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Multimodal self- and other-positioning on Wikipedia user pages

In the analysis of digital communication, there is a growing interest in how people construct their identities through interaction with each other. Multimodal self- and other-positioning can be seen as a key to the analysis of identity in the framework of interaction analysis. But so far, the focus of many linguistic studies has clearly been on the microanalysis of the purely verbal dimension of small episodes of identity construction in digital communication. Consequently, there is little empirical examination of how self- and other-positioning is shaped discursively, mediated institutionally and realized multimodally. Analysing Wikipedia user pages, the paper follows a multimodal approach that advocates at the same time the integration of discourse and interaction analytic aspects of positioning.

So far, the user pages as a locus of (self-) positioning in Wikipedia are completely underexamined in the constantly growing field of linguistic and media-scientific analyses of the collaborative online encyclopaedia, although self-representation can be understood as a prerequisite for participation in digital communication. On the wiki-supported user pages, engaged Wikipedia authors permanently elaborate on their online personas. Simultaneously they negotiate roles and positions in interaction on the corresponding user talk pages. The overall goal is to achieve powerful positions to have a high impact on the collaborative content production in the digital discourses of the online encyclopaedia. Three Wikipedia-specific multimodal resources are considered for the outlined analysis: when constructing identities-in-interaction Wikipedia authors make use of the Babel User Templates, they grant digital prizes and distinctions, and they integrate images on their user pages, which they borrow from the huge image repositories of Wikimedia Commons.

1. Introduction

Wikipedia is not only a controversial reference system that is used by many as a first source, but it is also one of the most successful projects in so called Web 2.0 environments in which knowledge is discursively negotiated. With around 40 million articles in over 290 language versions (Wikimedia 2018), Wikipedia ranks 5th in the list of the world's most important sites (Alexa 2018: The top 500 websites). The majority of the approximately 2.2 million registered Wikipedia authors aims to contribute to a high-quality online encyclopaedia within the framework of collaborative knowledge production. Hence, Wikipedia authors represent one of the largest online communities worldwide.

In Wikipedia it is common to present oneself to other authors via the so-called user pages in order to locate oneself in the positional system of the online community. The corresponding and hypertextually linked user talk pages offer members of the community the opportunity to discuss the contributions of a single author as well as their positioning activities on the respective user page. Hyperlinks set there open up hypertextual universes that make the discursive and institutionally shaped dimension of multimodal resources for self-positioning and other-positioning transparent to linguistic analyses. Wikipedia is thus a unique resource that makes it possible to analyse the (co-)construction of identities in digital discourses.

While positioning in recent years has been negotiated predominantly in interaction and conversation analytical approaches, Deppermann (2013b) refers to the discourse-analytical heritage of the concept position in the tradition of Foucault: in social interaction actors locate themselves in larger social structures and follow master narratives that are discursively established and shaped. The common microanalysis of face-to-face communication often raises the methodological problem of reconstructing this discursive dimension of self- and other-positioning. As already mentioned, Wikipedia with its hypertextual universe allows interaction analytical studies to get a grip on the discursive dimension of self- and other-positioning.

As Wikipedia authors not only use text, but also visual elements on user pages and user talk pages, the following analysis takes a multimodal perspective for the analysis of self- and other-positioning: not only the

verbal dimension but also the visual dimension (especially images and layout) and the interplay of these two modes in the analysed data will be considered from a multimodal perspective (cf. Jewitt 2016: 69). Thus, the following analysis will focus on three multimodal resources that help Wikipedia authors to locate themselves in the positional system of the online encyclopaedia: the basic elements of many user pages are the Babel User Templates (*babel* is an allusion to the Tower of Babel),¹ the Wikipedia prizes and distinctions and the possibility of integrating images and image captions from Wikimedia Commons² on the user pages.

This raises the following key questions:

- What are loci of self-positioning and external positioning of others in the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia?
- How can discourse and interaction analytical aspects of the position be integrated to analyse self- and other-positioning?
- Which resources are used for the purpose of multimodal self- and other-positioning via text and images in the digital community of Wikipedia? How are these resources used for positioning oneself and others?

