

Spanish at Work

**Analysing Institutional Discourse
Across the Spanish-Speaking World**

**Edited by
Nuria Lorenzo-Dus**



Also by Nuria Lorenzo-Dus

TELEVISION DISCOURSE: Analysing Language in the Media

Spanish at Work

Analysing Institutional Discourse Across the Spanish-Speaking World

Edited by

Nuria Lorenzo-Dus

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14

Vaya, ¡qué chungo! Rapport-Building Talk in Service Encounters: the Case of Bars in Seville at Breakfast Time¹

María Elena Placencia and Ana Mancera Rueda

Introduction

Drawing on the literature on small talk (cf. e.g. collections of papers in Coupland 2000a, Placencia and García 2008) and politeness (cf. e.g. Aston 1988a, Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2008), this chapter examines rapport-building talk in service encounter interactions in bars in Seville. By rapport-building talk, we mean conversational activities that go beyond the service transaction and participants' roles as service providers or customers. These are activities seemingly aimed at reducing interpersonal distance and reaffirming friendly relations between, in our study, bartenders and customers.² We aim to show that rapport-building talk for bartenders is in fact 'an intrinsic part' of talk at work (Coupland 2000b: 6).

Rapport-building activities have been found to range from the more or less creative/individualised (Aston 1988a, Placencia 2004) to the ritualised (e.g. greeting and leave-taking exchanges) – something Holmes (2000) depicts in terms of a continuum (see Figure 14.1) in her discussion of (small) talk at work.

Holmes (2000: 39) locates ritualised forms of talk (under Malinowski's ([1923] 1972) 'phatic communion' label) and 'core business talk' at opposite ends of the continuum, with two other forms placed between them: 'work-related talk' (off-topic) and 'social talk' (more individualised than phatic communion and where 'contact *per se* is foregrounded'). Social talk and phatic communion fall under the label of 'small talk'.

The same continuum can be employed to describe talk in service encounters in the present study, although we propose qualifying social

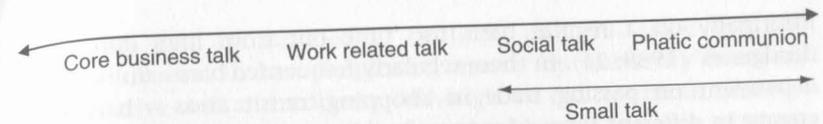


Figure 14.1 Small talk (Source: Holmes 2000: 38)

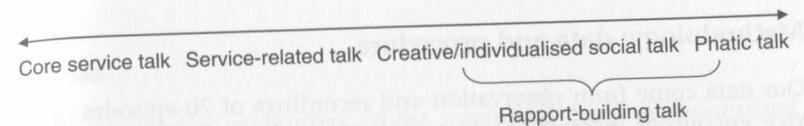


Figure 14.2 A revised continuum for analysing small talk in service encounters

talk as *creative/individualised*, since phatic talk is also a type of social talk (cf. Figure 14.2).

For us, however, even phatic talk can include a creative or individualised element. This can be seen through speakers' choice of particular greeting and other formulas. We are also of the view that rapport-building talk is not circumscribed or limited to particular sections of interaction, as suggested by Laver (1975, 1981). Rather, it can be interspersed in core service talk, with certain conversational markers – for example enacting affiliation in an exchange which is otherwise purely transactional. As Tracy and Naughton (2000: 71) observe with reference to Malinowski's ([1923] 1972) practice of treating phatic and non-phatic talk as mutually exclusive, 'exchanges can have features of both phatic and non-phatic talk', and institutional and sociable roles seem to become intermixed.

Relational aspects of (face-to-face) service encounters have been examined from a pragmatic or discourse analytic perspective in a range of sociocultural and situational contexts.³ Also, some sociological studies on bars have emphasised their role as (semi)public spaces in the life of towns and cities (e.g. Oldenburg 1989). However, service encounter interactions in bars, as far as we know, have not been examined from discourse or pragmatic perspectives. This is an important omission generally and specifically with regard to Spain, where bars constitute a focal point for meeting others even at breakfast time. Indeed, local bars in Spain at breakfast and other times seemingly represent one of those *third places* – 'beyond the realms of home and work' (Oldenburg 1989: 16) – where people gather

informally on a regular basis for 'time out from life's duties and drudgeries' (1989: 21). In these regularly frequented bars – unlike those dependent on passing trade in shopping/transit areas – bartenders engage in different types of rapport-building talk with most customers, these encounters being discursively co-constructed as friendly, sociable events.

