

Identity and social meanings in multilingual interactions: linguistic ethnography of an urban street market

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SETTINGS

MAYBACHUFER MARKET

- **Location:** Berlin-Neukölln, Reuterkiez (diverse population)
- Local shopping center & tourist attraction
- Sellers and customers of diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- **Multilingual and multiethnic diversity**

OBJECTIVES

- The study explores
- the linguistic resources that the sellers and customers have access to
 - how these resources are used and mixed at the market to (co)construct identities, while indexing different types of belonging

DATA COLLECTION

In the scope of Project A01: linguistic landscape (LL) (55 stalls, 426 signs); linguistic soundscape (4 stalls, 82h recordings): detailed sociolinguistic interviews with cooperating sellers; short interviews with multiple (other) sellers; 224 short interviews with customers; participant observation (3 months at a stall, selling Turkish bread and pastry); ethnographic field notes.

FINDINGS

○ Multilingual features of the market

LL: 9 languages: German, Turkish, English, Arabic, Spanish, French, Italian, Latin, Danish

Seller interviews: (mostly) Turkish and Arabic as L1, German as L2/foreign language, “a little bit of everything”

Customer Interviews: 45 different L1 and 17 different L2

○ Language Choices:

1. in Arabic: “The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: In black seed there is healing for every disease, except the death. (Ibn Majah)”
2. in German: “Black cumin oil. Bye bye Pharmacist”
3. in Turkish: “Cure for all black cumin”

„Angebote let's go aus
meine Garten, meine
Hühner bittschön!“

„Frische Brot,
taze Brot!“

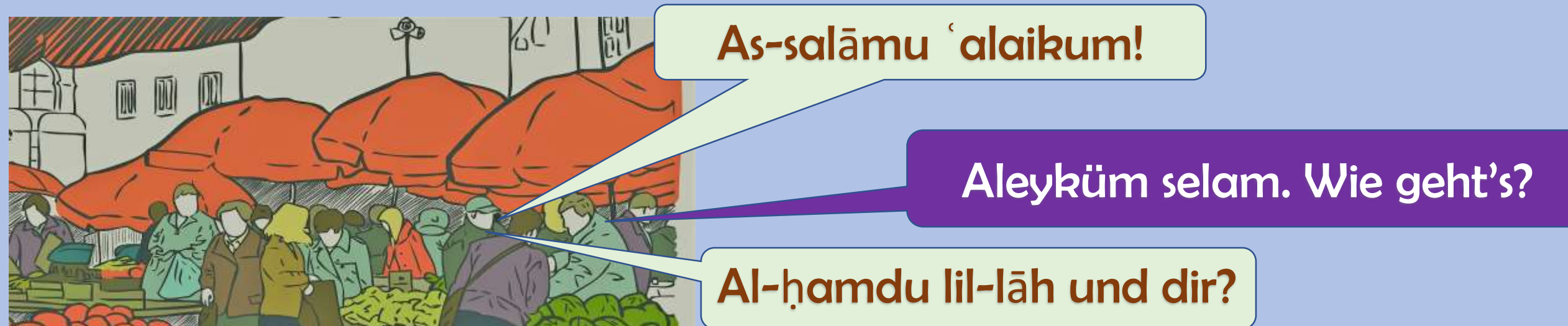
S: Hallo
C: Hello! Eh, what are the ingredients
of this?
S: Eh, das is eh Spinat cheese, cheese
eh patata

S: Seller C: Customer

Decision factors:

- Assumption of a lingua franca (→ German or Turkish)
- Pre-knowledge about the language spoken by the interlocutor
- Simple reaction to the spoken language
- Spontaneous decision
- Appearance, clothing

Example 2: Greetings, intercomprehension, code-switching in 3 languages (Seller-Seller conversation in Arabic-German and Turkish-German)