The paper also addresses the extent to which the available resources and subsequently the forms of meaning making are institutionally mediated (Thumim 2012: 143). The forms of self- and other-positioning of Wikipedia authors depend strongly on what possibilities the Wikimedia Foundation³ offers them at the software level (e.g. in the form of templates) and what image resources are available via Wikimedia Commons⁴ under free licenses.

2. Wiki-supported structure of Wikipedia

Wikipedia is characterized by a complex structure with several namespaces, which remains opaque for many users in everyday access to the online encyclopaedia. In order to understand Wikipedia as an object

1 User language templates supporting multilingual communication by making it easier to contact someone who speaks a certain language.

2 The Wikimedia Foundation is the organisation that hosts and maintains the technology underlying Wikipedia.

3 A Wikipedia namespace is a set of Wikipedia pages whose names begin with a particular reserved word recognized by the MediaWiki software.

4 Wikimedia Commons is an online repository of free-use images, sounds, and other media files.

of investigation for linguistic and multimodal analyses, however, it is relevant to understand this structure in detail.

Each encyclopaedic article in Wikipedia has a corresponding and hypertextually linked talk page and a revision history. In the revision history, all earlier versions of a Wikipedia entry are stored and the username or IP address of the user who made the edit is indicated hyperlinking to the user page of the respective Wikipedia author. On the talk pages, where the encyclopaedic content is negotiated, it is common for authors to sign their posts. These signatures also hyperlink to the respective user page of the author, thus making the authorship of posts on talk pages very transparent. The aforementioned user pages can be understood as the locus of self-positioning in the wiki-supported structure of Wikipedia: “Every user who logs in under an essentially freely selectable user name receives a user page on which he can introduce himself, his collaboration in Wikipedia and his reading of the encyclopaedia” (Wikipedia 2018: User name space).

The revision histories of the user pages also make it possible to analyse the identity construction of individual users from a diachronic perspective over time. Policies and guidelines of the community on meta pages provide that the respective user has the design sovereignty over her user page. The additionally hyperlinked user talk pages provide the opportunity for all other members of the digital community to discuss the edits of a user and to exchange interpersonal comments on her encyclopaedic contributions that are open to the public. Consequently, user talk pages can be seen as the locus of external positioning of others in the wiki-supported structure of Wikipedia. Susan Herring describes the co-presence of the hyperlinked namespaces in Wikipedia as “text-text convergence” (Herring 2013: 5). On a linguistic level, the above mentioned policies and guidelines and the technical affordances of Wikipedia impact how Wikipedia authors write and interact in the different namespaces: user pages have a (mainly) monologic structure, whereas user talk pages have a dialogic, chronologic, and topic-oriented thread structure (Gredel 2017: 101).

3. Data

The data of this study are drawn from the user pages of the 194 administrators in the German language version of Wikipedia in February 2018. In this paper, the administrators' user pages were chosen because they can be understood as a "discursive elite" (Schwab-Trapp 2001: 271), due to their active involvement in Wikipedia: in order to be elected as an administrator, a successful candidacy is required (cf. van Dijk 2010: 34). Usually, administrator rights are only granted to users who have contributed to Wikipedia for a long time and are actively involved in the community. Many administrators present themselves and their great commitment to Wikipedia on their user pages. While newcomers to Wikipedia sometimes do not edit their user pages, most administrators have highly elaborate user pages. The relevance of self-positioning on user pages for administrators is evident from the fact that some of them have several hundred edits that are accessible via the revision history of their user page.

Schwab-Trapp describes discursive elites as important parts of discursive orders since they represent the community as spokespersons in public (cf. Schwab-Trapp 2001). The elected Wikipedia administrators fulfil precisely this function of spokespersons in the discourse through special rights, which they are granted with their election: "These include the ability to block and unblock user accounts, IP addresses, and IP ranges from editing, edit fully protected pages, [...] delete and undelete pages, rename pages without restriction" (Wikipedia 2018: Administratoren). A position such as administrator in consequence determines which influence authors can have on the encyclopaedic content production (cf. Stegbauer 2009: 104). They initiate discourses and contribute to the institutionalization of new points of view (cf. Schwab-Trapp 2001: 272 and Mell 2016). Because the discursive elite of administrators has these prominent roles in the digital discourse of Wikipedia, they will be the subject of empirical analysis in section 4.

