly educational support (SU), as are EU/EEA students if they live up to certain requirements, such as having a student job in Denmark. Non-EU students may apply for scholarships – also from the Danish government. In the questionnaire responses, the fact that all the courses studied here are part of an integrated 2-year program instead of 1-year and that there is no study-fees (or very minimal fees) were mentioned as reasons for choosing Denmark.

For admission into an international degree program in Denmark, there are certain language requirements. The language requirements for admission into the three courses are similar. For entering the program, applicants with a Bachelor’s degree from any Nordic, incl. Danish, universities must as a minimum document English language qualifications comparable to a Danish high school (gymnasium) English B level. Applicants from non-Nordic and non-English speaking countries must be able to document English proficiency corresponding to an IELTS test score of minimum 6.5, a TOEFL test score of minimum 560 points or a Cambridge English-test (C1 or C2). English speaking countries include UK, Ireland, Australia, NZ, USA and Canada. Having obtained a degree from one of those countries in itself counts as sufficient language competence. For the teachers there are no specific language requirements. The teachers in this study had attended a teacher training program called *adjunktpædagogikum*. This program is designed for “traditional L1 teaching”.

Lastly, a few words on the taxonomies used for indicating progression in learning (on the basis of which curriculum at UCPH is made). In general education in Denmark, the most used tool is Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), which comprises the categories knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. These six categories increase in cognitive
complexity. Domestic students are familiar with this taxonomy (even if not consciously) as their high school assignments all contain elements of explaining, analyzing, and evaluating. As Bloom’s taxonomy is predominantly teacher-content focused and is not discipline-specific, the SOLO-taxonomy (Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome) is often considered more relevant for university teaching and learning (see Rienecker et al., 2015). The SOLO-taxonomy focuses on students’ learning and their learning outcome. It consists of elements increasing in complexity (Biggs & Tang, 2007) ranging from no understanding at all over ability to identify and describe core terms; relevant use of those terms; ability to demonstrate coherent understanding by analysis of a certain problem and demonstrating an abstract understanding; to the ability to move into other subjects, question what is known, and eventually create new knowledge. The taxonomy can be considered a goal of teaching as well as an assessment model since course and exam should ideally be aligned. Bigg’s model of constructive alignment points to the correspondence between learning goals and learning activities (cf. Biggs & Tang, 2007).

Having briefly introduced specificities of the Danish educational system and some of the similarities across the three courses, I will now move on to describing them in detail. The three courses were chosen to represent three different versions of the internationalization of university education in Denmark: Together they span the range of disciplines from science to social science and humanities (see also Section 3.2).

4.2 Course A – humanities

I will start by presenting course A in terms of the organizational frames for this specific course. The course was offered at the Faculty of Humanities, UCPH and was one of the few programs at this faculty offered in English. The study program that course A was a part of had recently been established as an international program at the time of my data collection; it was offered in English because of an ambition to attract international talent to the University. Admission to the program was competitive and limited to 50 students (out of approximately 300 applicants). The student population was meant to be approximately 50/50 local students and international students. The entry requirements for students were a BA from the humanities or social sciences, and applicants would be subject to an overall individual assessment. Admission would be granted based on an assessment of the relevance of the applicant’s academic qualifications (amongst applicants they were selected on the highest GPA from the BA level) and a letter of intent (which included a description of their qualifications in relation to for example internationalization). Thus, the
program was ambitious and the students handpicked. This also meant that most student seemed to
be elite and felt handpicked.

The program was structured as two semesters of four compulsory courses (where course A was
one of them) followed by a semester of internship and then the thesis (30 ECTS). The first semester
would primarily study methods, whereas the second semester (when my observations took place)
concentrated on specific theoretical subjects within the field. The program had been established
relatively recently and had been through the process of accreditation, a process that all newly
established degree programs in Denmark are subjected to. Two of the requirements for
accreditation are coherence between the competence profile and the learning outcomes and a
societal need for the education on the (national) job market with the latter being the most important
requirement. According to the accreditation report, the program’s candidates are expected to find
employment in work places where globalization is dominant, either directly at the work place or
as independent agents that the work place will be dealing with. The profile of the program was
thus anchored in a needs analysis of the national job market (with an international outlook), and a
master’s degree of this specific program would qualify for a career in political institutions.
Examples are jobs at national level and in local government, private companies (international),
NGOs assisting public institutions, providing analyses to national and local government, as well
as universities.

The curriculum was built on findings of both quantitative and qualitative research of the needs in
the job market for candidates with competences in translating theoretical knowledge into practice
and a solution-oriented approach in both a national and an international milieu. In that sense, the
program in principle represents a soft applied discipline (Becher & Trowler, 1989). However, the
“applied” was not as much represented in the actual teaching as in the general program structure
that included a semester of internship. At the time of my observations, the planning of the
internship was the subject of a great deal of student conversations, as they would start planning it
soon. The internship was planned by the students themselves with the possibility of getting help
from the study administration. Particularly, the international students worried about the planning
of internship, as the rules were different for them, e.g. no student allowance and an unpaid
internship do not match well. Furthermore, several of them mentioned certain privileges of the
Danish students with regard to finding an internship in Denmark, e.g. mastering Danish. This, and
a general interest in learning languages, also meant that a great number of the international students
actually attempted to learn Danish.
The students at course A would only have one course at a time (as opposed to two as is the case for most students of course B and C). This course was therefore a large course equaling 15 ECTS point (out of 120 ECTS to obtain a master’s degree) over a duration of half a semester. Course A was offered as an interdisciplinary course that would combine academic approaches from humanities and social sciences. The accreditation report also stressed that the teaching and learning activities should include group work with groups of different disciplines so they could serve as an asset in realization of interdisciplinary. However, interdisciplinarity was mentioned by the students in class evaluation as something they wanted more of, as they felt that the discipline of ethnography was of clear preference to the teacher.

The stated teaching style of the course was a seminar format (in principle) requiring active participation in discussions, mandatory student presentations and group assignments. In practice, this meant that there was a great deal of group work and group assignments including group presentations. However, there was no actual demand on participation in class discussions. The majority of the students were relatively active, though. The teacher of course A was an experienced teacher with native-like competences in both English and Danish, and s/he had followed the class throughout the program to a greater or lesser extent. Either as a guest lecturer or as the primary teacher of earlier courses. This meant that the students knew the teacher relatively well. From time to time, guest lecturers also taught classes at this course. This irritated some of the students because the guest lecturers would have a hard time finding an appropriate academic level, as some of them had little prior knowledge of the students. Sometimes the guest lecturer would teach in collaboration with the teacher and sometimes alone. Guest lecturers were supposed to be experts within a given subject.

The exam of course A was a synopsis exam, which means that the students should hand in a 4-5 pages assignment in a bullet point form with a deadline one week after the course ended. One week after handing in the 4-5 pages, they would perform an oral mini-defense of their assignment. This meant that they had 10 minutes for a presentation based on their written work (the synopsis) and then 10 minutes for discussion based on the presentation and the written assignment. How much time they would spend writing the synopsis was up to them as they were allowed to (and encouraged to) work on the assignment throughout the entire course. However, except for one class devoted to optional individual supervision, this work should be done outside class. The students could in principle choose any subject within the scope of the course for the synopsis.
However, it should contain a theoretical argument and preferably be empirically based. The teacher would often present data as an example of what could constitute relevant data in a synopsis, and the group assignments were often case-based and could in some ways also be seen to function as examples. This, however, was not explicitly stated and remained up to the students to figure out. In Chapter 5, I will present a detailed study of oral exams at course A. Further description and discussion of the exam as a form can be found there.

### 4.2.1 Student population of course A

The population consisted of approximately 30 students (the number of students attending exam), of whom 24 answered my questionnaire. As the questionnaire was given in class (as described in Section 3.4.3), the number of respondents more or less corresponds with the average number of students attending class. Of the six students who attended the exam but did not answer the questionnaire, four of them took the exam but had not followed this course but the previous one without taking the exam. I talked to all students prior to their exam. Thus, I have basis information on the six students as well, such as gender, discipline, language, and so on. These students are however not included in this presentation, as they did not attend class. For an overview of 24 who did (and filled out the questionnaire), see Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Studying abroad</th>
<th>BA degree</th>
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<td>25</td>
<td>U/E</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>E/A</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Overview of students on course A, n=24.

---

27 Bachelor’s degree obtained from another Danish higher education institution than UCPH, including university colleges.
As Table 3 shows, the gender distribution of the course was dominated by females: 78% (17 out of 24) females. Half (12) of the students were under 25 years old, a little less than half (10) was older than 25 years old, and two students were over 30. Furthermore, there was more than 11 different disciplines represented in the classroom distributed over e.g. pedagogy, science of religion, Middle Eastern studies, Arabic and English. The largest discipline was international relations. Nine students had obtained their BA degree from UCPH (at the Faculty of Humanities) and one from another Danish university. The remaining 14 students had obtained their degree in other countries. As previously stated, the students were selected partly on their previous international experiences, and thus 21 out of the 24 students had lived abroad (meaning outside of their home country) for more than four months, and 18 students had been studying abroad (e.g. two students as full-degree students of a BA in the USA).

If we look at citizenship, the diversity of students counted 11 students with Danish citizenship, representing a little less than half of the students, 13 were EU/EEA (three from Southern Europe, five from Netherlands or Germany, two from the UK, one Irish and one from Norway). Only one student were non-EU (from the USA). Double citizenships here counts as Danish, as it gives certain privileges to be a Danish citizen when studying in Denmark, e.g. SU. However, these numbers paint a way more simplistic picture than the actual reality: As the students were granted admission partly on their personal, international experiences, the course consisted of a number of students who would characterize themselves as being bilingual or who had one or both parent(s) from another country than the one they grew up in. The distribution of first languages in Figure 6 is thus also a simplification based on the students’ self-reported first language in the questionnaire. Figure 6 provides an overview of the first languages of the students.
A little more than a third of the students (nine out of 24) listed Danish as their first language. The remaining two thirds are almost evenly distributed over a number of languages with English (five students) and German (three students) being a represented by a few more students. When we look at the distribution of languages (and nationality), we see a somewhat euro-centric picture, however. Something some students also mentioned as being somewhat disappointing, see interview excerpt (excerpt 4.1) below for an example.

**Excerpt 4.1, Interview, Ingrid, Danish, Course A.**

"Nå det er bare europæere, så det er sådan lidt... Så er det ikke sådan rigtig internationalt". Fordi der er et eller andet med det der med globalt og globalisering og diversity og bla bla bla. [...] Altså jeg tror også det er derfor at mange af os har valgt det (studiet), fordi vi har interesse for det der med verden og møde mennesker fra hele verden og lære at kunne begå os sådan med andre kulturer. Og ja... Så et eller andet sted skuffende at der ikke rigtig var så mange folk fra den store verden.

//

"Oh well, there is just Europeans, then it’s like... Then it’s not really international”. Because there’s just something about this global and globalization and diversity and bla bla bla. [...] I think this was why a lot of us chose this (the program), because we have an interest in this about the world and meeting people from all over the world and learn how to act with other cultures. And yeah... Then it’s kind of disappointing that there wasn’t really that many people from the great world."
4.2.2 Language use and course culture

As it appears from the previous sections, the program that course A was a part of was built as an international program, and the student diversity (in terms of first languages, nationalities and disciplines) of course A was considerable – as was also the aim of the program. Furthermore, the subject of the course (and the program) was internationally anchored, and the course was in some ways students “studying themselves”. The students (and the teacher) thus also had a personal as well as an academic interest in their own and each other’s linguistic and national backgrounds, which often became subject of conversations in- and outside of class. This resulted in coffee break conversations on “which language do you speak with your father then?”, and showing each other videos making fun of pronunciation in different languages (especially German and Danish). The students generally had a strong sense of common identity in the subject of their studies. One student even said that she had more in common with her fellow students than with other people of the same nationality.

In class, principles of “the international classroom” were applied in terms of making use of the students’ cultural (and sometimes linguistic) backgrounds which were often a part of learning activities, and students welcomed the international experience. To provide examples, the students were at one point provided with a Danish song text to analyze in groups. The groups were in this exercise organized so there would be at least one Danish-speaking student in each group. Another time, the student groups were organized so different nationalities were represented: The subject of this exercise was to make an oral group presentation of a self-chosen example of “the nation thing” from one of the students’ home countries. I observed this type of organizing groups according to nationality and sometimes languages throughout the course. Furthermore, the subject of class discussions would often be based on sharing narratives from their home country: As an example, a discussion of gender norms of paternity leave in various countries came up in class. A British student followed up on a Danish student’s comment on Danish men wanting to take paternity leave by saying that it is not really an option in the UK and that this fact may be based on stereotypical ideas about men not needing to spend time with their children. The discussions in class were lively, and students would to a large extent draw on their own experiences which were taken up (when relevant) by the teacher, and s/he would apply theory to them. In that sense, the teacher showed how it should be done. This type of co-analysis is described by Rienecker (2015) as a core activity in humanities. The use of methods and theories from different disciplines was stated as a part of
the learning outcome, but as the disciplines drawn on were all soft sciences, the clash between disciplines remained rather implicit even if it was addressed (e.g. “now we use ethnography”).

Reading articles and discussing them were at the core of all teaching activities in course A. The academic texts were all in English as prescribed in the curriculum. Here it states that supplementary literature in Danish may be used, but that they will not form an obligatory part of the exam readings. These supplementary texts might include newspaper articles, but I never witnessed the teacher provide the students with such. However, the students did share newspaper articles in various languages (mostly Danish or English) in the Facebook page of the course, e.g. concerning the term “nydansker” (new Dane) discussed in class (see also Section 6.1.3). Discussions in class, however, were at times somewhat Danish-centered, which was mentioned by some students in the interviews. Some students also expressed a rough division of Northern-Europe (meaning Danish, German and Dutch students) vs. Southern-Europe in class. This was explained by the students to be due to a shared understanding of political movements, which was often the subject of discussions (in- and outside of class).

Due to the application process of course A, and the fact that it is one of a limited number of international humanities programs, studying in an international program was to some extent a deliberate choice, even if a couple of the students mentioned that a similar program in Danish does not exist. This differs from course B and C, where the students’ only option was to study in an English-taught degree program. I will here draw in three of the questionnaire answers to the open question asked of the Danish students, “why did you choose to study in English?”:28

1) “Primarily interest in the subject, but also training having an everyday life in English (possibly relevant competence), and wanting to get to know more people from all over the world.”

2) “It was the subject and not the language that was crucial the language was just “an extra thing” that fits well with the Global perspective of the program, and which is a benefit for me because I want to improve my English language skills in order to be better at communicating with people from other countries.”

28 Find attached all the questionnaire answers in Appendix 7.
3) “Due to interest in international themes (problematics). Plus a personal interest in being in an international environment”.

For the international students, what was stated as reasons for choosing to study in Denmark was generally “free education, interesting course, city”. But some international students also answered in the questionnaire that they chose Denmark and UCPH because e.g. “School is more affordable for foreign students and I had never met a Dane that I didn’t like while traveling” or “Copenhagen appealed to me, English language spoken a lot, good university” or “free education, interesting program, interesting Scandinavian society”.

Lastly, the students of the course generally had a high level of English, as one student said “you have to have a certain level to get in”. English was also to a large extent the dominant language in everyday interactions between the students. This was also the case with those who might be able to understand each other in another language, and it was explained with a “we met speaking English so it’s kind of the natural language”. However, whenever needed, the language of preference would be used – e.g. when searching for a word in English.

From this introduction of course A, I will now move to course B. Course A will make up the subject of the following chapter (Chapter 5).

4.3 Course B – health

Course B was a compulsory course and compulsory in two different study programs. One was offered at the Faculty of Health in collaboration with the Faculty of Science (referred to in this thesis as program 1) and one was the sole responsibility of the Faculty of Science (referred to here as program 2). Program 1 could be described as concerned with a hard, pure science (Becher, 1989), whereas program 2 featured a typical hard but applied science (Becher, 1989). Course B was in that sense an interdisciplinary course, and the course was organized and planned with the purpose of mixing two disciplines (viz. of mixing programs 1 and 2) i.e. two sciences which were surrounded by a narrative of not being naturally mixable. Both programs were offered in English: All master’s programs at the Faculty of Science are offered in English, and this has been the practice for more than ten years now. As program 1 was offered in collaboration with the Faculty of Science, this program followed the practice of offering the BSc level in Danish, and the MSc level in English. This had been the practice since the program was established. In this particular
course, I would describe the teacher as what Vinke have described as a “successful switcher”, i.e. someone who is confident in teaching in English (Vinke, 1995). Other courses, or more specifically teachers, in program 1 (offered at the Faculty of Health), were described by the students as not so successful. In one interview, a Danish/Spanish student complained that a teacher had switched from live English to playing a video tape of himself talking English. This shows that it is not only the students (or even not primarily the students) who have trouble living up to the stated policy of EMI at master’s level.

Program 1 was an MSc building on a BSc in the same disciplinary area. This meant that to be granted admission, students were required to have a BSc from that program or an equivalent education. Program 2, however, did not build on any particular BSc, and students could enter with a BSc from the Faculty of Science or within IT. Admission to the BSc of program 1 would be granted on the basis of highest GPA from high school, and the students entering the program were straight A students. Admission to the MSc was limited to 50 students, and the year before my observations, the number of applicants had risen to over 200 students. The students of this program were thus elite students, and a majority were even elitist and very exam-oriented students. The competence profile for program 1 is to qualify students for a PhD program or for work in other research institutions. In addition, it is stated in the description of the program that it enables candidates to participate as a fully-fledged member of international research groups. In contrast, admission requirements for program 2 were not as competitive, but the competence profile of this program was also aimed at doing research. In that sense, English might be a very relevant competence for the students of both programs.

Course B is thus atypical in being a meeting place for two different programs and in being focused on this meeting. But it was also atypical in another way. The course was taught by an experienced teacher fluent in Danish and English, and a few times the course was taught by a couple of Danish PhD-students from his research group. The teacher could best be described as a superstar for a great number of the students due to his research accomplishments, and he was also mentioned as a reason for international students to study at UCPH. The course had no obligatory list of readings covering the teaching goals for this specific course. In having no textbook and no readings, the course had a quite extreme approach to social constructivist learning, as the interaction between students (and teacher) were absolutely essential for learning. This was also stated by the teacher in the very first lecture. Thus, most students attended class – except for a couple of male Spanish students. The teacher also said that it was extremely important to ask for clarification, because
there is nothing to fall back to (i.e. no course book to learn the curriculum from). The students were also told that it is important to participate actively in group work and exercises. The teacher sees this way of teaching as a way to ensure that they will not just be “biological hard drives”. Moreover, this was seen by the teacher as the purpose of the MSc programs as opposed to the BSc programs. The specific comment was especially meant for the students of program 1. Students of program 1 (who were a relatively homogeneous group, see Section 4.2.1) would have been used to learning from a textbook in their BSc, and some of these students found it somewhat difficult to be on a course with no textbook (this is also the subject of conversations in Sections 6.2.5-6). In that sense, the course was very much learning by doing. Often, but not always, the exercises was followed up on in class.

The teaching was a combination of lectures and exercises, and the exam was an individual written take-home week exam (seven days) after classes had ended. The students were allowed to sit in groups and work on the exam, but they were obliged to hand in an individual assignment. Additionally, before the students were even admitted to attend the exam, they had to hand in three group assignments, called homeworks. These home works would be granted a pass/fail grade by the teacher, and all three of them had to be passed before the exam. Besides a pass/fail, the students would get feedback on the home works, and if they did not pass, they had a chance to change their assignment according to the feedback and then resubmit. A central part of the teaching strategy for this particular course was course group work. Groups were organized by the teacher, and the idea was to mix students of program 1 and program 2 so that all groups would include students from both programs. Groups were made as a long-term commitment so that home works were solved together in the groups. Throughout the course, the students had the opportunity to attend workshops where the groups could sit together and make their home works with teachers available for questions and guidance. There is no connection between the final grade and the home works, however, except completion of home works was a requirement for being able to attend the exam. Their sole purpose is to make sure that the students acquire skills in certain techniques. The idea of this specific course is highly original in that it is an attempt at familiarizing students from two different disciplines with how research is carried out. It is based on the idea that research is carried out in groups, requiring the expertise of both programs 1 and 2.

Course B counted 7.5 ECTS points (out of a total of 120 ECTS for the MSc.). The students from program 1 would have 30 ECTS points of mandatory courses in the program, and they would have lab work running simultaneously leading to their master’s thesis counting 90 ECTS points. The
students of program 2 would have two courses running simultaneously in the given module; course B was one of them. The other was an elective course.

4.3.1 Student population of course B

The questionnaire was answered by 50 students, which approximately corresponds to the number of students attending class regularly (once again note the potential bias of students not attending class). The gender distribution was 60% female and 40% male students, and 92% of the students were between 20-25. The students were thus quite young, which corresponds well with the determination that I found most of the students had. Seventy-six percent of the students were Danish citizens, 18% EU and 6% non-EU (double citizenship counts as Danish), see Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Studying abroad</th>
<th>BA degree</th>
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</table>

Table 4. Overview of students on course B, n=50.

Three languages dominated the classroom interactions: Danish, English and Spanish. This resembles the three clusters of first languages: Danish (64%), Spanish (16%) and then a group of different first languages with very few speakers present (18%). This distribution is visualized in Figure 6.
However, if we look at the students of each program, the picture looks a bit different (see Figures 8a and 8b). The number of students from program 2 (13 students) was considerably lower than from program 1 (37 students). The diversity of the student population in terms of first languages, however, is considerably higher in program 2.

In program 1, 86% of the students are Danish speaking, whereas 69% of the students in program 2 have reported other languages than Danish as their first language. Thus, when thinking of language backgrounds, program 2 was considerably more diverse than program 1. The same goes for the number of disciplines where 31 out of the 37 students had obtained a BSc within the same subject in program 1. Most of the (Danish) students from program 1 had thus studied together for their bachelor’s, whereas the small number of international students (four Spanish and one American) did not enroll in this particular education until the master’s. A Spanish girl in program...
I told me that this hampered socialization on the program, as the “new students” were immediately categorized as outsiders. This also showed in class, as the international students (all girls) of program 1 always sat together. Furthermore, as the student, who listed English as her first language, understood Spanish, they almost exclusively spoke Spanish. In program 2, students came from a range of countries: three Danish citizens, six EU-students, and four non-EU. They also came from a range of different disciplines, counting computer science, biotechnology, biology and biochemistry.

4.3.2 Language use and course culture

As is suggested above, the difference between the two programs with regard to disciplinary culture and student types (including nationalities) was a core theme of course B. The teacher told me in a coffee-break conversation that it created challenges that the course consisted of a mixed group of students. One group of students was considered homogeneous, used to getting good grades and generally in his words “good students”, but lacked skills in mathematics. The other group was, however, very good at math, and had it been a course only for them, the course would have been much more math heavy. Those students, however, did not have quite as good grades and were a very heterogeneous group in relation to disciplinary background, first languages and nationality. The differences across the two programs were present at all times in course B, and the exchange of viewpoints from the two disciplines was also an integral part of the learning outcome (as we will see in Chapter 6). This exchange was thus central to the course, ideally making the national backgrounds of the students irrelevant or at least invisible.

Compared to program 1, my general impression of program 2 was that it was a more inclusive program with social events focusing on cultural exchange. However, in this program a group of Spanish male students were less active in these sorts of events and in attending class, and as the course was designed to depend on active participation, this was noted by a number of students, see excerpt 4.2.

Excerpt 4.2, Break, course B, Elena (E), Spanish, Camilla/me (C), Rasmus (R), Danish

1 E remember I told you the Spanish people only came because they were gonna get
2 the exam
3 C I thought about it when they left
4 R and I was sitting there next to the pillar right
Course B was taught in a room too small for the number of students, and the room was divided into two by three pillars in the middle of the room. The students of program 1 preferred to sit at one side of the room while the students from program 2 preferred to sit at the other side. The division between the two programs thus also became physical. However, this sharp division evened out over time due to the predominantly successful group organization, an organization forced on the course participants by the teacher.

There are in course B a number of differences from course A in course organization. First, the students of this course are only together for one module (even if the students of each program are together for more), which potentially might mean something for the motivations for social engagement. Here, I am specifically thinking of the Danish students of program 1, who overwhelmingly kept to themselves. Secondly, as opposed to course A, students of course B did not have a choice with regards to studying in English. In that sense, the questionnaire question of “why did you choose to study in English” asked of the Danish students did not make much sense, and the answers I got almost exclusively stated that it was not a choice (see Appendix 7 for all questionnaire answers). However, many comments revolved around English being a potentially relevant competence or English being the language of science. Here are some examples: “It’s easier to communicate science in English”, “Programme only in English. All my future work in the field is going to be in English”, “I want to be in academia and English is a necessity”, “It was the only option, if I wanted to do the master degree, so a natural part of the academic education”.

When asked about their motivations for studying in Denmark, the international students mention no (or very minimal) tuition fee as a reason and the quality of teaching and research at UCPH, “It’s a hub for all studies related to biotechnology” or “Renowned quality of teaching and academic research. + my subject of interest had a very interesting offered programme”. Some students also mention job opportunities after university “Great university + program in English. I wanted to travel and live abroad. Better opportunities in Denmark than in my home country (Spain)”, “Good quality of education and free + job opportunities”, “Good working possibilities, high quality of teaching and happy international people”. 
As with the students of course A, the students of course B generally had a high level of English proficiency. Even so, Danish was used considerably more in course B than in course A, and especially the PhD-students who functioned as TAs were almost exclusively addressed in Danish – in private after class or during group sessions. The PhD-students would also use Danish for structuring such as “er I klar [are you ready]?”. The English used was mostly term-based, and when Danish was used, a great number of English terms from the field were used. This meant that as long as the conversation revolved around subject-specific content, international students could enter the conversation relatively easy. However, when asked in the questionnaire if it is an advantage to know Danish, some international students expressed that Danish is important – especially for social purposes: “Depends on workplace culture. Silence is not always golden.”, “Social banter is always Danish outside of uni-life, which can be an obstacle to non-Danish speakers”.

To sum up, course B constitutes an original, teacher-driven meeting place for two disciplinary cultures and two slightly different student populations, and group work and active participation are necessary and central requirements. The focus is on disciplinary culture rather than the students’ national backgrounds in contrast to course A.

4.4 Course C – science
Lastly, I will present course C. Course C turned out to be a very complex setting, and I will thus spend more time trying to explain why this may be. Furthermore, course C will not feature as prominently in the following analyses for the same reasons. First, I will describe the organization of the course. Note that this course was also observed by Pete Westbrook from the Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use on the teachers’ request.

Course C was offered as a mandatory course in an MSc program at the Faculty of Science and was a sociology course forming part of a science education. The program consisted of a great number of compulsory courses and only a small slot of flexibility to take elective courses or internships. This course, course C, counted 7.5 ECTS points, and the students would take two courses in this module; the other course was an elective one. Admission to the program would be granted to graduates of bachelor’s programs with some specific requirements to be fulfilled by having specific courses (within science) in the bachelor. Students from two specific bachelor’s programs of the Faculty of Science would be prioritized when granting admission. Compared to course A and B, in the admission to this program (and thus the course) the competition was not quite as
fierce, and the students were also not quite as elitist as the students of course A and of program 1 in course B. However, the students did seem to be relatively more motivated in other subjects than the one of this course.

The course had been taught in Danish until recently and was now offered in English as a part of a master’s program. The course was described in the curriculum as mainly focusing on Denmark and other Western societies. This matches my observations, as I found that almost all examples used were from Danish legislation. Furthermore, the course aimed to prepare students for a local Danish job market, and the teachers of the course were, in their own words, preparing students for a job in the Danish public sector.

Course C was project-based, and the exam was an individual, oral exam based partly on a written group report. Included in the curriculum for the exam were the syllabus of the course, a stakeholder document, an LFA report, and notes, exercises and discussions. I will turn to the oral part of the exam later, but first I will describe the group work leading to the written group report (and the stakeholder document), as this forms a central part of the course. The students had to hand in a report a week before the oral exam based on a group project using the Logical Framework Approach (LFA)\(^{29}\). The Logical Framework Approach is an approach to project organization following steps leading to a description of a given project’s purpose, results, activities and the connection between those. The approach is used in a number of organizations (including Danish municipalities and international organizations such as DANIDA\(^{30}\)). The groups would work on this project throughout the course, including built-in group work in class and group supervision. As a part of the process of the group project, approximately halfway through the course, a mandatory opponent seminar was planned (if students did not attend, they would not be allowed to attend the exam). The idea with the opponent seminar was that other groups and the teachers would give feedback on the LFA-group work based on a draft of the report and a group presentation. The LFA-project was meant to simulate a “real world” project, and a secondary goal of the group work was thus to prepare students to handle diverse and cross-disciplinary projects. The students were told that their experiences in this small multidisciplinary and potentially trans--

\(^{29}\) See Coleman (2012) for a description of the LFA approach

nationally diverse group would be a foretaste of what they could expect to meet in a bigger project group where people have different backgrounds and different agendas. In this way, the groups were meant to resemble small-scale project groups found in “real-life” projects and were long-term constructions.

The groups were organized by the teachers on the basis of expressed interest in a subject; the students could choose to focus on their own subject in the LFA group work, e.g. overweight nurses in Danish hospitals. Furthermore, as a part of the LFA group work, relatively early in the course a stakeholder day was planned. The stakeholder day was optional to attend, but the students should write a so-called stakeholder document that would function as a part of the exam curriculum. The stakeholder day consisted of meetings with different representatives from companies, which in principle could be future employers for the students. For the purpose of the LFA project, they represented possible stakeholders in the simulated project. The groups were assigned a couple of stakeholders about which they should find information prior to the stakeholder day, and on the stakeholder day they should ask questions based on that information (see also Section 6.1.1).

The oral exam was individual and consisted of two parts (20 minutes in total, excluding discussion of the grade): presentation and discussion of the LFA report (three minutes for presentation, and seven minutes for discussion; 10 minutes in total), followed by two questions with no preparation time and no aid allowed (10 minutes). Thus, the first part of the exam formed a short individual mini-defense of a group project. The students were told in class that the teachers in this part of the exam will check if they have actually contributed to the report and understood it and thus are able to explain core concepts. For the second part of the oral exam, the students draw from two different piles two numbers corresponding to two “questions”31 that the students must answer. The questions contains a headline or topic in the curriculum and have two or three sub-questions. The students were given five minutes to answer each question. At the oral exam of the course, the groups were required to be at the location of the exam at the same time, even though the actual examination was individual. The waiting area was guarded by an older man who had nothing to do with the course. His sole purpose was to ensure that the group members did not discuss their exam. This

31 “Questions” was the word used by teachers, but in reality the ”questions” referred to certain themes that the students should talk about.
meant that the other group members would wait outside the exam room before and after their own exam, and they had to stay there until the last group member was done. The students would get an individual grade, and they were assured that the grade would not be influenced by the other group members’ grades. However, the groups had the opportunity to get group feedback on the report afterwards as a group. The teachers were very careful to explain the exam process in class, and they used the oral exam as an invitation to speak English in group work.

The course was taught by two relatively experienced teachers and one PhD student – all Danish. Besides the group activities, most of the teaching consisted of lectures. All of the teachers had clearly taken teacher-training courses, and even if most of the teaching was done in a traditional teacher-fronted style, it was done with the application of pedagogical strategies to ensure interaction between teachers and students. However, the class was considerably less interactive than the other two courses, and only the same couple of students would partake in classroom discussions. The students were, however, throughout the course encouraged to ask questions with a statement that there is no such thing as a stupid question. The class was taught in a large classroom in an old building with students sitting in the back of the room as all the sockets were placed on the backside wall. This did nothing to create a cozy atmosphere in class. A few times guest lecturers taught the class, but this would only form a minor part of the lecture and the teacher(s) would be present as well. During the course, students would be provided with tests and quizzes, not to test them but to help them realize their individual academic level.

The teachers strongly emphasized that the students had to do their reading from the beginning of the course, as the module structure does not leave them much study time. To help the students prioritize their energy, the teachers would provide the students with intended learning outcomes (ILO) for each class and theme so they were able to see what they were expected to learn – as a guide. This was also meant to help them read a sociological text in case they were not used to reading such texts, and to apprehend what they were supposed to get out of the texts. Indeed, a student told me that he thought that reading articles was a secondary learning outcome of the course. He also told me that he found the texts hard to read, especially in order to figure out what he was supposed to get out of them. For that reason, combined with a time issue, he chose only to look at the intended learning outcome for this course and not read the texts. This negative consequence of using ILOs was brought up in the class evaluation.
4.4.1 Student population of course C

The questionnaire was answered by 30 students. The gender distribution in course C was quite uneven, as 90% of the students were female. This uneven distribution in the questionnaire answers might, however, be due to the fact that the male students rarely attended class, and therefore did not answer the questionnaire. Nevertheless, the gender distribution resembles the general composition of students in the course. The age distribution was similar to course A with half of the students under twenty-five and half of the students over twenty-five, and the average age was thus higher than in course B. Course C was the least “international” course in more than one sense. It was the only course where less than half the students had been studying abroad. Furthermore, 22 out of 30 students were Danish citizens, seven of the students were EU-citizens and only one student was from outside of EU (Brazil). See Table 5 below for an overview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Studying abroad</th>
<th>BA degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20 - 25</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26 - 30</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Older than 30</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Overview of students on course C, n=30.

For self-reported first language, see Figure 9.
The number of students reporting Danish as their first language equals the number of Danish citizens, 22. Besides Danish, the other first languages are quite evenly distributed over a number of languages. This also meant that there was not as obvious grouping of nationalities in this course as in course B (and partly course A). There was, however, a strong tendency among the Danish students to form groups with especially one dominant group of girls who had been studying together for their bachelor’s degree.

As indicated above, the course had a strong focus on the “real world”, and in opposition to the other courses, most local students had obtained their degree from another institution than UCPH: half of the Danish students (12 out of 22) obtained their bachelor’s degree from a Danish university college. This created some problems, e.g. conflicting interests regarding the role of the university either as a profession or a science.

### 4.4.2 Language use and course culture

At the beginning of the course, the students were asked to present themselves and their expectations to the course. Most of the students expressed that they felt forced to take the course and wished for more electives. This initial negative attitude towards the course permeated the course and some of the issues that arose throughout the course. Furthermore, as I wrote in the introduction to course C in Section 4.3, it was a sociology course placed in a science education, which some students found difficult. The difficulties lay in the unknown, e.g. how to read texts that do not necessarily have a correct answer. Some students even started the course with
statements of “hating” sociology. One student said in the class evaluation that it is good for “natural science people” that they “learn to think”, but that it could be more explicitly stated how and why it is important. Both students and teachers were aware of the different disciplines, and it was often articulated in class. Furthermore, the students expressed being used to a structure of one course with a multiple-choice exam and a project-based course running simultaneously. In this module, however, they would have two project-based courses; both courses were time-consuming and heavy on group work. This caused a general feeling of frustration in the students. A frustration that might also have mounted into a critique of the teachers’ English proficiency expressed in the questionnaire answers; a critique that did not correspond to the impression that both Pete Westbrook and I had of the course/teacher. In the questionnaire, the students of course C was – in contrast to the questionnaires on the other courses – asked about their experiences of studying in English (see Section 3.4.3 for description of the questionnaires). This section included a question: “Is there anything you would like the teachers to do that would help you learn through English?” The responses to these questions were often aimed specifically at the teachers’ language skills. Here is an example (a German student): “No. Because –honestly – they might not have the best skills to help appropriately…. But teachers with mother tongue → yes!”.

The teachers aimed for a quite strict English-only policy in class. As Danish students were overrepresented in the course in general, they often ended up in Danish speaking groups. The teacher would then ask them “English please”, resulting in quiet students. This would change throughout the course, however, and even if the students still spoke Danish whenever they had the chance, conducting group work in English seemed to become more natural for the students. However, they would often search for English word for various concepts. The use of Danish was also mentioned by international students in the focus group interview Pete Westbrook and Sanne Larsen conducted (for a description see Section 3.5), where especially one student expressed great frustration with the use of Danish.

With regards to choosing to study in English, this course is somewhere between course A and B. The students who took their bachelor’s degree at the Faculty of Science at UCPH did not, as was the case with the students of course B, have an option: All master’s degrees at the faculty are EMI. This is reflected in some of the questionnaire answers: “It was a package deal – simply how the study was. I chose my study based on the content, not the language”. For the students who came from a Danish university college, on the other hand, the choice of taking a master’s degree at a university is in itself an opt-in. And language seems to have played a role here. A great number of
the questionnaire responses from both international and Danish students concerns enhancing English language skills as the purpose of their studies (in English or abroad). Here are a number of the Danish students’ questionnaire answers: “the master is only in English and I also saw it as an opportunity to be better in English”, “to improve and to open an international profile and to open opportunities to work abroad”.