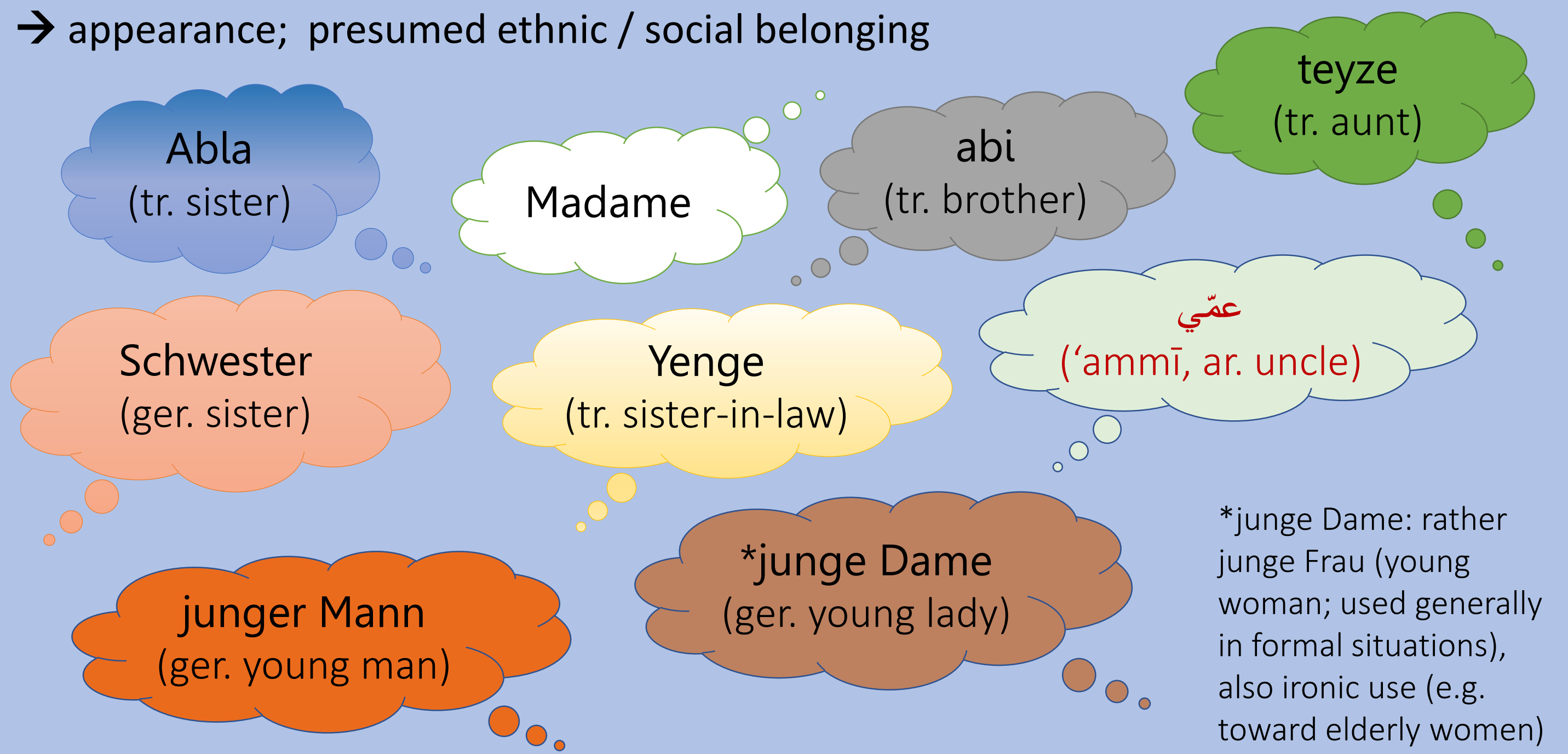
Forms of Address



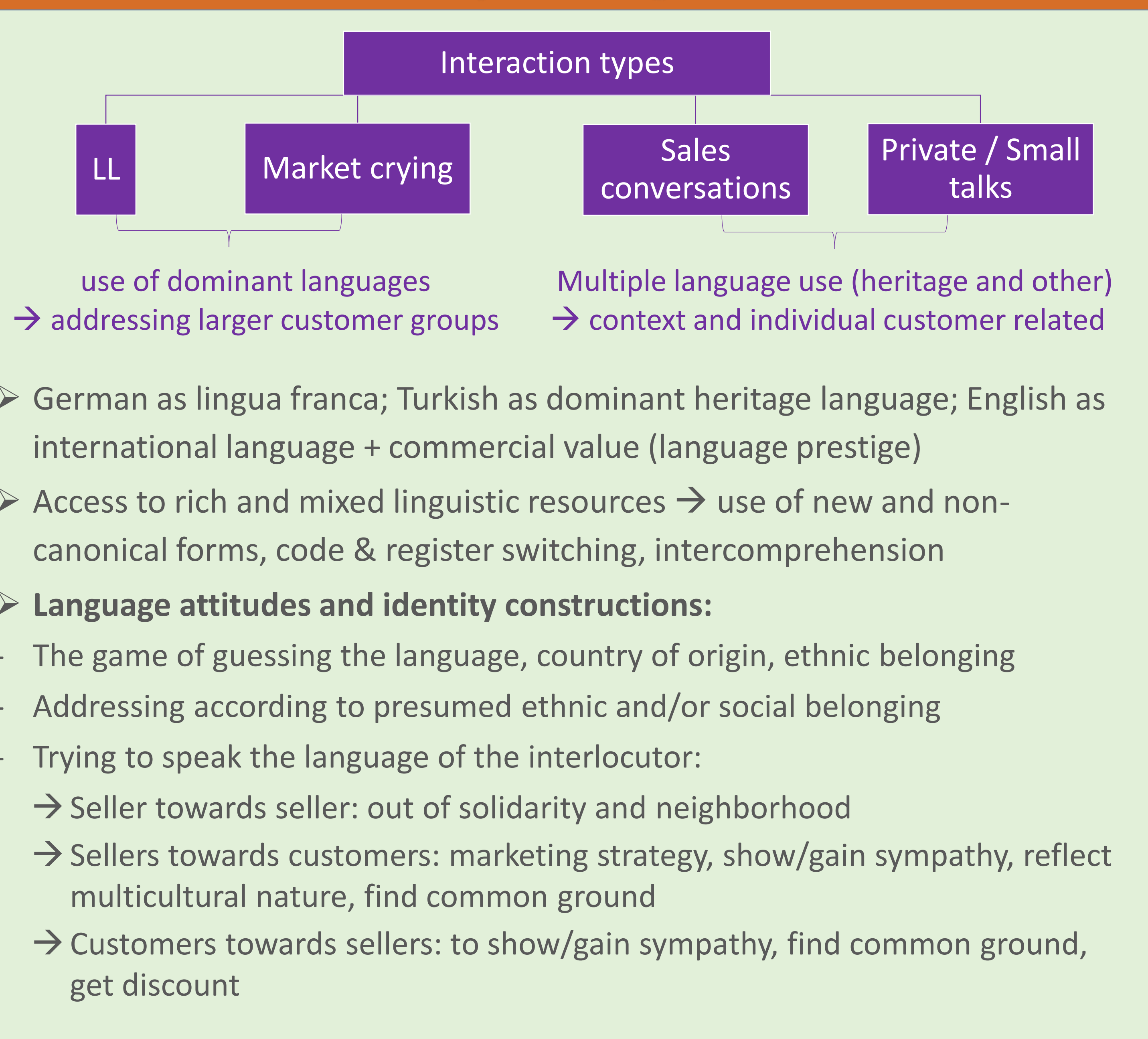
* Why Madame?! I'm Turk.

• Direct addressing in different languages:

→ appearance; presumed ethnic / social belonging



RESULTS



Example 1: an excerpt of the sales interactions at the Turkish bread and pastry stall

May_bwB101: a young female customer from the US, whose family lives in Rize, Turkey

May_kwK001: female seller of Turkish origin ; May_kmB001: male seller of Turkish origin

- 001 May_bwB101: uh turkçe yok <<talks about her friend>>
no Turkish
- 002 May_kmB001: siz çok güzel türkçe var
≈You have very good Turkish
- 003 May_bwB101: teşekkürLER (-) uh ailem (-) rizede
Thanks my family (is) in Rize
- 004 May_kmB001: Rizede /
In Rize?
- 005 May_bwB101: aMERigali (-)
American
- 006 May_kmB001: amerikalisiniz (-) Rizede /
You are American, in Rize?!
- 007 May_bwB101: yes (-) evet
yes
- 008 May_kmB001: trabzonda değil mi ?
Not in Trabzon?
- 009 May_bwB101: no (-) rize