This study draws its data from the openly accessible (i.e. non-password protected) user pages and user talk pages of Wikipedia. Consequently, the data can be seen to be in the public domain and its study to not require informed consent from individual contributors (cf. Wikipedia 2018: Ethically researching Wikipedia). All the analysed images were

published under free licenses on Wikipedia or on Wikimedia Commons making their use in scientific studies legally possible.

4. Identity and positioning between interaction and discourse

In the analysis of digital communication, there is a growing interest in how people construct their identities through interaction with each other (cf. Page 2016: 403). Several approaches coexist in linguistics with the aim of analysing the construction of identity: The Social Constructivist model has grown from Goffman's notion of footing (cf. Graham 2016: 306), while the framework of Membership Categorization is based on the original work of Sacks (1974). This study follows the Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré 1990 and 1999). They define subject positioning as discursive production of selves, “whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines” (Davies & Harré 1990: 48), which made the Foucault-inspired notion of subject position useful for conversation analytical studies. The Foucauldian heritage of the category ‘position’ (Deppermann 2013: 2) is to be reactivated here, in order to take the discursive dimension of self- and other-positioning on Wikipedia into consideration: “Conceptually, the idea is that people rely in their discursive practices on taken for granted structures of locally relevant discourses which provide a backdrop for their manifest displays of identity” (Deppermann 2013: 11). Therefore, the paper advocates the integration of discourse and interaction analytical aspects (cf. Gredel 2017) for the analysis of digital discourse.

Central to the analysis of self- and other-positioning in digital environments is the observation that actors in social networks always act in relation to other actors: “When we participate in new online media, we are not just behaving as one single self. We are networked individuals” (Barton & Lee 2013: 84). Graham describes “relationality” as “our degree of alignment with others” (2016: 305), that is negotiated in any interaction. An important factor of relationality is identity – the way we elaborate on our personae in the process of self- and other-positioning (cf. Graham 2016: 306). A relatively new focus of interaction analytical studies in the framework of Positioning Theory is to consider systemati-

cally multimodal aspects of positioning activities, with which an actor makes himself a socially determinable person and claims a certain position in social space.

In addition to the aspects of self-positioning, the external positioning of others can be described as follows: addressing each other's interaction partners assigns the others a social position as well (cf. Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2004: 168). Thus, the construction of identity takes place through the reciprocal and permanently interacting positioning activities described in this way.

Understanding positioning as “discursive practices” (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2004: 167), as previously mentioned, is in accordance with the term's Foucauldian provenance: “In Foucault's view, subjects are positioned by hegemonic discourses in terms of status, power and legitimate knowledge, which determine their interpretation of self, world and others“ (Deppermann 2013: 64). Following Bamberg's notion of positioning as located between structure and performance (cf. Bamberg 1997: 335) and his three levels of positioning, Deppermann concludes that especially Bamberg's level 3 opens up the discursive dimension of self- and other-positioning and the relevance of discursively established master narratives (Deppermann 2013: 64).

As a sub-discipline of linguistics, discourse linguistics in the sense of discourse semantics in the tradition of Busse and Teubert (1994) investigates how individual words, multi-word units and even more complex patterns of language use, such as metaphorical patterns, are established in transtextual units (Spitzmüller & Warnke 2011: 22.).

In recent years, agency has moved into the focus of Foucauldian discourse analysis, which is very well compatible with the interaction analytical approach described above. Heidrun Kämper describes the function of actors from a discourse-linguistic perspective as follows: “Die besondere Funktion der Akteure im Diskurs besteht darin, Sinn zu schaffen” (Kämper 2017: 259)⁵. The possibilities of the individual actors to influence discourses and to help linguistic patterns to dominate a discourse result from their respective roles and positions in a specific context. Analysing discursively established resources for positioning, section 4 puts the focus on actors of digital discourses.

⁵ Translation: The special function of actors in discourse is to create meaning.