Methodology: data and procedure

Our data come from observation and recordings of 70 episodes of service encounter interactions in two university-oriented bars in Seville that customers tend to frequent regularly and where they and service providers are therefore familiar with each other. For the purposes of contrast, we also collected data from bars in a shopping/service area, consisting likewise of 70 interactions, where most customers are unfamiliar with the bartenders. The data were collected between 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon over a period of two weeks. Permission was obtained from the bar owners to record interactions and a notice at the entrance informed customers of such.

We recognise the possibility that customer–bartender interactions may have been slightly influenced by participants' knowledge of their being recorded. However, we do not think this would have been a serious problem. As Malone (1997: 152) has suggested, interactions demand participants' attention as otherwise they can come to a halt. Also, both waiters and customers in bars are accustomed to conducting interactions in public and being overheard by others, especially as their exchanges are sometimes made in very loud voices.

We are also aware of our not being able to gain access to the social backgrounds of customers. These are common difficulties in using spontaneous data in discourse analysis research (cf. Félix-Brasdefer 2007, Placencia 2008a). Indeed, in order to examine the effect of social variables such as age and gender, scholars like Schneider (2008) have opted for data elicited through production questionnaires. However, while this method may work well when examining small talk in first-time encounters (as in Schneider's study), it is less helpful when studying small talk among people who know each other given that their shared knowledge/common ground (Enfield 2006) is often what is relevant in the management of rapport. Such common ground is very difficult, if not impossible, to recreate through experimental means. Also, in our study, the social background of

participants may be assumed to be fairly uniform, since our corpus was collected in bars frequented mostly by university lecturers, administrative staff and students. Although we did not factor into our subsequent analysis the customers' age/gender, all but one of them were adults; 63 were male and 39 were females. All the bartenders were male.

Analysis

Like many service encounters, those examined here are routinised events in their basic structure. This structure is normally characterised by the establishment of initial contact, the offer of/request for service (specification/clarification of customer's requirements), provision of service, request to make payment, statement of amount to be paid, and payment/termination of contact.⁴ Example (1) illustrates this basic structure.

(1) A (customer)/B (bartender)/C (customer)⁵

A1: *Hola↓/ buenos días→*

'Hello good morning'

Establishment of initial contact

B1: *Buenos días→/ ¿qué vas a tomar/ hijo↑?*

'Good morning, what are you^T going to have, my son?'

Offer/confirmation of service

A2: *Dame un cafelito para llevar cuando tú puedas/ Pepe*

'Give^T me one coffee^D to take away when you^T can, Pepe'

Service request

B2: *Vale/ ¿y la chica de la ventana qué quiere↑?*

'Fine, and the girl by the window, what would she like?'

Offer of service for accompanying customer

C1: *Un manchaíto// ponme un manchaíto↓*

'A latte^D, give^T me a latte^D'

Service request

B3: *Bien // el tuyo calentito→ ¿no Paco↑?*

'Fine, and you^T like yours hot^D, don't you^T, Paco?'

Clarification of customer's requirements

A3: *Sí/ sí/ el mío sí↑*

'Yes, mine yes'

[...]

B5: *Toma/ mi alma→*

'There you^T are, my soul'

Provision of service

[...]

A5: *¿Cuánto es↑?*

'How much is that?'

Request to pay

- B6: *Uno sesenta y cinco*↓
 'One sixty five'
- A6: *Toma/ cóbrate*↓
 'Here you^T are, charge^T me'
- B7: *Muchas gracias*↓/ *¿eh*↑?
 'Thanks very much, all right?'
- A7: *Bueno ...// hasta luego*↓
 'Fine ... see you later'

Statement of amount to be paid

Payment/termination of contact

Although rapport maintenance and enhancement can feature at any of the above stages, they were more prominent in our corpus during the opening and closing sections of the encounters in line with Laver's (1975, 1981) findings. Individualised/creative manifestations of rapport occurred before, after or during the main transaction. Rapport-building conversational markers and other affiliation tokens, for their part, were interspersed throughout the interaction, from greetings and requests for service, to payment and leave-taking.