My general impression was that in contrast to what could be expected the course was actually very Danish-centered. One international student said that Danish students would have an advantage having ”grown up with the system” and thereby having acquired a lot of implicit knowledge about this particular system. This might not be less true of the other courses, but it was certainly very visible in course C. Examples of questions provided in class as typical for what one would encounter at an exam were for example: “1) What characterizes a folk disease? 2) What are the most important folk diseases in Denmark? 3) Explain and discuss different types of strategies that can be used when trying to prevent the development of folk diseases”. However, even if feeling disadvantaged, the comments in the questionnaire concerning why the international students chose to study in Denmark were generally quite positive, and the international students seemed interested in learning about the Danish system, e.g. “Attracted to the Nordic countries (but did not want to go too far up North). Master programme offered at the University. Received advice from other people who know the place. Known to speak good English (my purpose was to improve my English)”. One student had a slightly more negative comment: “Erasmus exchange. Wanted to study abroad, was a bit late with applying. CPH was one of the few options with still space in my field.” It should be noted that the comments in the questionnaire are not targeting this specific course, but are answers to questions about studying in Denmark in general. I have not explicitly included a division between full degree students and exchange students in the questionnaire, but the comment suggests a potential (significant) difference in motivations.

One of the teachers mentioned that she hoped for the international students to contribute with an international perspective, but also an interdisciplinary one – and that they should make active use of their resources. The (Danish) students are told to be curious towards students from outside of Denmark. This is an example of good intentions never being more than that. The teachers of this course were very eager to improve their teaching (in English), hence the request for Pete Westbrook’s observations. Moreover, they had experienced in the past that international students did not perform as well exam-wise as the Danish students, and they wanted advice on how to prevent that. In the end of the course some students stated that they had hoped for an international
The teachers then told them that they were free to choose an international theme for their LFA-project. This was apparently not known by the students. In that sense, the course seemed to be influenced by miscommunication and some mismatch in expectations.

As stated in Section 4.4.1, 50% of the Danish students had a bachelor’s degree from a Danish university college, which might also have caused a different kind of mismatched expectations. A recurring theme of complaint is represented in excerpt 4.3.

**Excerpt 4.3. Group work, course C. Maria (M), Louise (L), Sine (L).**

1 M I think I will feel a little stupid coming out to the municipality now and say yeah I
2 have this course so basically I should be able to work with it but I don’t know any
3 practical use of this I know how to do it on my computer but I don’t know how it’s
4 actually
5 L yeah apply it in real life
6 S and that’s a really academic approach
7 L so I just feel a little stupid that I have had this course
8 S I feel like I’m just some academic who knows everything about the theory and then
9 when I come out in the real world I’m like are you guys(.) I don’t know anything
10 about it

We see here three students in group work discussing the LFA-approach. The students express that they find the approach “really academic” (line 6) and that they are not able to “apply it in real life” (line 5). Sine even says that she feels like “some academic” (line 8) which one might argue would be the point of taking an academic degree. The next excerpt contains their solution to the “problem”, see excerpt 4.4.

**Excerpt 4.4. Group work, course C. Sine (S), Louise (L)**

1 S we could have lectures about different approaches and then there comes some from
2 the municipality and talk about some issues that they have and would really like
3 that they would like to have some programs to and then we are divide in groups
4 and we decide or we can choose a planning tool ourselves depending on the project
5 that they need to have solved
6 L that’s a real good idea
7 S we did that in our bachelor and I think it just becomes more real when it’s actually
also when there comes one from the municipality and says this is a problem that we
would actually like to spend some money on

Excerpt 4.4 may leave us with the impression that the students did not see the words of the teacher as a valid justification of the intended learning outcome all together. The students here suggest that had it been said by someone “from the municipality” (line 8), however, it might have had a more significant effect. But note again that “the municipality” refers to a Danish institution.

As the section has suggested, course C was influenced by conflicting interests to a much larger extent than the other two courses – or at least more and other types of conflicts surfaced. Firstly, being a sociology course in a science study program created problems for some students. As one student wrote in the questionnaire when asked if it was more difficult to study through English: “depends on the content. If it is sociology it would be hard to understand no matter what”. Secondly, some of the Danish students were from university colleges and expected a much more applied perspective – and by implication a Danish perspective. Thirdly, some of the students were international students who were welcomed and encouraged to bring in their own perspective, regardless of the fact that the course curriculum was overwhelmingly local. The result was that none of the students were really satisfied. In the perspective of this thesis, one might question the prior decision to give this course in English. It seems to be a very good example of a “halfway house”, not really international, not really applied, not really Danish, and in that sense it is a reminder that some courses do not necessarily benefit from internationalization. This will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Having introduced courses A, B and C, I will in the following chapters take a further look at the dynamics of the three courses – and especially course A and B. The next chapter (Chapter 5) will analyze oral exam interaction in course A. Then, in Chapter 6, I will move on to the context of classroom interaction where I specifically zoom in on questions and group work interaction with a focus on course B.
5. “And what would you like me to say?”: Oral exams in an internationalized setting

In this chapter, I focus my attention to oral exams in course A, specifically. To describe the focus of my interest, I will begin with an interview excerpt illustrating one student’s experience of performing in an oral exam.

“The exams, they are different. Oral exams. I have never had oral exams so that was really difficult and scary, because I didn’t really know what was acceptable, what we could do or couldn’t do. For example my last exam I felt like I wish I had like an outline for them […], but I didn’t know we were allowed to actually hand out something. And someone told me like “why didn’t you do this?”. A Danish student told me that. And I said “why didn’t I know we could do that?”. So there are small things that you don’t know you can do unless you’ve actually done it before and the description of an oral exam doesn’t encompass all these small things. […] So it’s really frustrating, and then I wonder “well is my grade a reflection of my work or another reflection of me not understanding the system”. And that stinks.”

(Excerpt 5.1. Interview, Gabriela, English/Spanish, course A)

I have chosen to highlight this quote, as it reflects some of the concerns that students might have about performing in any type of exam. The student Gabriela conveys being uncertain of whether her exam grade is a reflection of her actual accomplishments or of her understanding of the exam format and the tacit assumptions underlying it. An uncertainty, which is clearly frustrating to her, expressed in her conclusive remark: “that stinks”. As “Danish students” (Gabriela’s label) move from one educational level and/or context to another, they, too, might sense that their grade is a reflection of partly their accomplishments and partly their understanding of the form (see Holmegaard, Madsen & Ulriksen, 2014, for a study on the transition from high school to higher education). The difficulties experienced by international students in this respect might be intensified by the narrative that they tend to have limited past experiences of performing at oral exams – not only expressed by Gabriela, but by every international student I have talked to. This
is also documented by Audur Hauksdottir (2012) interviews with Icelandic full degree students in Denmark\textsuperscript{32}.

This chapter will provide an ethnographic account of the oral exam form in course A and analyses of different students’ experiences with and performances in what is arguably one of the types of interactions during their time of study with most consequences for their future. The aim is thus to contribute to an understanding of how students in international courses act in a specific situation with a strong cultural flavor. The oral exam form is, as it is a high stake encounter, in itself an interesting and equally important type of interaction to explore. Perhaps even more so in an international setting, as it is a type of interaction where the student, teacher and examiner each bring with them different cultural and linguistic expectations that may influence the dialogic flow of the interaction (see for example Tranekjær, 2009, for a study of intercultural interaction in internship interviews). The oral exam interaction is thus an example of the interplay between academic, disciplinary, educational and national cultures (Räsänen, 2011) as well as language, which may all influence the success of the conversation. However, it is one of the least researched types of interaction in university classrooms – for good reasons (of confidentiality, stress etc.). The student Gabriela expressed that it was all “these small things” not included in the description of an oral exam that made her uncertain of the grounds for assessment. These small things, I will argue, correspond to what we can call “common sense” (see Roberts, Atkins & Hawthorne, 2014), which implies a particular norm or way of doing things that seems “unmarked” compared to the non-standard. These processes include obviousness and subconscious behavior and may thus not be so obvious to those outside the particular community. Applying a magnifying glass on the processes of interaction allows hidden aspects of the oral exam considered common sense to be made visible. Thus, to gain insight into the tacit rules of the exam, I combine a micro-analysis of the oral exam interaction with curriculum requirements and understandings of “the implied student” (Ulriksen, 2009). I purposely keep from focusing on grades as anything other than context information, as grades are not necessarily representative for what happens in the exam (cf. Roberts et al., 2014). Nor do I focus on the assessment process as such, even though I do include information on how the teachers react to certain types of performances. As also described in section 3.4, I talked to all students immediately after their exam, and the teacher and

\textsuperscript{32} See also https://video.ku.dk/melissa-oral-exam-at-sund for an official UCPH video on an international student’s experience of an oral exam.
examiner would discuss their experiences with me in the few breaks during the day. I thus have immediate reactions to the encounter from the perspective of students and the assessors.

The interactional analyses presented in this chapter are based on a broad-based thematic analysis of transcriptions of recordings of 25 exams lasting around 20 minutes (see also Section 3.6\(^{33}\)), combined with observations of and field notes from 30 exams, interviews with students, Facebook posts and classroom recordings and observations. I also observed oral exams in course C, but due to the limited number of exams I was allowed to observe in that course setting, they only function as a basis for understanding the disciplinary uniqueness of the oral exam in course A. Moreover, the mass of recordings from the classroom setting also informed the interactional analyses, and as seen in section 5.1.1, actually provided quite valuable insights into how the students viewed the exam. In presenting the interactional results below, I purposely focus on a small number of exams functioning as illustrative cases showing different students in exam situations and snapshots of their struggles and strategies in specific situations in their attempt to perform in the best possible way. The oral exam situation can be said to be a didactical situation (Brousseau, 1997), and I have especially focused my attention to instances of breaches in the didactical contract (Brousseau, 1997). These “telling cases” (Roberts et al., 2014), while they occur within their own contexts, help to illuminate wider patterns – also if they serve as unique examples or “extreme cases”, as is the case in section 5.3.2.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: I start the chapter with a description of the oral exam as an activity type (section 5.1), and with an ethnographic account of the exam under scrutiny (section 5.1.1) as well as with an introduction to the exam as an interactional genre (Section 5.1.2). I continue by presenting analyses of four different students’ experiences in the oral exams (Sections 5.2-5.4). The chapter ends with a discussion of the findings that set the scene for Chapter 6 (Section 5.5), which explores active participation in specific learning activities.

But first, some comments on the ethical considerations in this chapter (also described in section 3.3). As oral exam data are extremely sensitive in presenting the results of these analyses, I am faced with the dilemma of anonymization versus providing sufficient context information. I have

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\(^{33}\) A method similar to what is used in Roberts et al. (2014), but without the use of corpus linguistics.
attempted to achieve a balance between these two concerns by leaving out a number of possible identifiers (marked with […] in the interaction transcripts) and by addressing this issue continuously as I move through the chapter. Furthermore, as the interactional excerpts are rather long, I have chosen (when relevant) to mark my emphases by using bold typing for a more fluent reading. I have chosen not to attach additional examples of the exam to limit the possibility of identification, just as I have chosen not to attach the full transcripts of the excerpts presented.

5.1 Characteristics of oral exam interaction

Gabriela’s statement that initiated this chapter on oral exams reflects (international) students perception of and issues with oral exams. The oral examination is an exam form used at all levels of education in Denmark, from primary school to tertiary education. According to Leth Andersen and Tofteskov’s (2016) book for university teachers on assessment and exam forms, the oral exam is primarily used (across all subjects) in the Scandinavian countries, Germany and some Eastern-European countries. It is, however, not rare to find versions of oral examination in other parts of the world, but there does indeed seem to be a certain “common sense” about the way how the oral exam is thought of and described, both generally in the Danish educational system, but specifically in courses A and C. Leth Andersen and Tofteskov (2016) describe exams as a cultural phenomenon (cf. Blasco, 2015 on tacit knowledge) in the sense that the assessment system builds on the national teaching and university culture, on the institutional frame and on the legal regulations that permeate the university teaching and exam procedures (see also Roberts et al., 2014, on mono-cultural norms in assessment). In this section, I will provide context to this particular type of activity: the oral examination. This will be followed by an ethnographic account of the oral exam in course A.

34 In the Danish high school, a minimum of 4 out of 9 exams across subjects are oral, see for example: https://falko.dk/stx/eksamen/eksamensinformation/
35 In the exams I observed in course A, the German (and Dutch) students did extremely well. These students also expressed limited past experiences in the oral exam form, however.
36 In Denmark the Humboldtian teaching tradition and the student riot in 1968 have influenced our teaching and assessment culture (Christiansen et al., 2015), and the way we perceive the roles of teacher and student, respectively (what resembles the didactical contract). It has proven impossible, however, to track down the specific history of the oral exam in Denmark.
First some general comments on the oral exam form. Oral exams are (internationally) used in a range of areas, e.g. second language acquisition (Hüttner, 2014), pharmacology (Sibbald, 1998), medicine (as simulated consultations, Atkins et al., 2016; Roberts et al., 2014), sports education (as students answering questions during a 30-minutes period, Oakley & Hencken, 2005) as well as business education (Pearce and Lee, 2009, and Burke-Smalley, 2014). Oral examination is known in the British educational system as the *viva voce* exam, especially when referring to the oral defense of a doctoral dissertation (cf. Carter, 2011). Joughin defines the oral exam as: “Assessment in which a student’s response to the assessment task is verbal, in the sense of being expressed or conveyed by speech instead of writing” (1998, p. 367). The oral exam is considered an appropriate way to test students’ depth of understanding and their ability to organize ideas through language (Evans et al., 1966). Written exams – depending on the form – may provide little information other than which questions were “answered correctly” (Walker & Thompson, 2001). In contrast, an oral exam can be seen to offer certain benefits for both students and teachers, as it allows examiners to ask for clarification and thus increase the opportunity for students to demonstrate their full potential (Evans et al., 1966; Sibbald, 1998). However, the exam form has been the subject of discussions of reliability and has led to survey studies of student anxiety (cf. Carter, 2011).

The exam interaction should provide as precise, informative and fair a basis for assessment as possible, which is partly accomplished by allocating a specific period of time, the same for all students, for the verbal interaction (in Denmark, minimum 20 minutes, see Leth Andersen & Tofteskov, 2016). It is thus the goal of the exam (as for all types of exams) to ensure a homogenous and fair assessment in accordance with certain criteria, e.g. the learning outcome expressed in the curriculum of the course. In Denmark, an internal (employed at the institution) or external (employed at another institution) examiner assists the teacher in the assessment process (Gabrielsen & Laursen, 1998). Thus, the oral exam interaction in Denmark has at least three interlocutors: a student, a teacher and an examiner (internal or external). In some cases, the oral exam can be held as a group exam, and it is possible to have more than one teacher in a course.

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37 Even if the number of studies is scarce, in Chapter 2.2.3 we find an overview of literature focusing on oral exam interaction.
and thus more than one teacher at the exam. It should be noted that oral exam is not a delineated genre\textsuperscript{38}. Some oral exams are somewhat similar to the viva voce and is based on a written element. This type of oral exam will typically include a larger amount of presentation. Other oral exams are “purely” oral, but can come with or without preparation time and with or without drawing a question or a theme for the exam. Furthermore, the amount of discussion can vary. However, typically the oral exam in Denmark contains both a student presentation of some sort and a discussion between the assessors and the student.

In institutional interaction such as the oral exam (Erickson & Schultz, 1982; Drew & Heritage, 1992; Tranekjær, 2009), it is important to remember that the interlocutors have different institutional relevant roles such as student/teacher in a classroom setting. In a number of teaching books used for teacher training at Danish universities, it is pointed out that it is important that the role of the teacher and examiner is clear (cf. Rienecker et al., 2015). This means that ideally there should be a clear distribution of turn taking between the examiner and the teacher. The teacher’s role is to control the exam and provide the students with opportunities, by asking questions, to demonstrate to what extent he or she is able to meet certain criteria of the course’s learning outcome. Moreover, the teacher must uncover potential gaps also by asking questions. It is the role of the examiner, however, to ensure this by supplementing the teacher and suggesting themes that should be addressed. This can be done by asking additional questions with the goal of providing the student with a grade that is a valid picture of the student performance in accordance with his/her ability. It is, however, the teacher’s job to ask the majority of questions (see Leth Andersen & Tofteskov, 2016; Rienecker et al., 2015). The examiner thus functions as both a co-assessor and as overseeing the reliability and validity of the exam. The teacher and examiner are in principle considered equal in the discussion of the grade. However, in the case of disagreement, it is the examiner who is considered the impartial party, and the Ministerial Order on the Grading Scale and Other Forms of Assessment of University Education states that the examiner essentially has the final saying\textsuperscript{39}. This is linked to a general view of the student as a person with rights to be

\textsuperscript{38} For example, even though the exam form in course A and C in both cases was “oral exam” they also differed in their form (see presentation of the exam in course C in Section 3.4 and 4.2).

\textsuperscript{39} Link to the Ministerial Order on the Grading Scale and Other Forms of Assessment of University Education https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/r0710.aspx?id=25308
ensured. The role of the student in the oral exam interaction seems less clear, and it is this role I will zoom in on in this chapter40. However, the student is indeed expected to demonstrate skills in accordance with the learning outcomes of the course, and to answer questions. The interaction should in principle resemble an academic discussion, and the student is thus also assessed on academic literacy, in Airey’s understanding of literacy. Airey, building on Gee (1991), understands academic literacy as “the ability to appropriately participate in the communicative practices of a discipline” (Airey, 2011, p. 3).

As with most oral encounters, the oral exam interaction includes an inherent unpredictability in which neither the student nor the examiner(s) knows in advance exactly what questions will be asked and what responses will be made. For the same reason, the oral exam form is often described as an authentic exam form (Joughin, 1998; Rienecker et al., 2015) since it requires attentiveness and engagement, and in that way it may to some degree resemble job situations and especially job interviews (see for example Turner & Davila-Ross, 2015). The comparison between job interviews and oral exams is particularly relevant, as they are both conversations that result in an evaluation. This is alike to what is described as a gatekeeper encounter; an encounter in which one of the persons in the interaction has the authority to make decisions that affect the other’s future (Erickson & Schultz, 1982). In the job interview, the success of the conversation is measured in the offer of a job or a refusal. In the exam situation, the success of the conversation is measured in a grade or in pass/fail. This also means that the interaction is intrinsically asymmetric (Togeby, 1977).

Having offered some general comments on the oral exam form, I will now turn to the oral exam at course A.

40 Hüttner (2014) in a study of mock-exams in SLA and Roberts et al. (2014) in a study of simulated consultations have both pointed to the complexity of students “doing disagreement” and the students’ use of formulaic phrases, respectively.
5.1.1 The implied student in the oral exam under scrutiny

To consider what is not included in the description of the exam in course A (and thus potentially a source of frustration for some students), we have to start with what is included. Thus, in this section I will dive into the official accounts and grounds for assessment for the exam in course A along with the concerns and ideas of what constitutes a “decent oral exam” that the students bring forth. The exam form in course A is also briefly introduced in Chapter 4, and the exam procedure and my observations of this particular exam is described in Section 3.4.

I will employ the analytical concept of the implied student (Ulriksen, 2009) to explore what the students’ ideas of “what is acceptable” in this exam is, to revoke Gabriela’s frustrations. The implied student is a concept wide enough to embrace the diversity of the material, while still giving direction to the ethnographic account of the exam put forth in this section. As described in Section 2.4, the implied student concerns the underlying expectations of certain student behaviors and an implied notion of what an ideal student looks like in a given setting (Ulriksen, 2009, p. 518). Roberts et al (2014) point to what they call the Sherlock Holmes factor which can be described by this quote: “learners sometimes think there are hidden aspects… they are being asked to discover, akin to peeling away the skins of an onion until the flesh is found” (Kurtz & Silverman, 1996, p. 67, here cited from Atkins et al. 2016, p. 5). Thus, I will explore the processes of peeling the skins of an onion by comparing the official guidelines and the students’ interpretations of them.

The particular program that course A was a part of was at the time of my observations organized such that the students start with oral exams and are then gradually introduced to an increasing amount of writing, culminating in their writing of a master’s thesis. This progression was motivated by the assumption, on the part of the planners of the program, that oral exams would generally be easier for students, as they constitute a potentially more informal form of assessment than a written exam. An assumption that is rather sympathetic, but, as studies have argued, might not necessarily ring true in reality (cf. Carter, 2011, on anxiety in oral assessment)\(^4\). However, the

\(^4\) Very often the student fears failing which has by others proven a source of promoting deep learning (cf. Joughin, 1998) and shows apprehension relating to the examiners, their questions and comments.
calculated progression in exam forms also made the exams lie on the verge of formative\textsuperscript{42} and summative assessment (cf. Dolin et al., 2016) in the sense that they formed a learning experience, while still resulting in a grade. As course A was placed in the second semester of a four-semester program, the exam situation from which the data presented here stem was the second oral exam of the program. In that sense, the students all had experience from at least one oral exam. In the first oral exam of the program, the students drew a question at the exam – what one student referred to as a “memory game” – and were then given preparation time until they were to present their answer.\textsuperscript{43} The exam form under scrutiny here is yet another type of oral exam, a so-called synopsis exam consisting of both an oral and a written component: 20 minutes oral examination (followed by 10 minutes for grading) based on a 3-5 page synopsis handed in prior to the exam. In the words of the curriculum, a synopsis refers to a written draft containing the following components: a description of the topic and a presentation of a problem related to the subject area; an account of the methodology and theoretical approach; and a bullet point presentation of the points the student plans to cover during the oral exam (see Table 6 below).

The subject of the exam was “optional” (within the scope of the course), and the structure of the synopsis was presented by the teachers as relatively free. The word “optional” could possibly be a source of confusion, as it indicates that it is not obligatory to have a subject. However, no student mentioned it as confusing. The “optional” subject does, however, imply that the students should be able to know what constitutes a good and appropriate subject. Indeed, one student said to me that she felt that they were expected to find empirical data, but that she also felt that she lacked the time and skills to do so. Thus, the synopsis-exam as a form offered the students the opportunity to work with what they found interesting as the subject was self-chosen, but it also implied that the student was able to manage this freedom. This was somewhat accommodated by the teacher. As described in Section 4.2, the teacher provided one (optional) individual supervision on the

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\textsuperscript{42} Feedback was given both to the individual student and to the entire class in the first lecture of the following semester.

\textsuperscript{43} See \url{http://video.ku.dk/how-to-prepare-for-an-oralexam} for a video made by UCPH on the procedure of oral exams. The exam described in the video is not based on a written component. The video was made by the Faculty of Science, and while it is accessible to everyone, it is thus not possible to assume that the students of this course in the humanities would have seen it.
students’ choice of subject at the end of the course. The students were introduced to the exam at the beginning of the course\textsuperscript{44} in class, and it was subject to many conversations in and outside of class throughout the course. Furthermore, the synopsis and the exam were mentioned by the teacher throughout the course when appropriate, that is, in situations where data presented served as an example of what could be considered good data for the synopsis. The teacher also provided the students with two corrected synopses from earlier exams in the end of the module so that they were able to get an idea of what a synopsis could look like (and indirectly the assessment criteria).

Table 6 below shows an extract of the curriculum for the exam. References to content are left out to limit the identification of the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence objectives for the module</th>
<th>The module will give the student:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• [...]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Undertaking interdisciplinary case analyses, employing qualitative and quantitative analytic techniques.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competences in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessing the ways in which various forms of cultural expression contribute to the identity formation [...]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic objectives</th>
<th>The examinee is able to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate knowledge of [...] analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Understand core concepts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{44} As this was before I introduced the cameras (see recording procedures in section 3.x), I unfortunately do not have a transcription of the introduction.
- Demonstrate research and data collecting skills
- Demonstrate competences in conflict-analysis and interdisciplinary analysis
- Present and comparatively reflect on humanities’ contributions to […]

### Exam provisions

**Form of exam:** Oral exam, optional subject, with synopsis. A synopsis is understood to be a written draft containing a description of the topic and presentation of a problem in relation to the subject area; an account of the methodology and theoretical approach; a bullet point presentation of the points the student plans to cover during the oral exam.

**Assessment:** Internal exam with multiple examiners, the 7-point grading scale. In the assessment, the synopsis weighs ⅓ and the oral exam ⅔.

**Exam language:** English.

**Extent:** Oral exam: 30 min. incl. grading. Synopsis: Max. 4 standard pages. The synopsis is to be submitted 7 days prior to the oral exam date.

**Exam aids:** All written exam aids are permitted.

**Group exam:** The exam can only be taken individually.

*Table 6.* Extract from the curriculum of course A.

It states in the curriculum that the exam is “internal”, which means that the examiner was someone from the same department as the teacher. The participants in the oral exam encounter in course A
thus included a teacher, an internal examiner and a student. The teacher was the same teacher who taught the course. S/he thus knew the students well (and had presumably already formed his or her opinion of them), whereas the internal examiner may or may not know the students; the students knew of the internal examiner, but had not necessarily interacted with him/her prior to the exam. In either case, the internal examiner functions as an impartial outsider albeit with enough knowledge to be able to judge the students’ performances. The teacher and the internal examiner were both educated in Denmark and both experienced examiners. However, this was the first exam the internal examiner had held in English.

The information shown in Table 6 serves the purpose of meeting the students’ information needs on the specific course and exam. Furthermore, it is the formal outline of the course’s criteria for assessment. In that sense, the information represents what can be described the intended learning outcome (cf. Dolin, 2013) and it is built on the SOLO-taxonomy presented in Section 4.1 (see also Biggs & Tang, 2007). The grade is meant to express the degree to which the student meets the intended learning outcomes. The exam was graded in accordance with the 7-point grading scale (see Table 7 below). Even though I will not pay much attention to the specific grades of the exam snippets shown below, some comments have to be made on the grading-scale. The grading system of an educational system provides insight into how it views assessment. Moreover, the grading scale was a source of confusion for many international students in all three courses, as the following excerpt from the Facebook page of course A shows:
In Figure 10, we see a Facebook conversation between an international student and a Danish student. The international student asks for clarification on the grading process and conveys uncertainty about what constitutes “a decent oral exam”. The Danish student refers to the curriculum (cf. Table 6 above) and adds that, at the master's level, it might be important to be able to discuss and criticize and not just describe (a tacit reference to Bloom’s taxonomy). This idea of discussion and critical stance taking being applauded resembles the taxonomic reasoning and progression in the learning outcomes introduced in Section 4.1.

The 7-point grading scale was introduced in Denmark in 2007 as a result of a quality reform following the Bologna Declaration, and the students schooled in a Danish system are thus familiar with the scale. The grading scale replaced the so-called “13-scale” which was in line with Bloom’s taxonomy (presented in Section 4.1) and consisted of three failing grades (00, 03, and 5) and six passing grades from 6-11 and the highest grade of distinction, 13. The grade 13 was meant to only be given for the absolutely exceptional performance. Thus, the frequencies of this grading scale did not fit those of existing Anglo-American systems using A-D. A new grading scale was
introduced to meet the demands of internationalization by being compatible with the A-D-scale (ECTS), i.e. to make it possible to translate back and forth between the different grading systems and thus make it easier for Danish students to move across borders. The grading scale is often the source of political debate in Denmark\(^{45}\), and the compatibility of the 7-point grading scale and the ECTS is also disputable, but it is outside the scope of this chapter to go into that discussion here. For a discussion of the grading scale in relation to internationalization, see Dahl et al. (2009).

Table 7 provides an overview of the grades and a description of the performance that is supposed to trigger the specific grade\(^{46}\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>ECTS equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>For an excellent performance which completely meets the course objectives, with no or only a few insignificant weaknesses</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>For a very good performance which meets the course objectives, with only minor weaknesses</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>For a good performance which meets the course objectives but also displays some weaknesses</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>For a fair performance which adequately meets the course objectives but also displays several major weaknesses</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>For a sufficient performance which barely meets the course objectives</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00</td>
<td>For an insufficient performance which does not meet the course objectives</td>
<td>Fx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-3</td>
<td>For a performance which is unacceptable in all respects</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7. The Danish 7-point grading scale.*

In the assessment, the synopsis constituted a third of the grade, while the students’ performance during the oral exam accounted for two thirds. The oral part of the exam was followed by a brief discussion of the grade between the teacher and internal examiner where the student was not present. When receiving the grade, the students would also receive some feedback on their exam


\(^{46}\) [https://studies.ku.dk/masters/images/danish_grading_scale___k_benhavns_universitet.pdf](https://studies.ku.dk/masters/images/danish_grading_scale___k_benhavns_universitet.pdf)
as a justification of the particular grade. As described in section 3.4, I was neither present during
the grade-discussion between the teacher and internal examiner nor when the students received
their grade. Thus, I only know what they told me, and in the following sections, I focus mostly on
the oral exam interaction in itself and not the grade. It should be noted that no student failed the
exam in course A, and the grades I am aware of ranged from 4-12.

To sum up, the exam in course A can be seen as one exam consisting of three elements; the synopsis,
the presentation and the discussion. The oral part of the exam can roughly be divided into two parts:
a presentation by the student and a discussion between the student and the teacher (and the internal
examiner) based on the presentation and the synopsis. The oral exam thus started with a 10-minute
student presentation based on the synopsis followed by a 10-minute discussion of the topic presented
in the synopsis and thus also in the student presentation. The teacher and internal examiner had read
the synopsis prior to the oral part of the exam so that it may serve as a starting point for the
presentation and the ensuing discussion. The students were told in class that they should consider the
synopsis and the oral exam as necessary building blocks and that it was up to them how they wanted
to use these blocks and what they wanted to build out of them. With that, the teacher meant that
besides complying with some specific requirements, such as handing in a synopsis at maximum four
pages and forging an argument lasting 10 minutes followed by 10 minutes of discussion, it was
relatively free for the students to interpret the assignment. When the teacher said that the students
may “build what they want”, it is possible to assume that this is no trick, but that it comes with certain
tacit expectations. Here is what the students think:

Excerpt 5.2. Coffee break conversation in class. Anne (A), student, Danish; Leonardo (L),
student, Italian; Kasper (K), student, Danish.

1 A I think there’s not really a wrong or right way in this <to do this their way of
doing it I think >
2 L <yeah yeah I hope so> yeah
3 A it’s more like that we will kind of sum up or make an ((gesticulating a circle with
her hands)) in the oral exams but yeah
4 L so are we gonna have the feedback from the synopsis before we start or only after
so then we could adjust my oral if I get the feedback before and then okay this is
wrong if so if only it’s afterwards I can’t adjust or if you know what I mean
5 A that’s true but I guess (.) so I guess they are seeing it as a as one exam
6 L yeah yeah
and actually for my point I see your point for me I would be really anxious if they were saying you did this wrong bla bla bla yeah yeah I guess I would like to also prove that what I did in my synopsis there is a higher meaning with that you might be confused about it but then arh it made sense because yeah but I don’t know what’s going on so but actually when you speak then if you have marked things with a question mark then maybe as you speak it might actually answer itself and then yeah if you can’t answer it that’s probably what they are gonna ask you about

Excerpt 5.2 is an example of a discussion brought up during a coffee break in course A on the role of the three elements of the exam. This excerpt forms a part of a longer conversation on the exam between three students, the Danish students Anne and Kasper and the Italian student Leonardo. This conversation took place a couple of weeks before the course ended. In that period, the exam was the favorite topic of most conversations, regardless of student nationality. In this particular conversation, the students are talking about the synopsis and the oral exam, sharing strategies on how to present and prepare for the exam. Leonardo asks whether they will get feedback on the synopsis before the exam so that he may change his presentation according to the feedback (significantly, Leonardo positions Anne and Kasper (two Danes) as being able to answer his question, i.e. as local experts). Anne, however, says that she would like to prove that there is a “higher meaning” (line 14-15) with her synopsis. Leonardo expresses that he would like to know whether what he wrote in the synopsis is correct or not, whereas Anne would like to point out possible inconsistencies in the synopsis herself. Kasper adds that one might note possible questions arising from the synopsis, as this will probably be the ones addressed by the teacher and examiner in the exam. Both of these strategies seem to point out that the students believe that it is best to answer possible questions yourself. This belief thus serves as an insight into how these students view their role in the exam. Their role is, however, not described anywhere in the curriculum. The teacher did point out several times throughout the course that being critical towards one’s own synopsis would be a good strategy. How this could be carried out was less clear. In the exam, most of the students did use a version of this strategy – with varying degrees of success.

In this section, I have compared the official exam guidelines to the students’ interpretations of and expectations to what constitutes “a decent oral exam”. The teacher did provide the students with a
description of the intended learning outcome of the course as described in the curriculum. The exam assignment did, however, contain a great deal of freedom, which positioned the Danish students with a certain expert knowledge. However, as we will see, the Danish students’ perception of the exam was also influenced by a “common sense” way of describing the exam, i.e. there is no right or wrong way. It should here be noted that the Danish students in the exam did not receive better grades than the international students.

Before we tune in on the strategies of specific students in the exam, I will start by establishing an understanding of the dynamics of the oral exam interaction by focusing on the interactional genre of the oral exam.

5.1.2 “The answer is ‘what is the question’?” – student roles in the exam interaction

In linguistic terms, the oral exam is a genre, even if locally anchored, and genres “allow us to distinguish between very different communicative events, create expectations for each of them, and adjust our communicative behaviour accordingly”. (Gumperz, 1972, pp. 16-18) Thus, performing at an oral exam also requires knowledge of the interactional genre. Larsen (2013) offers insights into international students’ struggles with understanding the written genres of content courses at UCPH. Here, the author shows how students deal with re-contextualizing their genre knowledge from earlier educational experiences. As I described in section 2.4, students of any course bring with them prior learning experiences, and their meeting with the oral exam genre is thus influenced by the degree to which they are (or feel they are) familiar with the genre. This also influences interpretations of the didactical contract in the exam situation: the role of the student and the teacher (and examiner), respectively. In this section, I will guide you through the oral exam interaction of course A with a focus on student roles in the interaction, with one student’s exam as an example.

According to Leth Andersen and Tofteskov (2016), the exam has an initial phase, an examination phase and final phase in which the examination comes to an end. First, in the course A exam, the teacher and the internal examiner would make small-talk, welcome the student and ask him/her to sit, offer him/her some water or coffee with the aim of making a potentially stressful situation less so for the (potentially and possibly nervous) student. For the Danish-speaking students, this more informal part of the exam happened in Danish. As the teacher explained, this more informal atmosphere felt unnatural to conduct in English with Danish-speaking students. In the oral exam
interaction there is a number of relatively stable change of frames within the overall genre of an examination (Goffman, 1974). Atkins et al. describe Goffman’s concept of frame as constituting what is happening and as “a filtering process through which general principles of conduct apply” (2016, p. 3). It is this understanding of frame I employ here. Thus, the first change of frame was for the Danish students also a shift in language47. Below is an example:

Excerpt 5.3. Oral exam, local student. Teacher (T), student (S), internal examiner (I).

1 T tak for det ((den studerende tænder lyset i rummet))
2 S ja det var så lidt så må i huske på at det var mig der klarede det ((leende))
3 I ja heh det skal vi nok
4 S heheh
5 T så du springer bare eksamen over så hehe
6 S ja okay
7 T (0.5) hh ((rømmer sig)) okay we then switch into English

//

1 T thank you ((the student turns on the lights in the exam room))
2 S yeah you’re welcome then you just have to remember it was me who fixed the lights
3 ((laughing))
4 I yeah heh we will
5 S heheh
6 T so you can just skip the exam heheh
7 S yeah okay
8 T (0.5) hh ((clear his/her throat)) okay we then switch into English

In the initial phase of the exam, the tone of the conversation is light and welcoming, sometimes playful as we see in excerpt 5.3 regardless of the language used. This informal small-talk serves the purpose of setting the scene for the oral exam encounter. I have chosen to highlight this excerpt because the change in language illustrates the change of frame very nicely. People use frames to try to orient themselves and coordinate their social activity, producing and receiving an endless stream of signs to indicate “what it is that is going on here” (Goffman, 1974). In this case, the

47 This was also the case in the exam of course C.
change of language (and the throat clearing) serves as contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982) signalling that the interaction now goes from informal to formal (line 8), and the “examination” begins.

As hinted at above, the oral examination of course A can roughly be divided into a presentation part and a discussion part. The student’s role in the exam is basically to demonstrate the appropriate knowledge by harnessing the necessary skills connected to the task of giving an exam performance, viz. by giving a condensed presentation and later by answering questions by taking these as prompts for demonstrations of knowledge. The general pattern of the interaction, to resume the argument in linguistic terms, is thus that the student gives an oral version of the written synopsis. Here the students are speaking, and the teacher and the examiner are listening and (often) taking notes. In that sense, the student emulates the role of a member of an academic community giving a brief overview of the state of knowledge as to a specific subject. At some point, the teacher will change the speech event (cf. Hymes, 1972) and start asking questions for the student to answer. Excerpt 5.4 serves as an example of this change.

Excerpt 5.4. Oral exam, local student. Teacher (T), student (S), Internal examiner (I).

1   T I’m just gonna point out that you only have one minute left
2   S  oh okay
3   T I can give you two
4   S  yeah I just need two minutes pfuuh ((exhales)) I’m gonna talk very fast now ((student continues speaking for two minutes)) pfjew yeah so that was my argument
5   I  wow good .) breath now
6   T I forced you so much to speak faster because we have lots of questions to the last bit
7   T I’m sure so I will give you more time to elaborate on it I think.