4.1 Images as a resource for multimodal positioning in Wikipedia

While the verbal code is often in the focus of interaction analytical studies, digital forms such as computer games suggest that the multimodal dimension of identity construction should be taken into account (cf. Newson 2011: 133). Barton and Lee also refer to the special significance of images in the construction of identity online: “In addition to the written word, another important form of linguistic representation of technobiography is visual images, especially photos” (Barton & Lee 2013: 73). Section 5 will therefore first address the relevance of images in self- and other-positioning on the analysed user pages.

The fact that the multimodal dimension of Wikipedia should be taken seriously can be explained by the number of files uploaded: A total of 112,768 bitmap images and 17,938 vector images (e.g. svg, Wikipedia 2017: Spezial: Medienstatistiken) are integrated into the German language version of the online encyclopaedia alone. The fact that there are 43,391,122 files in Wikimedia Commons available shows that the stock of potential image inventories for Wikipedia is much larger still (Wikimedia 2017: Hauptseite). Wikimedia Commons has the function of providing image media (such as photographs, illustrations, videos, reproductions of paintings, etc.), which can serve to illustrate Wikipedia texts due to their open licenses (cf. Hammwöhner 2013: 286). In addition to this large stock of image data, the authors also have the option of uploading images directly to the online-encyclopaedia. How images are used for self- and other-positioning will be shown in the following using animal images and metaphors (section 5.1) and the Wikistress-o-Meter (5.2).

4.2 Animal pictures and animal metaphors as a multimodal resource for self- and other-positioning

Already when looking at the user names selected on the user pages of the 194 administrators analysed, it becomes clear that animal names play a central role in the online community of Wikipedia. There are user names like *Cymothoa exigua* (an isopod species), *Wabrerwattwurm* (Lug-

worm), *Neozoon* (raccoon) or *Gerbil* (gerbil). Kirchhoff explains the discursive imprinting and relevance of animal metaphors in the designation of human actors aptly: “Da Tiermetaphern stets Charaktereigenschaften beinhalten, sind mit ihr moralische und affektive Zuschreibungen [...] verbunden [...], die in der Rückübertragung auf den Menschen erhalten bleiben” (Kirchhoff 2010: 252)⁶. Kirchhoff concludes that in the implicit ‘order’ of animals, which is strongly influenced by culture and represented for example in literature, it is relevant who is compared to a certain animal (Kirchhoff 2010).



Figure 1: Screenshot of the user page “Cymothoa exigua”. https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer_Diskussion:Cymothoa_exigua (29 November 2018.)

On his user page the user “Cymothoa exigua” integrates a self-drawn picture (Fig. 1) of the animal, which is provided with spear and shield. In the caption he explains why he chose this user name and this image: “Attention, sometimes Cymothoa is also on the warpath. But on the other hand, the exoskeleton can also serve as a thick skin;” (Wikipedia 2018: user page *Cymothoa exigua*). The caption implicitly explains the animal metaphor and its use for self-positioning: The animal species is classified as a parasitic isopod, which mainly infests different fish species. The phrase set in the caption *to be on the warpath* means something like *to lead an attack against something* (Duden online 2018: *Auf dem Kriegspfad sein*). User “Cymothoa exigua” thus metaphorically refers to the fact that he

⁶ Translation: Since animal metaphors always contain character traits, they are associated with moral and affective attributions that are preserved in the projection on humans.

might initiate verbal attacks in the collaborative content production. By referring to the exoskeleton of the animal, however, he also indicates that he himself is prepared for (counter)attacks.