Phatic interchanges

As far as openings are concerned, in order to establish initial (verbal) contact, greetings may be exchanged (cf. (1) above), but the occurrence of an exchange of greetings is certainly not fixed. For example, greetings are not normally exchanged if the customer produces his/her request immediately after the greeting:

(2) A (customer)/B (bartender)

A1: *Hola*→/ *¿me pones*↓ *una menta-poleo*↑?

'Hello, will you^T give^T me a peppermint tea?'

B1: [Nods and soon afterwards places the requested drink on the counter]

Customers normally produce the initiative greetings when they get to the counter, as in (1) and (2). Yet there can be some variation. For instance, if the customer has been waiting to be served, the initiative greeting may be produced by the bartender instead, followed by an offer/confirmation of service, as in (3):

(3) A (customer)/B (bartender)

B1: *Buenas Pedro/ paté*// *¿no*↑?

'Morning Pedro, pâté, is that right?'

A1: *Sí, sí, paté*...

'Yes, yes pâté...'

Greetings, whoever (first) produces them, are ways of acknowledging one's interlocutor and re-establishing a relationship by displaying recognition, and confirming that 'everything is all right' (Chaika 1989: 44). Therefore, they usually constitute the first mechanism employed for maintaining rapport in the interactions examined. Moreover, they can be modulated through the choice of greeting formula (e.g. informal forms such as *hola* in (2) or *buenas* in (3) which exhibit familiarity) as well as other lexical items. In the following example, a first name replaces the initiative greeting produced by the bartender displaying a close relationship with his customer through the choice of a hypocoristic form (*Manolo* for *Manuel*), as well as enthusiasm for the encounter manifested through prosodic cues:

(4) A (customer)/B (bartender)

B1: *Manolooo*↑/

A1: *Buenas*↓/

'Morning'

B2: *Lo de siempre*→/ *¿no*?

'The usual, is that right?'

Skipping the initial stages of the interaction – a kind of ellipsis – and moving directly into service provision may also constitute a rapport enhancement mechanism. It involves anticipating clients' wishes to the extent that customers do not even need to formulate their request or be consulted about it at all. There are a few examples of this in the data examined where the bartender, on seeing particular customers enter the bar, gets their drinks ready and places them on the counter. More common, though, are requests for confirmation of service, where the bartender anticipates clients' wishes, but still seeks confirmation from them, as in (3) and (4) above.

Regarding farewell utterances, they tend – like greetings – to be initiated by the customer, and are normally responded to with another farewell utterance. Consider this example:

(5) A (customer)/B (bartender)

A3: *Adiós*↓

'Goodbye'

B2: *Hasta luego*// *hijo*→

'See you later, son'

Also, like greetings, farewell utterances may be modulated through the choice of formula, accompanying address form and co-occurring actions, such as welfare wishes. Through formulas such as *hasta luego*,

hasta mañana, and so forth, customers and service providers seemingly offer mutual reassurance by articulating their expectation of a continuing (service) relationship:

(6) A (customer)/B (bartender)

A4: *Hasta el lunes/ ¿eh↑?// que tengas buen fin de semana→*
'See you on Monday, won't I? Have^T a nice weekend'

B5: *Hasta el lunes↓*
'See you on Monday'

Welfare wishes, as in (6) above, which may be given by both customers and service providers, together with what Laver (1975: 230) refers to as 'admonitions' (cf. (7)), or 'benedictions' (cf. (8)), serve to consolidate the relationship by displaying concern for the other person:

(7) A (customer)/B (bartender)

B7: *Gracias↓/*
'Thanks'

A8: *...cuídate↑//*
'...take^T care'

(8) A (customer)/B (bartender)

B4: *Hasta luego↑//*
'See you later'

A8: *¡Con Dios!//*
'God be with you!'