The purpose of the second part of the exam (the discussion) is to assess whether the student is able to discuss academically the same subject as was in focus in the introductory presentation. These two parts of the examination thus also require different competences (including different linguistic competences) of the students. For example, the students have the opportunity to extensively prepare the presentation supported by their synopsis, whereas the discussion part of the exam is more unpredictable. The presentation could be seen as oral delivery of a written essay and thus requires not only thinking but also presence. The other part, the discussion requires linguistic flexibility (of both student and assessors, it should be added) since it requires interpreting the
teacher’s and the internal examiner’s questions as well. As I have described, the oral exam potentially has career-decisive consequences (thus is a high-stake encounter, cf. Atkins et al., 2016), and students are often under considerable stress to produce highly valued answers, which makes it imperative for them to be able to interpret the questions in the first place. Thus, the interaction also gives rise to the possibility of stressful or distorted communication that might affect the student’s performance – and the examiner’s perception of the performance. As my focus lies with the students, I will not go much into the task of producing understandable questions. However, this matter cannot be completely overlooked.

**Excerpt 5.5. Oral exam, local student. Teacher (T), student (S), internal examiner (I).**

1. T **I don’t know how to ask this question** now I’m gonna give you the answer
2. S arh
3. T because you mentioned this idea about uncertainty of identity (. ) the Appadurai-argument
4. S yeah
5. T globalization and so on are pushing some people you know they have this uncertainty about their own identity
6. S yeah yeah yeah
7. T and there for this kind of (. ) violence and prejudice
8. S yeah? ((asking))
9. T I’m sort of giving you.
10. S **I’m not getting the question I think**
11. T it’s eh (. ) okay so the question is or the answer or hypothesis is that
12. I hhh the answer is ((T laughing))
13. T hhh the answer is **what is the question**
14. ((all laughing))
15. T the answer is this is because this is a reaction to globalization uncertainty about identities that would be Appadurai’s argument
16. S yes
17. T that is that creates certain kinds of ehm (. ) violence is also Appadurai’s argument
18. S yeah?
19. T **could you use that also to your last bit of the argument** that both objective and subjective violence are
20. S created by <uncertainty>
Excerpt 5.5 stems from the very beginning of the second part of the exam. The teacher has thanked the student for his/her presentation and is now initiating the discussion part of the exam. The teacher and examiner, as indicated in section 5.1.1, come prepared with a number of themes for their questions based on the synopsis, and the teacher may change his/her way of asking questions based on the answers s/he gets. When the teacher starts by saying “I don’t know how to ask this question” (line 1), it could be a linguistic issue. However, it is more likely that it is a way of testing whether the student is able to follow his/her line of thinking; it is an open question where the student is given the opportunity to show that she can structure and take control. In the question-answer sequences in the exam discussions, question-asking is the privilege of the teacher (or the internal examiner), whereas it is in the role of the student to produce “good”, but not necessarily correct, answers. I will discuss this further in section 5.3.

While the teacher is speaking, the role of the student, as we see here, is to listen actively. The student’s “arh” and “yeah yeah yeah” can be considered lexical agreement tokens (cf. Hüttner, 2014) (perhaps deliberately) signaling that the student is indeed following the teacher’s line of thinking, which is arguably the preferred action (Pomerantz, 1984). In line 12, the student has to ask for clarification, “I’m not getting the question I think”, which is, in itself, not peculiar as the teacher has actually not yet asked a question. In that sense, it is a polite way of asking for clarification, as the student expresses an inability to understand the question while in fact the teacher is yet unable to formulate a question (his/her own words, line 1). Participants in social interaction have to keep checking that they are tuning in to the same stage in the activity, giving and noticing indexical signs of, for example, what type of speech act is performed (Rampton et al., 2014). Lines 11 and 13 both serve as examples of how the student has to guess whether the question is in fact a question, an answer or a hypotheses, and next, what type of response is suitable for either of these. In line with Dalton-Puffer (2013, 2016), I here understand a speech act as a verbal action that reflects prototypical cognitive actions needed to process content knowledge and, more broadly, as the pair-parts that trigger or constitute a specific action, e.g. questions and answers. In that sense, this excerpt serves as an example of a very specific competence required
of the student, that is, to know that in fact “the answer is what is the question” (line 15). For example, in line 21, the teacher asks the student if s/he could “use that to the last bit of your argument” referring to the “Appadurai-argument”. This question is seemingly a yes/no-answer (e.g. Steensig, 2015), but as we see by the student’s reaction, it is in fact also an invitation to discuss. It is also not insignificant that it is the teacher (as opposed to the student) who makes the joke about the answer being the question. This is most likely connected to the exam as an institutional encounter with specific roles and relations (a/symmetries).

I have chosen to show this excerpt from this particular exam, as it shows a way of asking questions characteristic of all the exams. It should here be noted that the teacher and examiner’s questions, as described in the section above, is influenced by the quality of the synopsis and can thus differ in their level of abstraction (in a Bloomian sense). However, the excerpt shows how the idea of “the implied student” comes into play in the interaction. In Leth Andersen and Tofteskov’s (2016) book on exams in the Danish educational system, the authors point out that what is often considered the best performance is when the student is able to control the interaction; if you want a high grade, you should be in control. This is presented as nothing more than a general idea that exists amongst teachers and examiners. In Keldorff’s (1996) case study of the assessment process of one oral exam, we can find a slightly more empirically basis for this idea; Keldorff finds that the grade given reflected the examiner and teacher’s general view of the student, for example, as being eager to engage in academic discussion. In the exam sessions I observed the teacher and examiner’s question asking strategy in this excerpt offered the student the opportunity to take control, which the student in this excerpt aligns with (Roberts et al., 2005). Furthermore, the student’s response in line 25 displays two types of strategies that resemble what the students presented in the section 5.1.1 discussed. First, a response strategy that signals independent thinking by saying “also something I wanted to talk about” (lines 25-26), which resembles what Kasper and Anne suggested in the section above (excerpt 5.2), and another strategy that involves being critical “I don’t wanna undermine my own project, but…” (lines 26-27). This excerpt thus serves as an example of question-asking strategy that was found to be similar in all exams. Moreover, it exemplifies the student’s role as the student in this exam, as I have shown, displays in a number of ways that she knows the genre, i.e. how she is expected to carry out this interaction.

In this section, I have thus shown two changes of frame: from the initial informal phase of the exam interaction to the actual examination, and from the presentation to the discussion. To end the
exam interaction and thus the discussion, the teacher will thank the student for his/her performance and indicate that the allocated time has ended. This is exemplified in the excerpt below.

**Excerpt 5.6. Oral exam, local student. Teacher (T), student (S), internal examiner (I).**

1. I  you know I don’t have any fixed answer or something I ((student laughing)) was
2.    just interested in thinking together like cause on the other hand all the things that
3.  we say is not accessible to them because that is ours right
4.  S  yeah
5.  I  that is what we continuously push them with in the whole integration <stuff>
6.  S  <yeah yeah they have to do> ((talks loud)) this <and you have to do that to be
7.    integrated
8.  I  <yeah you have to and> understand and respect and take on our enjoyment right
9.  S  mm
10.  I  so I’m just you know I don’t know
11.  S  yeah it’s a really interesting double mechanism in that way ((the student explains
12.    how)) do you see my point?
13.  I  yeah
14.  T  yeah I think I have to close it thank you very much

These past sections serves as a frame for understanding the general pattern of the oral exam interaction in course A as well as the expectations towards the role of the student (and teacher). In the following sections, I will analyze four different students’ strategies in the oral exam. The first exam is an example of how the teacher and examiner is trying to figure out if the student has actually understood the assignment – an assignment that was not explicitly formulated but a certain way of carrying it out was implied. The following section (section 5.3) will focus on a “successful” and an “unsuccessful exam”, and the last exam shows a student’s strategic choice of a subject (section 5.4).

### 5.2 Understanding the assignment

In this section, I will look into one student’s interpretation of the assignment in the oral exams. The student in focus in this section was a mixture of nationalities, had lived in several countries, but her primary source of education was from the USA. As described above, the subject of the exam was self-chosen (or “optional” to use the wording of the curriculum); the students were told
that it was up to them how they interpreted the synopsis exam – as long as they met the formal
criteria such as handing the synopsis in on time and delivering a 10-minute presentation.
Furthermore, we have in the past sections seen that there seemed to be an idea (amongst the Danish
students in particular) that there was no “right or wrong way” to do the exam (see excerpt 5.2
above). The student presented as a case study in this section is an example of a student who did
indeed interpret the official guidelines and the freedom that followed to do the exam differently
on purpose.

First of all, the student chose a “visual presentation” in the form of a slide show, knowing that it
was a different way of doing things (see excerpt 5.4 below). All other students held the
presentation without a slide show – very often with help from a personal written outline. Secondly,
the student was standing up during the entire exam. All the other students sat at a table across from
the teacher and the internal examiner, as shown in Section 3.4. The student had chosen a film as
her self-chosen subject, and the student’s slide show included images from the film on which she
did her synopsis, to exemplify theories from the course literature in what seemed to be a convincing
way. Her delivery of the presentation was thus markedly different in its form, but this did not seem
to be a problem. The following interaction played out right after the student entered the room and
is thus the student’s introduction to her presentation:

*Excerpt 5.7. Oral exam. Student (S), Internal examiner (I), Teacher (T).*

1    S    I’m doing things a little differently cause I’m a visual person and mine is a
2    S    synopsis of a film so you guys are getting a whole different visual experience
3    I    it’s great.
4    S    okay can I start?
5    T    just go ahead
6    S    so the reason why I chose to contextualize my presentation this way is because it’s
7    S    a film synopsis and I think that I can very much tie the theories to the film and the
8    S    images and metaphors that are constructed within the film

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48 The student discussed exam strategies with students in class, and some of the students had told her that it was
unusual but permitted to make a power point presentation.
Lines 1-2 serve as an example of the student’s on-going self-positioning (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991). Positioning theory has become an important analytical tool in interactional sociolinguistics (alongside Goffman’s concept of framing (Goffman, 1974)), as it is used to “explore ways participants in conversation strategically manage their identities and their jointly produced definition of ‘what’s going on’” (Jones, 2012, p. 3). Within this theoretical line of thinking, there are a number of intentional positioning, where deliberate self-positioning (amongst forced self-positioning and positioning of others) is one. This type of positioning occurs in every conversation where someone wants to express their identity by stressing their agency, by referring to their point of view or to events in their biography (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991, p. 115). Here, the student deliberately positions herself as doing things differently (which in fact fits into an existing norm of no right or wrong way) as a part of a personality trait while at the same time offering a unique brand (i.e. “a whole different visual experience with a presentation”, line 2). This kind of self-positioning was not unusual for the student, as it was a strategy often used in classroom context as well. Here, the internal examiner applauds this strategy by applying: “it’s great” (line 4).

The excerpt 5.7 shows the student’s strategy of doing things differently, which in itself is an accepted strategy. In that sense, the idea about nothing right, nothing wrong was in fact correct. However, as we will see in excerpt 5.8 below, it was unclear to the teacher and the internal examiner whether her case (the self-chosen subject) was the film or the case described in the film. The film is a reenactment of real events based on a biographical book and is an artwork built over a piece of history when Greenlandic children was sent to Denmark as a part of the Danish colonization of Greenland. Thus, the discussion part of the exam consisted of the teacher and the internal examiner trying to find out if the student herself did an analysis on the case upon which the film was made, or if she used the filmmaker’s interpretation of the event. In that sense, the exam became a negotiation of the assignment itself. Excerpt 5.8 stems from the beginning of the discussion part of the exam, and as you will see, the teacher starts by clarifying how the student is using the film.

**Excerpt 5.8.** Oral exam, international student. Teacher (T), student (S), internal examiner (I).

1 T thank you I mean just a sort of overall discussion here cause you’re analyzing a
2 film but sometimes it’s unclear to me when you are (.) how you use the film is it
because I guess that […] has a eh she has a project

or she’s expressing a narrative herself of her interpretation of culture of rootedness
and so on and and so how much can we just take this as face value this is what
happened are you using it to excavate into what happened in the case of the
experiment or are you trying to analyze her film?

ehm < so I think>

you see what I mean?

I’m trying to build upon what her intentions were with the film so I touched
briefly upon this but the intention with the film and the reason why it is an effective

the experience but she needed it in a way that was more visible […] and so I think
I wanted to use her (.) the analysis that I wanted to use was kind of on the film
because I think she dramatizes it in a way that I was able to relate it through the
visual component to the literature so I think in the same way that she uses her film
to reach a broader audience I use the film to kind of put in real world the very
somewhat theoretical literature that we read so it was my way of rooting it

mm but so you so to put it in other words you sort of agree with her analysis or
you <follow>

<so my personal>

or no you with your theoretical <background>

<well>

would you so you yeah you agree you find that her analysis is makes sense within
the

framework of <the other>

framework <that you understand>

<I think> yeah I mean I think her the reason why I did a film synopsis is because I

49 Name of the filmmaker

50 The student explains why she considers the film an effective narrative based on a press interview with the author.
think she is able to articulate with the visual component what sometimes is lost through words and so the reason why I chose to use her film rather than the text and if you have read both of these and it is I mean the film is essentially Helena’s story (.) and I think there’s just an accessibility that for me is just easier to apply in a way to the literature that was also accessible for me to communicate to the two of you

The teacher initiates the 10-minute discussion by asking to the student’s recognition of the ontological status of the film as an artwork or if she is analyzing the case expressed by the film. In line 11, we see what appears to be a yes/no question (e.g. Steensig, 2015): “you see what I mean?” However, the student interprets the tacit assumption that she is to give an account of her method of analysis, not a yes or a no – which is, of course, also clear from the more direct question in line 7, 8. Moreover, in line 10, the internal examiner produces a backchannel which could be a validation of the importance of the teacher’s question and its relevance. So in this way the student is also guided towards what the teacher and examiner want: an account of some sort.

The student explains that her intention with using the film was to “build on” the filmmaker’s intention, which was to visualize a rather complex story. In that way, she explains that she uses the film to visualize theories. Thus, from her explanation, it seems as if she is trying to explain theory by using a film and by using an analysis done by the filmmaker or “kind of on the film” (line 16). In line 21, the teacher tries to rephrase and asks if the student agrees with the filmmaker’s analysis. Thus, even though the student recognized that she should give an account, she is seemingly not able to identify the “right” kind of account – at least not here. What follows suggests that, in fact, there is a right way and a wrong way for purposes of discussing academic content. To the teacher’s rephrased question, she responds “my personal” (line 23). However, it is not her personal opinion they are after but a theoretically justified critical view on that specific analysis (see line 24). Once again, the student tells them that the point of her visual presentation was to communicate theoretical literature to them. The teacher and the internal examiner thus seem to be testing whether or not the student does her own analysis or is using another person’s analysis. The latter might not in itself be problematic, but not recognizing it might. In that sense, it seems as though the teacher and examiner’s understanding of the assignment was to provide an analysis of a self-chosen case, an understanding that is in line with the curriculum guidelines in Table 6. In contrast, the student seems to interpret the assignment as her – as a “person” – presenting theory in an “accessible” way, which might very well correspond to her prior experiences of oral
performance, and is perhaps a strategy that has proved successful for her in the past. In this context, however, the teacher and internal examiner are looking for a critical and analytical stance (see line 24) towards the fact that this work of art not only tells a story but also interprets it.

Following the interaction in excerpt 5.8, the internal examiner follows up by asking how the student distances herself analytically from the filmmaker. To this, the student responds by bringing in her own experiences of being in Denmark. Once again using a strategy of self-positioning. This strategy is also visible in the next excerpt, which took place a couple of minutes later, still on the same subject. The internal examiner continues asking questions:

Excerpt 5.9. Oral exam, course A. Internal examiner (I), Student (S), Teacher (T).

1  I  but just to provoke a bit
2  S  yeah <do it>
3  I  <you> say for instance this social the whole social experiment exemplifies the complexity of identity formation ehm one could argue that ehh what you show us
4  S  mm
5  I  the simplicity of identity formation in the sense that if you remove someone from A to B they lose their identity so are you showing us ehm the complexities here or do you in some way come to simplify things because they I’m not saying they simplify things because their experiences are so real but their wordings of you
6  S  <simplified> know their tryings to to word their experiences become <simplified>
7  I  identity wise do you come to overtake that a bit or?
8  S  well I think it’s instinctual for me to attempt to simplify and by no means do I think it’s (.) I still believe that identity construction and loss is an extremely complex topic and we see this throughout the course literature […]51 I think I think that’s a shortcoming on my part and I apologize for that if I did present it in a way
9  S  that was simplified I think I wasn’t trying to present identity as simplified but

51 Due to possible identification markers, I have chosen to leave out this part. The […]-part constitutes two lines.
The internal examiner initiates his/her turn by saying “just to provoke a bit”\textsuperscript{52} (line 1), which probably does not mean that s/he is actually trying to provoke the student but the student’s line of thinking. This is welcomed by the student, “yeah do it” (line 2). If we look at the adjacency pairs in the question-answer sequences, the lines 1 and 2 are interesting as they (again) show clear positioning of both the student and the internal examiner and their rights and roles. The examiner has the right to ‘provoke a bit’, which the student allows, though in fact she can hardly disallow it. In that sense, the ‘yeah, do it’ is actually a type-conforming and preferred response (see Pomerantz, 1984). At the same time, the question in line 1 does allow the student to show that she is open for provocative questions and hence accepting the rules of the academic discussion as a genre. Here, the question thus includes the indirect speech act of an invitation to engage in an academic discussion. In the following turn, the internal examiner implies that by seemingly overtaking the visual interpretation of a complex story, the student might actually come to simplify the case. To this, the student responds that it is “instinctual” for her to “attempt to simplify” (line 14) (once again positioning herself). The student goes through some of the course literature ([…], line 16), and the teacher ends up excusing the student’s possible misinterpretation of the assignment by saying that she has chosen “an extreme case” and therefore gives her “the benefit of the doubt” (line 22). This ended what could be considered an interrogation into whether or not the student lived up to one of the understanding of the assignment and one specific bullet in the curriculum, that is, analysis (see Table 6). The exam continues for a couple of minutes after this excerpt with a discussion of different definitions of culture presented in the course literature.

\[\textsuperscript{52} \text{Possibly a Danification of provoke from the Danish word “provokere”} \]
What we have seen in the excerpts was in some ways a defense of the student’s written work. The assignment included a great deal of freedom and, as we see in excerpt 5.9, there seems to be divergent understandings of what the assignment was. According to Hinnenkamp (1999) misunderstandings are a “common sense” category (see also Coupland et al., 1991; Roberts et al. 2005). They occur whenever there is lack of understanding for one or both parties. Hinnenkamp (1999) arranges misunderstandings in several categories, in relation to whether they deal with misunderstandings of facts, words or sentences (core misunderstandings) or misunderstandings of genre, activity type or tasks (event misunderstandings). What is occurring in this exam can be considered an event misunderstanding. As I have shown, the student is able to identify that the exam is a discussion, and she has thus mastered some aspects of the interactional genre of the oral exam, e.g. accounting for her answers. Furthermore, the example shows that the exam-assignment did in fact include a certain amount of free interpretation, i.e. she was allowed to stand and present a power point show. What seemingly leads to her struggles is the academic genre, and here there is indeed a right or wrong. The student’s continuous self-positioning as a “person” (visual, instinctual etc.) and not as an “academic” leads the teacher and examiner to difficulties in the assessment of her academic performance. This self-positioning strategy of hers was also mentioned by the teacher in one of the coffee breaks during the day. However, the student ended up getting a 10 for the exam, which is a high grade even if the general level for all students at this exam was high, and the student might indeed have gotten “the benefit of the doubt”. In principle, domestic students might just as well misunderstand assignments, but the Danish students in this particular class had all gone through the Danish educational system and even in the top end, and a “misunderstanding” like this simply did not occur with the Danish students.

Before we move on, I will end this section on a similar note found in Roberts et al. (2014) study of simulated consultations: Virtually all candidates experienced moments of misunderstanding. In Robert and colleagues study, the difference between high and low grades was that the poorer performing candidates had slightly more misunderstandings. Bumpiness and irregularities are experienced in every conversation. What is interesting is how they are handled.

5.3 Extraordinary exam(ple)s
In this section, I will present detailed analyses of several excerpts from two different examinations. The first one is an example of a “successful” examination, and the second one is an example of an “unsuccessful” examination. I have chosen these two exams because the first one serves as an
example of a student whose performance the teacher and examiner praised, while second one is an example of a student with a strong feeling of being misunderstood.

5.3.1 “Yeah I buy that” – a successful examination?

The excerpts analyzed in this section stem from an exam with a Danish student who performed well. It should once again be stressed that it was not just Danish students who performed well, but this particular exam was indeed considered an exceptionally good performance by the teacher and the examiner. I have chosen three excerpts that present snapshots of question-answer sequences.

The examination started with the student presenting central points from her synopsis, which was formed as a theoretical discussion on humanitarianism. The teacher initiated the discussion-part of the exam by thanking her for a thought-provoking paper and presentation. The questioning, I will argue, may thus aim at providing the student with an opportunity to excel, getting her the grade 12. Excerpt 5.10 below is the first question of the examination.

Excerpt 5.10. Oral exam, local student. Teacher (T), student (S).

1 T I may be taking this a bit far
2 S yes
3 T but in class we also discussed other ways of you know ideas of resistance against
4 for instance hegemonic racial ideas and so on
5 S mm
6 T is there some similarities there?
7 S (.) ehm yes probably yes
8 T I know it’s a bit of a stretch
9 S yeah no but I did think about it myself a bit as well ehm with regards to (0.3) eh
10 to for example the Palestinian suicide bombers
11 T mm
12 S eh that also fight back ehm but we don’t want to (. ) eh risk having to identify we
13 don’t want to accept that they are a part of this humanity or total identity because
14 that would mean that we have it in us as well as the capacity to do that

The teacher initiates his/her questioning by saying that s/he “may be taking this a bit far” (line 1), signaling that this is a question that gives the student the opportunity to excel. The teacher’s
question is formed as a yes/no answer (Steensig, 2015), and the answer would be yes. However, as we have seen, it has to be followed up by an account of some sort. The student answers “yes probably yes”, which is followed up by the teacher in line 8, saying that s/he knows “it’s a bit of a stretch”. Just as we saw in excerpt 5.5 in section 5.1.2, this student is also using a strategy of answering “but I did think about it myself” (line 9), which is indeed the preferred answer (Pomerantz, 1984). It is thus possible to assume that the student is aware that for her to “think about it” signals a shared understanding that this specific topic could be important. The teacher’s reference to a specific episode in class and the student’s recognition of that specific episode here also establishes a common frame of reference and experience (Gumperz, 1982), which in studies of gatekeeper encounters has proven important for success (cf. Kirilova, 2013). We have thus from the beginning of the discussion a starting point of departure where the teacher signals a sense of co-membership (cf. Tranekjær, 2015; Campbell & Roberts, 2007).

Excerpt 5.11 shows the next question asked by the teacher.

Excerpt 5.11. Oral exam, course A. Teacher (T), Student (S), Internal examiner (I).

1     T  so to the Appadurai-thing I think it’s brave and I think it’s interesting but I’m  
2          not sure I buy it completely  
3     S  no.  
4     T  at least not maybe or let’s just debate it  
5     S  yeah yeah  
6     T  ehm because it’s good that you do it especially when you talk about the imagined  
7          communities because imagined communities aren’t they an idea of communities in  
8          plural it’s a universal but particular model you see what I mean?  
9     S  ((sighs))  
10    T  I’m Danish but I know there are German people  
11    S  mm yes I understand what you mean ehm (0.2) that might be true (.) to be  
12          completely honest I don’t I haven’t read extensively of Anderson I ehm  
13    T  but I think in general the idea of nation state is built on this idea of being a what  
14          you might call it a community or  
15    S  yeah yes <but in a community>  
16    T  <different communities> similar communities  
17    S  yes yes yes  
18    T  different but similar

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yes yeah yeah but it’s not so much I think what I wanted to say with using Anderson was to say that if (0.2) if what nee (.) what makes a collective identity a community that we can ascribe some certain unity to is that it is imagined then why not that unity might as well be everyone I mean yeah having an idea of an imagined community which is larger than that yes because exactly because it is imagined then who determines where the boundaries are it doesn’t like (.) they are not there before you or it’s the Danes that already have their boundaries so when does it stop mm I mean you could also talk about an imagined European community imagined humanity as a community yeah yeah I buy that

This excerpt starts with the teacher inviting the student to engage in a debate on her argument presented in the synopsis and in the presentation by saying that it is brave but that he does not buy it completely. The student’s first reaction is that she “has not read extensively” (line 12) enough to engage. However, the student elaborates on the argument after a clarification from the teacher broadening out the question to not specifically interrogating her in her knowledge of Anderson, but more “in general” (line 13). The student here displays either that she has not prepared extensively for the exam, or (more likely) she uses a strategy of self-positioning that at first glance seems self-deprecating. This, however, might also be a strategy, like the speaker who starts his speech by saying ‘I’m not good with words’. In line 19, we see an opposition expressed in what can be considered a weak disagreement in the “yeah but”-form (Pomerantz, 1984; see also Muntigl & Turnbull, 1998, on counterclaims). Disagreements are closely related to argumentation, and we see from the teacher’s reaction in line 23 that this specific disagreement is not dispreferred as is usually the case with disagreements (cf. Hüttner, 2014). On the contrary, it seems as an important move for the student to engage in a (more symmetric) academic discussion. The way that the student disagrees with the teacher is in contrast to the previous example (in section 5.2), which showed the exact opposite: The student agreed the whole way. From line 15, we see the student and the teacher working together on the argument in a way that can be described as collaborative speech to illustrate the listener’s possible continuations of the speaker’s turns (Sacks, 1966). Her explanation is satisfactory, and the teacher “buys” her argument (line 31). Throughout their co-
construction the teacher also seems to give her credit for some of the points that s/he is actually making (e.g. line 29).

The last excerpt (5.12) from this exam shows the internal examiner’s first question, which dives further into the student’s argument on humanitarianism.

Excerpt 5.12. Oral exam, local student. Internal examiner (I), student (S), teacher (T).

1. I so how should we go about this is this the ultimate failure <of the humanitarianism>
2. S <I think that>
3. I or the opposite or what is it
4. S I think the **well it almost becomes a personal political question** whether you believe in the possibility or not because eh several Agier among **well I haven’t read extensively on it** but Agier does critique the humanitarian system for already being broken but he doesn’t give an alternative so it yeah personally no I don’t necessarily think there’s an alternative but that we have to keep fighting the power balances and then
5. I an alternative to drawing the line or?
6. S no
7. I or to being there in the first place?
8. S **to trying to be there in the first place yes to trying to ehm**
9. I so the question is how should we be there if we should not be encompassed by your critique here I mean how can we talk about A helping B in the first place
10. S yeah
11. I without that being an unequal situation in the first place?
12. S well I don’t know if I have an answer to that to be honest I mean it seems sort of **an academic discussion** that doesn’t give an alternative like Agier himself in our lecture mentioned this philosophy of the gift ((continues to explain Agier’s point)) so that **I think it becomes a question of what you believe in** exactly because humanitarianism it’s not a fact it isn’t like any other ideologies it’s something that you ascribe to
13. I mm mm
14. T I think you (.) how to pose this as a question as if **you are also giving the answer** you say it **depends on what you believe in**
This student’s reaction to the internal examiner’s question is that it is almost “a personal political question” (line 5). However, instead of discarding the question because she has not “read extensively” (line 6-7), she takes that reservation and answers “personally”. The “honesty” this student displays in this excerpt and the one before, as I argued, might be a self-positioning strategy. As to the internal examiner’s follow-up question, the student does not know if she has an answer, but she elaborates on that non-answer and ends up answering that “it depends on what you believe in” (lines 26-27) – an answer the teacher and the internal examiner accept. In that sense, this student has not provided a conclusive answer of the type you might expect from an examination, but by engaging in a discussion of why a certain position depends on what you believe in (“an academic discussion”, line 20), she might actually be doing what they expect of her. Thus, it might not be the specific answer that is important, but rather the way she answers, and the student seems to know that. In Nissen (2015, 2018), I have discussed the difference between correct answers and “good” answers, which means reflected answers, in a disciplinary setting of a science education. Here, I showed how one student by switching language from English to Danish was able to give an incorrect answer in a reflected way, which in turn was acknowledged by the teacher. In this case, one might argue that it is not interesting if the answer is correct or not (and there might not even be a correct/incorrect answer) as it “depends on what you believe in” (line 22, and again acknowledged by the teacher in line 27). However, the way in which she answers is interesting. What this student does well, for example by behaving in what could be considered a dispreferred way (e.g. by disagreeing and overlapping speech), is being an equal partner in an academic discussion (even if the situation of an exam is not symmetric, she still manages to create that impression).

As described, the student received a high grade and was considered a top-performing student by the teacher and the internal examiner. As it turns out, it is more difficult to pinpoint what makes an exam good than what makes it less good. One reason for this is that the didactical contract only becomes visible when broken (Brosseau, 1984). However, one might argue that based on this analysis the privileged behavior (cf. Bernstein, 1999) that gave her that grade was that: 1) She displayed a higher cognitive level in terms of being able to discuss relevant concepts and provide new knowledge (see Biggs & Tang, 2007, on the SOLO-taxonomy); 2) She was able to know that the question did not require a yes/no-answer (which was also acknowledged by the student in the
previous section), and 3) she was able to engage in an academic discussion in a seemingly more symmetric way.

In the following, I will analyse excerpts from an exam that could be considered unsuccessful – not as much in terms of a low grade, but rather the way in which the exam interaction was handled.

5.3.2 “Thank you for thinking with our questions” – an unsuccessful examination?

The exam in focus here is with an international student who is categorized by himself and others as a native speaker of English and had his educational upbringing in an Anglophone setting. This student was not satisfied with his grade, a 7, and he did indeed receive one of the lower grades given to students taking this particular exam. The grade 7 (equaling a C) is given for a good performance, which meets the course objectives, but also displays some weaknesses (see Table 7).

The question-asking strategy of the teacher and the examiner, as described in section 5.1.2 above, occurred in all exams, and this section will focus on this student’s attempt to answer their questions. In this exam situation, it seems as though the teacher and especially the internal examiner’s ways of asking questions are influenced by very specific expectations to the student, although these might be influenced by the implied student (see section 5.1.1-2). Furthermore, the exam serves as an example of issues concerning the didactical contract.

The exam started by the student entering the room and the teacher apologizing for already being behind schedule. The student starts his presentation by explaining his choice of topic. His presentation is based on main points from two scientific articles; he has not collected data himself. This is not necessarily a problem; as we saw above, it was possible to receive a high grade without doing so. However, some of the students decoded the freedom to select a topic of your own choice as a chance to excel by doing precisely that. The student’s presentation ended by the student stating that religion is indeed important in migration and that this is what he has tried to show in his synopsis. The teacher thanks him for his presentation and says that there are many perspectives on this. This comment could be considered the first peephole to the teacher’s evaluation of the exam.

The excerpt 5.13 below shows the teacher’s first question in this examination:

*Excerpt 5.13. Oral exam, international student. Teacher (T), student (S).*

1     T religion is a dodgy thing for us social scientists to work with because a lot of what
2  we’ve been talking about is you see it more as like the churches as social
institutions they are places where they have safe houses they provide assistance in various ways they provide networks they provide some kind of community (.). is there more to it (.). I mean you also mention (.). couldn’t one (.). could one simply say well this is like any other kind of social institution it happens to just call itself catholic or eh no I don’t think so I think it’s important.

that was what I was hoping for

aha hhh ehm no I don’t think so ehm I touched earlier on in the beginning of the presentation on motivations (.). what motivated people here and that religion is motivating and those who are providing the services the church (.). and interestingly in many cases those who receive the services (.). many migrants (.). I think a lot of this you don’t see so much (.). I’m not qualified enough to start speaking about this in other locations around the world

The teacher asks a fairly lengthy question that the student gives a short answer to (“no I don’t think so, I think it’s important”, line 8) followed by a further account from line 10. As opposed to the exam with the student in section 5.2, there is no explicit marking of the question as “provocative”, this is just performed “couldn’t one simply say” and “it happens to just call itself catholic” (lines 6-7). The student’s answer “eh no” could signal that he finds the question strange. His answer is acknowledged by the teacher by saying “that was what I was hoping for” (line 9), and when the student finds out that the answer is in the right direction (“aha”, line 10), he elaborates on that answer (lines 11-15). I will not go further into the student’s account. However, I will draw attention to line 14-15 where the student tells the teacher and internal examiner that he is not “qualified enough to start speaking” of other contexts than the one he has studied as this particular utterance actually becomes quite central for the rest of the exam.

In the discussion that ensues, the teacher refers to an article the student himself brought up in the presentation, asking him to elaborate on that. The student explains how the point of this text, in his view, is that migrants make a cost-benefit analysis of what they will gain as opposed to what they will lose by migrating in terms of social investment in a given religious community. This explanation forms the longest of the student’s contributions in the entire exam in terms of uninterrupted speech. The internal examiner points out that cost-benefit is actually an economic way of thinking, inviting the student to engage in a debate on moral economy. The student tries to explain that cost-benefit might not be the right word by referring to a study showing that migrants
rely on the words of their pastor in their decision-making process. The next excerpt (5.14) shows the final part of that answer and how it is received by the examiner. The excerpt starts with the student explaining that people who do not succeed with migration initially, do not blame religion for their “failure”.

*Excerpt 5.14. Oral exam, international student. Student (S), internal examiner (I), teacher (T).*

1. S this is why I’m referring to this case study even if they do not succeed they still come back and try again they don’t blame religion saying <oh this is bad>
2. T <don’t blame religion hhh>
3. S they just say oh okay we will try again (. ) I hope I have tried to answer
4. I yeah yeah yeah xxx I just still find it interesting that according to your own references here with Mayers it doesn’t necessarily mean that all ways of approaching something economically appears although religious approaches overrule you state ehm but only that perhaps we need to understand economic approaches here broader ( . ) so in terms of you know you talk also about the moral communities religious communities is also moral communities so how eh I mean
could you elaborate a bit about mmm on one hand religious communities is moral communities here and also the cost benefit I mean use it more think with it more morally and not necessarily ahm
5. S okay eh ( . ) network theory so I’m talking about the role of religious networks ( . ) network theory isn’t usually viewed as an economic theory it’s more viewed as a social explanation for why migration occurs but the terminology that we use and when you think about network theory and the role of religious networks I think it’s infused with economic rhetoric it’s about spiritual capital that the migrants gain from religious communities (0.5) that migrant sorry networks ehm often help
6. I mm?
7. T can I ask something completely different?

This excerpt is an example of a what has been termed a *latent misunderstanding* (Erickson & Schultz, 1982). A crucial issue in all communication, whether it deals with first or second language talk, intercultural interaction or interpersonal interaction, is whether the parties understand each other, and if not, how they tackle mis- and nonunderstanding (Roberts & Simonot, 1987). In gatekeeping encounters, misunderstandings may have a crucial effect on the outcome of the conversation, and it
is thus even more crucial how participants handle them. The latent misunderstanding is a covert misunderstanding characterized by ‘uncomfortable moments’, but the misunderstanding is often unnoticed and remains unnegotiated. The interesting thing in this case is that, at this point in the exam, the misunderstanding is only addressed by the teacher in the sense that s/he tries to change the subject (“can I ask something completely different?”, line 22). The student is trying to answer the question, and he even marks his attempt: “I hope I have tried to answer” (line 4). The internal examiner’s “yeah yeah yeah”-response is seemingly an example of lexical agreement tokens. However, the following “I just still find it interesting” (line 5) indicates that s/he is not entirely satisfied with the student’s answer or at least s/he is continuously trying to get him to engage in a discussion. The internal examiner continues by asking him to “elaborate a bit” (line 10-11). The student does not elaborate, but instead, he says “okay (.) network theory” (line 14) as his way of answering within the theoretical field that he knows. The question was arguably not testing his knowledge, but rather his ability to discuss the various spheres of the spiritual (religion) and the economical. Moreover, it was not aimed at network theory but intended to engage him in a discussion of moral economy. Thus, the internal examiner is still not satisfied with his answer (see the “mm?” in line 21”, and the teacher closes the interrogation by asking if s/he may change the subject. In this excerpt, we thus also see a deviation from the usual roles of the teacher and the internal examiner. As I presented in section 5.1, the role of the teacher is to lead the conversation and the role of the examiner is to make sure that the student gets a fair treatment. The internal examiner generally contributed considerably more than you might expect in an oral examination in Denmark. This was not mentioned/brought up by any of the students, however. Nevertheless, in this particular exam the internal examiner ends up almost taking over the role of the teacher. However, as this was not emphasized by any of the participants, I will not go further into this.

Following the interaction in excerpt 5.14, the teacher attempts to change the subject to the role of identity in relation to religion. To this, the student once again refers to two case studies he has read. This is followed by a second attempt by the internal examiner to make the student engage in a discussion on moral and religious communities, shown in excerpt 5.15.

Excerpt 5.15. Oral exam, international student. Teacher (T), student (S), internal examiner (I).