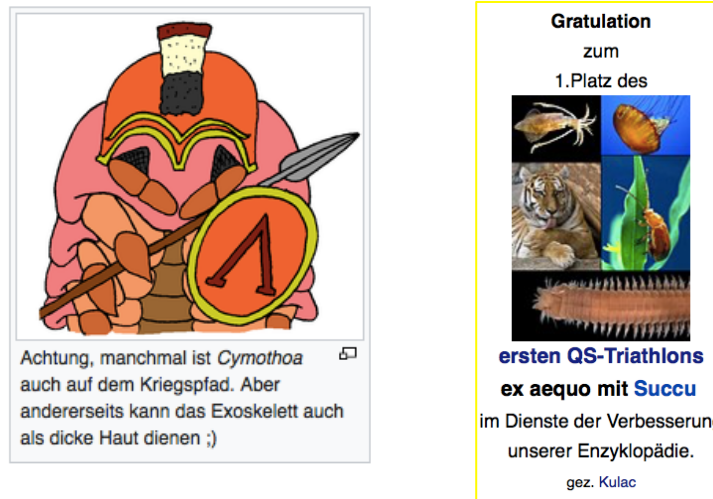


Figure 2 (left): Image on the User page of user „Cymothoa exigua“. URL: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer_Diskussion:Cymothoa_exigua

Figure 3 (right): Award on the User page of user „Cymothoa exigua“. URL: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer_Diskussion:Cymothoa_exigua

Through the Latin naming of the animal species *Cymothoa exigua* and the use of technical terms such as *exoskeleton*, the user positions himself as an expert with biological expertise. The “identity of expertise” (Newson 2011: 131) constructed in this way is further expanded upon on the user’s user page by a picture gallery, which includes photos of various other animal species. The status as a technical expert in the field of biology is also confirmed by an award given to *Cymothoa exigua* by user “Kulac” on the user talk page (Fig. 3, for prizes and distinctions see section 7). The award in question is an award for contributions of particularly high quality. On the user talk page, there is thus also an external positioning activity related to the user “Cymothoa exigua” supporting his self- and other-positioning as an expert in the field of biology.

It is also common in Wikipedia that administrators metaphorically introduce themselves as predators, watchdogs or biting dogs via the mul-

timodal dimension of their user page. Figures 4 and 5 prove this discursive practice:



Caution - biting admin - When the admin comes, lie on the floor and wait for help. If no help comes - Good luck

Caution! This user is moody and biting. However, he can be soothed with a lot of coffee!

Figure 4 (left): Image on the user page of user “Funkruf”.

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer:Funkruf> (29 November 2018.)

Figure 5 (right): Figure 12.6: Image on the user page of user “Der.Träumer”.

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer:Der.Traeumer> (29 November 2018.)

Figure 4 shows an element of the user side of user “Funkruf”. The image establishes intertextual relations between the visual code (typography and colour) as well as the verbal code of signs that are usually attached to properties in order to warn of guard dogs and thus prevent strangers from entering the site without authorisation. By lexical substitution the usual lexeme *dog* is replaced here by *Admin*, which is provided with the attribute *biting*. In Figure 5, the user stages himself as a lion via the visual code, which in the verbal code is also attributed with the adjective *biting*.

As these examples show, Wikipedia authors use animal images and metaphors for self- and other-positioning on their user pages. They transfer the characteristics of the represented animals to their selves in order to locate themselves in the positional system of the Wikipedia authors with their preferences and characteristics in the collaborative content production. In the examples presented, the overall goal of the Wikipedia authors was to legitimize socially

undesirable behaviours (e.g. verbal attacks) in the “service” of the online encyclopaedia through certain animal metaphors indicating the occurrence of some aggressive behaviour in nature.

4.3 Wikistress-o-Meter as multimodal metaphor with discursive imprinting

The potential conflicts previously mentioned in section 5.1 in the collaborative content production of Wikipedia is one of the central topics of the user name space and are metadiscursively addressed there. To describe the effects of conflicts, the term *Wikistress* has become established in Wikipedia: “Wikistress is the term used to describe stress caused by working on Wikipedia. There are many causes and explanations for wikistress. On this page some explanations and tips for stress avoidance are collected” (Wikipedia 2018: Wikistress). In order to give individual authors the opportunity to display their “Wikistress-Level” on their user page, a series of templates was developed – the variants of the so-called Wikistress-o-Meter (see Fig. 6 and 7).

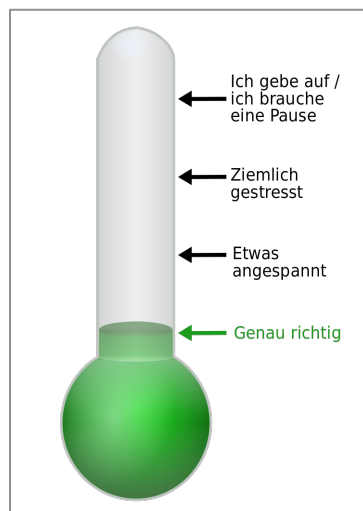


Figure 6: Wikistress-o-Meter on the user page of user “Brackenheim”.
<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer:Brackenheim> (29 November 2018.)