Creative/individualised rapport-building activities

Under this category we find a wide range of activities initiated both by bartenders (39 instances) and customers (35 instances) in the bars in the university context. They include, among others, taking notice and making personal observations, as well as self-disclosures, telling anecdotes, expressing commiseration, giving advice on matters other than the actual transaction, assessing news stories, teasing, exchanging gossip and playful insults.⁶ We exemplify some of these activities below.

The bartenders appear to be very skilled at noticing changes in their customers' appearance or mood, as well as in recognising any prolonged absences. They react to these changes or absences sometimes seriously but most of the times jokingly, i.e. within what Spaniards would colloquially call a *cachondeo* or play frame. Taking notice in this way encourages (playful) complimenting behaviour, how-are-you enquiries, the eliciting of personal troubles, and so forth. In (9), for instance, the bartender responds to his customer's greeting in A1 with an expression

of pleasant surprise (*hombre, Juan*), followed by a jocular complaint about his prolonged absence (B1). He playfully calls his customer *monstruo* (literally, monster) and teases him about his absence (*qué ¿estás perdido?*). The customer goes along with this teasing by agreeing that he had been 'lost' (A2). In B2, the bartender reverts to the service frame:

(9) A (customer)/B (bartender)

A1: *Buenos días*
'Good morning'

B1: *Hombre↑// Juan// ¿dónde estabas↑ monstruo? ¿Qué?, ¿estás perdido↑?*
'[conversational marker displaying surprise] Juan, where have you^T been awesome? What happened? Have you^T been lost?'

A2: *Sí/ ya ves→*
'Yes, that's the way it's been'

B2: *Manchado/ ¿no↑?*
'A latte, is that right?'

Example (10) below illustrates the bartenders' practice of noticing changes in customers' appearance. In B2, this happens via a compliment to a female customer, which seems to double as a greeting (*¡qué guapa estás!*). Such compliments are regarded as face-enhancing in that they convey appreciation of one's interlocutor, thus reinforcing the latter's positive face (Haverkate 1994). The customer does not take the compliment very seriously, indeed rejects it in a teasing way by accusing the bartender of being a flatterer in turn C2:

(10) B (bartender)/C (customer)/D (bartender)

D1: *Hombre↑// aquí tenemos a Mariola e Isabel↑*
'[conversational marker displaying surprise] here we have Mariola and Isabel'

B2: *Isabel/ ¡qué guapa estás↑!*
'Isabel, you^T look great!'

C2: *Anda/ anda/ ¡qué pelota qué pelota↑!*
'Come^T on, come^T on you^Tre just flattering me!'

In (11) below the bartender notices the pattern of a dress that a customer is wearing. The comment he makes in B1 is not a clear compliment, but has elements of teasing, suggesting that the pattern is too heavy. The teasing becomes clearer in B3 with the bartender's comment about spring having already arrived in the high street, as reflected in what the customer is wearing, and the laughter that follows this comment. The customer goes along with the play frame, further developing it by saying that on that very day she is in fact playing a fairy-tale character with the name (*Blanca Flor*, that is, like the flowers on her dress (A3)). The play frame continues for another two turns. Nevertheless, in A4 the customer

moves back into the service frame by placing her order: *ponme un bombón*. The teasing on the part of the bartender then resumes, and verges on flirting when he turns her customer's order into a *piropo* or compliment with an amorous overtone (Achugar 2002) in turn B3: *Bombón, lo que tú eres, morena*. The customer rejects the compliment in a playful way (A5):

(11) A (customer)/B (bartender)/D (bartender)

A1: *¡Hola// chicos↑!*

'Hi guys!'

B1: *Buenas/ niña. ¡Qué floreada vienes hoy! Tienes más flores que ...*

'Morning, girl. You^T are really flowery today. You^T have more flowers than ...'

A2: *Claro// ¿has visto↑?*

'But of course, that's right'

B2: *Eso Carmen/ la primavera ya en El Corte Inglés [laughter]*

'That's right Carmen, spring has arrived at El Corte Inglés'⁷ [laughter]

A3: *Sí/hoy soy Blancaflor→*

'Yes, I am Blancaflor today'

D1: *¿Y los zapatos también son de flores↑?*

'Have your shoes got a flower pattern too?'