1       I  mm mm anyway (0.2) **but could you just elaborate a bit** about the relationship
2           then between the communities here in the studies you’ve read about ethnic oh sorry
3           religious eh communities and their way of eh supporting each other’s moral
4           communities and then the broader eh societies eh at their destination like within the
host what does it do to all the (.) that are also in the course within be it the US or 
wherever?
S you mean in the connection between where they are coming from and?
I no no where they are coming to
S where they are coming to?
T so them as minorities
I them as minorities within a surrounding host society
S okay well and what would you like me to say?
I no just you’ve talked about all the internal relations here
S okay between them internally moving from A to B and deciding within A or B but what
about the C or whatever eh
S okay eh how can I answer that (.). I will use Levitt her book on “god needs no
passport” ((continues to explain points from Levitt’s book)) sorry I lost my thought
I well I’m just like more than do they continue or not to do certain religious stuff
that’s fine but with what consequences and for who (0.3) so where does it take us
(.). I mean so where does that knowledge take us (.). the knowledge that they bring forward here that
people continue to do this and this and that within their ethnic religious
communities (.). but and and and so what (.). to be rude (.). like eh what are the
consequences and for whom (0.4) like what does it mean to them does it have any
effect on their wellbeing or does it give them
S on the migrants or themselves?
I yeah for instance you can take any angle answering my question you would like
to

In this excerpt, the misunderstanding is no longer covert and might no longer be a misuderstanding but simply a lack of understanding. Rathje (2004) defines a misunderstanding as a situation where the speaker signals one meaning but the hearer deciphers another and a non-undstanding as the moment when the speaker signals one meaning but the hearer does not decipher any meaning. Here, it is probably not the case that the student does not understand the meaning of the words, but it is not clear to him what is expected of him. The student asks for
clarification of the question (lines 7 and 9) and finally in line 12 says “what would you like me to say”, displaying that he might sense that he is not answering the question in the right way but does not know how to go about doing so. In this example we see a breach in the didactical contract in the sense that, from the perspective of the internal examiner, the students fails to meet the expectations by not aligning with the speech event (Hymes, 1972). From the perspective of the student, the internal examiner fails to produce a question in which it is clear to the student what is expected of him. It should here be noted that even though the didactical contract becomes visible, it does not become explicit (Warfield, 2006).

We saw in the very first excerpt of this particular exam (excerpt 5.13) that the student seemed uncertain of the expectations of his response, but this time he is even more confused. Once again, the student tries to answer within the boundaries of what he ‘knows’ with certainty: “I will use Levitt” (line 17), which as it seems was not how the internal examiner expected him to answer: “well I’m just like more” (line 19). In lines 23-24, the internal examiner says “I mean so where does this knowledge take us” followed by “to be rude” in line 26. This formulation of “where does this knowledge take us” may be interpreted as the internal examiner’s attempt to try to get the student to apply knowledge from the book and thus reach the level of abstraction in SOLO-terms (Biggs & Tang, 2007). It seems as if the teacher and the internal examiner are asking in order to try to get him to perform at a higher cognitive level, and thus their questions are not testing knowledge but ability to analyze and synthesize. This might, however, not be visible to the student or even a legitimate expectation. In terms of Bloom’s taxonomy, he has so far stayed in the lower part of the cognitive hierarchy (knowledge), and the internal examiner is quite desperately trying to assess his ability to analyze and evaluate, and thus trying to get a response that would give justification for raising his grade from average to high (Bloom, 1956). Thus, the apparent openness of the internal examiner’s questions in allowing the student to take “any angle answering” might actually not be that open; the internal examiner seems to be after a quite specific way of answering similar to what we saw in section 5.3.1. The student is silent after this, and excerpt 5.16 below is in direct continuation of the excerpt above. Here, the internal examiner adds more information to the question, possibly to make it more specific than the open approach shown above.

53 see Chapter 4 for a description of the SOLO-taxonomy
Excerpt 5.16. Oral exam, international student. Internal examiner (I), student (S), teacher (T).

1 I or does it give them certain rights with the multicultural institutional settings that
2 they can they are you know established as a religious community I mean what are
3 the (. I would just like you to go in to the wider consequences of these findings
4 S okay in terms of the relations with their host community?
5 I for instance as you please
6 S okay (. ehm (0.8)
7 T can I?
8 I yeah
9 T I think you can also ask it sort of empirically or comparatively (. does it make a
10 difference that this community is in Boston rather than in Berlin for instance or
11 Denmark
12 I or in Stockholm or yeah
13 T in fact that America is multicultural and does it make a difference that they are that
14 it’s a Hindu community as opposed to a Muslim or Jewish community I mean (0.2)
15 in that sense it has some kind of effects
16 I can’t yeah (. it has (. all the cases have different contexts
17 T yeah
18 I but the way you present it it comes you know the all the various thinkable
19 contexts disappeared a bit
20 S mm
21 I so Boston and you know welfare Scandinavia capital of Copenhagen would be two
22 completely different settings to try and be a Hindu community in I suppose
23 S I can’t speak I can speak about the internal dynamics but I cannot speak to you
24 about how that plays out externally
25 T mm
26 I no but what would you (. would you just we will give you the chance to try and
27 do it anyway without having done any fieldwork how would it look?
28 T well on the basis of the broad theories we’ve had and so on
29 I yeah how would this look ah in a Scandinavian setting?
30 S (0.3) eh I think fairly pretty much the same

At this point, the internal examiner makes his/her expectations more explicit: “I would just like you to go in to the wider consequences of these findings” (line 3). The student is, however, still
not sure what that means, and he tries to get a grasp on the question by asking for clarification. Once again the internal examiner says “as you please” (line 5), which leads to a long pause interrupted by the teacher taking over and asking the question in another and presumably more concrete way. What we see in line 7 where the teacher asks “can I”, could once again be considered an exchange of roles, if we keep in mind that the internal examiner should assist the teacher and not the other way around. The student does not really get a chance to respond to the teacher’s question though, and the internal examiner shifts from asking to assessing by saying what s/he had been after all along was “different contexts” (line 16). This is followed by a piece of feedback saying, “the way you present it the various thinkable contexts disappears a bit” (lines 18-19), thus hinting at the assessment criteria. At this moment, we once again see a breach in the didactical contract (or at least different interpretations as to what the contract looks like), as the student is not able to answer the question on his own, and the internal examiner has to make the expectations completely explicit. Here, the student may feel that the examiner failed him by not asking questions that are understandable, and thus not upholding his/her part of the contract. When we look at this excerpt in continuation of the one before, where the student asks the internal examiner “what would you like me to say”, one can wonder why s/he does not make his or her expectations more explicit earlier. However, by doing so, the internal examiner (taking on the role of the teacher) would actually not uphold his or her part of the contract, as it would deprive the student of an opportunity to engage in a (more symmetric) discussion and thus obtain a higher grade (or ultimately learning). As to the critique of the “contexts disappearing”, the student responds in a way similar to the very first excerpt (excerpt 5.13), where he stated that he was not qualified enough to speak about this: “I can speak to you about the internal dynamics but I cannot speak to you about how that plays out externally” (lines 23-24). He started the entire discussion by saying that he is not qualified to speak of other contexts, and that is exactly what the internal examiner expects him to do now. The internal examiner says that they will give him a chance to do it anyway – even if he does not feel qualified enough. In line 30, we have the first conclusive answer to the question negotiated in the previous excerpts, saying “I think fairly pretty much the same” (line 30).

There is more than one possible interpretation of the excerpts above. Either the student is incapable of noticing the importance of context, which would mean that he is simply not able to answer the question. There is also the possibility that the internal examiner’s wording/asking of questions is restricted due to limited vocabulary. In other words, it might be that s/he is not able to rephrase the questions. Dafouz (2007) noted that one important competence required of teachers in English
medium settings is different strategies to formulate questions, and we see here that the continuous attempt to get the student to “elaborate” was not successful. Studies have also suggested that teachers feel a “lack of linguistic flexibility” in situations other than lecturing, for instance during group discussions (Hellekjær, 2007, p. 79). This I know from conversations with the internal examiner, was also the case here. A third option is that the student does not know what is asked of him (he is following another didactical contract). As expressed by Roberts et al. (2014, p. 2), both sides experience the exam – it is in plain sight – but in this student’s exam there seemingly is a gap between the two positions hidden in taken for granted ways of acting and interacting. A fourth, and not a straightforward option, is that it is a combination of the three. The student fails to acknowledge the importance of context while at the same time struggling to understand the questions due to linguistic impreciseness on the part of the internal examiner and because he lacks knowledge of the exam genre and has a different interpretation of the didactical contract. In any case, the student was dissatisfied with his exam and felt that he had been treated unfairly, but, as the excerpts show, the way of questioning was not different from what was asked of the other students. Indeed, the student’s way of responding might seem just as strange for the teacher and internal examiner as their questions seemed unfair for the student.

Following excerpt 5.16, the internal examiner gives the student one more chance to deliver a satisfactory answer by asking him in what way he thinks “it” will look the same, and excerpt 5.17 is a continuation of that sequence of conversation. It is also the last sequence before the exam ended.

Excerpt 5.17. Oral exam, international student. Student (S), internal examiner (I), teacher (T).

1     S I think there’s an incredibly strong eh dynamic of brotherhood or a community
2     within these religious communities that no matter what is beating at their door so to
3     speak
4     T hmm mm
5     S <whether> whatever storm whatever weather there might be
6     I <makes them>
7     S <whether> whatever storm whatever weather there might be
8     I so whatever (.)
9     T I’ll take this it’s actually irrelevant
10    I wherever they land in the world a ethnic religious community internally would just
11    look the same because it doesn’t matter or?
In this last excerpt, the student tries to explain why he thinks that a religious community will look the same in various contexts. However, he does not get many utterances without being interrupted by the internal examiner trying eagerly to get him to answer in a certain way. The teacher tries to close the interrogation by saying “this is actually irrelevant” (line 9). The exam is at this point coming to an end as the 20 minutes allocated to the interaction is almost up. The teacher’s utterance could be aimed specifically at the examiner to get him/her to close down the interrogation or it could be aimed at the student to signal that he is not contributing in a relevant way. The student ends the exam in the same way he started it by saying “I don’t have enough information” (line 12). The whole atmosphere of hyper-questioning leaves the impression that the student is put on trial and cross-examined about something he either does not know or is not able to recognize as a valid contribution. This causes him to withdraw from the interaction. The more the examiner insists, the more the student withdraws. The student finishes the examination by saying “I’ve been honest with you” (line 12), referring to the very first statement of not being qualified enough. He has, in his own words, still tried to answer the question “based on what I have read” (line 13). However, the problem seems to be that they have different notions of what the question was. He is not asked to refer (to) what other people have written, but rather to reflect on a given situation just as we saw the student in the “successful examination” do. In one of the case studies of students portrayed in Larsen (2013), a French student of political science, Audrey, finds that her previous experiences of writing and her expectations towards the study environment clashes with the writing requirements she meets in the context of the content courses at UCPH (hence, the implied student). The student in the exam showed here might just as well have experienced that being a student in an exam situation means speaking within the context of what you have read, and not speak about things you do not know for certain. Over a period of time, however, the student portrayed in Larsen’s study found a way to not discard her previous experiences but re-contextualize them in a way that she felt true to her perceptions of writing. The interesting thing in the exam showed here was, however, that the misunderstandings did not seem to be clarified, at least not at the exam itself. I have no way of knowing whether any misunderstandings were clarified in the feedback and delivery of the grade, but based on my conversations with the student and the teacher/internal
examiner, I have a strong feeling that they were not. The student thus left the exam knowing that he did something wrong, but not knowing what he did wrong.

The exam finishes by the internal examiner saying “thank you for thinking with our questions” (line 16). That could mean that s/he is trying to relieve the tension that has built up between them (hence, a shift from examination “back to” informal conversation) as the student did actually not think with their questions. Another option is that the internal examiner sees it as an opportunity to tell the student that it was “thinking” they wanted all along before he is to receive a presumably unsatisfying grade. In any case, this last utterance could suggest that the examiner is aware that something went wrong; “thank you for thinking with our questions” (line 16) is similar to saying “thank you for trying”. The excerpts shown in this section capture all that happened in the discussion part of this exam; they did not talk about more than what is presented here.

Unsuccessful exam interactions are most likely not uncommon at the University of Copenhagen. Accordingly, the question that needs to be addressed here is whether this particular failure to communicate had something to do with the EMI-setting and the specific tacit assumptions of getting from an answering mode to a discussion mode. To sum up, the possibility exists that this international student misunderstood what the expectations were and concentrated on what is regarded as less advanced performances in the Danish ‘system’, and at a lower taxonomic level if we think in Bloom or SOLO-terms. There is the further possibility that the internal examiner’s English skills make it less possible for him/her to produce the (type of) questions that guide the student in the right direction. It is important to remember that this particular exam was one of the first the internal examiner had held in English. As the internal examiner was an experienced examiner (in Danish), we may assume that s/he had developed a specific asking strategy for exams – only that it might not be that easily translatable to English (and perhaps not obvious to students not used to the oral exam form). Finally, it is possible that by continually referring to a particular American study of religion, the student is making a claim of the universality of the role of religion that seems “exotic” in a Scandinavian context. In the following, we see a student’s choice of subject that is valued as exotic in a positive way.

5.4 Being the right kind of different

The last exam, I will show is with a student educated in the USA, and this particular student’s choice of subject was Latin Americans’ choice to become a minority in the USA. As I have
presented in section 4.2, in course A, analysis of multiculturalism and what multiculturalism means and entails was both a central issue and a characteristic since the class was itself multicultural. Still, a couple of the students complained about the class not being multicultural enough, which to them meant that it lacked a focus on the “really exotic” (see excerpt 4.1 presented in Section 4.1.2) parts of the world, such as Africa and the Middle East. Both in classroom interaction and at the exam, being the right kind of international could be an advantage. Thus, in this section I will show how a strategic subject choice benefitted this student. The specific episode showed in excerpt 5.18 happened almost midway through the discussion part of the exam.

Excerpt 5.18. Oral exam, course A. Student (S), internal examiner (I), teacher (T).

1  S  I wanna talk about the naming but I don’t have time but yeah it was created and
2  there were actually a lot of politics involved with that because black activists were
3  worried that if Latinos became brown then some people who were of afro-Cuban
4  descent or afro-Puerto Rican descent would start saying they were Latino first
5  before black and then that would take numbers away so it was just a nightmare
6  I   hh wow (slight laugh))
7  S   yeah
8  T   (.) for us it’s just completely wow cause it’s
9  S   yeah I know
10  I   it’s exotic
11  S   because before the 1970’s Latinos were just all white
12  I   mm
13  S   and then they felt like no this is a growing population we need to really understand
14  it better
15  T   but I mean it’s also fascinating again for a European a lot of texts we have had
16  is about you know creation of minorities seen as something negative
17  S   yeah
18  T   whereas in the US there is a group of people who wants to be a minority
19  S   yeah
20  T   they don’t want to be white ((I laughs hard))
21  S   I hope my synopsis showed that
22  T   it did and it’s kind of fascinating
This student told me in an interview that she was exhausted of always having to establish a common ground with her classmates before talking about issues related to politics or integration in the USA, because they seem “exotic” “for a European” (as the teacher also states in line 15). In the context of this exam, however, she benefits from presenting precisely something exotic. As stated in section 5.1.1, it was implied in the description of the exam (the “optional” subject) that students were able to manage the freedom of choosing a subject of their interest. The choice of subject in itself did not seem to cause problems, but the students who did choose a “good subject” did indeed benefit from this. The teacher and internal examiner’s reactions in excerpt 5.18 are interesting in this respect. The first response is a “wow” (line 6) followed by a “for us it’s just completely wow” (line 8) and “it’s exotic” (line 10). The student’s “yeah I know”-response (line 9) tells us that she is aware of this topic being different from other topics that the teacher has introduced. The teacher points out that many of the texts they have read have been from a European point of view, “whereas in the US” (line 18) it is different. That the course represented a somewhat euro-centric point of view was also voiced by some of the students in the interviews54. In many ways, this exact moment of cultural exchange is by many seen to benefit the international classroom: The domestic students (and in this case teacher) get perspectives from other countries (see for example Kling, 2013). In some ways, the teacher and the internal examiner in this specific situation take over the “analysis” so to speak and explains what is so revealing – for them (see lines 15-16 and again lines 18 and 20). In that sense, what seems to happen is that the teacher and the internal examiner learn something new. They duly explain why but this in a sense leaves just as little room for the student as happened in the reverse case above. This is true for the rest of the exam as well, but it is not as obvious as in this excerpt. For this student the exam does not as much constitute an assessment of her analytical abilities as an appraisal of her unique experiences, and they are only unique from a local perspective. The quality of the synopsis is, however, worth mentioning here. Both the student and teacher refer to it in lines 21 and 22, and it is possible that the synopsis was so good that the teacher and examiner’s questions were adjusted accordingly. The internal examiner closes the exam by thanking the student so much for an interesting case.

54 This resembles what has been pointed out by Fabricius et al. (2017): that internationalizing the curriculum tends to be practiced by erasing local references and replacing them with other references ”which are just as localized, but localized elsewhere” (p. 587, see also Ljosland 2008, pp. 279–280).
I have chosen to end with this excerpt, as it shows how this student uses her experience of being exotic (or different) to her advantage (just as the power point-presenting student did, only less successfully). This last excerpt thus shows that a specific kind of different was rewarded as interesting in itself apparently therefore not inviting any further interrogation.

5.5 Discussion – and some notes on language

I started this chapter with an interview excerpt from the student Gabriela voicing concerns about the oral exams as an exam form that she was not used to. Furthermore, she expressed concerns about whether her grade was a reflection of her work or a reflection of her not “understanding the system”. Some of the things described by Gabriela as making her uncertain of the criteria are relatively easy to accommodate, for example, being explicit about whether or not the students are allowed to hand out additional papers at the exam. Other things, as I have argued, might consist of tacit assumptions by the teacher (and a number of students) that stem from previous experiences with the exam form and guided by an idea of implied student(s). The typical advice for teachers in international classrooms is to be explicit about expectations and assumptions (see for example, Cozart et al., 2015), but as suggested by the above analysis of the exam with the English students (section 5.3.2), the teacher and internal examiner simply do not seem to be aware of the different expectations and assumptions. Throughout the course, the students were guided on how to handle the exam – in implicit ways through exercises and presentations, and explicitly by information on the exam and supervision. This led to an ongoing process between students of interpreting the requirements (shown in section 5.1.1). Course A was subject to an organization of a program that, as mentioned, assumes that oral exams are easier for the students. An assumption that is not necessarily true for the Danish students either, but that builds on an idea that the tacit rules of the exam are somewhat recognizable. It should here be noted that written genres also contain tacit rules – as is also shown by Larsen (2013). However, as the oral exam offers the opportunity for the examiners to ask for clarification (see Joughin, 1998), the problems of interpreting the task has an immediate obviousness that is not present in the written exam – for better and worse. It is outside the scope of this thesis, however, to discuss the pros and cons of the oral vs. written exam any further. For a discussion of this matter, see Joughin, 1998. Nevertheless, we saw expressed by a number of international students that it was not clear to them what constituted a “decent oral exam”. This positioned Danish students with a certain “expert” knowledge of the system. However, we also saw expressed an idea by these students that there is no “right or wrong way”. This idea seemed to be shared by the teachers and the Danish students and treated as “common
sense”. In principle, this idea of “nothing right, nothing wrong” could be true, and I suggest that it is in fact what the teacher (and internal examiner) believe it to be. And, as we saw with the power point-presenting student, in some ways it was (see section 5.2). However, as was especially obvious in the case of the English student (section 5.3.2), there was indeed a wrong way of doing things. It should be noted that even though the oral exam form, intense as it is, caused anxiety (and problems) for some students, all the students I talked to after the exam appreciated the exam form, and appreciated the opportunity to choose a subject of their interest. Carter (2011) also found that the international viva candidates, even if anxious about a number of issues concerning the viva exam, appreciated the exam form.

Exams are in many ways channeling some of the specific challenges of the internationalization process, and the oral exam described in this chapter did indeed reveal a “blind spot”. The teacher did try to prepare the students for the exam, but as I have argued s/he might not even him/herself be prepared to the task of making tacit rules explicit (the implied student). This was especially true in the case of course C, where the teachers were extremely explicit about their expectations, but the international students performed considerably worse than the Danish students – to the apparent surprise and frustration for the teachers. Roberts et al. (2014) also found that international candidates received poorer grades than their local peers did. It should once again be stressed that the international students of course A did not perform better or worse than the Danish students did. However, the experiences and strategies of the international students I have analyzed in this chapter serve as different examples of the international students’ encounter with an activity with a strong cultural flavor. I have showed examples of a student who struggled with the assignment itself, of a student who seemed to follow another didactical contract than that of the teacher and examiner and, finally of a student who benefitted from being international and thus “exotic”. Such experience was specific to international students – even if found in less extreme versions in all exams involving Danish students.

What has been granted less space in this chapter is the role of language in the exam. Before we move on to Chapter 6, I will offer some final notes on this matter. One reason why language has played a smaller part in this chapter is that language is at the same time ever-present and invisible. Language is inevitably what the interaction happens through, and in that sense, it is all about language. Several studies have explored the interrelation of language and culture in gatekeeper encounters in intercultural settings (e.g. Kirilova, 2013; Tranekjær, 2015; Roberts et al. 2005) and they point to the same conclusion that language and culture are inseparable. Similar to the findings of Breeze and
Dafouz’ (2017) study of written exams, in the exam on course A the struggling students’ main problem was to interpret task requirements “properly” which in the oral exam included the interactional genre. Thus, their understanding of the (culturally anchored) exam form and their linguistic competences is indeed also difficult to separate. Gunderman (2014, referring to Smit, 2010) similarly describes a threefold challenge for assessment in teaching and learning in “the international classroom”: Students have to prove their cognitive understanding of new topics, their linguistic competence in expressing their thoughts in English and lastly their ability to master culture-specific assessment requirements (Gunderman, 2014, p. 218). However, as Breeze and Dafouz (2017) point out, although interpretation of task requirements seems to cause the main problems for the students, this should not lead to the interpretation that language skills in EMI are irrelevant (it should be added that this goes for L1 classes as well, see Airey, 2012). Here, it should be stressed that the language norms in written language are supposedly less pragmatic. In terms of what linguistic quality or proficiency means for the performance, this is harder to pinpoint, and this is no less true in a monolingual setting. The students in course A could generally be considered (and considered themselves) highly proficient in English. Thus, I will here point to Airey’s (2010) finding of students’ ability to explain physics concepts in two languages: “above an initial lower threshold of competence in disciplinary English, students give descriptions with similar levels of disciplinarity in both English and Swedish, regardless of the language used to teach them” (Airey, 2010, p. 44). Once again, it should be noted that different from most studies of gatekeeper encounters, the gatekeepers in the oral exam in course A, the teacher and internal examiner, respectively, were not linguistically superior. This was pointed out by one student in an interview; the teacher and internal examiner’s English proficiency was not better than the students’ (meaning not perfect), which in the words of the student led to an ongoing discussion of wordings and trying to get as close as possible to the intended meaning – both in class and at the exam table. As we saw, one of the students who seemed to struggle the most in the oral exams was a native speaker of English. This student, however, seemed to struggle with differences in relation to the expectations of the interaction. It should here be noted that in his exam the visibility of the implied expectations could also be explained by the fact that there is enough interaction to see if they are broken or at least focused on. One further problem, as I argued, is that the teacher and especially the internal examiner were unable to rephrase questions in an understandable way. Here, the question of linguistic proficiency cannot be ruled out.

The exam situation is intense in nature, and some of the issues present here might also be present in the classroom but remain under the surface. All together, the four students in focus in this chapter represent some of the challenges and opportunities that teachers and students might face in an
internationalized classroom setting. Thus, this chapter points to the international classroom as not just being a question of linguistic proficiency. Moreover, it is not just about the cultural diversity of the students, but how these things play into the students and teachers’ odds for understanding each other (and themselves). In the next chapter, I will dive into the classroom setting.
6. Active participation in the international classroom

In the exam situation under scrutiny in the previous chapter, the students received a grade based partly on their ability to solve an assignment (and answer questions), which entailed understanding of what was asked of them. The analyses suggested that this ability was influenced by their understanding of “the system”, more precisely by their ability to decipher the rights and privileges of the various speaker roles assigned to the students, teachers and internal examiners, respectively.

Stepping out of the context of an oral exam and into the context of classroom interaction, I will in this chapter focus my attention to particular teaching and learning activities that involve students’ active participation. To frame the focus of my interests in this chapter, I have chosen to highlight an excerpt from an interview with a student of course B called Marianna. Marianna, whom we will also meet later in this chapter (in Section 6.2.1, specifically), is a Danish citizen with a Colombian dad and a Danish mother. She grew up in Spain, and all her previous education had been in Spain and in Spanish. In the interview, I asked her if she experienced any change in her study behavior having changed the language of instruction. This is her answer:

"Jeg tror en ting er sproget du læser på, men den måde du har lært at læse på den kommer ikke til at ændre sig så hurtigt. Jeg tror jeg ville have det meget sværere ved at ændre min læsemetode end ved at skifte sprog."

"I think one thing is the language you’re studying in, but the way in which you have learned to study will not change as fast. I think it would be harder for me to change my way of studying than the language."

(Excerpt 6.1. Interview, Marianna, Danish/ Spanish, Course B.)

This interview excerpt includes all three factors proposed in Chapter 2 that influence the learning space termed EMI or “the international classroom”: the role of language, the role of discipline implicitly and the role of experiences and expectations (“the way in which you have learned to study”). In this chapter, I will explore pragmatic aspects of learning in an English lingua franca setting
as well as the way in which the students are expected to (and think they are expected to) learn\textsuperscript{55}. In the context of social interaction in focus in this chapter, the attention must be drawn to specific linguistic competences being used in specific pragmatic situations, which are pedagogically determined. Furthermore, the international classroom is a learning space where different teaching and learning cultures meet (cf. Cozart et al, 2015) but, as I will argue, where the teaching culture of the host country is privileged\textsuperscript{56}. In the teacher training courses for university teachers in Denmark, active participation is emphasized as an important aspect of teaching and learning (cf. Rienecker et al., 2013, for one of the books used for teacher training) and the Danish pedagogical narrative is that independence and critical stance taking are highly valued (see also Kling, 2013\textsuperscript{57}). Thus, this chapter is concerned with the ways in which the specific classroom activities are organized and presented to the students, how they are interpreted by them, what forms of interactions are developed (see Amade-Escot, 2006) and what roles are available for the students in this learning process. I have approached my analyses of different forms of interaction with the assumption that it is possible to gain insights into the social structures of (a Danish version of) the international classroom by looking at how different roles and privileges are assigned to certain students and linked to privileged study behavior.

This is done by analyzing four different examples in which the students are asked to work independently or as a group. The data analyzed in this chapter was collected in classroom and group work contexts, including Facebook posts, and from semi-structured interviews with students. The data analyzed stems primarily from course B and less so from course C for reasons described in Section 4.4. I will, however, compare the three courses (A, B and C) throughout the chapter to identify differences and similarities relating to discipline. The chapter is divided into two parts: Part I (Section 6.1) focuses on questions such as active participation in class and Part II (Section 6.2) zooms in on group work. Together these two parts inform a concluding discussion presented in Section 6.3 on the dynamics of classroom interaction in internationalized university settings.

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\textsuperscript{55} See this video for an official introduction made for international students by UCPH on the “ways of learning” they will meet at the university [https://studies.ku.dk/masters/studying-at-ucph/learning/](https://studies.ku.dk/masters/studying-at-ucph/learning/)

\textsuperscript{56} Perhaps, except when the teacher is international as well.

\textsuperscript{57} Tange & Jensen (2012) found that Danish university’s teachers interviewed in their study agree on a specific “Danish” way of teaching including problem-oriented work and teamwork.
6.1 Part I. Questions as active participation

I begin my inquiry into the student roles in the Danish version of the international classroom by investigating students’ questions as active participation in classroom settings. A general finding of EMI literature is that in EMI classrooms there is decreased interaction compared to instruction taking place in the students’ L1; students ask and answer fewer questions (cf. Airey & Linder, 2006). In this study, I generally found a difference in the level of interaction across the three courses; in course A and B the number of questions asked did not strike me as being significantly low. In course C, however, very few questions were asked and usually by the same students (see Chapter 4 for an introduction to the courses). All teaching on the courses included an element of a more teacher-fronted lecture. However, the amount of this type of teaching was considerably higher in course C (as in Airey and Linder’s study) than in the other courses, which might also result in a lower rate of questions (as also argued in Section 2.2.2). Across all three courses, however, students’ question asking in the classroom was universally encouraged with the traditional (and perhaps typically Scandinavian) teacher statement “there are no stupid questions” – similar to the “anything you like”-statement of the exams (see section 5.3.2). In Tange and Jensen (2012) the authors find in interviews with teachers in international settings, that they describe “the good student” as being willing to speak up in class, as one who is reflective thinking and has the ability to engage critically with methods and theories presented in the course. Thus, not speaking up in class may be perceived as deviant behavior or lack of engagement. Ulriksen, Murning & Ebbensgaard (2012) report a number of factors influencing students’ participation in high school classrooms in Denmark (with a specific focus on students from non-academic homes). These factors are: That the pupils had a sense of having something to contribute with; a range of social factors including a good relation to the teacher and the other students; that they linguistically understood what was being said, and that they felt that they gained from it. I will in this first part of the chapter zoom in on how students reflect on and act according to ideas of what they perceive as rational behavior according to their own abilities, goals and the positions available in the classroom (see Anderson, 2009).

6.1.1 “It’s a bit Danish formulated” – when pragmatics get lost in translation

In this first section, I will provide insights into a group of students’ metalinguistic (and meta-pragmatic) awareness (see Silverstein, 2001) of asking questions through a second language by
analyzing excerpts from a group discussion in course C. This meta-discussion provides insight into how the students reflect on what constitutes an appropriate question; how questions can be asked, what a question is, and who, to whom and what you may ask. The group discussion in many ways reflects factors proposed by Hymes (1972) influencing communicative competence: 1) Is this even a question, 2) is it appropriate in the given situation and 3) is the usage accepted. The students’ discussion can thus be seen as a discussion concerning the relevance of a question, the appropriate phrasing and the appropriateness of the question in the situation. These factors should not be seen as separate entities, but as a moment-to-moment glimpse of the complexity of teaching and learning in the EMI classroom.

The excerpts selected stem from an assignment in course C where the students were asked to formulate a number of questions to be asked at a so-called “stakeholder day” to be held a couple of weeks later. The students were asked to formulate a number of questions, then the questions should be send to one of the teachers for approval, and eventually the questions would be asked at the stakeholder day. The excerpts thus show a situation in which a group of students is assessed on a shared product, the question. To understand the excerpts shown in this section, some context information on the group and the assignment is needed. In course C, the students had to make a stakeholder document (1-2 pages with information on assigned stakeholders) as part of doing a simulated LFA project (for more information, see Section 4.4).

Specifically, about halfway through the course, the students were to attend a “stakeholder day” planned by the teachers, and for that day the groups were asked to prepare 6-10 questions to specific stakeholders (representatives from larger companies or municipalities and in principle future employers) selected for them by the teachers. The stakeholder document counted as a part of the syllabus for the exam, and thus it was important for the group members to do well on this task. Prior to the particular session in focus here, the group in focus here had organized the work so that the group members had formulated one question each, and they then went through one question at a time, discussing what to ask and when as well as how the questions should be formulated. Thus, the task of formulating and asking an appropriate question can roughly be summarized as follows: 1) individual phrasing, 2) group editing, 3) teacher approval and 4) asking the stakeholder. As the excerpts presented below stem from a lengthy discussion (approximately 15 minutes), I have selected a number of key excerpts to illustrate the entire process (the full discussion can be found in Appendix 8).
Table 8 below provides an overview of the group members in terms of background information relevant for this analysis. The groups in course C were long-term selections made on the basis of common interests; the students had to write what they found interesting, and then the groups were organized by the teachers (see Section 4.4 for further details about the construction of groups). The students in this group were thus assumed to have a common interest, and the excerpts shown here is thus only a small part of a longer collaboration between these particular students ranging over a month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1, course C</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Self-reported first language(s)</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>UCPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nava</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Unknown(^{58})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Danish/Arabic</td>
<td>UCPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>UCPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>UCPH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Overview of group 1, course C.

Laura, Olivia and Thomas share a Danish linguistic majority background, whereas Safa comes from a Danish linguistic minority background as her parents migrated to Denmark from Tunisia before she was born. Safa is completely fluent in Danish, and she reported in the interviews that she grew up bilingually, speaking both Arabic and Danish. Nava’s first language is Arabic, and she told me that she learned English (and some Danish) relatively late in her life. In my observations, I noted that she seemed to understand a great deal of Danish – her understanding was, however, limited to specific contexts, and I never heard her speak Danish. She confirmed her receptive competences in Danish, when I asked her.

In the excerpt below, the group members are discussing a question suggested by Safa intended for the stakeholder Nestlé concerning the company’s labeling of products. This question received a lot of attention from the group and was the question they spent most time discussing. The problem seemed to be that Safa started the question with the formulation “you’re probably doing an honest  

\(^{58}\) Nava did not complete the questionnaire. All information I have on her is from my conversations with her.
and just job”59. This formulation made the other students question her intention with the question. In what follows, the group has just started discussing Safa’s question.

Excerpt 6.2. Group work, course C. Laura (L), Safa (S), Thomas (T), Olivia (O).

1 L what do you mean you are probably honest ((addressed to Safa after reading her question))
2 S cause they write in their homepage that they work with the eh like the way that they like how they started like making this milk for babies and or yeah the xxx ((laughing))
3 T probably honest hehe ((Safa and Thomas laughing))
4 S yeah
5 O yeah that’s eh really critical written
6 S okay yeah hehe måske [maybe]
7 O and also xxx I don’t really see the question formulated like you say that we assume that they are doing a honest job a just job

Having read Safa’s question-draft in the shared Google docs, Laura asks what Safa means with “probably honest” (line 1) – a formulation that also receives Thomas’ attention as he repeats it and laughs (line 6). Olivia expresses that the question is written in a critical way, and Safa’s “hehe yeah okay” (line 9) indicates that she might agree. It is likely that the students find the phrasing ‘probably doing an honest and just job’ problematic since this explicitly expresses the suspicion that honesty and justness cannot be taken for granted. The pragmatic explanation is that in including the word “probably”, the question is flouting Grice’s maxim of quantity (Grice, 1975), because if Nestlé were in fact doing an honest and just job there would be no need for the word “probably”. Thus, the implicature is that they are not.

After this exchange, a discussion ensues in which Safa argues for the relevance of her question and the formulation “probably doing an honest and just job”. Safa’s argumentation rests upon Nestlé sending contradicting signals by making sugary products while, at the same time, engaging

59 Unfortunately, I did not have access to the Google Docs that the students were working on and therefore cannot display Safa’s question in full.
in public health issues. It turns out that Safa has indeed identified an apparent contradiction. Safa argues that the contradiction lies in Nestlé having entered into a partnership with the international diabetes prevention organization while still producing and advertising for unhealthy products. The formulation “doing an honest and just job”, Safa explains, refers to the labeling of their products, which, she says, must be assumed to be done in accordance with standards for GDA (Guide for Daily Amount). Based on that explanation, Olivia accepts the relevance of the question but questions the premise of it being formulated as a question since it seems to be a statement. The discussion continues on the formulation of the question, and whether it is a question at all:

**Excerpt 6.3. Group work, course C. Laura (L), Safa (S), Olivia (O).**

1. O I see there is a statement and that’s it and I will put a dot after and not a question mark
2. L it’s just because you have to remove the question mark and then the question is coming after
3. S no it was also a question I think they are contradictory why are they engaging in public health if they are <producers of slik [candy]>
4. O <ah ah ah> it’s like in a Danish way it would be men er det så ikke modsætningsfyldt at være samarbejdspartnere og så [but would it then not be contradictory to be collaborating and then]
5. S ja [yes]
6. O how would you say that
7. S yeah <contradictory yeah>
8. O <okay that was> yeah but it’s not contradictory you can also say like men det er ikke [but it isn’t] it depends on how you phrase it but I think it’s maybe a bit Danish
9. formulated I see it how you would say it in Danish now but eh
10. S ehh
11. O men er det ikke det er det du skriver her eller det du vil sige [but isn’t it that is what you are writing here or what you want to say] maybe the phrasing is just a bit different in English ehm but do you find it contradictory that you or I don’t know
12. S it’s different in Danish

The focus of the discussion shifts from the relevance of the question to whether it can even be considered a question, and, if so, how it should be formulated. Safa’s question had two parts, and
Laura suggests that the question mark should be placed after the second part and not the first. This suggestion makes Safa explain the initial wondering that generated the question: “why are they engaging in public health if they are producers of candy” (line 6). This triggers an “ah ah ah”-reaction from Olivia, who at this stage seem to realize how it would have been formulated in Danish. Olivia especially emphasizes the formulation “*men er det så ikke*” which can be directly translated to “but is it then not”.