The template can be interpreted as a multimodal metaphor: the mental state of an author is metaphorically depicted using a kind of thermometer that contains a liquid. The thermometer can reach different “temperatures” or levels depending on the Wikistress level. The different states of the liquid are also marked by their colour, as the overview of the five variants of the Wikistress-o-Meter show (Fig. 7). The source domain of the metaphor is thus a liquid that can be brought to “boil” by “heated” mood in Wikipedia. Wikipedia authors use this template to illustrate their emotional state or their current attitude towards Wikipedia. Hypertextually linked with this template on the user talk pages is a meta page of Wikipedia, which has the title *Wikistress* and which opens up a discursive space for the exchange of information on the same topic. In the texts on this page, the Wikipedia authors create a typology of different types of Wikistress and give tips on how to cope with them.

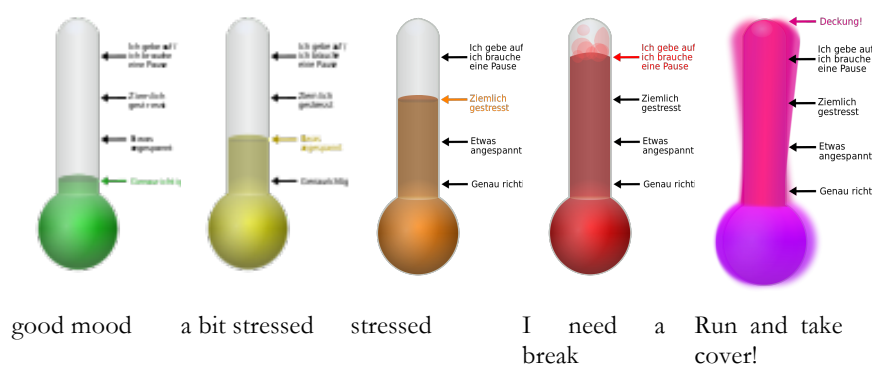


Figure 7: The five variants of the Wikistress-o-Meter.
<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wikistress> (29 November 2018.)

On the corresponding user talk page (Wikipedia 2018), however, there are severe controversies on what is meant by Wikistress. This can be shown by the contribution of user “Löschfix”:

So, the forms of Wikistress defined on the main page and here I find totally irrelevant. Wikistress is when you are infected by Wikimania and can't stop. [...] That is Wikistress. (Wikipedia 2018: Talk Page *Wikistress*).

In the German original quote: “Also die auf der Hauptseite [sic!] und hier definierten Formen von Wikistress finde ich total irrelevant. Wikistress ist, wenn man von der Wikimanie befallen ist und nicht mehr aufhören kann. [...] Das ist Wikistress.” (Wikipedia 2018: Talk Page *Wikistress*).

User “Löschfix” redefines Wikistress and describes the definition already done on the actual page as totally irrelevant. In connection with his new definition he describes the alleged phenomenon of Wikimania and at the same time condemns affected persons by awarding this psychological consultation need. This makes it clear that the Wikistress-o-Meter is a discursively established resource for self- and other-positioning on the user pages. It also becomes apparent, however, that counter discourses are initiated in the interaction on the user talk pages, which are intended to serve to question or redefine the ‘Wikistress’ concept that is widespread and discursively established in Wikipedia. If an author links the corresponding template with the meta page on his user page to the entry Wikistress, he establishes the transtextual connection to a discursive space in which these counter discourses can be found (at least on the corresponding discussion page).