A4: *¿Los zapatos? Claro // Anda/ Paco/ ponme un bombón→*

'My shoes? Of course. Come^T on Paco, give^T me a *bombón*'⁸

B3: *Bombón→ lo que tú eres→ morena↓*

'A *bombón* is what you^T are, *morena*'⁹

A5: *Anda/ anda/ no me seas zalamero ...→*

'Come^T on, come^T on, don't be such a flatterer'

Teasing, then, occurs with both male and female customers and around different topics. In some cases, it seems to be part of a joking relationship (Placencia 2004, Radcliffe-Brown 1952): it is conventional and not meant to cause offence. Insults such as *hijo de puta* and *maricón*, in (12), also appear to form part of the play frame on such occasions:

(12) E (customer)/B (bartender)

E8: *Sí/ sí/ ándate con ojo// que te pongo también a ti una multa*

'Yes, yes, you'd^T better be careful as I can give you^T a fine too'

B13: *Pero no era que tú no multabas/ ¿hijo de puta↓?*

'But didn't you^T say you^T didn't deal with fines, son of a bitch?'

E9: *Anda ya/ maricón→/ dime qué te debo ↑*

'Come^T on, you^T faggot, tell^T me how much I owe you^T'

Such exchange of insults illustrates a kind of male humour, reminiscent of Labov's (1972) ritual insults among young male adults in New York, where the participation frame in which they are exchanged makes it clear to participants that the insults are not to be taken at face value.¹⁰

Bartenders are also good at noticing changes of mood in their customers. In (13), for instance, the bartender produces a type of

how-are-you enquiry to a customer (B2), showing that he has noticed that he is somewhat worried. This enquiry leads him to ascertain what his customer's trouble is (A3, A4), which, in turn, gives him the opportunity to convey solidarity by showing disbelief and horror at his customer's plight (*¡Qué horror!*). The customer provides further details, and in (B6) the bartender once more displays empathy and affiliation with his customer when he says *vaya, ¡qué chungo!*:

(13) A (customer)/B (bartender)

B1: *Un café/ ¿no/ Paco↑?*

'One coffee, is that right Paco?'

A1: *Sí/ por favor→*

'Yes, please'

B2: *¿Qué pasa con esa cara↑? ¿Tenemos mal día↑?*

'What's with the long face? Are we having a bad day?'

A2: *Sí/ mal día↓ ...*

'Yes, a bad day ...'

B3: *¿Y eso↑?*

'And why is that?'

A3: *Una multa↓*

'A fine'

B4: *Vaya ... ¿y cuánto↑?*

'Oh no ... how much?'

A4: *¿Cuánto↑? ¡Ciento ochenta euros la multa↑!*

'How much? One hundred and eighty euros the fine was!'

B5: *¿Ciento ochenta↑? ¡Qué horror↑! ¿y eso cómo ha sido↑?*

'One hundred and eighty? How awful! And how did that happen?'

A5: *Nada/ que aparqué malamente↓ // Es que fue cuando el partido del Betis→*

'It's just that I didn't park properly. It was during the Betis'¹¹ match'

B6: *Vaya/ ¡qué chungo↑!*

'Oh no, that was really nasty!'

Bartenders in the interactions examined are also good at remembering where they left off when last they saw different customers. In (14), the bartender enquires about the health of his customer's friend or relative (B3), thus displaying interest in his customer's social relations. He receives a reply in (A4) that suggests that the person in question, who is in hospital, is gradually improving as he is soon to be released from some kind of specialist unit. In B4 the bartender changes the interactional frame from a serious to a play frame by suggesting that the patient will soon be back at the bar causing trouble as before, thus jokingly expressing optimism about his recovery. This optimism is shared by the customer in A5, who expresses agreement with the bartender's assessment and adds to the joking exchanges by specifying the kind of trouble that the patient will create when he returns, given his enthusiasm for a particular football club (... *dando guerra con el Betis*...). Through these

humorous exchanges, the bartender and customer converge in their assessment of the condition of the patient, their optimism about his recovery and their wish to see him well soon:

(14) A (customer)/B (bartender)