- 010 May_kmB001: gelin trabzona (-) biz trabzonluyuz
Come to Trabzon. We are from Trabzon.
- 011 May_bwB101: uh-huh
- 012 May_kmB001: hamsi yeriz orda (-) hamsi
we eat hamsi (European anchovy) there, hamsi
- [...]
- 024 May_kmB001: rizede ne yapıyorsunuz ?
What are you doing in Rize?
- 025 May_bwB101: hiç (-)
nothing
- 026 May_kmB001: Hiç /
nothing?
- 027 May_bwB101: (-) aMA: geçen uhm (-) <<she can't find the word>>
But last -
- 028 May_kmB001: sene
year
- 029 May_bwB101: yıl (-) ya geçen (-) or geçen yıl
Year last last year
- 030 May_kmB001: geçen yıl /
Last year
- 031 May_bwB101: hopefully
- [...]
- 042 May_kmB001: (-) yenge görüyo musun (-) bizim hemşeri
Do you see, Yenge? Our fellow-townswoman
- [...]
- 045 May_kmB001: amerikali hemşerimiz
≈ Our American fellow-townswomen

- Sympathy towards the speaker of their heritage language → shifting in language, simplifications, repetitions and ratifications
- Lexical and grammatical choices indexing spatial, temporal and social belonging, distancing, Zusammengehörigkeit (in bold)