4.4 Babel User Templates as a resource for self- and other-positioning

For self- and other-positioning in Wikipedia, another resource is central, which is made possible by Wiki syntax and is used for self-positioning: The Babel User Templates were originally only used for information about the language skills of Wikipedia authors (cf. Ensslin 2011: 553). The genuine function of the templates was to inform others in which languages (or dialects) and at what level Wikipedia authors can contribute to the multilingual project of Wikipedia. Ensslin criticizes the babel boxes as their implementation on user pages presupposes a certain level of familiarity with the standard W3 mark-up language of the underlying software MediaWiki (cf. Ensslin 2011: 554). Thumim describes such technical framework conditions and aspects of interface design of social networks in digital media as a central moment in the institutional mediation of these platforms (cf. Thumim 2012: 143). In consequence, the

Babel User Templates can be seen as part of the institutional imprint in Wikipedia since they and the associated Wiki syntax are predetermined by the Wikimedia Foundation. In recent years, however, the volunteer Wikipedians have begun to creatively expand, at least in part, the clearly defined form and function of the Babel building blocks: meanwhile Wikipedians use the Babel User Templates to represent their place of origin, their hobbies as well as their political and ideological preferences (cf. Stegbauer 2009: 289). They have also begun to extend the templates with images and hyperlinks.



Figure 8 (left): Babel User Template of the user “Baumfreund“. <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer:Baumfreund-FFM> (29 November 2018.)

Figure 9 (right): Element of the Babel User Template of the user “Atamari“. <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer:Atamari> (29 November 2018.)

These innovative variants are of particular interest for the integration of discourse and interactional approaches that are the focus of the present study, since, in addition to biographical information, they also enable positioning activities in relation to dominant discourses (Deppermann 2013: 64), which refer to larger social structures within Wikipedia. In the following section, three specific elements of Babel User Templates will be considered, which provide information on the ideological preferences of the respective users. Often the specific terms are provided with a hyperlink that refers to Wikipedia meta pages where the discursive negotiation of terms such as *in-* and *exclusionist*, *musketees*, and *cosmopolitans* take place.

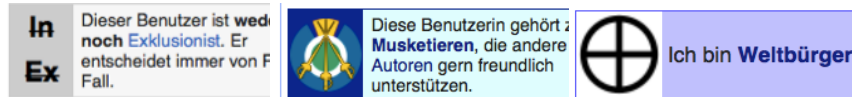


Figure 10: Element of the Babel User Template of the user “Der.Traeumer”.
<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer:Der.Traeumer> (29 November 2018.)

Figure 11: Element of the Babel User Template “Muskietiere”.
<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzerin:Ra%27ike> (10 February 2018.)

Figure 12: Element of the Babel User Template of the user “Weltbürger”.
<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benutzer:Schwalbe> (29 November 2018.)

The first Babel element (Fig. 10) is used for self- and other-positioning linking to the categories *in-* and *exclusionist*. While in the example at hand, the author refuses to be assigned to one of the two groups, numerous other authors assign themselves to one of the mentioned groups. In- and exclusionism can be understood as opposing and competing Wikipedia philosophies. An example of this is the definition of the term *inclusionism*: “Inclusionism is a philosophy of Wikipedians who prefer the retention and adaptation of problematic articles to their deletion. Inclusionists are also generally less concerned with the question of relevance” (Wikimedia 2018: Inklusionismus).

It becomes clear that inclusionism is only one of many Wikipedia philosophies that are negotiated contentiously on the corresponding talk pages. Categories used in a similar way for self-positioning are *Musketeer* (Fig. 11) and *Cosmopolitan* (Fig. 12): musketeers are a group of Wikipedians who have set themselves the goal of supporting “newcomers” in Wikipedia. The link in the Babel element leads to a page that lists the attributes and claims of the musketeers in the social space of Wikipedia: “The musketeers are noble, helpful and good. They meet to help Wikipedians, support them in their articles or other online projects, and be nice in the process” (Wikipedia 2018: Muskietiere). Another Babel building box with the statement *I am a Cosmopolitan (Ich bin Weltbürger)* (Fig. 12) is linked to the Wikipedia entry *Cosmopolitanism*, which is defined as follows: “Cosmopolitanism [...], also cosmopolitan citizenship, is a philosophical-political worldview that regards the entire globe as home. [...] It stands in contrast to nationalism and provincialism” (Wikimedia 2018: Kosmopolitismus). The three Babel elements cited as examples show that Wikipedia authors use the Babel User Templates to locate their

selves in relation to central discourses. With the integrated hyperlinks, they also refer to discursive spaces of Wikipedia, which make the negotiation of the set categories transparent.