In his comparison of the English and Danish modal systems, Mortensen (2006) found that English lacks certain features that are important in Danish, including the modal particle “så”. In our case, “så” might be considered a down-grading politeness strategy (Andersen, 1991). Maintaining face (Goffman, 1984) in interaction is a central element of commonly accepted notions of politeness. Moreover, in successful communication participants should be concerned continually with maintaining each other’s face (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987). Thus, when posing a potential face threat – such as implying that Netslé is not doing an honest and just job – this will according to Andersen most often happen with the use of down graders such as modal particles like “så”. It is thus likely that the other students see Safa’s question as a potential threat to the hearer’s (here, the stakeholder’s) positive face, their self-image, as it points out that they are acting in a contradictory manner. Either way, Olivia seems to follow Safa’s line of thinking when formulated in Danish, but interestingly not in English, as it sounds a bit “Danish formulated”. As it seems, the problem is that a question can be perceived as being rude when the politeness gets lost in translation. It should, however, be noted that it is possible that attacking the wording is a strategy used by Olivia to criticize the content of the directness of Safa’s opening line (cf. Hynninen, 2012).

In the following excerpt (6.4), the discussion goes into the appropriateness of a question like this on a stakeholder day, meaning them as students and Nestlé as a possible future job provider and as a guest at the University of Copenhagen. As there is a considerable social distance between the students and the stakeholder, the situation is potentially rather delicate (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This leads to a discussion on whether it is okay to pose critical questions to Nestlé:

**Excerpt 6.4.** Group work, course C. Nava (N), Olivia (O), Safa (S).

1 N I like the second part of this ((Safa’s question)) I don’t like the first but I agree with Olivia that it does sound a little bit harsh and it is (.) you look at it as when I first read it I felt like you’re maybe accusing them

4 O mm
but they should rephrase it okay

you should be welcome to rephrase it

I agree with you <I agree with you it’s just>

<maybe the first one should be>

does it say that they should be able to handle questions like these

ja ja [yes yes] of course

that should be harsh we shouldn’t be diplomatic in this situation I don’t think they

yeah

yeah we could go and ask specifically what we want <it should be spot on>

<spot on>

it can be critical but I think the way to phrase it could be

okay just rephrase it then ((O starts typing))

Nava seemed to be the diplomat of the group since she often mediated discussions, especially between Olivia and Safa; in this case, while acknowledging the second part of Safa’s question, she, at the same time, agrees with Olivia that the first part is somewhat face-threatening (lines 1-3). Safa reacts by saying that if “they” do not like it, then they can rephrase it. “They” probably refers primarily to Olivia as we see Safa later changes her formulation to “you” (line 7) when addressing Olivia thus positioning her as the one who makes the final decision (cf. Anderson, 2009, on roles in group work). And, indeed, even though Olivia and Safa end up agreeing that they can in fact ask critical questions, Olivia ends up making the decision on how this particular question should be rephrased (as a less critical/direct question). While spending quite a lot of time discussing the phrasing of this particular question, the group ended up agreeing that the question should be rephrased (including changing contradicting to conflicting), but that the content should remain the same.

This last part of the students’ discussion touches on role constellations – not only internally in the group, but also in terms of student vs. stakeholder. Can students ask future employers critical questions, and, if so, how should they be phrased? It should be possible to ask an equivalent question in English, so the discussion of Safa’s question turns to whether it is appropriate in the context. Pointing to a (apparent) contradiction between a company’s PR and corporative responsibility strategy and its actual practice counts as a regular Face Threatening Act (FTA).
Whether a meeting with stakeholders should include such an FTA is arguably an issue related to politeness. With her question, Safa has thus identified a contradiction not only with Nestlé but also with the assignment. As we see, the assignment itself places a discussion of “being critical” as opposed to “being diplomatic” (Safa’s words, line 13).

This first section of this chapter has thus provided insight into the students’ meta-linguistic and meta-pragmatic awareness as well as how students act in an (unintentionally60) ambiguous teaching context. We have seen how this group was observant on the academic relevance of a question, on the linguistic factors of asking a question in another language (and the ensuing pragmatic consequences), and on the appropriateness of the question in its context of use. Question-asking can serve the purposes of both gaining and displaying knowledge, in this case knowledge of the appropriate ‘critical’ stance towards stakeholders balanced with a display of knowledge of their actual practices. As the students touched upon in the discussion shown in Section 6.1.1, question-asking thus also includes recognizing social codes of conduct, such as who may ask what to whom, and how social roles (e.g. that of stakeholder and student) become important in relation to the appropriateness of the situation. The creation of the question in this interaction was the result of a group task on asking questions, and the meta-discussion was thus framed by a mandatory element. The result of the group work was supposed to be a question that they as a group could vouch for. Thus, even though the question initially represented Safa’s individual wondering (and wording), the question in the end reflected the entire group’s capacity.

I have chosen to highlight this instance of group interaction as it points to the complexity of active participation in the international classroom context, and thus serves as a starting point for the chapter as a whole. First of all, it is an example of how the students position themselves as a group and how they in that process come to an agreement on how they should communicate externally, in this case with a stakeholder. Furthermore, this group interaction emphasizes that language plays a crucial role in active participation in the international classroom context. Even something as small as a modal particle can make a question as more or less face threatening. Additionally, asking questions includes the ability to decode a social (and/or didactical) situation (what questions can you ask to a stakeholder?). This last point can be broadened out by viewing all interaction including

60 There is nothing in my observations that suggests that this ambiguity was an intentional part of the task design.
classroom interaction as a conversation with a storyline and positions that people and in this case, students and teachers can take on according to these storylines (Harré & Langehove, 1991).

In the sections that follow, I explore two instances of active participation in teacher-fronted classroom activities, first from a general perspective (Section 6.1.2), then with a specific focus on international students (Section 6.1.3) and finally in relation to other situations of learning (Section 6.1.4).

### 6.1.2 Active participation in classroom settings

While the generation of the question shown above was subject to a group editing process, classroom questions are usually more spontaneous because they are posed in the course of an unfolding story, i.e. that of the lecturer’s lecture. Thus, in this specific storyline, the teacher’s role is that of facilitating knowledge by speaking and the students’ role is to engage in a process of obtaining that knowledge. From the teacher’s point of view, student behavior in classroom settings is often viewed ranging from passive to active participation (cf. Abdullah et al., 2012). The passive behavior is seen as sitting quietly, taking notes, listening, doing something else, whereas active participation is asking questions, giving opinions, or answering questions posed by the teacher (cf. Fassinger, 1995; 2000 on active participation in class). Thus, questions are an important part of active participation in classroom settings, and as is described by Tange and Jensen (2012), the good student in a Danish context was described as one who speaks up in class. One way for teachers to engage students actively in teacher-fronted lectures is to ask questions, and teacher-asked questions have been the focus of many studies (see Garcia-Sanchez, 2016, p. 90-97 for an overview), and they have often been subject to categorization. For example, Dalton-Puffer (2007) drawing on Mehan (1979) places questions in a dichotomy based on whether the person actually knows the answer to it or is genuinely interested in an answer that is unknown (see also Dysthe, 1997, on authentic questions). However, I will not focus on the questions of teachers, and it is not my aim to categorize questions. Rather, I will explore two instances of student-initiated interaction in what can be considered teacher-fronted classroom teaching.

Before analyzing excerpts of student-initiated interaction, some relevant information on student questioning will be provided (see Carlsen, 1991, for an overview of literature on students’ questions). In Chapter 4, I presented two cognitive taxonomies used in the Danish educational system for structuring learning outcomes: Bloom’s taxonomy and the SOLO-taxonomy (see
section 5.1 for more information). Chin and Osborne (2008) classify questions according to the level of thought required for answering them. Bloom’s taxonomy, for example, includes a hierarchy of levels that range from knowledge through comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Questions can thus be placed at a lower or higher level in terms of Bloom’s taxonomy. Pedrosa de Jesus et al. (2003) place questions on a vertical continuum ranging from confirmation questions (seeking clarification, exemplification and/or definition) at one end to transformation questions (restructuring and reorganizing understanding) at the other end, which resembles the SOLO-taxonomy. Using the same line of thinking as the other authors, Scardamalia and Bereiter (1992) identify two types of questions: basic information questions and wonderment. Basic information questions seek to fill a recognized gap in knowledge, and this type of question can be placed at the low end of Bloom’s taxonomy and in the confirmation end of the continuum proposed by Pedrosa de Jesus et al. (2003). Wonderment questions, on the other hand, show higher cognitive surplus. It is important to emphasize that both types of questions are equally important for students and teachers, but that their appropriateness depends on the situation. Miyaje and Norman (1979) argue that it takes considerable knowledge to ask “good questions” and that “to ask a question, one must know enough to know what is not known” (p. 357). Kuhn also points out that acquiring the disciplinary matrix not only means acquiring specific ways to solve problems or to conduct research, but also developing specific ways of asking questions, and not least learning which questions to ask and which not, depending on whether the question is considered to be inside or outside the discipline (Kuhn, 1970, p. 37).

A further aspect of question-asking is thus that it involves a potential display of ignorance, which may be more difficult to handle the more you want to blend in. First, asking a question is a public display (in contrast to waiting to see whether your question is answered without you having to formulate it). Second, a public display of ignorance is a potential risk (and especially if it displays ignorance of what everybody else knows). Thirdly, there are cultural and linguistic conventions as to how you ask in a specific teaching culture and when you ask (and your question might display your ignorance of that, even if the question in itself could be considered appropriate).

I will start by showing how a seemingly simple question in course B might is not at all a simple question. The excerpt below shows an example of a question asked by an international student in class during a lesson in course B on statistical analysis of data from experiments. This class was taught by a PhD student who functioned as a teaching assistant on the course (see also Section 4.3), in the following referred to as the teacher. The class started with the teacher giving a
presentation on proteins and how to use a particular tool for analyzing experimental data. This was followed by a short group session where the students were to try and apply this tool themselves. In the situation presented in excerpt 6.4 below, the teacher is following up on the exercise, and the students have now returned to their seats, the form of teaching once again teacher-fronted.

**Excerpt 6.5. Classroom, course B. Teacher (T), Student (S).**

1. T  it turns out that in order to get a mouse that was completely labeled in all proteins
2. you had to go through three generations so you had to feed the grand mom, the
3. mom and then the daughter and then you had a mouse that was labeled eh and these
4. amino acids are quite expensive so it actually means that if you wanna do one of
5. these mice this is the same cost as one PhD-student and then you can kind of say no
6. more.
7. ((students laughing))
8. S  so a PhD-student in one month or a PhD-student
9. T  no the cost of having one PhD-student it’s not the life of the PhD-student
10. ((students laughing))
11. S  no no it’s just like is it thirty thousand or three hundred thousand
12. T  that would be like eh it’s one point five million
13. S  okay
14. T  so yeah ((nervous laughter)) so in that sense it’s kind of nice if you could do the
15. comparison instead of having to label a mouse

The teacher’s utterance in lines 1-6 seems as a justification of the analysis the students have just carried out since manual labeling of a mouse would have “the same cost as a PhD student and then you can kind of say no more” (lines 5-6). This utterance evokes laughter amongst the students. Keeping in mind that the many students in this course are aiming to be PhD students one day, the teacher’s comparison of a labeled mouse and the cost of a PhD student with the insinuation that there might only be money for one of them can be classified as a joke (see also, “in that sense it’s kind of nice if you could do the comparison instead of having to label a mouse”, line 13-14). One student follows up on the teacher’s joke by asking “so a PhD student in one month or a PhD student” (line 7) seeking to fill a gap in her knowledge. The teacher answers by taking the joke one step further: “not the life of a PhD student” (line 8). The student is still not satisfied with what could be considered a non-answer and then explicitly asks for numbers on the cost of a PhD student (“thirty thousand or three hundred thousand”, line 10). These numbers are then provided by the
teacher (line 11), and the student finally expresses satisfaction, “okay” (line 12). The idea with the
ejoke seems to be that it is better to simulate the experiment than to establish the resources needed
to label three generations of mice. In order to understand this, one might need an insight into what
it costs to label a mouse or what a PhD student’s salary is. However, it requires some shared
presupposition to know that, and the question shows that (at least) one student does not have this
knowledge.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the question. Nor is there anything wrong with asking
questions to a teacher’s presentation as this was encouraged throughout the course. However, there
seems to be a mismatch in student and teacher expectations concerning what is considered an
appropriate question/answer in the given situation. This mismatch could be explained as an issue
of alignment of identities (Zimmerman, 1998). For specific types of discourse, specific identities
are relevant, in this case student/teacher. In excerpt 6.4, the teacher attempts to take on the identity
of a “joker” – an identity that the student does not accept (or recognize); the student seems to
interpret the teacher’s joke as a delivery of facts. The lack of alignment in excerpt 6.4 thus also
provides a clue as to how this student might be interpreting the didactical contract: The teacher
delivers facts.

The fact that this question was asked by an international student is not important in itself, as a
Danish student could just as well have asked a misaligned question. However, the situation here
includes more than one intensifier of possible misinterpretations (see Section 2.4 for a presentation
of the idea of intensifiers and Winchester-Seeto et al, 2014). First, there might be a different
perception of the cultural productions (cf. Madsen, 2018) of what a teacher is, which might, or
might not, include joking. Secondly, the teacher might have failed in framing the joke and thus in
taking on the joker identity due to linguistic issues; in that case, “then you can kind of say no
more” (line 5) might not have the intended effect. “Then you can kind of say no more” corresponds
to “need I say more”. Swedish lecturers found it problematic to introduce humor and provide the
local context through EMI – especially when students come from different cultural backgrounds
(Airey, 2011). Thus, this example is not as much about the question itself but it illustrates how
question-asking requires social understanding just as much as academic knowledge.

The excerpt above showed a situation in which a seemingly simple question produced a
misalignment. The following excerpt (6.6) stems from course C and serves as an insight into the
benefit students may gain from the co-construction of knowledge that asking a question potentially
entails (Abdullah et al., 2012). In that sense, questions can be just as important as answers, as the excerpt illustrates. The excerpt comes from a lecture with the purpose of recapitulating on key concepts and preparing the students for the oral exam. This particular lecture was taught by two of the regular teachers (see Chapter 4.4 for more information). In class, one student voices that she finds the concept of psychological essentialism hard to understand and seeks a definition. One of the teachers (T1 in the excerpt) provides an explanation of the concept that does not seem to satisfy the student completely, prompting another student to offer a possible way of thinking about the concept.

Excerpt 6.6. Classroom, course C. Student one (S1), Teacher one (T1), Student two (S2).

Teacher two (T2)

1  S1 but I think it makes sense if you say that psychological essentialism is up here
2  ((hierarchical gesticulating with her hands)) it’s a way of thinking and then you
3  have different kinds of essentialism culturalism essentialism and that’s how you
4  think about it
5  T1 I don’t know if that makes sense for me to see it that way
6  S2 but it’s to say the umbrella is psychological and cultural is one of the boxes under
7  the umbrella
8  T2 couldn’t it be gender essentialism? ((addressed to T1))
9  T1 yeah
10 T2 yeah so you are right if you see it like an umbrella it could be gender essentialism it
11 could be sexual essentialism I think one good example also at the exam if you can’t
12 explain like give a really brief and perfect definition of stuff try to give examples

The second student suggests that one could think of psychological essentialism as the hypernym to other types of essentialism, whereas the other types of essentialism represent the way you think. These include ‘gender essentialism’ or ‘sexual essentialism’ and are subordinate to psychological essentialism (lines 1-4). The teacher (T1), who initially provided a definition of the concept as an answer to another student’s question, does not accept that way of thinking – at least not as something that makes sense to her. A third student contributes with an explanation seeing psychological essentialism as an umbrella and the other types of essentialism as boxes under the umbrella (lines 6-7). This explanation is similar to the one provided by the first student, but the umbrella metaphor exemplifies the explanation provided by student 1. The second teacher then interferes by asking the first teacher if it could be gender essentialism (instead of cultural
essentialism), perhaps to check with the first teacher who is an expert in the area to be sure what to answer the student. It could also be to avoid undermining her colleague’s authority. However, this teacher (T2) agrees with the student’s way of thinking about it and additionally acknowledges the metaphorical definition as a strategy to use in the exam situation: If they lack a clear definition, they should give examples. This strategy is similar to communicative strategies used in second language acquisition (Færch & Kasper, 1984). If the learner does not know a word, they can talk around it by describing or exemplifying. As disciplinary language is also a language that needs to be learned, it makes a lot sense to propose this strategy.

The question in the excerpt above (excerpt 6.6) provides insight into the cognitive processes of the students, and as it requires three students and two teachers to come up with an answer, it must be a question that requires a high level of knowledge (see Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1992). Besides being an example of a different type of question than the one of “the cost of a PhD-student” and a different social situation, this excerpt is also an example of a question that not only renders possible an opportunity for co-construction of knowledge between students and teachers, but also gives us an insight into exam strategies. The students who asked the questions on psychological essentialism were all Danish, and when looking at the two types of questions shown in this section, it might seem as though international students ask inappropriate questions and local students ask appropriate ones. It should be stressed that I did not find this to be the case in general. However, I did observe a considerable difference in the number of questions asked by local students and international students in courses B and C. In the following section, I therefore take a closer look at international students’ experiences of asking questions in class.

6.1.3 International students’ experiences of participating in class

While the section above provided insights into classroom practices, I will now focus on students’ attributions of their own practices to gain an insight into the repertoire of affordances that international students bring into actions (or not) in classroom situations. This also gives us an understanding of the actions that the students notice – a litmus test of “the system” so to speak. According to attribution theory, humans try to determine their own and other’s actions by

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61 Course A was different in this aspect (see also Sections 4.2 and 6.1.3.)
interpreting the cause of their behavior (Weiner, 1985). I will draw in representations of experiences of three different students as expressed in the interviews to gain an insight into the students’ experiences of interaction in teacher-fronted classroom teaching. All students I interviewed were asked about their study strategies (including raising their hand/speaking in class), and I have chosen three different students (one from course A and two from each program in course B62) to serve as examples of different students – across the two courses. In this section, I thus unfold how “the language you’re studying in” and “the way in which you have learned to study” (to resume to the opening interview quote) are used to by the three students to describe their own study behavior. As the number of interviews I did in course C was considerably lower than in the other courses (see Section 3.5), I have chosen not to include interview excerpts from this course.

The first student in focus was a Spanish student from course A, Adriana. When asked how she feels about raising her hand in class, Adriana tells me that she sometimes feels a bit ridiculous when asking questions. However, she also expresses that she has come to a point where she knows that the teacher is also there for her questions – even if they are “stupid”.

*Excerpt 6.7. Interview, Adriana, Spanish, Course A.*

> “Sometimes you feel a bit ridiculous, but […] I mean I know the teachers are there also for that and it’s part of the learning relationship. You know there is always a risk of feeling ridiculous or just posing the question wrong, and that I mean… You have seen me in class, I’m not super good at asking questions in the right way, and I sometimes just do it too directly, or you know I don’t do all this master’s or you know more academic style of posing a question, but I’m just like “okay this is what I’m feeling with this topic. Can you help me?””

The interview excerpt elaborates on how questions can be asked in the wrong way, as also suggested by the students of group 1, course B (Section 6.1.1). Adriana talks about “posing the question wrong” and that “the right way” involves not being “too direct” and “more academic”. Most of the student-generated questions in course A could be characterized as belonging to the category of wonderment (Pedrosa de Jesus et al., 2013), even if that wonderment was not

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62 See Section 4.3 for description of the two programs.
necessarily linked to theory, and students also brought in personal narratives. The difficulties that this student might experience can be captured by Bernstein’s term “weak classification”, which refers to an opaque combination of academia and personal experience (Bernstein, 1999). We saw the same kind of difficulties in Chapter 5 with the oral exams. Under these conditions of learning, it might be difficult for students to know what is considered “the right way”. As we also saw in Chapter 5, there was also a “right way” to answer questions. The local culture of the classroom can also contribute to determining what is considered the “right way”, and I did observe Adriana’s questions sometimes being received with some hesitation. Nevertheless, Adriana did ask questions in class. In course A, the teacher followed the students throughout the master’s program, and the students received individual feedback. This might influence Adriana’s perception of asking questions as a part of “the learning relationship” (what could also be considered the didactical contract – the teacher is there for students’ questions).

Adriana could be considered one of the linguistically weaker students of course A, and Adriana told me that preparing for the oral exam for her also included preparing linguistically. When I asked her if she felt assessed on language in the oral exam, she answered:

*Interview excerpt 6.8. Adriana, Spanish, Course A.*

“‘Definitely (language assessment), not just in the oral exams, but in the everyday sessions. By everybody. I feel it’s a big pressure like how… I mean you may have a really good question, but if you don’t know how to pose it, you are really... The other students think, “okay she is just”... I don’t know, ”she doesn’t manage the tools”.’”

In the interviews with students in courses A and C, language generally played a larger role than with students in course B, which is also reflected in Adriana’s answer to my interview question. In this excerpt (6.8), Adriana does not just talk about asking a question in the right academic way, but also the general linguistic phrasing of a question (or other utterances) that might make her somewhat self-conscious. She mentions the pressure of being assessed on linguistic competence, a feeling that was voiced by other students from course A, both local and international – even highly proficient ones. I know from my observations and from conversations with Adriana throughout the course that she spent a lot of her time preparing linguistically for the exam as well as for class. In observational studies of (monolingual) classrooms, Dillon (1988) found that some students fear negative reactions from classmates and the teacher. For Adriana, that fear seems to be connected to posing the question wrongly or not “managing the tools” (Excerpt 6.8).
One student from course B, Isabel from Spain, pointed out that she was not used to raising her hand and asking questions, and that it was hard for her to do so even if she would like to (see excerpt 6.9 below). Isabel could be considered a quiet student in class, even if she was actually quite social and lively in conversations with the other Spanish girls in course B (see Section 4.3.2 for a description of the student population).

Excerpt 6.9. Interview, Isabel, Spanish, Course B (program 1).

“I’m not used to raise my hand and asking questions cause I don’t know it’s just I feel a lot of pressure if I have to do it, but I would like to just don’t care about it. [...] I don’t do it cause I’m not used to it, but I think it’s great that they (the Danish students) can. I think it’s a matter of... In Spain the professors are like in another level and here everything it’s really linear [...] I think I’ve just asked one question in the whole year I’ve been here, cause I thought that I need to get used to this, cause I really want to do it, but it’s just... [...] I’m not used to it, and it’s just hard to say, ”okay lets”. It’s a big step.”

Isabel does not risk being ignored or not acknowledged by not asking questions. Isabel attributed her reluctance to ask questions to her previous learning experiences – to the fact that she had not been used to doing it and that the role of the teacher in a Spanish context was more hierarchical than in Denmark. The less hierarchical perception of the teacher in a Danish context was mentioned by all the international students I interviewed in course B. Systemic conditions, such as socialization into institutional and situational authority roles, have been found to inhibit student questioning (Dillon, 1988), and for Isabel she was in the process of adjusting to new authority roles. Smit (2010) similarly found that students who had been socialized into formal education in teacher-centered systems were less ready to offer contributions. Even if the difference of the role of the teacher in different educational cultures is acknowledged, it might take time to change the way you behave around them. Finally, Isabel says in this interview excerpt that she has tried to ask questions in class because she thought that she needed “to get used to it, cause I really want to”. Isabel here explains that it required a lot of energy for her to ask a question – energy that would go from following the lecture. However, she acknowledges, and maybe even envies, the ability of the other students (i.e., the local students) to ask questions, and thus expresses her idea of the implied student (Ulriksen, 2009) as someone who asks questions.
Adriana and Isabel are fairly similar in terms of (national) educational culture and in my view also in their level of English proficiency. Both express the belief that asking questions is important but they struggle to do so and attribute those struggles to study culture and language assessment, respectively. For Adriana, asking a person to supply you with information means positioning him or her as knowledgeable, i.e. as having cognitive authority. However, as Isabel sees it, in the Spanish educational context, the burden is on the student to get meaning out of what is communicated, and not asking questions is thus a part of upholding her end of the didactical contract (see Balacheff, 1999). It is thus to simple to say that different perceptions of the didactical contract is caused by national educational culture or that asking questions is restrained by linguistic proficiency. One significant difference between the two students is their disciplinary background, and the disciplinary context they are faced with as well as local specificities of the course (such as size). Abdullah et al. (2012) find that classroom size has an impact on students active participation in class, and course A was considerably smaller than course B (see Chapter 4).

The third and last student in focus in this section is a Latvian student from course B, Andrejs. Compared to Isabel, Andrejs was much more socially involved with students of all nationalities, yet he never asked questions in class. For Andrejs, speaking in class involves two distinct activities: delivering presentations and asking questions (see Interview excerpt 6.10).

**Excerpt 6.10. Interview, Andrejs, Latvian, Course B (program 2).**

“I have no problem speaking in front of the class (in student presentation), but I usually don’t ask questions, because I just suck up the information, and then process it after the lecture. […]And there should be people asking questions in the class because then “oh I didn’t think of it that way”, which I might think of later and “ah damn why didn’t I ask that question”.”

Unlike Isabel, Andrejs does not directly attribute his not asking questions in class to differences in study culture, although he did mention the symmetrical power relations with teachers and the exam practices in Denmark as different from those in Latvia. Nor does he attribute his lack of question-asking to language skills or assessment, and he acknowledges that speaking in class and asking questions might require two different skill sets, just like the presentation and the discussion in the oral exam might require different things of the students (see Chapter 5). For Andrejs, “sucking up information” (and not asking questions in class) is legitimate study behavior. Like the other students, he recognizes the benefits of asking questions, including gaining access to other students’
way of thinking much like we saw in excerpt 6.6. Even though Andrejs might not see it as significant, his study behavior is also something he has learned through experience. Later in the interview, he tells me that he is used to multiple-choice exams with a lot of self-studying in preparation for the exam, and the way of studying that he is used to is thus “sucking up information”. He also mentions that in Denmark he often relies on other students asking the questions. In that way, he does not have to spend time formulating a question in class as he can wait and see if other people might do it for him which by the way is neither atypical nor problematic. This form of behavior does not necessarily have anything to do with him being an international student. There is always an element of personality to be taken into account when talking about real human beings (see also Weiner, 1985). In any classroom, you will find students who prefer not asking questions in class. However, there are a number of possible intensifiers (Winchester-Seeto et. al, 2012) in the internationalized classroom.

This past section has via interview excerpts shown three different students and their study strategies in regards to asking questions in class. Combined with the prior sections, it seems that asking questions as active participation in class is influenced by a number of factors – some of which are intensified in an internationalized setting. To put it simply: Asking questions is a matter of how to say it in English (translating from L1); when to pose the question; whether it will be a smart move/investment to ask that particular question and finally; how necessary it is for the student’s understanding of what is to be learned.

First of all, having to pose questions through a language that is not necessarily the language of preference might be a challenge as shown in Section 6.1.1 and as expressed by Adriana. Lack of confidence in the language might thus make some students more hesitant to ask questions even if their learning strategy were to do so. Furthermore, asking questions requires the right timing. As we saw with ‘the cost of a PhD student’, the timing of a question is quite important. Had the student not asked that specific question at that specific moment, the reaction might have been very different. The timing of a question requires contextual understanding, which partly is a matter of social background knowledge (Gumperz, 1982). The process itself of posing a question might cause a delay in timing, which, in turn, might end up in no question being posed at all, as when Isabel expresses that it is hard for her to “just say let’s” (excerpt 6.9). Besides social background knowledge, asking a question also requires disciplinary knowledge: What information do I lack, and what information do I know the teacher has, and how do I ask the question in the “right” way? This also includes an idea of what the other students know. Additionally, Isabel and Adriana’s
comments on the teacher also play a role here as presupposed ideas of what a teacher is: What questions can one ask a teacher (i.e. instead of finding out by yourself)? This leads us to a factor that could be referred to as strategic thinking, which I will also discuss in Section 6.1.4 below. Students such as Andrejs might just wait and see if the question is asked by other students, or if the question should be asked after class or addressed to the other students rather than the teacher.

6.1.4 Student participation in other learning situations

Having explored interaction in the classroom including international students’ experiences with speaking up in class, I now turn to the characteristics of asking questions framed by other contexts than the lecture. In Section 3.1, I argued that the classroom should be viewed as something that extends beyond the physical walls of the classroom and studying in a time of internationalization means that the internet is inevitably a part of students’ everyday and academic lives. In what follows, I therefore focus on strategies of closing potential knowledge gaps that go beyond the teacher-fronted lecture in focus in Sections 6.1.2 and 6.1.3.

One of those strategies, used by some of the local students, was to ask the teacher in Danish during group sessions or after class (similar to what is found by Söderlundh, 2010). Some students (both local and international) also asked the teacher questions before or after a lecture. However, the strategy used by most students, regardless of nationality, was to ask a peer. Excerpt 6.11 stems from an interview with an Indian student from course B, Vishwaraj, who claimed to have no problem in asking questions in the teacher-fronted lectures – I never observed him raising his hand in class, however. But I know that he wrote e-mails to the teacher if he had questions and that he often asked his peers both about issues concerning “the system” and academic content. The interview excerpt that follows shows part of his response to my question about study strategies:

Excerpt 6.11. Interview, Vishwaraj, Indian, course B.

“I suppose there is some concepts that are really technical for me to understand, so obviously you ask from your other friends those who have a prior background to that, and they can explain it to you, so you get some idea and to have more clarification. And internet is pretty helpful in today’s world, and it basically gives you answers that you want. And still if it is not clear you can go to the teacher or you can ask the teacher that I don’t understand this, and they are pretty happy to explain it, because most of the students they don’t understand, but they are a bit hesitant to
ask. I think it’s pretty important to clear your concepts if you want to move on to the next level.”

Vishwaraj’s response suggests that there is a question hierarchy: ask your friends and the internet, and then ask your teacher. The questions asked by students in course B were indeed mostly about explanation of concepts, as suggested by Vishwaraj. In another interview with an American student, Gabriela, from course A, she mentioned that some English words are used with less precision in Denmark, e.g. toleration instead of tolerance, and that this impreciseness may cause some vagueness as to what is actually meant, which, in turn, may lead to misunderstanding or at least confusion. For her, this type of question was not considered appropriate for asking in class. Her strategy was to try and determine whether the words or the meaning caused her problems. Whenever she came across such a word, she would note the word and seek information elsewhere. To this end, social media comes in handy.

As described in Section 3.4, I was enrolled in the intranet sites for all three courses as a student and was a member of the Facebook page for course A. In course B, the teacher encouraged the students to use the intranet for discussing homework. The students could ask the other students and the teacher, and the teacher could at all times follow the discussions. This opportunity was not used to a large extent, but some students did use it, mostly for clarification. In contrast, Facebook was used extensively by the students. Course A had a Facebook page for the entire class, whereas the students in courses B and C used Facebook in the study groups to share documents and plan how, where and when to meet. The use of Facebook in course A seemed to be a more established practice than in the other courses, and, as we saw in the previous chapter (Chapter 5), it was also used for questions concerning the exam.

Facebook is in general the main choice of social media of students in higher education, and students spend a great part of their time there (Ellefsen, 2015). Aside from social activities, Idris and Ghani (2012) have shown that students use social network sites for discussing assignments, asking and answering questions, posting information and supporting each other’s academic work. When posting a question on the group page, students have every member of the group as recipients, but in course A the teachers did not have access to Facebook – in contrast to the discussions at the intranet site. Thus, Facebook was also used for evaluating the course and for planning social events like Friday bar, beer after class or content-related events such as talks or debates. In course A, Facebook was also used for practical information about the Danish educational system, and the
international students also used it for apartment hunting. Some international students even used it to practice some Danish or for translation of official documents from Danish to English. Some postings on the Facebook page happened simultaneously with the teaching, for example a Wikipedia-page on Grundtvig (a Danish national figure) when Grundtvig was casually mentioned in class. Other posts happened in the evenings or on weekends. This in particular might benefit students like Andrejs, who would generally not pose questions during class but come up with questions later on.

In the example below, we see a post from a British student in course A requesting a translation of one of the official legal criteria for the concept ghetto. Ghetto is a concept also mentioned by the American student, Gabriela, in the interviews, as it means something different in the US than it does in Denmark. Figures 11 and 12 below are examples of such a question asked outside of class.

*Figure 11. Facebook part 1 of 2, course A.*
The Facebook post is addressed to the Danish-speaking students as “we”, meaning the non-Danish speaking students, find the concept of ghetto hard to define. The first student contributing with what she perceives as a “bad translation” is Norwegian, whereas the two other students are Danish. In some ways, the definition of a ghetto could be considered a question of general knowledge rather than content knowledge. It might also not be considered important knowledge by students who come across the term in a particular instance. However, this definition of a ghetto seems highly relevant for reading about issues of ethnicity in Denmark, and the formal definition provided in this posting might not be general knowledge for Danish students. As previously stated, the teacher did not have access to the Facebook page, which might result in more and other types of questions. However, it would be very beneficial for the teacher to know that questions like the definition of a ghetto were asked on Facebook. Questions like these are also a part of the cultural exchange that is seen to characterize and to be a benefit of the “international classroom” (cf. Henriksen et al., 2018). Furthermore, Facebook interaction of this type is an example of co-construction of knowledge (cf. Duff, 2002) and thus an important part of learning. In that way, Facebook extends the classroom interaction beyond the physical walls of the classroom. Besides the (conscious choice of the) absence of the teacher, there is another noteworthy difference between asking questions in class and on Facebook: the issue of timing. Discussions such as the one shown in Figures 11 and 12 may span several days, providing the students with time to consider their questions and answers. It is thus obvious from this section that the students use other resources than the teacher to obtain knowledge.
6.1.5 Summary and introduction to part 2

In this first part of the chapter, I have looked at question-asking as active participation in the internationalized classroom setting in a broad sense. We saw how language competency, past (culturally framed) educational experience, content knowledge and power relations all play a role in the asking of questions. In the first section (6.1.1), we saw a group with different ideas of what was considered appropriate for asking a stakeholder, but working together towards the shared goal of formulating a “good question”. The section that followed showed two instances of classroom interaction in teacher-student interaction in a teacher-fronted classroom setting. Here, I showed how a seemingly simple question can be tricky but also how a questions can lead to co-construction and sharing of knowledge. In the third section (6.1.3), I proposed factors that might be intensified in an international classroom context by looking at interview excerpts with three different international students. This was followed by showing questions asked outside of the physical classroom. Besides being an example of privileged study behavior (see Tange & Jensen, 2012, and Section 6.1.3), questions provide the teacher with an insight into knowledge gaps that might be different from the teacher’s expectations (not knowing what a PhD student costs and that this is not necessarily important knowledge, see Section 6.1.2). Secondly, the students might be left with a missed learning opportunity if they do not know the criteria for a ghetto in the Danish context. As we saw in the very first section (6.1.1), students may also need explicit training in questioning strategies such as learning the linguistic forms of effective queries and the syntax of question formation (Chin, 2004, p. 109). Furthermore, in the first part of the chapter I suggested that asking questions includes pragmatic knowledge of who can ask what question to whom and when. This first part of the chapter serves as a stepping-stone for part two where I analyze group work dynamics in course B, suggesting that some of the dynamics shown in this part of the chapter are to be found in the group work as well.

Part II. Rights and privileges of group work in an internationalized setting

“I think the university (UCPH) is better, and also the way of teaching is different, but it also makes it hard. [...] Here it’s much more interactive, and they make you do group work. [...] I think the way here is much better cause you really learn [...] but then it makes it difficult too, cause I have been learning that way for so long and then we come here and change the way. It’s hard, but I think it’s better. It forces you to really learn the stuff because you have to make presentations, and you’re also part of a group so then you feel responsible so “okay I really need to be part of it””
Excerpt 6.12. Interview, Isabel, Spanish, course B (program 1).

A key source of interaction between students, and in international courses between local and international students, is group work. In groups, students can ask questions in a smaller forum, which might be less intimidating than doing so in front of the entire class; they can ask questions not necessarily appropriate for the entire class to hear, and they can “test the waters” to find out if a question is actually appropriate for the entire class. At the same time, group work is also an area where cultural diversity plays out, providing both opportunities and challenges for building intercultural understanding. This section focuses on the mechanisms of role assigning in group work and how these roles are influenced by power structures and language choice exemplified by an interdisciplinary exercise in course B. Almost all forms of teaching and learning across all three courses had some form of group work, ranging from ”talking to your neighbor” (pair work) to more structured forms of group work in larger and more stable groups, as we also saw in Section 6.1.1. All students that I interviewed were asked about their experiences of group work. While, group work is indeed not always successful, it can lead to a better study milieu as students get to talk to each other. Moreover, there are proven academic advantages of group work for students (cf. Gaudet et al., 2010); students learn how to argue, including defending their position and question other students’ ideas as well as convince others of their own.