B3: *Oye// ¿qué tal va el enfermo↑? Cuéntame/ cuéntame↑*

'Listen^T, how is the invalid doing? Tell^T me about it, tell^T me'

A4: *Va bien/ poco a poco va mejorando/ ya la semana que viene lo bajan a planta*

'He's doing well, gradually getting better. Next week he'll be moved down to the ward already'

B4: *Sí/ dentro de poco ya está aquí otra vez/ dando guerra→*

'Yes, and he'll soon be back here getting on our nerves'

A5: *Eso↓ / dando guerra con el Betis para arriba y el Betis para abajo↓*

'That's right, getting on our nerves with Betis here and Betis there'

B5: *Sí/ a ver si lo vemos pronto→*

'Yes, we hope to see him soon'

A6: *A ver/ a ver→*

'Let's hope so, let's hope so'

The bar at breakfast time also seems to be a place for light-hearted whingeing for both customers and bartenders.¹² In (15), the bartender starts a whingeing sequence by complaining about the amount of work they have had that day (B1), and is joined in the whingeing by another bartender in D1 for whom there is so much work that it is almost a crying matter. The play frame is marked in B2 by the exaggerated remark the bartender makes – that they have had about 3000 customers – and is followed by laughter. Both customer and bartenders develop further talk within this frame and end up philosophising about the role of crying and laughter in everyday life (D4, A6):

(15) A (customer)/B (bartender)/D (bartender)

B1: *¡Qué de trabajo↑!*

'So much work!'

A1: *¿Muchos clientes hoy↑?*

'Many customers today?'

B2: *Sí↓ / ¡unos tres mil! [laughter]*

'Yes, about three thousand' [laughter]

D1: *Sí↑ / ¡qué trabajo! / ess– ¡¿para llorar?!*

'Yes, there's so much work that I feel like crying'

A2: *Ya no estamos en FERIA↑ / ¿eh?*

'Remember that we are no longer in the FERIA¹³ season'

D2: *¿Por qué?*

'Why?'

A3: *Que ya→ / no estamos en FERIA ya→ / podemos llorar/ ya→ / ¡porque no estamos en FERIA*

'I said that we are no longer in the FERIA season so we can now cry'

[...]

D4: *Hay momentos para todo↑ / algunos para reír y otros para llorar↓ // nos toca reír / y nos reímos↓ / nos toca llorar / y lloramos↓ // así somos↓*

'There are appropriate times for everything, for laughing and for crying; when it's time to laugh we laugh, when it's time to cry we cry. That's the way we are'

[...]

A6: *... siempre es mejor reír que llorar→ / pero no demasiado↓*

'... it's always better to laugh than to cry, but we shouldn't laugh too much'

It is interesting to see also how forcefully customers and bartenders express their opinions and their disagreement with each other, as in A6 above, without causing offence. Such a style of self-affirmation, according to Thurén's (1988) study on gender relations in a neighbourhood in Valencia, is expected in friendly situations where it is important to display one's personality by trying to convince others of what one really thinks.¹⁴ The assertive expression of personality, however, may not necessarily be specific to Spanish culture, but to 'third places' where people feel at ease to express themselves freely, as if 'at home' (Oldenburg 1989).

A final example of individualised rapport-building talk is an enquiry by the bartender in (16) about his customer's plans for the weekend (B3), which elicits whingeing/joking about women dominating men, to which the bartender also contributes:

(16) A (customer)/B (bartender)

B3: *Pedro→ ¿qué vas a hacer este fin de semana↑?*

'Pedro, what are you^T doing this weekend?'

A3: *Pues no sé → / a lo mejor voy a la playa ↑ // como hace ya buen tiempo →*

'Well, I don't know. I might go the beach since the weather is good'

B4: *¿No vas a ir a jugar al futbito↑?*

'Aren't you^T going to play five-a-side?'