4.5 Prizes and distinctions as a resource for the external positioning of others

As a central resource for locating actors in the positional system of Wikipedia, Stegbauer describes the awarding of prizes and distinctions (Stegbauer 2009: 288). They can be awarded for various types of participation in the project and made visible through standardized Wiki syntax elements in the Wiki. These digital awards are not only an expression of power; they also have a communicative function, because they order the social world (Maeße 2015: 147).

When describing prizes and distinctions, terms and settings known from phaleristics⁷ are used, such as *Hero of Wikipedia in gold for [User:XY] in the service of improving our encyclopaedia* (in German: *Held der Wikipedia in Gold für [Nutzer:XY] im Dienste der Verbesserung unserer Enzyklopädie*). Here, the analogies to state awards for labourers in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) are unmistakable: the title “Hero of Labour” was awarded to particularly diligent workers in the GDR (Wolf 2000: 92). Here it is therefore a matter of taking up ideologically influenced discourse traditions that were established in the German Democratic Republic in order to glorify the extraordinary achievements of volunteer Wikipedia authors through awards and to create a system of non-monetary incentives in the planned economy of the GDR. A central difference is that the awarding of Wikipedia-specific prizes and distinctions is not reserved to a state authority but can theoretically be awarded by any Wikipedia author to any other, allowing them to primarily be understood as a resource of positioning of others.

The prizes and distinctions also follow the usual logic of award systems by specifying the conditions of awarding: classes or gradations are often made clear by metals (gold, silver, bronze), by metal colours or by size (cf. Henning & Herfurth 2010: 22). The value of an order is con-

⁷ Phaleristics is a subdiscipline of history which studies prizes and distinctions.

veyed by its visual design as in the case of the so-called “Wikiläum order of merit”: “The Wikipedia order for 5 (bronze), 10 (silver) and (at some point also) 20 years (gold) of voluntary work” (Wikipedia 2018: Wikiläum).



Figure 13: Wikipedia Award in a gold, silver and bronze version.
<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vorlage:Wikiläum/Test> (29 November 2018.)

The majority of Wikipedia authors in the analysed data set accept and even appreciate the positive external positioning made by integrating the prizes and distinctions on their user pages or user talk pages, as these awards strengthen their position in the collaborative content production of Wikipedia.

5. Conclusion

In this article, three multimodal resources were presented which are used by Wikipedia authors to construct identities-in-interaction via self-positioning and external positioning on the user (talk) pages: on the analysed pages there is evidence that administrators use animal images and metaphors for self-positioning. In addition, the authors make use of the discursively established Wikistress-o-Meter template to visualize mental states with the help of the multimodal metaphor of heated fluid. The second resource of multimodal self-positioning activities is the Babel User Template that can be seen as an institutionally mediated element on Wikipedia. There are innovative versions of the templates, which often refer to (competing) Wikipedia philosophies via discursively established categories such as *inclusionist*. The hypertextually linked article and meta

pages on such categories open up hypertextual universes in which these terms are negotiated discursively making the discursive dimension of self-positioning visible. The third resource presented in this analysis are the Wikipedia prizes and distinctions that Wikipedia authors can bestow on each other. It is a kind of resource that is not used for self-positioning but for other-positioning. The design of the award inventory follows the traditional logic of phaleristics in the gradation of materiality (bronze, silver, gold). In addition, the awards contain verbal patterns such as *Hero of Wikipedia in gold for [UserXY] in the service of improving our encyclopaedia* where analogies to ideologically imprinted discourses of the GDR are unmistakable. The presented examples legitimize the integration of discourse and interaction analytical approaches proposed in this article reactivating the discourse-analytical heritage of the term *position*. It has been confirmed that Wikipedia is a unique resource whose wiki-supported structure (hyperlinked user (talk) pages and meta pages) can be used as a resource to empirically reconstruct the discursive, multimodal and institutionally mediated dimension of positioning in one of the largest online communities worldwide.

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