As we saw with asking questions, and as expressed by Isabel in this part of the chapter’s opening quote (excerpt 6.12), group interaction might also be something to get used to. Other international students also mentioned group work as being new and different – and better (see also Kling & Larsen (2017). Ideally these group discussions will help students understand concepts better (cf. Greenop, 2007, Al-Sheedi, 2009; Li et al. 2010), and lead to construction of new knowledge (Tuan & Neomy, 2007, Li et al., 2010). However, group work is also an arena for personal positioning even though the pedagogic assumption often seems to be that groups are innocent forums for discussion, learning and growth. There are various methods of organizing group work in a course all with the same focus: to get students to “talk to each other”. Before we turn to the actual analysis of group interaction, some contextual information on a rather complex didactical exercise design is needed and on the groups of students attempting to solve it.
6.2.1 The exercise and the groups

The excerpts presented below show students engaged in an interdisciplinary exercise typical of course B. As noted in Section 4.3, course B participants were from two different master’s programs, and one of the learning outcomes of the course was to teach the students of these two distinct programs how to co-exist, as they would need each other’s skills in future work situations. The interdisciplinary objective was thus a part of the course construction, and the teaching activities, and the particular exercise under scrutiny in this analysis, are a prime example of this. The particular group exercise under scrutiny here indeed required different skills, and the design of the exercise made each student’s individual skill set into a piece of a puzzle where every piece in principle was important for success. In that sense, this group exercise serves as a good example of how students in international courses (inter)act when solving a task.

Below you will find interview excerpt 6.13 in which a student from program 1 reflects on participating in a course with students from different backgrounds. He perceives mutual understanding of different disciplinary skill sets as a part of the learning outcome for this course. This resembles other students’ perceptions of the purpose of the course (see also Chapter 4.3.2).

Excerpt 6.13. Interview, Jacob, Danish, program 1, course B.

"Det at de (studerende fra program 2) er [analytikere]63, og vi (studerende fra program 1) er noget andet er en kæmpe stor fordel, fordi det her kursus også lidt handler om at forskere laver mærkeligt data, og så giver de det til nogle analytikere, og så hvordan de snakker sammen, og hvorfor forskere de siger så dumme ting, fordi de ikke forstår kode, og de forstår ikke statistik, og analytikere forstår det, men de forstår ikke de eksperimenter der bliver lavet, og hvordan for det er vigtigt når man fortolker data hvordan det er lavet, og hvordan det skal spille sammen. Så for at vi kan møde hinanden på midten, er helt vildt vigtigt at der også er analytikere. Jeg tror vi lærer noget af dem og omvendt, og det tror jeg er vigtigt, så det er en kæmpe fordel."

//

63 For anonymization reasons, the name of the program is here replaced with the label “analyst” used by the student later in the excerpt.
“That they (i.e. the students from program 1) are [analysts] and we are something else is a big advantage because this course is also about researchers making some weird data, and then they give it to some analysts, and then how they interact and why researchers say such stupid things because they don’t get coding, and they don’t understand statistics, and analysts understand it, but they don’t understand the experiments, and how it is important for interpreting data how the experiment is done. So for us to meet in the middle, it is extremely important that there are also analysts in this course. I think we learn from them and the other way around, and that is important. So that’s a big advantage.”

Jacob’s use of the labels analysts and researchers (what the teacher called experimentalists) to describe the students of program 1 and 2, respectively, to a large extent permeates the dynamics of the groups. The long-term groups in which the students were to carry out exercises were formed so that they would consist of students with different disciplinary backgrounds (i.e. program 1 and 2) and thus skills. Nationality was less important. The groups would thus consist of at least one analyst and one experimentalist – at least one student from each program.

Tables 9-11 below provide an overview of the three groups in focus in this chapter. Due to anonymization of data, the information given on the bachelor’s degree of the local students is limited to area of interest and the university from which they obtained the degree. For the international students, information on country of origin and discipline is considered important. As reflected in the tables, there is an overlap between national culture and disciplinary differences, and in none of the groups presented in this section (and indeed in very few of the remaining groups) was the analyst (students from program 2) a local student. This must be considered an incidental consequence of program 2 being considerably more diverse than program 1 (see Section 4.3.1). Even so, it affected the group dynamics significantly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Self-reported first language(s)</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marianna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Spanish/Danish</td>
<td>Cellular biology, Spain</td>
<td>Program 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>First language</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Søren</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>Human biology, UCPH</td>
<td>Program 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>Human biology, UCPH</td>
<td>Program 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Computer science, China</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Cellular biology, Spain</td>
<td>Program 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Overview group 1, course B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>First language</th>
<th>Bachelor's degree</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vishwaraj, called Vish</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>Biotechnology, India</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rasmus</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>Human biology, UCPH</td>
<td>Program 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirsten</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>Human biology, UCPH</td>
<td>Program 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Mathematics, Spain</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Overview of group 2, course B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>First language</th>
<th>Bachelor's degree</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raul</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Biotechnology, Spain</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Biology, Spain</td>
<td>Program 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group 2 had two more members not attending this lecture. Information on them can be found in Section 6.2.6.
Table 11. Overview of group 3, course B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sofie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>UCPH</td>
<td>Human biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>UCPH</td>
<td>Human biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>UCPH</td>
<td>Human biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bertel</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>UCPH</td>
<td>Human biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrine</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>UCPH</td>
<td>Human biology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exercise analyzed in this section was a group assignment for all the long-term groups intended to prepare the students for their future careers as researchers/experimentalists or data analysts. As the exercise was also designed for students to draw on methods/techniques learned previously in the course, it had the dual purpose of 1) rehearsing knowledge and skills and 2) promoting interdisciplinary exchange and understanding. The exercise was meant to simulate a “real life” situation where analysts and experimentalists work together. To this end, the students were provided with data from a real experiment and given a list of questions to answer in the form of a slideshow. The slideshow had to be uploaded to the intranet site for the teacher to be able to select three slide shows for presentation in front of the class. The selection of presentations was meant to represent variation in ways of approaching the assignment in order to promote creativity. The teacher introduced the exercise in front of the entire class, wearing a white coat to symbolize his impersonation of an experimentalist, and the students were told that during the lecture, whenever he changed into the coat, he, as a form of role playing, would no longer know anything about mathematics and statistics. The teacher thus represents the pedagogical processing of a “real life” situation and at the same time an impersonation of the interdisciplinarity. The groups had to complete the assignment as if they were analysts.

In this part of the chapter, I show three different groups engaged in solving the same task. When doing the exercise, most groups stayed in the classroom while some chose to sit around the campus. For practical reasons, I only observed and recorded the groups in the classroom for this particular exercise. For this exercise, I have analyzed observations and recordings of five different groups solving the task. All groups presented here have been observed and followed throughout the course.
(see Section 3.4 for a description of my observations). In that sense, I could have chosen other excerpts showing some of the same group dynamics. I have chosen to start this analytical discussion of the dynamics of group work in internationalized settings by analyzing the exercise step by step using a group that serves as a good example of how the exercise was approached; the didactical design was rather complex. The design did in many ways comprise a didactical ideal that relies on the students’ ability to decode the didactical contract.

The exercise was not introduced more extensively than what is described above, and it was a part of the exercise that the groups should realize that they were provided with incomplete information on the data. This realization would serve as an essential part of their learning process. In that sense, the exercise had (at least) two steps: Realizing the lack of context information in the assignment and then answering the questions using the statistical program R. In other words: “Speaking to each other (and the teacher)” and then “coding”. This can be considered the didactical ideal of the exercise, which includes an idea of the implied student as a creative and independent-thinking student. This didactical ideal was, however, not explicitly articulated to the students, and it thus in some ways looks like the implicit question-asking strategies used by the teachers in the oral exams (see Chapter 5).

In the following analysis, I will analyze how the students (inter)act in relation to the initial approach to the task and which strategies seem to be used in the shared goal of solving the task and in turn how this influences the group dynamics. I will focus on group 1 and excerpts from group 2 and 3 will be used in Sections 6.2.5-6 as a comparison.

6.2.2 Group 1: “You might need me for data” – first, ask questions

Group 1 comprised three local students, but only two of them were present for this exercise: Søren and Andrea. Another group member was the Danish/Spanish student, Marianna (whom we also met in Section 6.1.2), who grew up in Spain (and was educated in Spain), speaking Danish with her mother and Spanish with her father; Marianna is a Danish citizen. There was another Spanish student, Valentina, who almost exclusively spoke Spanish (to and with Marianna). The sole representative of program 2 (the coders) was a Chinese student called Chang.

The teacher would approach one group at the time, and the students in group 1 were eager to answer the questions, already working hard on the assignment when the teacher approached them.
The following excerpt shows the teacher’s role-playing when approaching them as the experimentalist; this is the first time the teacher approaches group 1.

**Excerpt 6.14. Group 1, course B. Teacher (T), Søren (S), Marianna (M).**

1. T hello I’m your local experimentalist do you have any questions (.) I know
2. everything there is to know about this experiment and it’s actually real data I
3. haven’t made it up so you know
4. S ehm yeah (0.2) is it possible eh (.) we were looking at the location is it possible to
5. have just one nucleotide sequence
6. T yeah ((hesitant))
7. S okay (0.3) so for example do you have this ((addressed to Marianna))
8. M no
9. T so do you remember how this cage technique works
10. S ehm pff yeah kind of hh
11. T right how does it work ((teacher takes a seat)) it’s actually kind of important that
12. you understand the exercise so what are we trying to do
13. S we are using the cap we are looking at RNAs and we are using the cap cat cap to
14. the graph in RNAs then you sequence the first twenty something nucleotides
15. T yeah and then you map these things to the genome
16. S yes

The teacher starts by establishing that he is now the local experimentalist and asks the group if they have any questions for him about the experiment. Søren, the Danish student, takes the floor and asks a question about nucleotides, a topic the students briefly touched upon prior to the teacher’s arrival. The teacher answers with a hesitant “yeah”, and Søren tries to find an example of a nucleotide sequence on Marianna’s computer; they are working on two computers, Marianna’s and Chang’s. It is Søren who takes the lead in this short excerpt of the conversation. It should be remembered that at this point, the students believe that the exercise’s sole purpose is answering the questions, and, as described in Section 6.2.1, the questions included repetition of techniques introduced previously. The teacher offers them a clue as to how to answer the first question by mentioning the *cage technique*, a method that they had been introduced to recently in another lecture. This clue is noticed by the Danish students who mention later in the conversation that these methods will be essential for the exam because they have spent so much time on them (see
Section 6.2.3). When provided with the clue on this particular technique, the cage technique, Søren is the one to explain how it works.

The next excerpt (6.15) is the continuation of the conversation between Søren and the teacher shown above. After having established a shared understanding of the cage technique, the teacher at this point, answers the question posed by Søren:

Excerpt 6.15. Group 1, course B. Teacher (T), Andrea (A), Søren (S).

1 T  now the thing is that once you map it to the genome the thirty base points they are
2 actually quite uninteresting right the only reason that we do thirty base points is
3 that you need something to map the genome but eh whether this is thirty or forty I
4 don’t need this it’s irrelevant right (.) what’s interesting is the first nucleotide right
5 because it’s the first one being transcribed (.) do you agree?
6 A  no <why is that more important>
7 S  <why is that>
8 T  ehm because we wanna know where the gene starts
9 S  yeah? But we can’t say that from just one nucleotide
10 T  no no but the thirty base pair that’s just for mapping but once I have mapped it
11 A  arhhh
12 T  then it is sort of uninteresting to say that it’s from here to here we are only
13 interested in this right
14 A  oh
15 S  aha okay

Line 1 can be considered the answer to Søren’s question: “is it possible to have more than just one nucleotide sequence?” (see excerpt 6.14). The teacher explains why it is only the first nucleotide that is interesting. The teacher then asks if they agree with his explanation to which Andrea and Søren immediately answer, “no why is that” (lines 6-7). This response could be interpreted as a questioning of the teacher’s authority. It could also be an essential aspect of problem solving, as it seems to fill a recognized knowledge gap and is a display of interest. Søren and Andrea try to understand the explanation by asking follow-up questions, and the teacher explains until they express their understanding by saying “oh” and “aha okay” (lines 14-15). Marianna, Valentina and Chang remain silent. This sequence of the conversation ends with the teacher saying that it was a really good question.
Following the acknowledgement of Søren’s question, the teacher says that a part of this exercise is to ask him questions. He explains that they have purposely been given vague information because it is a real experiment and should simulate a “real life” situation where they, as analysts, are given data that lack information. They therefore need to learn what to ask of the experimentalist in order to solve the task, see excerpt 6.16.

Excerpt 6.16. Group 1, course B. Teacher (T), Søren (S).

1 T but you know I’m around here and a part of this exercise is also to ask me
2 questions because it’s very vaguely dosed and it’s done by eh it’s done a bit how
3 can I put this it’s done with this in mind it’s supposed to be vague because it’s a
4 real experiment so that’s why you have to ask me stuff [it is the] only way you’ll
5 figure out you know what is important
6 S okay
7 T so it’s not like you have all the data you need or you have all the raw data you need
8 but you might need me for data

As noted in the description of the exercise, it consists of (at least) two parts. The first one is realizing that the experimentalist/the teacher is a very important asset in relation to solving the task and that they must start by figuring out what to ask him. In that sense, the teaching situation becomes like a game of jeopardy where the teacher has the answers, and the students are to figure out what the questions are. This was not uncommon on the course. However, this exercise was indeed highly complex, and the role of the teacher was much more essential than in other exercises on the course. In that sense, this exercise serves as a unique insight into the students’ process of interpreting the didactical contract.

These first three excerpts (excerpts 6.14, 6.15 and 6.16) represented the first time the teacher approached the group. The students now know that questions are important, and they also know what is considered a good question: Søren’s question. In this part of the group’s exchange with the teacher only two students participated verbally. The next section analyzes a discussion that ensued immediately after the teacher left, which focused on what to ask him next time round. Here, if we keep in mind the discussion on question-formulation in Section 6.1.1, all students had a stake in what was initially Safa’s question. In the same way, a question asked by an individual group member comes to reflect on the group as a whole. In the case of course C (showed in Section
6.1.1), the question gained importance since it was to be posed to a stakeholder – a potential future employer. In the case of course B (showed here), the questions are important because the teacher represents what the students want to become: A researcher. For this reason, it is likely that the students would like to display excellence, and that some questions thus are considered more appropriate than others are.

6.2.3 Group 1: Who and what to ask?

After the teacher leaves the group, the students return to answering the questions in the assignment. When we enter the discussion in excerpt 6.17 below, Marianna and Søren form a pair and are working on Marianna’s computer, while Chang and Andrea are looking at Chang’s computer. Valentina is working on her own computer. After having figured out that a part of the exercise is to ask questions, they now look for the appropriate questions to ask. Marianna is now quite active and participates in the discussion. The other Spanish-speaking student, Valentina, remains silent, however. So far, Valentina has not participated in the conversation at all. It is difficult to determine if it is because she cannot or because she will not participate.

**Excerpt 6.17. Group 1, course B. Søren (S), Marianna (M), Andrea (A), Chang (C).**

1  S  what’s the values that we have for different tissues what’s point eleven point eight
3  M  isn’t that the reads?
4  S  number of reads zero point seven to seven reads
5  M  no oh I haven’t looked at that point
6  S  no
7  A  eh did it say anything in the eh ((looks at the screen))
8  M  if not we can ask him that other question those are questions we can definitely ask
9  M  him
10 C  TPM?
11 A  TPM for the given tissue what was TPM
12 M  I don’t know what that is I can look it (. ) I don’t know Google it

At this stage, the students are looking through lecture slides to see if they can find anything in there that they can use to answer the questions (line 7). Marianna comments that if they do not find what they are looking for, they could ask the teacher: “those are questions we can definitely ask him” (line 8). “Those” refers to the question posed by Søren on the values for different tissues
Marianna’s utterance also implicates that there are questions not suitable for asking the teacher, for example questions you can answer yourself by looking through the slides. The other students do not, however, respond to this suggestion.

Chang is now also participating with the brief utterance “TPM” (line 10), which Andrea picks up by helping him formulate a more complete contribution, a question: “TPM for the given tissue what was TPM” (line 11). Chang was seen, by Marianna, as the group member who struggled most with English – a view voiced by other course B students as well in interviews. With some help from Andrea, Chang manages to ask a question. Marianna’s response, “I don’t know google it” (line 12), not only signals a hierarchy in the types of questions that can be asked, but also in who determines what may be asked to whom. In this case, the question is apparently not considered suitable by Marianna for asking the teacher, but only for asking Google. They find the answer on Google a couple of minutes later, and Valentina, having had time to google, says something for the first time: “tags per million”, followed by a short explanation of what tags per million is. The use of Google here provides Valentina with an opportunity to participate; if language prevented her from participating, Google gives her wordings to overcome this. The use of Google also serves a gatekeeper-function for questions: You can check if the question is worth asking. As shown in Section 6.1.3, the Indian student Viashwaraj implied a hierarchy for question-asking that is: 1) asking your peers, 2) Google and 3) then you can ask the teacher. Thus, in this excerpt we see the question hierarchy expressed by Vishwaraj in Section 6.1.3 in practice.

Following the Google search, the discussion returns to the issue of what constitutes appropriate questions to ask the teacher in this situation (see excerpt 6.18 below). This exchange makes it visible that there is not only a hierarchy in what questions you may ask to whom, but also an internal group dynamic in who has the power to determine whether something can be considered an appropriate question for asking the teacher. In the previous excerpt, it seemed as though Marianna had the right to say to Chang that his question was a question for Google. In this excerpt, Andrea seems to have the right to determine whether Marianna’s question is appropriate “for now” (line 6):

Excerpt 6.18. Group 1, course B. Marianna (M), Andrea (A).
1 M I would have another question that would be also which type of tissues are we
2 looking at because we have cer car that could be cerebellum cervix
3 A mm mm
Prior to this specific part of the group discussion, the students had discussed (and agreed) on a couple of questions that could be considered appropriate to ask the teacher. These questions resembled Søren’s first question on nucleotides in line 4 of excerpt 6.14, which was acknowledged by the teacher as a good question. In excerpt 6.18, we see Marianna suggesting an additional question to the ones already agreed upon by the group. Andrea, however, dismisses the suggestion with the explanation that it is not “important for now”. Marianna accepts the timing of the question and suggests that they can keep it in mind for the presentation. This suggestion receives no response. At this point, we can only assume that this non-response is a way of ignoring Marianna’s suggestion. However, shortly after the sequence presented in excerpt 6.18, the teacher once again approaches the group asking if they have any questions. Søren asks him the questions they agreed upon. Søren has not explicitly been given the role of moderator by the other members of the group, but no one opposes this, and one of them has to respond whenever the teacher approaches to avoid an awkward silence. The teacher answers the questions posed by the group with Søren as the moderator. Before leaving once again, the teacher asks if they have more questions, see excerpt 6.19.

Excerpt 6.19. Group 1, course B. Teacher (T), Søren (S), Marianna (M).

1 T anything else?
2 S no I think that was it for now
3 T you know what the samples are?
4 M oh I was wondering a bit because you just give us a bit of a name and and cer could
5 T be cerebellum or cervix <whatever>
6 T <I thought> it was completely obvious
7 M what?
8 T what the names were this this is me pretending to be an experimentalist this always
9 happens you get files like this and it’s not explained what is what and we need to
10 T ask
The teacher asks if there is anything else, and Søren says “no that was it for now”, once again ignoring the question Marianna wanted to ask. The teacher then asks if they know what the samples are, which is actually precisely Marianna’s ignored question, and Marianna seizes the opportunity to ask if cer is cerebellum or cervix. Then the teacher impersonates the experimentalist by saying “I thought it was completely obvious”, catching Marianna a bit off guard: “what?” (line 7). The teacher then takes off his coat, metaphorically, and acknowledges her question by telling them that this is one of the “vaguely dosed” things they have to ask about. This serves as an example of the simulated situation where the experimentalist has provided the analysts with a file lacking context information; whether cer is cervix or not is the missing metadata that the students are supposed to identify and/or ask for. Just like Google served as a gatekeeper for questions, so here internally in the group first Andrea and then Søren take on the same role. Marinna’s ignored question may also serve as an insight into how the assignment is interpreted. Here, the students’ process of interpreting the assignment, and in that process ignoring Marianna’s questions, tells us that the students Andrea and Søren may interpret the situation and thus their roles as students in this situation as them answering questions rather than them understanding how questions are answered.

As described in Section 6.1.1, questions can be placed at a higher or lower level on Bloom’s taxonomy, and this particular question, if cer stands for cervix or cerebellum, might be perceived as a “basic information”-question (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1992). In that sense, the question could potentially be perceived as a knowledge gap and thus a display of incompetence. In comparison, Søren’s question on nucleotides displayed knowledge within a certain academic subject area. Furthermore, as we also saw with the group in course C in Section 6.1.1, even if a question is asked by one person, in a group context all members are responsible for the quality of the question. Displays of academic competence are often seen as constituting participation in group work as it demonstrates the students’ right and ability to participate (e.g. Dalby Kristiansen, 2017). However, as this group sequence, and the analysis of oral exam found in Chapter 5, shows us, it is not enough to be competent; it is also a question of being recognized as competent within a certain context. Even though Marianna’s contribution turned out to be exactly what was asked of them by the teacher, Søren and Andrea in the end seemed to have claimed the right to determine which questions should be asked. Hence, Søren and Andrea as being the ones who “know the system” in this group function as gatekeepers for utterances with an authority person as recipient.

In Section 6.2.2, we saw how the students handled the assignment and how the teacher established that as part of the exercise the students should realize that they lack information. In this section,
we have seen how the group’s internal dynamics work in relation to figuring out what to ask. This part of the exercise required a high level of discussion. In the next Section (6.2.4), the students are working on answering the question, hence coding.

6.2.4 Group 1: “Understanding the question, then coding”

In continuation of excerpt 6.19 above, the teacher once again leaves the group. The students continue working in pairs of two with Valentina as the “fifth wheel”. Chang and Valentina are still not verbally participating in any form of discussion, whereas Søren and Andrea discuss how they should proceed with answering the questions in the document by interpreting what the teacher told them. Marianna suggests that the analysis part of the assignment is vague and that it might be something to ask the teacher about. Søren swiftly acknowledges this by saying that there might be more than one correct answer. Søren and Andrea agree on the following procedure for the analysis: Start by making a plot and then they can move on and see if it is sufficient for making the analysis. This procedure is supported by Marianna. After having made the plot, Andrea and Søren discuss what they can conclude based on this particular plot, for example how and if they can compare expressions of mRNA in different tissues. The discussion unfolds as follows:

Excerpt 6.20. Group 1, course B. Andrea (A), Søren (S).

1     A  yeah I totally get what you’re saying and I totally agree it’s just look here
2     ((pointing at the screen))
3     S  yeah yeah I totally accept the plot I’m just a little skeptical about what we can eh
4     say from the plot
5     A  skepticism is good
6     S  yeah (0.2) but it looks nice ((all laughing)) but we should be maybe a little careful
7     about saying too much about <anything>
8     A  <not conclude anything>
9     S  yeah I think so
10    A  but well we can say that we have different <expression patterns>
11    S  <yeah yeah> and there’s no doubt that there’s a lower expression but why that’s of
12    course not for analysts that’s for somebody else to talk about
13    A  mm
14    S  so yeah
15    A  but we are the analysts right?
The discussion in excerpt 6.20 is representative of how the local students in course B generally discussed interpretation of data analysis in group work: There might be more than just one answer. As we saw in the previous chapter (Chapter 5), some students seemed to approach academic activities from the vantage point that “skepticism is good” (line 5). It should be added that students of program 1, such as Søren and Andrea, who had been admitted to the program from the corresponding bachelor’s program, were elite students admitted on the highest GPA from high school. Just as the local student of course A, whom we encountered in Chapter 5 on the oral exam (section 5.3.1), students such as Søren and Andrea had many years of practice in playing by the rules of the system so they would receive good grades; they have been brought up to know that a critical approach is important.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that in this exercise there is the additional issue of conflicting disciplines, which makes offering a straightforward explanation of the dynamics of the group difficult. Within the design of this exercise there was a clear role distribution, which we saw expressed by Jacob in excerpt 6.13. There are two opposing roles: the analyst and the experimentalist. Experimentalists are perceived (by themselves) as researchers. In contrast, analysts are seen as producing codes for the experimentalists to interpret. In that sense, besides being a question of educational culture there is also a question of disciplinary self-perception, “that’s not for analysts to talk about” (line 12). It is thus hard to determine whether the students’ idea of “questioning” stems from being brought up in a certain (national) educational system or in a certain disciplinary culture – or both. The disciplinary identity was observable in the students, for example when Søren, during a group discussion, used the expression “my biologically ordered mind” thus using a strategy of self-positioning (Harré & Langehove, 1991). Either way, the same dynamics could also be observed in courses A and C, in activities preparing students for the exam and in the exam situation itself (see section 5.1.1). When Andrea utters that “we are the analysts right” (line 15, excerpt 6.20), Søren replies that the teacher will probably “ask to it” (line 16), and that they should keep it in mind so they can answer if asked. In the exam chapter (Chapter 5), we saw the local students using a strategy of “I have actually thought of that myself”.
Søren and Andrea’s discussion in excerpt 6.21 was not only a discussion of interpreting data but also a discussion of the point of view from which this should be done: from the experimentalists or the analysists’ point of view. The students’ discussion leads up to one of Chang’s few verbal contributions to the group work:

*Excerpt 6.21. Group 1, course B. Chang (C), Søren (S).*

1. C so actually what is challenging is understanding the question not coding or
2. S hehehe I agree

Chang’s utterance is a succinct summary of what occurred in the excerpts above representing approximately one hour of group work. First of all, the utterance contains the two parts of the exercise: understanding that the question is “asking” and then coding. The didactical design of the exercise was rather complex as it included interdisciplinarity, a conceptualization process and an element of coding. In didactique, the process of didactics is seen to have different phases: the devolution of a didactical milieu to the students and the students’ actions and their forming of hypotheses towards a solution (which includes a validation either by talking to the teacher or their peers) (see Madsen, Christiansen & Rump, 2014). In some sense, this exercise was a devolution of incomplete information and a range of questions with the ideal that students can figure out what Chang now realizes: That “understanding the question” is actually a part of the exercise. One interpretation of Chang’s utterance is that the exercise turned out to be a misguided didactical trick including too many steps and too much complexity. The task does indeed seem to privilege certain types of students and maybe even some educational cultures. The students are assigned roles by themselves and by others due to this privilege. Looking to other groups in course than the group in question in this analysis, the exercise was equally frustrating and motivating. However, when successful it was received very positively – as it was by group 1. Seen from a more positive angle, Chang’s utterance might be interpreted as an epiphany. Once he got the point about “understanding the question”, he learned something essential.

Sections 6.2.2-4 provided an analysis of group interaction in Group 1. In the next sections, I will discuss group dynamics in internationalized settings at a more general level, still exemplified by this particular exercise on course B.
6.2.5 Pieces of a puzzle

The success of the exercise shown in the previous sections was in many ways dependent on an effective division of labor internally in the group. The exercise required the students’ ability to 1) realize what the assignment was (understanding the question), 2) solve the assignment (coding) and 3) make use of different disciplinary skills in order to do 1 and 2. Thus, the exercise was also for the students to realize that they in principle might need each other “for data”, to use the teacher’s metaphor.

If we look at the group in the analyses presented above in Sections 6.2.2-4, it might leave the reader with an impression of two group members setting the agenda, one being ignored, and two group members not participating. This is however not the full picture. In their own words, the group actually functioned well. One reason for this could be that they had each found a suitable role and, as we saw, they had established an internal hierarchy with codes of conduct (similar to those between teacher and student). The dynamics of their group work was akin to a game of cards. Every individual in the group had a card with different categories, within which they could have a higher or lower score. The categories included linguistic competence, social competence, academic skills and “knowing the system”. Different categories would become relevant in different situations, some categories would trump other categories, and some players may have been dealt better cards than others had. In this section, I will illustrate how these different categories came into play.

For “understanding the question”, it was beneficial for the group to have Søren and Andrea’s knowledge of the Danish educational system, as they were able to look for clues (even where no clues were to be found). Another benefit of the group was that Chang, Marianna and Valentina may have gained an insight into tacit dynamics such as what to expect from the exam – an insight we saw in Chapter 5 that some students lacked. Excerpt 6.22 below exemplifies this.

The students of group 1 are enjoying a short coffee break from the same exercise shown in the previous sections, and Andrea and Søren are discussing the exam:

Excerpt 6.22. Group 1, course B. Andrea (A), Søren (S), Marianna (M).

1 A I fear in the exam or in the final there will come a question like this
2 S yes of course there will
3 A where you don’t know how to answer and you don’t have a book you can look it up
and you can kind of google it but at some point you just get stuck
and there has to be cause it’s a take home one week exam if it was easy everyone

S got twelve then they would shut down the course next year right so
A it will be difficult

S there would be a lot of questions where you’re like
A but I hate when you just don’t know one thing is that you don’t you’re not able to

S answer the question but you don’t know how to get help to
A yeah that’s true

A yeah
M ask our R expert
A Chang I will call you during our final week like I can’t code this ((high pitched))
M yeah I think our group will be like Chang please this doesn’t work (.) why

Søren and Andrea score high in having insider’s knowledge of which clues to look for when preparing for the exam. From this excerpt, we also see that Chang’s role in the group is being “the R expert” or “the coder”. R expert here refers to an expert in the statistical program R. Thus, the coding part of the exercise is made easier for the group by having Chang as a member. Success of and participation in group work are often measured in verbal action. On that yardstick, the group work was not very successful, as Chang and Valentina did not contribute much verbally. A dogmatic understanding of what constitutes effective interaction in group settings may also generate that misunderstanding. As Donnellon (1996) puts it, “team work is essentially a linguistic phenomenon” since “teams do their work through language” (p. 6). Moreover, perceptions of the role of silence in contexts adopting social constructivist models of learning can be seen as a failure to learn (Jaworski & Sachdev, 1998). Full participation is thus often characterized by verbal contribution to the group. Exploring an Asian context (Hong Kong), Jin (2014), however, provides empirical evidence of silence being used as a means of enacting active participation in problem-based learning. As the coder, Chang did not produce many verbal contributions, but he was producing the code, which was an essential part of solving the task. This means that seen from a learning perspective, the group was successful; not because they produced a verbal solution, but precisely because at least one of the two silent students non-verbally concentrated on coding. The flipside of that coin is that the other members might become dependent on Chang’s expertise in this respect.
Finally, we may conclude that in this international classroom you may excel even though your language skills are (seen as) productively deficient. In excerpt 6.23, we see what Marianna answers in the interview when asked about group work.

*Excerpt 6.23. Interview, Marianna, Danish/Spanish, course B.*

"Jeg tror de har et meget fint engelsk allesammen synes jeg. Chang tror jeg har haft lidt sværere ved det, men hans del har vi så rettet lidt sprogligt, men ellers han er jo analytikeren, så hans bidrag har ligesom været koden stort set, og der er jo ikke så meget grammatik i det."

//

"I think they are okay in English, all of them. Chang I think have found it a little more difficult, but his part we have corrected the language a bit, but otherwise he is the analyst, so his contribution has been the coding mostly, and there is not much grammar in that."

The statement in interview excerpt 6.23 concerns homework assignments that contained a written part, but it may be transferred to the oral group work as well. Chang’s English proficiency might be considerably lower than Marianna, Andrea and Søren’s, but his contribution to the group was the code “and there is not much grammar in that”. His high score on specific academic skills became very central in this group exercise.

However, as also described earlier, the categories (linguistic, academic and social skills as well as “knowing the system”) had to be recognized as relevant. An example of this is Marianna, who had an essential question ignored by members of her group. In the case of Marianna’s ignored question, the role of the teacher became important. By encouraging additional questions, the teacher made it possible for Marianna to ask her question. Marianna scores relatively high in both the social and linguistic categories, but there might be other students who are too intimidated by the dominating students (in this case Danish) to ask questions – even when prompted by the teacher. This seems to be the case for another international student, Isabel:

*Excerpt 6.24. Interview, Isabel, Spanish, course B.*

“Sometimes I feel more comfortable speaking with internationals than with the Danish cause I feel they have a really high level in this master so it’s intimidating sometimes, but the teacher is like 4 steps more.”
This excerpt touches on a social hierarchy that might resemble the one seen in the group, and it supports the claim that the Danish students are in a privileged position. I have no reason to believe that the academic level of the Danish students was higher than that of the international students in general, but there is good reason to believe that they were more comfortable with the way of teaching, as foregrounded in Section 6.2.4. Over time, students learn to decode teacher expectations as to what constitutes learning within a certain system or discipline; they gradually decode the didactical contract (see Balacheff, 1999). For Andrea and Søren, this decoding actually seemed to have happened to an extent where they even kept others from making the same experience. It is possible that Valentina from group 1 shared the feeling expressed by Isabel above, which could explain why she did not participate much in group work. However, her oral participation in the group might also be restricted due to (perceived) low English skills. In this respect, Marianna became important as she spoke all three languages used in the group, English, Danish and Spanish. Due to her multilingual competences, she took on the role of a mediator. She is not the only one to do that.

For Chang’s coding contributions to make sense, he was also in need of someone to interpret his contribution, as shown in Section 6.2.3 (excerpt 6.17). In this case, Andrea carried out the verbal part of the process of group work for him. Previous research has described this role as being similar to a “broker” function (see for example Kraft, 2017). The concept of ‘language brokers’ has primarily been used in relation to children and adolescents in multilingual settings. One definition of the term is: Language brokering is the act of “interpreting and translating between culturally and linguistically different people and mediating interactions in a variety of situations” (Tse, 1995, p. 226). For Kraft (2016), the language broker aids the collective and in turn reaps personal rewards or benefits as s/he becomes indispensable (p. 177). Andrea is already in a rather privileged position as she scores high in almost all categories and is in that sense not in need of these benefits. However, for the benefit of the group they needed Chang’s contributions. Just as Andrea translated Chang’s primarily non-verbal contributions into verbal ones, Marianna became a go-between for the Spanish student Valentina (and for other Spanish students in class). Marianna was, as mentioned, bilingual in Spanish and Danish, and had a high level of English. She was in that sense linguistically privileged, as she could understand everything said. However, as we saw she might score low on “knowing the system”. Marianna thus indeed benefited from being a broker, and she would often function as such for Valentina. Excerpt 6.25 is from my interview with Marianna when I asked her about group work.
"Jeg synes det fungerer fint. Vi snakker stort set engelsk men der er nogle gange sådan hvis jeg skal forklare noget hurtigt til Valentina så fyrer jeg den af bare af på spansk, fx hvis vi lige snakker om noget. Nogle gange snakker vi også dansk blandt os hvis de lige diskuterer noget hurtigt mellem to."

Valentina might score as low as Chang in the linguistic skills (here meaning English) category, but it is hard to determine as I almost exclusively observed her speaking Spanish to and with Marianna. A few times, she said something in English when she possessed some knowledge needed or, as we also saw with the Google-example, had time to prepare her contribution (Section 6.2.3). At other times, she and Marianna would speak Spanish, and Marianna would explain to the group what they talked about. This broker role for Marianna transcended group work as she would also function as a translator, from both English and Danish, if the Spanish students, including Valentina and Isabel, came across something they did not understand, e.g. in lectures. Marianna offered the following explanation of this mechanism when I asked her in an interview:

"Det vi så gjorde det var at de (spanske piger) prøvede at høre efter og sådan at skrive ned det de (underviserne) sagde. Og ellers... Jeg sad jo i rækken så jeg kunne godt oversætte hvis de havde nogle spørgsmål til et eller andet. [...] Jeg ville oversætte til hvad de havde brug for, men hvis jeg skulle forklare noget, så ville jeg forklare det på spansk."

Excerpt 6.26. Interview, Marianna, Spanish/Danish, Course B.
For Marianna, the broker role made her a valuable asset for the group of Spanish girls, and in group 1, she seemed to enable the participation of Valentina. Marianna expressed in the interview that she also had a social advantage in knowing Danish. Both Marianna and Valentina might benefit from Marianna’s linguistic capacity in all three languages used in the group. As there was no-one in the group or on the course who knew both Chinese, Danish and English well enough to function as a broker for Chang, his participation relied more on him being a core asset with regards to coding and less on his verbal participation. As I have shown, the broker function did not just concern translation of language, but of “coding language” and of “the system”. However, the downside to brokering is that Valentina for example in turn might never need to speak English and thus never improve her skills.

To sum up, the exercise design included two roles, the experimentalist and the analyst. These roles are bound up on discipline (program 1 vs. program 2) to facilitate interdisciplinary exchange. The purpose of the analysts was to deliver the code, and the purpose of the experimentalists was to figure out what information was missing from the biological data. Furthermore, the students were meant to learn from each other’s skills. Thus, the design included the students realizing that there was in fact information missing.

Role assigning is a part of group work even in a monolingual setting, and groups might often include “the leader”, “the social one”, “the one who has ideas”, “the one who writes”, and so on (Algren-Ussing & Fruensgaard, 1994). In group 1, roles were assigned by the design of the exercise (and the course) – the coder, the experimentalist – but they were also assigned due to linguistic competences or ”knowing the system”. Knowing the system is a role specific to the university. It should be kept in mind that these roles might not be explicitly assigned. The only role that is explicitly labelled by the students is the coder, in this case Chang. However, the roles have to be agreed upon. As we saw, Marianna’s question was not accepted as a relevant contribution in the situation, and Andrea and Søren here functioned as gatekeepers for valid questions. Roles such as gatekeepers, spokesperson or broker are group internal. Not every student in the group had a central role, e.g. Valentina’s role was simply unclear. However, this is the reality of group work. All students had to be assigned to a group, and group 1 was an example of one group’s (inter)actions in order to solve a task.
6.2.6 Groups 2 and 3: When the pieces do not fit

Group 1 represented a relatively well functioning group where students were assigned or took on different roles due to the design of the exercise, but also due to different skills. We have seen a complex design of an exercise and how one group executed it. However, as Mathieu and Rapp point out, the success of group work is highly dependent on the group:

> Effective teams require more than just task work [...] they require the ability to coordinate and cooperatively interact with each other to facilitate task objectives through a shared understanding of the team’s resources (e.g., members’ knowledge, skills, and experiences), the team’s goals and objectives, and the constraints under which the team works. (Mathieu & Rapp 2009, p. 91).