A4: *No ↓ // porque la parienta se quiere ir a la playa ↓ //*

'No, because the missus wants to go to the beach'

B6: *Total↑ / que lo que diga la parienta → /*

'Whatever the missus says'

A6: *Pues claro → / tío ↓ // las mujeres llevan siempre los pantalones [laughter]*

'Of course, mate. Women always wear the trousers' [laughter]

More specifically, in A4, the customer talks about his forthcoming weekend activities being constrained by his wife, referred to in an impersonal but joking manner as *la parienta* ('the missus', literally, 'the female relative'). The bartender shows that he understands his customer's 'predicament', presenting it in B6 as a general rule that a wife's wishes must be respected. The customer concurs saying in A6 that women are the ones who 'wear the trousers'. This admission that men are resigned to having a supposedly subordinate position vis-à-vis women leads to laughter

(B6). This is a type of whingeing/joking among men that also appears in other sociocultural contexts in the Spanish-speaking world (cf. Placencia 2008b).

Conclusions

We have provided a number of examples of a range of conversational activities in interactions between customers and bartenders in bars in Seville at breakfast time that go beyond the business exchange. They include ritualistic and individualised creative forms that show that considerable attention is paid to rapport-building in interactions in that environment. In fact, the service encounters in these bars often resemble a *tertulia*, or 'chat among friends', where interest is taken in the other person's private life, personal disclosures are made, and so forth. And yet, the interchanges in the interactions examined here are mostly about mundane rather than any serious or particularly intimate matters. This appears to be in line with Knapp's (1978: 111) observation that 'small talk is characterized by breadth, not depth'. Through these rather mundane activities, though, different identities are brought to the fore, relationships are confirmed and channels are kept open for further interaction.

Local bars seemingly offer a place for casual socialising at breakfast, and other, times. The regularity of contact is one enabling factor. As Oldenburg (1989: 33–4) stresses, it is the regulars who 'give the place its character' and 'set the tone of conviviality'. Social talk between bartenders and customers is also facilitated by spatial, temporal and structural factors. Regarding the former, it has been argued that the setting of service encounters can encourage or impede (social) talk (McCarthy 2000, Mitchell 1957). Bars in Spain tend to have wide counters around which customers sit or stand in close proximity to each other and to the bartenders, a habit which encourages and facilitates talking. Concerning temporal aspects (cf. McCarthy 2000), the nature of the encounter also facilitates social talk in that no matter how small the order is, it takes some time to prepare and consume. There is thus time for talk beyond the transaction. This is unlike briefer service encounters such as those at the baker's, where the products are ready at hand and the encounters can be very swift (Placencia 2005), giving room for fleeting relationships only.¹⁵ Finally, the structure of the service encounters under investigation, in which payment is made after consumption, ensures that customers and bartenders engage in further talk before the encounter is completed.

It is noteworthy, too, that bartenders and most customers in our study are neither intimates (although they may give the appearance of being so) nor strangers. Instead, they seem to occupy an intermediate position – being in what Wolfson (1988) called 'the bulge'. This seems to encourage social talk/rapport promotion. Interactions among participants in the bulge have been found to require more interpersonal effort than interactions at both extremes of the bulge (cf. Placencia 1997). Silence among strangers in service encounters (and intimates in other contexts) is acceptable (or may even be desirable), but is less so among participants in the bulge. Not being talkative in this context would be regarded as unfriendly. Yet another related factor is the expectation of continuity in the relationship among the regular customers and service providers (e.g. in the university environment in the case examined here), unlike the environment with passing customers.

Regarding the functions of rapport-building talk in the context examined, these appear to be multiple, including social, psychological and material aspects (Morrill and Snow 2005). By projecting a friendly and upbeat image through humour and avoiding 'wallow[ing] in pity over misfortunes' (Oldenburg 1989: 25–6), bartenders contribute to creating a relaxed, fun atmosphere where customers can feel free to talk and unwind.¹⁶ Conversely, small/rapport-building talk appears to be a vital form of talk for bartenders at their workplace in terms not only of securing continued custom but also in terms of adding some interest/fun to their work.