In the previous section, different roles were identified. In this section, I will look beyond group 1 to other groups solving the same task. Bear in mind that coincidentally there were no Danish natives with “coder” skills in these groups (and internationals were often construed as analysts). This means that the role of the coder and the role of the predominantly math-minded (or math-“speaking”) international were conflated in the groups.

Another group on course B (group 2) consisted of three Danes, an Indian student, Vishwaraj, and a Spanish student, Elena. In excerpt 6.27 below, two of the Danish students, Rasmus and Kirsten, are talking about the exam. The third Danish student, Ida, was not present. Rasmus and Kirsten joked that she did not attend this lecture because she was tired of group work. Vishwaraj and Elena are not present at the time of the conversation presented in excerpt 6.27, as they had a deadline for handing in a document (in Danish) for their student jobs. Kirsten and Rasmus are taking advantage of their absence to evaluate the group process. Kirsten initiates this group evaluation by stating that she is nervous about the exam as she feels they spent a lot of time on homework 3 (the final of the three group assignments they were to hand in prior to the exam).

Excerpt 6.27. Group 2, course B. Rasmus (R), Kirsten (K).

1     K  jeg er lidt bekymret for at der kommer et eller andet svært xxx for eksempel det
2 sidste her på homework 3 der brugte vi lang tid hvor jeg blev sådan lidt nej jeg ved
3 det ikke
4     R  ja ja det gjorde jeg også mange gange haha men det lykkedes jo ((leende)) (0.2) jeg
5 ved ikke jeg synes ikke selv jeg er god til at kode men alligevel så lykkes det mig
alligevel tit at lave de der ting

vi har faktisk kodet meget

ja (.) jeg troede Vishwaraj bare ville være sygt god til at kode men han er ikke

rigtig kommet med noget (.) Elena aj hun lavede den der gode kode på et tidspunkt

ja (0.2) det gjorde hun

det er nok os der har trukket læsset

(0.2) hihi jeg blev også lidt træt af det sidst da vi ”ej det der hh” ((udånding))

alså vi har ikke tid til at lave mere ”nu fortæller jeg hvad vi gør så kan I gøre det”

der i går da jeg havde lavet de første slides og så tænkte jeg bare nu gider jeg ikke

mere nu må nogle andre gøre det

der kommer

osse fordi hun sagde jo at hun ville kode hun er bare den eneste der ikke er

engageret i det

jeg er bare jeg ved ikke (.) jeg er bare ikke så god til gruppearbejde det er bare så

can det næsten være lige meget

det er bare verdens meste arrogante gruppe

//

I’m a little nervous that there will be something difficult xxx for example the last
one here with homework 3 we spent a lot of time on it where I was like I don’t

know

yes yes I was like that many times as well haha but we did do it ((laughing)) (0.2) I
don’t know I don’t think I’m good at coding but I often end up successfully doing

these things anyway

we have actually done a lot of coding

yes (.) I thought Vish would be extremely good at coding but he hasn’t really

contributed with anything (.) Elena aj she did that one good code one time

yes (0.2) she did

it’s probably us who have done the heavy work

(0.2) hihi I was pretty sick of it last time when we “come on this is hh” ((exhaling))

we don’t have the time to do more ”now I’m gonna tell you what we are gonna do

and then you can do it”

yesterday when we had done those first slides I just thought now I don’t want to do

it anymore now someone else have to take over

there comes
Rasmus agrees with Kirsten on the unnecessary amount of time spent on homework 3. They also agree that it was necessary for them to do more coding than anticipated, and that they had expected that Vishwaraj would be very good at coding, but turned out not to be – or at least that he did not contribute as a coder. Kirsten and Rasmus acknowledge that Elena actually made a good code once, but she is not perceived as engaged in the group work, which leads the Danish students to not recognizing either of them as filling the role of “a coder”. In the excerpt of the conversation between Rasmus and Kirsten, Rasmus points out that he is “not that good with group work” (line 19). However, he just made a deal with some of the other students, including his Danish group members, to sit together when given the exam. At the end of the excerpt, Kirsten (in line 21) says that they are “the world’s most arrogant group”. A plausible interpretation of that utterance is that they, Kirsten and Rasmus, are determining whether or not the other group members have contributed, and thus can be considered useful group members. They, meaning Kirsten and Rasmus, are thus becoming “the world’s most arrogant group” (line 21 in the original, line 22 in the translated version). Kirsten and Rasmus’ evaluation show how they construct themselves as being in a position where they can determine whether or not Vishwaraj or Elena is filling the coder-role. This is akin to the dynamics of group 1, where Søren and Andrea determined whether or not Marianna’s question was considered appropriate or not, the difference being that Kirsten and Rasmus actually verbalize it.

As previously stated, there was an overlap between the coder role and being international in all the groups analyzed. Kirsten and Rasmus are both students of program 1 (experimentalists), and the coder is thus to be found in either Vishwaraj or Elena (or both) who are students of program 2 (analysts). Kirsten and Rasmus express that they thought that Vishwaraj was going to be “sygt god til at kode [extremely good at coding]” (line 8). That Vishwaraj was perceived to be a more obvious candidate than Elena for the role of coder might touch upon the fact that Vishwaraj is Indian (and male) – in addition to being a student in program 2. He was more than once positioned as Indian, see excerpt 6.28 below for an example.
Excerpt 6.28. Group 2, course B. Rasmus (R), Vishwaraj (V).

1 R he don’t pick a group just pick one guy (.) you
2 V you
3 R present alright (.) Indian guy
4 V you present ((both laughing))
5 R haha it’s super racist
6 V it’s like you the different one

The excerpt is one example of a standing joke between Rasmus and Vishwaraj revolving around the fact that Vishwaraj is Indian. India is known to provide good and cheap IT-solutions\(^{65}\), and the view that Vishwaraj should be “sygt god til at kode [extremely good at coding]” might reflect a stereotypical perception of Indian graduate students in a subject remotely related to IT. Wincherster-Seeto et al. (2014) found in their study of cross-cultural PhD supervision that Asian PhD candidates often suffered from stereotyping. Indeed, there was a certain stereotyping going on, and as we see, the Danish students Rasmus and Kirsten expected the Indian international student to be the coder. When interviewed, it was obvious that Vishwaraj did not see himself as the coder:

Excerpt 6.29. Interview, Vishwaraj, Indian, course B.

“If a biologist doesn’t understand mathematical concepts that’s pretty obvious […] So we just have like one mathematician with a background in maths (Elena) and the rest all people are from biology and biochemistry so it gives you a hard time because you have to understand algorithms and stuff […] Because you don’t even have those basics right. So then it kind of becomes challenging because you have shifted your field of interest, so to adapt to those challenges also takes some time.”

In this excerpt, Vishwaraj expresses that Elena with her background in mathematics should be the group’s coder and that he actually does not really understand “algorithms and stuff”. Thus, Vishwaraj might also need a coder, as he finds that not only the way of teaching but also the

\(^{65}\)https://computerworld.dk/art/233801/danske-it-opgaver-stroemmer-til-indien-derfor-foretraekker-danske-firmaer-de-indiske-leverandoerer
content is different. As we can also see in Table 10 in Section 6.2.1, it might indeed be more obvious that Elena should be the coder. However, her lack of engagement (or what the Danish students consider engagement) in the group work might be the reason why she did not fill the role of a coder.

The role of engagement in group work seemed to be a significant aspect of the perception of one student by the others. A Danish student, Jacob, told me in an interview that he did not find his group very successful and that this was not because of the international student, but rather the local students’ way of handling the group situation. In his own words, his group consisted of a girl from California and “a lot of Danes”. His concern is that the Californian girl might feel excluded. However, he says, she rarely contributes and the other students therefore sometimes “forget” to speak English. Jacob says that he tries to translate for the international student, but as “they work a bit faster in Danish”, this does not always happen:

Excerpt 6.30. Interview, Jacob, Danish, course B.

"Jeg tror en af pigerne hun har bare sådan en modvilje mod at snakke engelsk. [...] Og så en jeg tror hun glemmer det bare lidt, og så er det sådan lidt lettere at snakke dansk og så er det lige det hun kommer til. [...] Men det kan også være fordi sådan at når hun (den internationale studerende) kun er én, og hun ikke er den der sådan er primus motor på at lave det kan man sige. [...] Hun laver tingene, men hun er ikke sådan den computer vi sidder og arbejder med. Jeg tror hvis der var to måske, så havde man måske også snakket mere engelsk. Det kommer ligesom lidt an på, hvordan ens hierarki er i gruppen måske også, for det går nok lidt hurtigere, når vi snakker dansk egentlig."

"I think one of the girls she resents speaking English [...] and another one I think just forgets it, and it’s just easier to speak Danish and she just ends up doing that. [...] But maybe it’s because she (the international student) is only one person and she is not like the driving force to get things done you might say. [...] She’s doing her job but she’s not like the computer we work with. I think if maybe there were two we might have spoken more English. And it might depend on the hierarchy of the group also because we work a bit faster in Danish actually."
According to Jacob, despite the Californian member who does not speak any Danish, this group works in Danish at times (i.e. when under time pressure). The group contains one Danish student who always speaks Danish, and another one who regularly follows suit when the use of Danish is initiated by other students. There was no officially stated local language policy of course B other than English being the medium of instruction, and speaking English was to a large extent perceived as equaling successful group work. This is similar to findings by Mortensen in multilingual groups at the International Basic Studies at Roskilde University (Mortensen, 2014). According to Jacob, the group might have been speaking more English if there had been more than one international student or if the Californian girl was more of a “driving force”. Like Vishwaraj and Elena, the Californian girl does not fit the qualifications of being the coder – not because she cannot (to my knowledge) code, but because she is not very actively engaged in the group work. Once again, we see that being a native speaker does not necessarily prepare you better for studying in English in Denmark. The Californian girl might score high in English proficiency, but according to this Danish group member, she scores low in the other categories (presumably more relevant for the given task), which in turn may legitimize that the other students speak Danish.

I have now argued how certain factors influence the role ascription in the group, among other things engagement and ability to code. In Group 1, Chang fits the criteria for being a coder, and Andrea therefore helped verbalize his contributions. Valentina was helped by Google and had Marianna to translate for her. In Group 2, Vishwaraj and Elena did not need a language broker. However, they did not meet the criteria for being coders. Vishwaraj because he was not able to code, and Elena because she was not engaged in the group work. The last group, I will focus on is Group 3 (see Table 11 for a description of this group).

In Section 6.2.5, I argued that one important, albeit somewhat invisible, role in the group work was the broker. The third and last group in focus in this chapter consisted of two Spanish students, Carlos (C) and Raul (R), and five Danish students, including Sofie (S) and Martin (M). In the composition of students, this group is rather similar to group 1. In this group, the coder was not a Chinese student, but a Spanish student, Raul. The excerpt from group 3 below is an example of what happens when the broker does not live up to his/her role.

The discussions in this group are not unlike group 1: The students discuss what questions to ask the teacher and how to interpret the data. In the group session in question, Carlos is sitting, both metaphorically and literally, between Raul and the Danish students, and Raul and his computer
face away from the group. The Danish students use Danish and English dependent on the audience, and the same goes for the Spanish students Raul and Carlos. However, Carlos is physically and linguistically more oriented towards the Danish students. When we enter the conversation showed in excerpt 6.31, Sofie, Martin and some of the other Danish students are discussing core promoters of genes. Carlos is tuning in and out of this discussion as he also discusses with Raul in Spanish. The Danish students switch between Danish and English according to Carlos’ participation.

Excerpt 6.31. Group 3, course B. Sofie (S), Carlos (C), Martin (M), Raul (R).

1 S tag ids (.) så det her må være en mRNA ikke det der er en anden mRNA der er
2 udtrykt i det her væv med precis samme (0.3) og den her og den her og det her gen
3 har precis samme xxx så jeg tror ikke det er (.) så jeg er bange for at det ikke er
4 expression levels maybe it’s something else [tag ids (.).
5 right this is another mRNA expressed in this tissue with exactly the same (0.3)
6 and this one and this one and this gene is exactly the same xxx so I don’t think it is
7 (.).
8 C you have this values for example in the embryo or in the cer they have eight values
9 S they have eight value <observations>
10 C <you take each> one of those eight values
11 S maybe we can ask him
12 C yeah I think that these values have should have any meaning (.).
13 M yeah
14 C so maybe we come to ask (0.2) and the range is the same between close to five
15 and something (..
16 R vale [it is] Carlos ((Raul trying to make contact with Carlos))
17 S did you do it Raul?
18 R xxx distinguist los colores [I distinguish the colors]
19 C he
20 S how did you do that
21 R I did <I did a>
22 S <you did a PCA>
23 R PCA then k-means and depending on the cluster I give a color to each
24 point
25 S oh k-means ((laughing))
26 C and what is each cluster like ((addressing Raul))
27 R  ((looking at his screen))
28 S  maybe you can put up the eh R-code
29 R  yeah right I have to understand it ((laughing))

Sofie explains to Martin that something does not make sense in their calculation. The last part of her utterance in English sums up the point that “maybe it’s something different” (line 4). Carlos knew that they were talking about expression patterns, but had just been looking at Raul’s computer. He then turns to the others and tells them about values. In that way, we see here how Carlos was able to work his way into a conversation in Danish as this conversation was subject-specific. Even if students in coursework in course B used Danish, they would still use subject-specific terms in English. In that sense, Danish would deliver the syntactic framework but as for lexicon, the disciplinary matrix made itself visible as English technical terms would be inserted in the right slots. This might make the output easier to understand for non-Danish speakers. After Carlos turns to the Danish students, they start discussing whether or not it is a question to ask the teacher. As in the other groups, the Danish students ask the questions to the teacher, but Carlos, like Marianna, is also contributing. In line 18, Raul tries to make contact with Carlos to say that he distinguished the colors. Sofie asks if he (Raul) solved their problem, and Raul explains that he did a PCA (Principal Component Analysis) and then K-means (line 23). Sofie’s laugh indicates that the answer seems obvious in the approach of the specific assignment, but five other people did not come up with that, “oh k-means” (line 25). Carlos asks Raul what each cluster represents. Raul has now returned to his computer screen. Sofie suggests that he put up the R-code in the Google docs document, to which he replies with “yeah right I have to understand it” (line 29).

In order to offer possible interpretations of this utterance, I have to look to my general observations. Raul might not recognize or acknowledge the relevance of sharing of content information in a group, or maybe it is not even seen as teaching for him; many of the Spanish students simply did not attend group sessions. Martin-Rubio and Cots (2018) in a study of Spanish students studying in Denmark found that some Spanish students interpreted the freedom (meaning less teacher-fronted type of teaching) they met in a Danish university as a free pass to not participate. Another possible explanation is that Raul only wants to say something he is sure of, as seen with the English student in the exam chapter (see section 5.3.2). The third interpretation is that he actually would like to contribute, but would prefer to do it in Spanish. It is hard to determine whether Raul chooses not to share the R-code or if he chooses not to speak English, or if he simply does not “manage the tools” to do so (see section 6.1.3). In this case, Carlos either does not accept
the role of broker or does not realize that there is such a role. Indeed, in more than one instance, Carlos actually uses his Spanish classmate, Raul’s, content knowledge as his own. Raul is not excluded from the group, but has more or less excluded himself, which makes group work more difficult. However, as we saw with Chang, a lot of the coder’s contribution can happen nonverbally, and even if the other students’ do not get access to Raul’s line of thinking, they might eventually get access to the result. Thus, I have shown two groups where the role assigning was not as successful as in Group 1.

The specific type of task shown in the past sections was essential for the course and this particular exercise serves as a good example of how different backgrounds, here meaning different disciplines, were built into the course design. The interdisciplinarity of students were used actively in the exercise on course B, even though there were no explicit introductions as to how students should approach working towards the (common) goal of 1) solving the task at hand, and ultimately 2) learning. I suggest that the exercise and the students’ ensuing role assigning can be described by using the didactical contract (Brousseau, 1997). Some of the role assignment and the work in the didactical milieu (as I have described) is inherent in the didactical design of the exercise, e.g. that the groups included students with different backgrounds. Furthermore, the roles of the students as analysts and the teacher as the experimentalist is also a part of the design. This, I suggest, we can call intended role assigning inspired by the theory of didactical situations (see Brousseau, 1997). The “intended role assigning” is closely connected to the implied student (Ulriksen, 2009) – as opposed to the actual student. This means that when the exercise is organized and presented it assumes that the students are a specific type who are able to decode the situation. On the other hand, and this is related more specifically to the actual students, as we have seen another type of role assigning happens internally in the group according to a number of factors including linguistic and cultural, group dynamics and so on, in a way that is extending (and for some groups maybe even conflicting) the intended role assigning. This type, I suggest, we can call relational role assigning. This dichotomy of what we could also term potential and actual behavior is not specific to the international classroom and is not specific to group work. I will turn to the latter in the concluding remarks.

First, as I also argued in relation to active participation in teacher-fronted teaching, we can point to a number of intensifiers (Winchester-Seeto et al., 2014) in the relational role assigning in the international classroom, and here the card game analogy comes in handy (see section 6.2.5). It should be stressed, even though it might seem obvious, a catalogue of kinds of positions or roles
that exist here and now will not necessarily be found at other places and times (see also Harré & van Langehove, 1991). However, the processes of determining roles according to specific competences are most likely rather universal (cf. Komori-Glatz, 2017). In the international group work, one intensifier is a matter of what Balacheff has called custom (Balacheff, 1999). Balacheff distinguishes between the didactic contract as relating to customs and norms (see also, Madsen et al., 2014). For the students in these groups, the norm is the same; it relates to the specific exercise and the rules for functioning connected hereto. However, the Danish students’ reflections on how the content of the exercise relates to the exam is a question of custom and is thus potentially more difficult for the international students to relate to as their “customs” are established elsewhere. In turn, this positions the Danish students as “experts” on the system, even when they are not – see for example Søren and Andrea in Section 6.2.3.

Another intensifier is the role of language. In the relational role assigning in the groups analyzed, language played a significant part. First of all, English was not the only language used – neither for social nor for academic purposes. This only reaffirms what we already know from previous studies (cf. Söderlundh, 2010; Mortensen, 2014; Ljosland, 2008). The use of different languages seemed to be a pragmatic solution and thus depended on the students, for example Marianna who became a language broker for the Spanish group member, Valentina, who seemed to struggle linguistically. Chang, the Chinese group member, also seemed to have linguistic problems, and for students like him and Valentina, proficiency in spoken English might prevent their (verbally) active participation in group work. These students became highly dependent on the other students to include them. A rather cynical question here could be in which situations it is worth the effort for the other students to integrate students who struggle with language skills? An example here is the case of Chang and here the obvious answer is that he contributed with specific academic skills as an analyst as opposed to when the international student is not considered “a driving force” (see section 6.2.6).

6.3 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have analyzed and discussed active participation in two forms of classroom interactions: asking questions and group work. The first part of the chapter served as a steppingstone for the second part. In the first part of the chapter, I analyzed participation in teacher-fronted activities in the internationalized classroom setting and how students’ had different strategies for participating, e.g. using Google and Facebook or relying on others to ask questions.
In the second part of the chapter, I analyzed group work interaction in an exercise focused on asking questions – a part of this exercise was thus realizing what information was missing. The task was rather complex and might seem exotic since the teacher impersonated a scientist, but the simulating a “real life” situation was not exotic or limited to course B, as we also saw with the LFA-project in course C (Sections 4.4.2 and 6.1.1). In some ways, the exercise that I have chosen to focus on in this chapter’s second part can be seen as a general picture of how teaching in this specific course was organized; the ability of the students to take on certain roles to make the teaching and learning function (e.g. taking on responsibility for one another) was implied. The ability to do so requires the students’ realization of the different roles, as well as the students’ willingness to invest in that kind of social (academic) activity. This was not unique to course B or to the activity of group work. In general, students were implicitly expected to function as brokers for each other – either language brokers or “system” brokers. For this to work, the students had to participate, for example by asking questions (see for example the Facebook posts shown in Section 6.1.4). Thus, the activity has to be perceived by students as beneficial for their learning. The success of the exercise in course B (and in some ways in course C) depended on the students’ ability to navigate in the expectations incorporated in the course activities by the teacher and the diversity of prerequisites of the students’ in the class. In this exercise of course B, as well as in other learning situations (e.g. asking questions in class), a number of different student strategies manifested themselves. These seemed to depend on personality, educational and disciplinary culture as well as specific skills such as language or coding.

To conclude, this chapter has demonstrated what language and “the way in which you have learned to study” (to resume to the chapter’s opening quote) means for classroom practices in two international classrooms. In the following chapter, I will provide a final discussion.

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66 This was done less so in course A. Probably because the course was in a less obvious way training students for a profession.
7. Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to produce meaningful understandings of what happens in “the international classroom taught through English” across disciplinary settings as seen from the perspective of students. To do so, I focused on students’ (inter)actions in different pedagogical (and hence also social) situations and how they reflect on specific learning activities in international classrooms. I have portrayed student behavior in terms of what they did to accommodate their learning, for example using Facebook, and how they interpreted specific learning situations based on previous learning experiences. Thus, I have in this thesis explored experiences with and interaction in oral exams (in chapter 5), classroom interaction including Facebook, and role assigning in group work (in chapter 6). The two research questions that guided the analytical chapters 5 and 6 were:

- How do students in international courses handle their experiences of specific activities that have a strong cultural flavor, in this case, the oral exam?
- Which roles are available to students in particular teaching and learning activities that involve students’ active participation, especially, in group work settings?

In this chapter, I provide a summary and discussion of the main insights presented in this thesis. I also propose suggestions for practical implications of the findings provided by a student perspective on internationalization, what insights are still needed and at last some concluding remarks to end this thesis.

7.1 Summary and discussion of findings

In the first chapter of the thesis (Chapter 1), I presented the motivation(s) behind the internationalization of higher education, which seemed influenced by a multifaceted range of agents and interests. These conflicting ideas of what internationalization means (or should mean) was also noticeable in different research interests and labels used to describe the linguistic and pedagogical consequences of internationalization in higher education (see Chapter 2). For some, internationalization means a shift in language (i.e. EMI) – a simple solution to accommodate a changing educational market. For others, internationalization means a shift in content as well in terms welcoming new perspectives on the curriculum. Additionally, the aim of attracting
international talent means a shift in the student body, which in turn is both seen as creating an opportunity for a fruitful international study environment and as creating challenges for teachers and students.

The amount of research into the consequences of internationalization of higher education has expanded alongside the expanding number of “internationalized” courses and programs. The plethora of labels for research interests in this area suggest that internationalization of higher education is a highly complex phenomenon (see also Dafouz & Smit, 2016, for a discussion of this issue in connection to the ROAD-MAPPING framework). Based on this body of research it is possible to assume that the classroom reality of students in internationalized settings is influenced by: 1) studying content taught in English (cf. Hellekjær, 2010; Airey 2010), 2) in specific disciplinary settings (cf. Bolton & Kuteeva, 2014) and 3) in so-called “international environments” (cf. Tange, 2010). These issues have, however, often been treated separately. The findings of previous studies thus provide us with an insight into parts of the learning processes of students on international courses localized in a specific educational and disciplinary setting. This study contributes with knowledge of the classroom reality that the students meet and how they deal with this reality.

To embrace the complexity of internationalization of higher education, and to emphasize the emic perspective, this study of “blind spots” of internationalization has adopted the methodological approach of linguistic ethnography. Ethnographic approaches have been called for in previous studies of EMI, with good reason: The ethnographic approach offers a way of comprehending both tacit and articulated understandings of participants in processes and activities. This has been the core focus of my study. In understanding the meaning-making processes of the students, it proved essential to extend the study of the classroom environment to include the students’ course-related interactions on Facebook. A strength of this study is, thus, the variety of contexts and data material that yield insight into different kinds of students in different situations (see Chapter 3).

Chapter 4 described the three courses that I chose to explore, detailing the three disciplinary settings and students’ everyday lives as students of those specific international courses. To offer insights into internationalization as meaning something different in different disciplinary settings, for different students and in different learning situations, I chose to dive into three disciplinary settings. In that sense, the careful design, including three disciplinary contexts and a great variety of situations and data types, offers a way to understand the disciplinary uniqueness of a certain
issue, and thus also common traits and challenges across the disciplinary settings for a deeper understanding of student interaction. Below is a recapitulation of the overall differences between the three courses in relation to the enactment, perception, and relevance of internationalization.

Course A (humanities) was initially established to attract international talent. The course also contained an element of (ethnic) cultural diversity as an intrinsic part of the content. As we saw in Chapter 5, one student benefitted in the exam from being just that: an example of cultural diversity. Thus, the international students in this course were both a result of international talent recruitment (the best students) and an opportunity for an added cultural dimension in teaching and learning. As the course was planned and started as such, both students and teachers found it beneficial that the program was international – and in English. Several studies have pointed to humanities being less prone to using EMI (e.g. Bolton & Kuteeva, 2012). This was not the case in course A. However, course A represented a unique case in the sense that English is in fact used considerably less in the humanities at UCPH (this resembles the findings of Kuteeva & Airey, 2014). Not only was the program explicitly started and advertised as an international program, but the students had themselves chosen to study in an international program. In that sense, the program was an opt-in – not only for the students and the teachers, but also for the Faculty of Humanities. Course A was also the most international course out of all three courses in terms of the number of countries of origin among students. It was a part of the design of the program to enroll 50 % international students. However, as we saw in the exam situation in Chapter 5, even in a course that embraces cultural differences, the tacit knowledge of the system (and maybe the discipline) caused problems for some international students. In that sense, students of course A were met with implicit expectations of how they should act, i.e. the implied student (Ulriksen, 2009) and more importantly of being able to act within the structures provided by UCPH in general and the educational program in particular. The analysis of this course especially emphasizes the importance of investigating unarticulated behavior and implicit structures in the process of internationalization.

In course B (health and medical science), English and internationalization in the shape of international students was seen as an unavoidable premise and a natural part of academic education. The students of course B were trained (and aimed) to become leading researchers in an international field, and English was thus considered an important competence for them to have. However, the international perspective (meaning intercultural perspectives) might be less relevant content wise, as it is disputable if the understanding of the statistical program R becomes better by adding a cultural dimension. The students definitely saw a benefit in having different perspectives
in the classroom, but not as much in terms of internationalization as in terms of interdisciplinarity. Whereas course A could be considered an “international classroom” by birth, course B could be considered EMI in the sense that it was indeed a translation of Danish teaching practices into English. In course B, the diversity of students was thus not recognized as cultural per se, but a great emphasis was put on the divergent disciplinary backgrounds. In that sense, as we saw in the interdisciplinary exercise analyzed in Sections 6.2.1-6, this type of diversity was an integral part of the course and exercise design. Challenges of a diverse student cohort, also in terms of linguistic proficiency levels and disciplinary cultures, seemed to surface more in this course than in course A as we saw with the group work presented in Chapter 6.

Course C (science) and course B were both subject to a language and internationalization policy at the Faculty of Science simply stipulating that all Master’s level courses are taught in English. Course C had quite recently shifted from being Danish-medium to English-medium. Furthermore, the course represented a sociology course in a science education, which seemed to cause problems. The students of course C generally (and it should be stressed that I mean in average) had what seemed (to me) to be the lowest proficiency in English of students in all three courses. They also seemed to struggle with grasping both content and teaching practices. First of all, the discipline-specific language use of sociology caused problems for students who were used to science vocabulary and discourse (this was expressed in class, in interviews, and in the questionnaire). Similarly, Hellekjær (2010) finds that “socializing students into domain-specific academic genres and registers with specialized vocabularies” caused problems (Hellekjær, 2010, p. 248). However, it should be mentioned that course C students’ motivation for and investment in the course was generally low. English may indeed be a relevant competence for the future of the students if this entails working in international collaboration. This is also expressed by the students in the questionnaire, but the students seemed to struggle and in that sense this course might have benefitted from employing CLIL-like principles (see section 2.1). I observed a difference in how international students and local students reacted to changing from one educational context to another. The international students were generally more positive towards the teaching than the local students were (see also Chapter 4). This might have been because they had moved from one country to another and did not know what to expect. Thus, the differences in attitudes towards the educational setting may be explained and understood in terms of the conditions under which students entered the program, the expectations that they brought with them and the didactical contract they entered into (see Madsen et al., 2014). Furthermore, as argued in Chapter 4, the teachers tried to apply most of the principles for teaching and learning in the international
classroom (see Section 2.1). However, this seemed to remain an ideal target and not a practice.
The students were in fact trained to function in Danish municipalities and the curriculum was thus
quite Danish-centered. This might not in itself be a problem, but it caused students to believe that
they were only allowed to choose Danish-specific subjects for their group project (and in turn the
international students to struggle with the exam). In that sense, the international perspective – even
if it could have served as challenging the “Danish” way of thinking – was not exploited to the full.
These problems were, arguably, caused by a combination of a number of issues, of which language
was certainly one of them (see also Chapter 4). Course C ended up playing a smaller role in this
study. However, course C was important for understanding courses A and B, especially in terms
of the purpose of internationalization. Course C in many ways left the impression that an
international dimension was imposed from the hand of the Faculty of Science. Furthermore, the
course was an eye-opener in my study to the role of “institutional culture” Räsänen (2011) as
the students who came with a Danish university college background to course C experienced a
lack of familiarity with UCPH (see section 4.2.2). In that sense, course C became highly important
in realizing that different (cultural) perceptions of learning are also present in a “Danish” context
and not just in an international classroom. It should be added that my own assumption that it is
important to see students in a variety of teaching and learning contexts fell short here; to realize
the uniqueness of student behavior in this course (and what aspects may be connected to the
discipline), it would have been necessary to see if they acted differently in “real” science courses.

Finally, I presented students’ actual practices and their meaning-making processes in different
situations of learning in international classrooms in a Danish context across the three courses. The
oral exam was presented in Chapter 5 (in course A) and classroom interaction, including group
work in Chapter 6 (in courses B and C). The findings of these chapters provided an insight into
visible and tacit assumptions of study behavior and task requirements. Challenges regarding local
assessment practices have been highlighted in other studies as well (e.g. Gundermann, 2014;
Audur Hauksdottir, 2012; see also Kling & Larsen, 2017). However, this thesis affords insight into
the actual exam practices, which is rare (see Roberts et al., 2014 for an exception). I started Chapter

\[ \text{In Section 2.4, I presented different layers of culture, including ethnic culture, local culture, academic culture and}
disciplinary culture (Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Räsänen, 2011), which together make up the multifaceted learning}
\text{space of an international classroom. This could be expanded to including institutional culture.} \]
5 with an interview expressing one international student’s concerns about oral exams based on her (lack of) experiences with the exam form. To address these concerns, I presented the curriculum and official requirements of the oral exam and compared them to the students’ ideas of what they were expected to do in the exam. The analyses showed that the international students repeatedly asked their Danish peers for advice and thereby positioned them as local experts. The local students’ (and the local teacher and examiner’s) idea of the exam was that there was nothing right, nothing wrong, but that one should be able to discuss rather than display content knowledge.

To address how students handled their experiences in the oral exam, I showed different students’ strategies in the exam. One student’s exam proved that the idea of nothing right, nothing wrong was in some ways correct. Even though the student acted markedly different from other students of the course, this did not cause any problems. However, when it came to the genre of an academic discussion, the student fell short due to an on-going self-positioning. Another student’s exam could be explained by different understandings of the didactical contract (Brousseau, 1997). From the point of view of the teacher and examiner, the student failed to engage in a discussion on matters outside of his readings. From the point of view of the student, the teacher and examiner failed to provide him with questions he could answer, leading him to ask “and want do you want me to say?” (see Brousseau, 1984, for an insightful presentation of the mathematics pupil Gäel on whom the concept is built). This student’s exam is particularly interesting, as it highlights the relevance of the concept of the implied student (Ulriksen, 2009). The teacher and examiner, the progression from oral to written exams within the program, the assignment itself – all created a notion of how the student was expected to behave and the student did indeed act unexpectedly. Furthermore, it uncovered a blind spot that in international classrooms (as in other classrooms) certain things are invisible, and these may get lost in translation so to speak. Roberts et al. (2014) emphasize the benefits of ethnographically informed sociolinguistic studies to contribute to a review of some aspects of the exam. They argue that while some of the strategies of successful candidates can be taught, not all are susceptible to explicit teaching as they are a result of socialization (Roberts et al. 2014, p. 88). However, by drawing attention to problems that float under the surface, we might enhance our knowledge – not only of exams but also of issues connected to interpreting expectations in the classroom. Airey has pointed to similar issues in relation to discipline: Content experts are often not aware that “meanings they take for granted may be impossible to construe from outside the specialized discourse of the discipline” (Airey, 2011, p. 21).
In Chapter 6, I explored roles in the international classroom. Together with Chapter 5, this chapter produced insight into the international students’ encounters with Danish educational traditions. In both chapters we see how Danish students were continually positioned, and positioned themselves, as “local experts” – regardless of whether they actually were experts (for example, when the Danish students Søren and Andrea ignored a valid question made by the international Marianna as shown in Section 6.2.3). We also saw how this international classroom was influenced by the meeting of teaching cultures, but with the local teaching culture as privileged. The chapter consisted of two parts. In the first part, I explored the complexity of the international learning space. We saw how students argued whether a question was formulated more impolitely in English than it would be in Danish, and how active participation in the classroom was influenced by language, didactical contracts (e.g. whether or not the teacher was perceived as one to ask questions), and by taking for granted background knowledge such as the cost of a PhD student. This first part of the chapter in many ways reaffirms what we already know: EMI faces a threefold challenge in content, language and culture (cf. Smit, 2010; Gunderman, 2014). However, the excerpts of interactional data from a metalinguistic and meta-pragmatic group discussion as well as the questions asked in class combined with Facebook posts and interview excerpts lend insight into how students act in this complex setting and how they interpret the situation they are in – with the ultimate goal of learning content. The second part of the chapter zoomed in on groupwork and the roles available for students in this setting. I here suggested a card game analogy for describing the dynamic nature of roles and how students positioned themselves and each other according to a number of categories. The relevant categories of the card game in this setting included linguistic skills, social skills, academic skills and “knowing the system”. It should be noted that this list is not finite. Komori-Glatz (2017) also finds that students perform various roles (in relation to language proficiency) from novice to expert. The students in Komori-Glatz’ study took on the role of either expert or novice in accordance with their level of knowledge of the topic in question. The analyses shown in Chapter 6 add to the findings of Komori-Glatz’s study of successful groups by giving insight into what happens in less successful groups where students do not recognize or acknowledge their role. One important difference between the groups in Komori-Glatz’ study and the ones in course B was the level of diversity internally in the group. For example, similar to the findings of Hellekjær’s (2010) study of reading comprehension, and unlike the students in Komori-Glatz’ study, some students did indeed struggle with language in terms of participating. These students became highly dependent on other students to include them – a process that involved the privileged students acknowledging other categories such as academic skills. Thus, language proficiency was one factor, but arguably technical skills were another factor which afforded other
One very important aspect to remember when we talk about the international classroom taught through English is that the processes of getting used to an educational and a teaching context have parallels to what happens in every classroom (see, for example, Ulriksen, 2009). I here find Winchester-Seeto et al.’s (2014) idea of intensifiers especially fruitful (see also Section 2.4). Based on interviews and an extensive literature review, Winchester-Seeto et al. found a considerable overlap in difficulties experienced by PhD-candidates and supervisors in cross-cultural versus monocultural settings. However, they also identified a number of what they call intensifiers that made experiences of candidates and supervisors in cross-cultural settings more complex and potentially more difficult. Based on Winchester-Seeto et al.’s (2014) study, I argue that the notion of intensifiers can be seen as accentuating problems for a specific group of students, but also as the international classroom setting itself intensifying issues existing in any classroom. As Airey (2009) argues, “changing the lecturing language merely accentuates communication problems that are already present in first-language lectures” (p. 84; see also Hellekjær, 2010).

Some problems may arguably be found to be more difficult for (some) international students (see for example Kling Soren, 2013; Tange, 2010 for studies of teachers’ perceptions of international students). For example, in the case of the oral exam situation, some international students, struggled with tacit rules of the exam, and the students certainly had different prerequisites for engaging in specific activities in the sense that the privileged educational behavior in classroom activities and in the oral exam situation was indeed that of the local setting. In that sense, international students’ experiences of difficulties may indeed be intensified in the encounter with certain activities with a strong cultural flavor, such as an oral exam, and in activities requiring active participation, such as group work, even though these can also cause problems for Danish students. This intensifier is described in Winchester-Seeto et al. as “cultural differences”. I have referred to the same phenomenon as “knowing the system”.

One of the pitfalls of the internationalization discourse is that culture – without necessarily defining what that means – becomes an explanation (and solution) for the challenges related to teaching and learning in the international classroom, and very often problems that might be common become the international students’ problem (cf. Tange & Jensen, 2012). Furthermore, as
Barker points out, by employing the term “international students” we risk seeing these students as one homogenous group, which is of course not the case (Barker, 2012). This was no less true here, as we saw one student strategically using her international background to her benefit in the oral exam in course A, while others struggled with the exam. Furthermore, we risk overlooking that local students may also struggle with making sense of their studies, for example the clash between university bachelors and professional bachelors in course C. A number of studies of transitions in education (see Holmegaard et al., 2014) have suggested that when students move from one educational level to another, they also enter a new setting that they have to make sense of – which can indeed cause problems. Thus, some things are new for both “Danish” and international students, but they are new to a different degree.

7.2 Limitations and practical implications

What we understand as good teaching is a complex matter, and teaching itself happens in a complex exchange involving different rights and privileges and different agents: students, teachers, management, politicians etc. (as also suggested in Chapter 1). This is no less true for the internationalized context (see also Dafouz & Smit, 2016). I would like to stress that it is not, and never has been, the aim of this thesis to suggest solutions to problems. One reason for that is that in subscribing to the methodology of linguistic ethnography, data is not analyzed in terms of how it speaks to an educational framework of skills, competencies and improvement (Rampton et al., 2014, p. 17). Instead, it is examined in terms of emergent meanings and significance for the participants and their (different) perspectives generating a richer understanding of context and contingency. Also, a frequent discussion among practitioners of the ethnographic approach is its ability to offer general answers. As already argued in Chapter 3, the purpose of this study is not to generalize, if we understand generalization as implying that specific challenges and conflicts found in the three courses would also be found in a fourth course somewhere else. I can safely say that this may be the case but it is certainly not necessarily so. Conflicts and challenges (and the corresponding solutions) are connected to specific contexts and the interplay of different factors in these contexts and are not to be taken out of that (see the ethnographic idea of situatedness described in section 3.1). However, the analyses in this thesis are generalizable in the sense that the moves towards more English and the educational and political motivations for internationalization are happening elsewhere as argued in Chapter 1. Furthermore, the analyses point to processes and elements in certain challenges that are not necessarily visible at first but that exist, even if they might play out differently, in other settings as well. Most importantly, I
would argue that the idea of “blind spots of internationalization” are worth paying attention to. These blind spots can in particular be understood in terms of the concepts of the didactical contract and the implied student and the way in which they affect teachers’ and students’ attention towards the implications of internationalization. Ethnographic studies from a student perspective add to our understanding of the clash between the potential and actual reality of the didactical contract (see Section 6.2.6) – not just in an international setting. Finally, the idea of the international classroom as an intensifier of general problems is also transferable as argued above (see also Winchester-Seeto et al., 2014).

Some practical implications of this study should be discussed in this light. First of all, if we look across the three courses an obvious suggestion is that the motivations for internationalization of higher education and the aim for a specific course or program should be closely linked. To put it simply: What is or should be considered the aim of teaching and learning in an internationalized university setting? E.g., is it a learning goal to train international collaboration? What is the aim of teaching and learning in a university altogether? This might vary from one educational setting to another and from one disciplinary context to the other as is obvious from this study as well. Airey (2011) has suggested something similar when he developed a “disciplinary literacy discussion matrix”. This matrix offers a way of thinking linguistic outcome into content courses by positing questions to the content teacher about desired learning outcomes related to language and communicative practices. This could be supplemented with a language policy discussion in the individual classroom. Several studies have shown that students (and human beings) use linguistic resources available for communicative purposes (cf. Blommaert, 2005; Jørgensen, 2004, on languaging; Ljosland, 2008; Mortensen, 2010, Söderlandh; 2010; Smit, 2010; Nissen, 2015, on students’ language use in EMI settings). In course C, the teachers aimed for an English only-policy to avoid exclusion of non-Danish speaking students. This, however, was hard for both students and teachers to navigate in; not only was the rule often broken, but, in some cases, it also restricted discussion in groups and in class in an unproductive way. In that sense, we are back to the question of what the learning outcome of an (international) university course should be. If the purpose is to learn academic content, and, if this is achieved most efficiently in another or more language(s), it seems rational for students to “break” the English only-policy. This in turn raises the issue of whether or not a one-language policy is actually constructive for academic quality.

As argued, not all problems are specific to the international setting, but they are most likely intensified. This means that we may look at recommendations related to good pedagogical practice
in general. I will here draw attention to the concept of the implied student and suggestions made by Johannsen, Ulriksen and Holmegaard (2013). Their overall recommendations for “good teaching” are to understand the students and their reasons for acting in certain ways that are not necessarily suitable for the aim of the course. This is perhaps even more urgent in an international context, and similar suggestions have been made in studies of teaching in international contexts (cf. Tange, 2010; see also the IntlUni-project68). Based on interviews with teachers in Sweden, Airey (2011) has similarly suggested that it is even more important to be well prepared when teaching in English (Airey, 2011, pp. 48–49, also found in Eilert, 2017).

It goes without saying that teaching aims and expectations of good student behavior should be made explicit. However, I have argued that there are limits to what may be made explicit simply because in any cultural system there are “blind spots” of naturalness which escape the reflective stance (see also Bowden and Marton, 1998, on “ways of seeing”). This is again not specific to the international classroom, but the clash between expectations may be intensified, and linguistic restraints may make it more difficult to accommodate them. Furthermore, some things are implicit for pedagogical reasons such as the exercise in course B – here the student Chang would not have had the epiphany of what was to be learned if the exercise was made explicit, but his peers were just as important in this aspect. In that sense, the implied student was one who was engaged in the group work. Thus, inspired by Johannsen et al. 2013, a general suggestion is that teachers draw attention to their ideas of who the students on the course are, what “the good student” is like and what is good about him/her.

### 7.3 Suggestions for further research

I have now described in what ways my study may have contributed to the general understanding of internationalization of higher education in a classroom context. Some final words could be added on what remains to be studied. As this thesis is being completed, the political debate on internationalization of higher education in Denmark has increased in complexity. Today the debate

http://www.ethicalforum.be/sites/default/files/The%20opportunities%20and%20challenges%20of%20the%20MMLS_Final%20report_sept%202015%5B20932%5D.pdf

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on internationalization of higher education in Denmark revolves around a proposal from the Danish government to reduce the number of “English-speaking students” as well as promote an increased focus on the Danish job market (see Ministry of Higher Education, 2018)\(^\text{69}\). Similar trends are visible in other countries: Internationalization has been brought into the debate about the nation state and its future in Europe. This only emphasizes a need for even more insight into what has been pointed out by Stone (2006): “What should internationalization mean”? (p. 334). In this respect, it is especially important to pay heed to disciplinary and local differences. In this study, I have shown that the relevance and enactment of internationalization manifested itself differently in the three courses under scrutiny. More ethnographic studies including different disciplinary contexts are needed to deepen our understanding of culturally produced ways of learning.

I have primarily focused on the international students’ encounter with the Danish educational system and how the Danish students’ ideas of what constitutes “right” ways of learning surfaced in that encounter. I did not, however, explore how the teachers experienced encounters with differences in expectations. A great deal of research on EMI has focused on teacher cognition (see Henriksen et al., 2018 for an overview), and surveys have been made that explore the challenges that teachers perceive in international classroom settings (e.g. Tange, 2010). Even though these types of research are highly relevant and provide insights into the beliefs and emotions of the teachers, an ethnographic study of teachers’ encounters with instances of breaches in the didactical contract would enrich our understanding of the practices of the international classroom. Additionally, incoming students are only one aspect of internationalization, albeit a very important one.

In a research project starting August 2019 with the name “Geographies of Internationalization” funded by the independent research fund Denmark, my colleagues and I will study how the internationalization of higher education produces new understandings of pedagogies, students, and knowledge. This project contributes to the insights found in the present thesis in two important ways. First, it explores the experiences of Danish students studying abroad. As we have seen in

\(^{69}\) See https://videnskab.dk/kultur-samfund/danmark-taber-naar-regeringen-skaerer-paa-engelsksprogde-uddannelser for a discussion.
this study, some international students struggled with tacit assumptions connected to certain activities with a strong cultural flavor. To further explore what may be considered typically Danish, it is interesting to explore what tacit assumptions Danish students bring with them and what they encounter when they are studying abroad (see Martin-Rubio & Cots, 2018, for an example of a small-scale study of Spanish students studying in Denmark). In the upcoming project, we will investigate students’ experiences of studying abroad by following them before, under, and after their stay. Secondly, the project includes the perspectives of EMI teachers in Denmark with an international background. In this thesis, I have shown that the international classroom at UCPH is a learning space where teaching cultures meet, but where the local culture is privileged. In the project, we will explore the experiences and negotiations of teaching practices and knowledge among international staff taking the Danish mandatory teacher training program “adjunktøpedagogikum”. More specifically, we will look at how their knowledge and current pedagogies in Denmark are constituted and negotiated in relation to previous teaching experiences in other countries.

7.4 Concluding remarks

To end this thesis, I would like to start at the beginning. The university as an educational institution has undergone a transformation from an elite institution to providing wider participation, and at the same time we have witnessed a strong trend towards internationalization and in the wake this English-taught courses. The student population has become larger and more heterogeneous as to academic, linguistic and cultural background than ever before (Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2012; van der Walt, 2013). This has created a new kind of learning space that has often been termed EMI or the international classroom. Throughout the previous six chapters, I have provided a methodological and empirically based argumentation for why it is important to study tacit assumptions – and even more so in an international setting. With this thesis, I set out to explore students’ lived experiences of navigating in international courses across different disciplinary settings and in different situations. I have showed how students (strategically) navigate in the complex setting of the international classroom as a classroom taught in a language that is not the same as the majority language of the surrounding society, and where different teaching cultures meet but where the local one is privileged. This creates a learning space where some processes – even if they may be found in any classroom – are intensified for some students and by the setting itself. While research into the consequences of internationalization of higher education is increasing, more knowledge is still needed. It is my hope that this thesis has contributed to the
understanding of a complex matter and has laid the foundation for further research into the consequences of internationalization across disciplines.
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Abstract

In recent decades, there has been a noticeable trend at traditionally non-English speaking universities towards English Medium Instruction (EMI) in order to attract more international students. As a consequence, the student population is more heterogeneous than ever before. This increased diversity of the classroom in regards to linguistic and cultural repertoires (including educational background) means that the setting for content learning has changed. This thesis contributes to an understanding of “the international classroom” as seen from the perspective of students.

I have explored the lived experiences of students in the international classroom through linguistic ethnography in three different courses. All three courses were taught in English but offered three different versions of the international classroom. The courses were taught at three different faculties at the University of Copenhagen as a part of international master’s level programs. The students in these three courses were followed from course start through to the exam in different forms of course work, e.g., group work, lectures, during coffee breaks, supervision and ultimately at the oral examination in two of the courses. All students completed a questionnaire and a number of students were interviewed. The study thus rests upon a great amount and variety of data, including video and audio recordings of students in different situations and in three different disciplinary settings.

Through analyses of oral exam interaction and classroom interaction with a specific focus on active participation, especially group work, I reflect with the students on their experiences, and I demonstrate international (and local) students’ encounters with multifaceted expectations of what constitutes learning. These analyses uncover a number of “blind spots” of university internationalization, including the challenges involved – for students as well as examiners – in running oral exams when students have limited experience with this exam form. This in turn sheds light on assumptions taken for granted by both teachers and local students regarding what constitutes a “decent oral exam”. Furthermore, the study shows how students navigate in the setting of an international classroom, how they use Facebook for obtaining information and how they assign each other different roles in a more or less successful way. Lastly, by looking at three different disciplines, this thesis sheds light on how internationalization means something different in different contexts and what challenges are exclusive for the international classroom.
Resumé

I de seneste årtier har der været en trend på traditionelt ikke-engelsktalende universiteter mod flere engelsksprogede kurser for at tiltrække flere internationale studerende. Som en konsekvens er studenterdiversiteten større end nogensinde, og denne øgede diversitet i klasserummet med hensyn til sproglige og kulturelle forudsætninger (inklusiv uddannelsesbaggrund) betyder at konteksten for at lære et fag er forandret. Afhandlingen bidrager til forståelsen af internationalisering på klasserumsniveau set fra de studerende synspunkt ved at analysere hvordan studerende på tre forskellige kurser navigator i den virkelighed de møder på internationale kurser.


Gennem analyse af mundtlige eksamen og klasserumsinteraktion med særligt fokus på aktiv deltagelse, viser jeg hvordan internationale (og lokale) studerende oplever mødet med en studiehverdag på internationale kurser på Københavns Universitet. Jeg fokuserer i analyserne på de episoder hvor studerende møder forskelligheder i forventninger som ikke er umiddelbart synlige – for eksempel i den mundtlige eksamen. Samtidig giver analyserne os indblik i hvad der bliver taget for givet af både undervisere og lokale studerende. Desuden viser afhandlingen hvordan de studerende navigator i klasserummet, for eksempel ved at bruge Facebook til at indhente information, og ved at påtage sig roller der kan være konstruktive eller mindre konstruktive. Afhandlingen viser ligeledes hvordan internationale klasserum ikke er én størrelse, men kommer i forskellig udformning, samt hvilke udfordringer der er særlige ved internationale kurser.
Appendix 1: Message on the intranet sites

Dear all,

I’m a PhD-student at Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics at University of Copenhagen, and my research project is focusing on issues concerning language, learning and culture in an international university classroom. I will be following your class for the next module as a part of my data collection. Material gathered during the research process will be treated as confidential and securely stored. In subsequent publications or use of recordings you will be anonymized: your name will be removed where used and your comments made un-attributable. All names in descriptions will be pseudonyms. You can withdraw from the project at any time without having to give an explanation, and you will have the opportunity to see and agree to all data concerning you. If you don’t want to be a part of the project just let me know, and you will not appear in any data material.

I look forward to meeting you.

Best wishes,
Camilla Falk Rønne Nissen
PhD-student, Department of Nordic studies and Linguistics, University of Copenhagen
Vjh811@hum.ku.dk, +4526248255
Appendix 2: Consent form

My research project has the working title of “Variation in the multilingual classroom – internationalization in different contexts” and will focus on issues concerning language, learning and culture in an international university classroom. Any essential changes in the project will be informed about as soon as they occur.

Material gathered during the research process will be treated as confidential and securely stored. In subsequent publications or use of these recordings you will be anonymized: your name will be removed where used and your comments made un-attributable. All names in descriptions will be pseudonyms.

By signing this consent form you declare that you are willing to participate in the research described, and that your participation is entirely voluntary. By signing this form, you agree to your participation being audio- and videorecorded and to these recordings being used for research purposes. You also agree to the audio- and video files and the transcripts of the recordings being archived and used for research purposes. This includes extracts of the audio- and video files (in accordance with conditions outlined above) being shown to bona fide researchers (e.g. at conferences) and screen shots from video files (in accordance with conditions outlined above) in anonymized form being reproduced in scholarly publications.

You can withdraw from the recording at any time without having to give an explanation, and you will have the opportunity to see and agree to all data concerning you.

I (the respondent) agree to these conditions:

Name: ______________________________________________

(Please use CAPITAL letters)

Signature: ______________________________ Date: ______________

Feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Camilla Falk Rønne Nissen
PhD student
Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics, University of Copenhagen

E-mail: vjh811@hum.ku.dk
Appendix 3: Questionnaire

Anonymized version of questionnaire handed out in courses A, B and C.

Be aware of questions on both sides of the paper. Thank you for your time!

Basic information:
1. Gender:
   Male
   Female

2. Age:
   - Younger than 20
   - 20-25
   - 26-30
   - Older than 30

3. Citizenship(s):
   - Danish
   Other _________________________________

National identity:
4. What country would you say you come from?

5. What country/countries do your parents come from?

6. Have you lived in other countries than Denmark (min. 4 months)? If yes, which?

Language:
7. What language is your first language (mother tongue)?

8. What other languages do you master?

9. In which context did you learn English?
   - School
   - At home
   - _________________________________
Traveling
Other/comments

Academic background and future:

10. What study program are you currently a student of?

11. I chose this program because (tick as many boxes as you need):

- Attractive academic subject
- Personal interest
- To make a difference in the world
- Relevant/interesting job opportunities

Other

12. Have you been studying abroad (if international, apart from your time in DK)?

- Yes
- No

13. From what university do you have your BA degree, and what did you study?

If you have a BA degree from a Danish university the next two questions are for you. If not – just skip to question 16:

14. Why did you choose to study in English?

15. In what sector do you see yourself working in the future?

- Private (incl. NGO)
- Public
- University (research and/or teaching)

If you did not get your BA from a Danish university the following question are for you. If you did – just skip to question 17:
16. Why did you choose to study in Denmark?

_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

17. Do you plan to stay in Denmark after graduating?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not sure/it depends..
Comments ________________________________________________________________

18. Which language(s) do you think will be your working language in the future (you are welcome to tick more than one)?

☐ English
☐ Danish
☐ Other ________________________________________________________________

19. Do you think it is (or could be) an advantage to know Danish in order to function (you are welcome to tick more than one):

☐ Professionally
☐ Academically
☐ Socially
☐ I don’t think it is an advantage at all
Comments ________________________________________________________________

20. Generally when learning new content, I prefer to:

☐ Think things through by myself
☐ Talk things through in a group

It depends ________________________________________________________________

Personal questions (if you find some of them too personal feel free not to answer, but please read through them):
21. Marital status:
- Married
- In a relationship
- Single

If you have a partner the following 3 questions are for you. If not – just skip to question 25.

22. Where does he/she come from? ____________________________________________

23. In what country does he/she live? __________________________________________

24. What language(s) do you speak together? _____________________________________

25. Do you have a student job (incl. lab work for your master’s thesis)?
- Yes
- No

If yes: Doing what?
__________________________________________________________________________

26. How do you live?
- a) Apartment alone or with your partner
- b) Apartment with flat mate(s)
- c) Dorm

27. What language(s) do you speak at home? _______________________________________

28. I most often find myself hanging out with:
- Private friends (not from class) sharing my first language
- Students from class sharing my first language
- International students with mixed linguistic background

Questions 29-25 were only included in the questionnaire for course C.

**Learning through English on the course:**

29. When do you usually read the set texts for a lesson?
- Before the lecture
- After the lecture
- I don’t usually read the set texts

Comments ________________________________________________________________

30. How do you usually use the lecture slides?
- I print them out/download them before the lecture
- I print them out/download them after the lecture
- I don’t print them out or download them at all
31. Do you generally find learning through English:
   - More difficult than learning through your first language?
   - About the same as learning through your first language?
   - Less difficult than learning through your first language?
   - English is my first language (mother tongue)

Comments

If you find learning through English more difficult, the next question is for you. If not – just skip to question 33.

32. What do you find difficult about learning through English?

Comments

33. Do you do anything specific to help you learn through English?
   - Yes
   - No

If yes, what?

34. Is there anything the teachers do that you feel is useful in helping you learn through English?
   - Yes
   - No

If yes, what?

35. Is there anything you would like the teachers to do that would help you learn through English?
   - Yes
   - No

If yes, what?

Your answers to this survey will be anonymized, but if you don’t mind I would appreciate it if you would state your name and e-mail address for potential follow up questions. Thank you.
Name
_____________________________________________________________________________

E-mail
_____________________________________________________________________________
Appendix 4: Interview guide

Data on the students before the interview:
Questionnaire answers, field notes, (and exam on course A).

Linguistic biography – establishing rapport
What language did you speak growing up?
What language(s) did you use in school?
If you should make a hierarchy of languages according to how useful you find them…

Going through the questionnaire

Course specific questions

Overall experience learning through English
Do you find a difference in studying in English or your first language?
  - Reading
  - Writing
How about your classmates and English?
Do you feel linguistically prepared to study in English?
Feedback from the teacher? Do you use peer feedback? Is there a difference in getting feedback on language and feedback on content?
Is English as a first language an advantage?

Study strategies
Speaking in class
Preparation for class
Notetaking
Group discussions
Have you changed your strategies?

International experiences
Your views on integration on the course
How do you find studying with students from different backgrounds?
Appendix 5: Main coding categories emerging from the student interviews

Cognitive load
Problems and strategies
   - Speaking
   - Reading
   - Writing
   - Group work

Language norms
   - Native speaker
   - English as a Lingua Franca

Experiences of being international (incl. attitudes)
Experiences with EMI
Socio-academic differences
The “other” languages
Feedback, academic language use and language vs. content.
Interdisciplinarity
## Appendix 6: Transcription key

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## Appendix 7: Questionnaire answers

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267
Questionnaire answers open questions:

Reasons for choosing EMI (Danish students):

- “Being able to use my bachelor background in a field of many other backgrounds. It happened to be in English.”
- “Primarily interest in the subjects, but also training having a every day life in English (possibly relevant competence), and wanting to get to know more people from all over the world”
- “Interesting with different nationalities, but it was not a main/important reason”
- “I wanted to continue my academic training with English as the working language”
- “The international setting/milieu and improving my academic English”
- “Native language – felt more comfortable. I have also studied in French and felt less comfortable doing so.”
- “It was the subject and not the language that was crucial. The language was just “an extra thing” that fits well with the Global perspective of the program, and which is a benefit for me because I want to improve my English language skills in order to be better at communicating with people from other countries.”
- “Because its only possible to study this kind of study in English”
- “Because of the subject – wasn’t really offered in Danish”
- “Due to interest in international themes (problematics). Plus a personal interest in being in an international environment.”

Reasons for choosing to study in Denmark (international students):

- “To be closer to family and to enjoy the benefits of Danish citizenship – e.g. free school and SU”
- “Good, attractive academic program in my area of interest and good benefits for being a student (ex no tuition fee)”
- “School is more affordable for foreign students and I had never met a dane that I didn’t like while traveling. Also I refused to pay an exorbitant amount to study.”
- “Free education, interesting course, city.”
- “Interesting study program, good reputation, no study-fees.”
- “Copenhagen appealed to me, English language spoken a lot, good university + program, no student fee.”
- “For the 2 year programme. In Holland it is often 1 year.”
- “Free education, interesting programme, interesting Scandinavian society”

Context of learning English:

- “Originally school, but actually got better through living in Germany – not learning English for six months.”
## Course B: Raw data

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Questionnaire answers open questions:

Reasons for choosing EMI (Danish students):

- “Wasn’t active choice”
- “It’s easier to communicate science in English”
- “Because the master (and this class) is only taught in English”
- “Because the programme is in English and it makes no difference to me.”
- “Not a choice, however, I think it is only to any benefit in my future career”
- “Only in English in masters. Further I’m fluent enough in English that it doesn’t make a difference”
- “Chose the program not the language”
- “Programme only in English. All my future work in the field is going to be in English.”
- “Master in this field only in English, but I really don’t mind. All the text books within the field are in English anyway (also at BA)”
- “The scientific language is English hence communication is a lot easier.”
- “I don’t care.”
- “Language didn’t matter, chose plainly on subject.”
- “Meet cool international people”
- “I want to be in academia and English is a necessity”
- “It was the only option, if I wanted to do the master degree, so a natural part of the academic education.”
- “It was only possible to enter an English taught master.”
- “I didn’t think about it, it was just natural”
- “The programme that I wanted was in English and I prefer it since its good for me to have excellent English skills”
- “To master it, since it’s the most used in the academic world”
- “Wasn’t really a choice, however I do prefer it considering it good practice for future career”
- “It was natural since the master is in English. Not an actual choice.”
- “Only thing that makes sense in the subject – no real choice.”
- “Easier to communicate with people of different backgrounds”
- “It was not my decision; the program is in English, and I’m fine with that.”
- “As the masters degree is in English, I didn’t choose, but I don’t really care if it is in Danish or English”

Reasons for choosing to study in Denmark (international students):
- “I wanted to go abroad for the masters. As I am Danish and I know the language, dk was an obvious option.”
- “(From DK): mostly convinience. Fear of unknown as well as my partner played a big part in it.”
- “Free education, high level of teaching and good job opportunities after university”
- “Good working possibilities, high quality of teaching and happy international people”
  “Renowned quality of teaching and academic research. + my subject of interest had a very interesting offered programme.”
- “Great university + program in English. I wanted to travel and live abroad. Better opportunities in Denmark then in my home country (Spain)”
- “Good quality of education and free + job opportunities”
- “Its an interesting country with good academic opportunities”
- “Main reason: liked the master programme. Also attracted to Nordic/Scandinavian culture, wanted to live it from inside.”
- “Interesting msc programme”
- “I was employed here, and I realized I needed more education in order to be more effective on the workplace, and to enjoy my work as well”
- “It was a good choice with a good background and research that university has”
- “Programme, social structure, international experience”
- “Its free to French citizens, I like to live in a country that has a foreign language, I like biking Denmark is a really welcome place.”
- “It’s a hub for all studies related to biotechnology.”
Planning to stay in Denmark after graduation:
- “If a great opportunity comes along”
- “I may go abroad for a good job, e.g. phd”
- “Depends on job opportunities and relationship status in the future“
- “What more attractive possibilities there are”
- “Depends on phd position, relationship status”
- “If I get a job”.
- “If attractive projects in other countries.”
- “Would be better with a phd in another country.”
- “I would like to do my phd abroad”
- “Depends on job and wife offers”
- “Will go abroad for a couple of years, but come back”

Context of learning English:
- “Tv, computer, internet”
- “Primarily school if you need only one tick, but I believe learning English cant be assigned
to one source in these days.”
- “A lot from film, video games and internet”
- “I learned in private English school but mastered after using it during my exchange study
year.”

(Social, academic or professional) advantages of knowing Danish:
- “My mothertongue will always be my preferred language for connecting with people”
- “Its always an advantage to know an extra language”
- “Advantage while living in DK.”
- “Professionally and academically: it depends on where I am living and what im working
with.”
- “Social banter is always Danish outside of uni-life, which can be an obstacle to non-danish
speakers”
- “Too hard to learn, sorry”
- “Academic Danish is irrelevant – all academic research is done in English”
- “Most people are good in English and due to the great no. of non-native speakers English is
so often used.“
- “Depends on work environment”
- “Depends on workplace culture. Silence is not always golden”
### Course C: Raw data

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Questionnaire answers open questions:

Reasons for choosing EMI (Danish students):

- “The master is only in English and I also saw it as an opportunity to be better in English”
- “If it was Danish, I would still have chosen this master”
- “To improve and to open an international profile and to open opportunities to work abroad”
- “It was a package deal – simply how the study was. I chose my study based on the content, not the language.”
- “Because the master only exist in English”
- “The education was only available in English”
- “This education is only offered in English”
- “To improve and open an international profile and to open opportunities to work abroad”
- “It was not a choice, but im glad I did, to practice – I want to work globally”
- “I wanted this master program and it was in English so I had to study in English.”
- “Because the master was English, if it was Danish – I would also have chosen it.”
- “The master was only in English and also I saw it as an opportunity to be better in English.”
- “Because it makes it more easy to find a future international job.”

Reasons for choosing to study in Denmark (international students):

- “Attractive to study at KU”
- “Erasmus exchange. Wanted to study abroad, was a bit late with applying. CPH was one of the few options with still space in my field.”
- “Attracted to the Nordic countries (but did not want to go too far up North). Master programme offered at the University. Received advice from other people who know the place. Known to speak good English (my purpose was to improve my English)”
- “Because of opportunity to study abroad on especially because I wanted to improve my English. Also because I wanted to obtain knowledge related to […] from scientific perspective rather than continue with medical studies. And to travel and get experience from being independent. And because I have heard that Danish are the happiest people in the world and Denmark is the best country to live in!”
- “Meet new international people, try to live abroad, improve language (English), get life experience and also interest to Nordic culture.”
- “Interested in studying abroad & in an English master programme, but mostly because of the programme itself (doesn’t exist in other cities than cph & stckhlm, in Europe)”
- “Because the courses looked interesting and the city (CPH) is nice.”
- “The study programme was 2 years instead of just 1, the approach in [...] was of my interest, also the tuition fee was free and cph was a nice city I wanted to live in. I don’t regret it at all!”

(Social, academic or professional) advantages of knowing Danish:
- “My experience is that its nice to know that just basic for more socially life but for work as well (I mean part-time jobs).”
- “It could be an advantage when you have to communicate with people who are not good at understanding or expressing themselves in English.”

Learning through English:
- “depends on the content. If it is sociology, it would be hard to understand no matter the language”.
- “But, im learning science, so I wonder if I was studying in another field perhaps the level would be different”.  
- “There is of course a transition (learning of new vocabulary), but it was short. Especially when you study science, it makes sense to do it in English.”
- “You get used to it.”
- “Sometimes its easier to get a explanation on something difficult in Danish.
- “In the beginning it was very hard. Now I’m used to it. Sometimes it’s actually harder to write in Danish.”
- “Sometimes its difficult, takes practice.”
- “In the start I found it more difficult, but now I’m used to it and it’s easier.
- “But you get more used to learn in English.”
- “In the first ½ year of the study it was much harder. Know it is in some ways easier because the academic articles are in English.”
- “What do you find difficult?”
- “Vaboluaries, but also the bad skills of teachers that struggle to convey a message”
- “I need more time doing the assignments and I can’t express myself as I would do it in my mother tongue. However, I don’t have problem understanding the lectures and reading material.”
- “Remembering the right terms.”
- “The teachers’ bad English (Danglish → sometimes)”
- “It the teacher is very bad at English”
- “I do not have the same vocabulary in English than in Danish, and I often experience that the teachers are bad at explaining stuff in English, because they lack vocabulary too.”
- “Sometimes discussions/questions are difficult to formulate.”
- “Sometimes I have to ensure that I understand basic words, and that takes times and less focus on the real theme.”
- “Because the teachers sometimes cannot express themselves in English.”
- “Sometimes when it is difficult it is easier to get it explained or discuss in Danish.”
- “Expressing myself clear.”

What could the teachers do?

- “Understand more that it’s not your mother tongue”
- “Honestly - they might not have the best skills to help appropriately... but teachers with mother tongue → yes!”
- “Maybe not the teachers for this course, but orientation on how to write academic papers in English.”
- “Get feedback on English when we submit a report, or give an oral presentation.”
- “Speak loud.”
- “Specify and repeat difficult stuff”
- “Explain on a lower level and not use academic wording in explanation.”
- “actually be better! I think it is of all criticism that some of them is that bad. If you ask them a question they are simply not able to explain in other ways”.
- “Practice their English everyday at home!”
- “Not their job → however, if there were a solution it would be nice.”
- “Upgrade their English skills.”
- “Get better”
- “Explain difficult stuff.”
- “Try to explain in a different way if they do not know the English expression instead of just saying “well, you know what I mean”. NO! I don’t!”
- “Not sure, but it would be better/have tools to work with.”
Appendix 8: ”It’s a bit Danish formulated” – full transcription

Group work, course C. Laura (L), Safa (S), Thomas (T), Olivia (O), Nava (N).

1  L  what do you mean ((addressed to Safa after reading her question)) you are probably
2       honest
3  S  cause they write in their homepage that they work with the eh like the way that they
4       like how they started like making this milk for babies and or yeah the ((overlapping
5       speech and laughing))
6  T  probably honest ((Safa laughing))
7  S  yeah
8  O  yeah that’s eh really critical written
9  S  okay yeah hehe måske
10 O and also ((overlapping speech)) I don’t really see the question formulated like you
11       say that we assume that they are doing a honest job a just job
12 O  yeah because they <write that about labelling>
13  S  <but it’s not contradictory>
14 S  and they are taking part in eh like this EU edge or I don’t know pledge where they
15       don’t eh market like the marketing for their unhealthy products for children under 12
16       in Europe but they still there are sugar in products still containing their product
17       contain a lot of sugar and they label it they have these GDAs labeling and they use
18       it but there’s and they have just made a partnership with international diabetes
19       prevention but on the other hand they are making and manufacturing these products
20       and they want to help decrease diabetes and they know it’s a problem
21  O  mm
22 S  but it’s like you producing something that people eat (0.2) they are like they are not
23       the main reason because there is also the physical activity aspect of it ehm (0.3) but
24       yeah.
25  O  okay I just really maybe it’s just me I don’t understand how you can put a question
26       mark in the end after that long sentence like you’re having some kind of statement
27  S  mm
28  O  and then you say that that doesn’t mean or that you are having a partnership or but
what’s what do you mean by that
oh I see what you mean
but it is not (0.2)
but I don’t I’m writing here that they are one of the world’s leading manufacturers
of unhealthy and sugar products but on the other hand they work with diabetes
figurations
they’re also
a partnership
they are also that it’s not on the other hand isn’t it they are collaborating with them
right
yeah
(0.4) I just don’t see the question in this one
do you see the question ((addressed to Nava)) hehehe
I see there is a statement and I will put a dot after and not a question mark
it’s just because you have to <remove>
<I don’t get the>
the question mark and then the question is coming after
no it was also a question I think they are contradictory why are they engaging in
public health if they are <producers of slik>
<ah ah ah> it’s like in a Danish way it would be “men er det så ikke modsætningsfyldt
at være samarbejdspartnere” og så
ja
how would you say that
yeah <contradictory yeah>
<okay that was> yeah but it’s not contradictory you can also say like “men det er
ikke” it depends on how you phrase it but I think it’s maybe a bit Danish formulated
I see it how you would say it in Danish know but eh
ehh
men er det ikke det er det du skriver her eller det du vil sige maybe the phrasing is
just a bit different in English ehm but do you find it contradictory that you or I don’t
know it’s different in Danish
do you not find it contradictory that you are partnering with diabetes
that’s also really critical ((laughing))
yeah
but it’s alright come on
but I think we have to delete therefor you are probably honest and just but
yeah
no because they are because then it’s it would be the last question <is it your opinion
that the consumer is>
<but is it necessary>
responsible for his own they are giving you the information this is not good for you
when you eat this you’ll have eh ate ten percent of your sugary recommended sugar
intake or ten percent of the amount sugar you are allowed to have
yeah but you’re just saying that they are labeling correctly is that what you’re aiming
at right that’s what they’re trying to do
no yeah they are trying to label correctly xxx
so we don’t have to be unsure of their just and probably and stuff like that they must
be just and honest
no they are not just because just because your label is there doesn’t it mean you’re
alright for example the wholegrain they’re xxx
maybe we should ask are you doing it correctly?
no because
that’s what you are saying they might do but I wanna know from you seem to be
doing it correctly
<could we just ask>
<but they are not doing it correctly>
do you find it contradictory to collaborate with the Danish diabetes federation
couldn’t we just make that a question
yeah but for example with the wholegrain in their morning products they are writing
that in each of our breakfast products you’ll gain you will have we will provide you
with wholegrain yeah you will provide me with wholegrain
and a lot of sugar
and a lot of sugar and fat
yeah yeah yeah
so it’s like they tell the producer we give you this but on the other hand when you
eat our breakfast products
but you cannot say <you’re>
S

<let me> finish let me finish they will say you’ll get one and a half teaspoon sugar
but if you drink one glass of juice you will have two<teaspoons>

O

<yeah> that was what we talked about sundhedsanprisninger right

N

sundheds hvad?

O

anprisninger you remember that

S

but that’s not a sundhedsanprisning

O

yeah but you’re saying that it’s really healthy and you’re calling it something else
like it might not be as healthy as <you’re claiming it is>

S

<but they didn’t> claim that they are saying <that directly>

O

<they are> claiming to be

S

if they claim eh sundhedsanprisninger is the how do you say it if you eat this you’ll
get omega tre or <this is>

O

<this you’ll get> wholegrain right?

S

yeah but they just say that they provide you they don’t say you’ll get healthier <by

O

<noo but you should get some fibers> and then people could think there’s I don’t

S

<ja ja>

O

it’s a new one for me also but I’m just thinking that they are trying to make their

S

product interesting by saying maybe you’ll have wholegrain or whatever and then

O

so.

N

I like the second part of this I don’t like the first but I agree with Olivia that it does

S

sound a little bit harsh and it is you look at it as when I first read it I felt like you’re

O

maybe accusing them

S

but they should rephrase it okay

O

yeah

S

you should be welcome to rephrase it

O

okay

S

I agree with you <I agree with you it’s just>

O

<maybe the first one should be>

S

they should be able to handle questions like these
130  O  ja ja of course
131  S  that should be harsh we shouldn’t be diplomatic in this situation I don’t think they
132  yeah
133  O  yeah we could go and ask specifically what we want <it should be spot on>
134  N  <spot on>
135  O  it can be critical but I think the way to phrase it could be
136  S  okay just rephrase it then ((O starts typing))

((continues from before))

137  O  I don’t really like condictory ((contradictory)) for me it’s
138  S  we’ll see
139  O  yeah (0.5) could you say another word I modsige
140  S  jaa?
141  O  finder du det (0.2) det kan være conflicting
142  S  ja conflicting (0.7)
143  L  do you find it opposite he
144  O  ja I think it’s cool now 1 2 3 okay next hehehe