Finally, the extent to which the talk considered here can be described as an Andalusian or Spanish practice more generally,¹⁷ or how it differs from talk in bars in other sociocultural contexts, are issues for future investigation.¹⁸ While the literature (on politeness) has tended to portray Spaniards as positive-politeness oriented in general (cf. Haverkate 1994, 2004, Hickey 1991, Vázquez Orta 1995), and Andalusians as being loquacious (Hernández López and Placencia 2004, Narbona Jiménez et al. 1998), in this study we have highlighted, among other things, the fact that interactants' interpersonal history naturally plays a role in the use of affiliation/positive politeness in service encounters. Customers and service providers in bars in a university environment seem to have (relatively) long relationship histories, developed through regularity of contact, which provide plenty of conversational material. Histories in contexts where there is no regularity of contact appear to be non-existent or limited, thus restricting the kind of talk that can take place during service encounters. What is more, the ethos of the bar/caféteria may also play a role. In this respect, it would

be interesting to examine whether foreign chains like Starbucks also constitute a 'third place' for public sociality and the construction of the transaction as a sociable event rather than a mere service exchange.

Notes

1. This chapter builds on a presentation at the II Linguistic Impoliteness And Rudeness (LIAR) Conference, Lancaster 2009. We are grateful to the reviewers and to Dr Lorenzo-Dus for their valuable comments.
2. Such activities may also, of course, perform other functions.
3. These include interactions at the hairdresser's (e.g. De los Heros and Montes 2008, McCarthy 2000, Placencia 2007); at the baker's (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005); at the chemist's (Callahan 2006, Hernández López and Placencia 2004), in supermarkets (Kuiper and Flindall 2000) and in other kinds of shops (e.g. Antonopoulou 2001, Callahan 2006, Kong 1998, Placencia 2004, Traverso 2007).
4. Not all interactions proceed in a linear manner, as they can become intermixed with other interactions, and sometimes other customers interrupt.
5. Transcription conventions correspond to those developed in Briz (1998) and Briz et al. (2002). Additionally, in the translations, ^T is used to mark *tú* address, ^V is used to mark *usted* address; and ^D to mark use of a diminutive.
6. By contrast, in the environment where the customers are passing, there were only two instances of individualised talk beyond the transaction: one when a bartender tripped and fell down and a customer expressed concern, the other one, when a customer requested a particular drink and made a self-disclosure about her health as an explanation of her request (cf. Mancera Rueda and Placencia, in press).
7. El Corte Inglés is a large department store chain in Spain. While its name (literally, the English cut/style) alludes to English style of couture, the chain is an icon for Spanish lifestyle and fashion.
8. A *bombón* is a very sweet mixture of coffee and condensed milk.
9. *Moreno/a*, a compliment commonly used in southern Spain, alludes to what one may refer to as a Latin beauty – brown eyes and dark hair and skin.
10. In the Spanish-speaking world, the use of taboo words as insults, with an affiliative function, has also been mainly linked to youth/teenage talk (cf. Stenström 2008, Zimmerman 2002).
11. The (Real) Betis (Balompié S.A.D.) is one of the two main football clubs in Seville; the other one is Sevilla. There is intense competition between the two clubs and their supporters.
12. Clyne (1994: 49) defines whingeing as 'long or repeated expression of discontent not necessarily intended to change or improve the unsatisfactory situation'. He observes that whinges are 'very common in work situations' and that they 'promote an outlet for emotions and can be regarded as a type of phatic communication' (1994: 50). See also Boxer (1993).
13. The Seville *Feria* is a week of celebrations with entertainment, dancing, drinking and eating that takes place two weeks after Easter.
14. Concerning self-affirmation as a trait of the communicative style of Spaniards, see also Bravo (1999), Fant (1989), Hernández Flores (1999), Hickey (2005) and Lorenzo-Dus (2007), among others.
15. Morrill and Snow (2005: 17–18) propose a continuum of interpersonal relationships that goes from the 'fleeting', or transient in character, to the 'anchored'. The latter refer to relationships 'anchored in more durable emotional and behavioural interdependencies', yet 'tied to a particular place' as in the relationships of regulars at a bar epitomised in the American TV series *Cheers*.
16. This latter function made headlines in 2009 when a bar in Cullera (Valencia, Spain) encouraged customers to use insults during service transactions to help them deal with the stresses and strains of the recession, thus explicitly promoting bar talk as a kind of therapy. 'Dame una cerveza, imbécil! Un bar de Cullera quiere insultos', *Reuters España*, 18 June 2009, <http://www.es.reuters.com/article/.../idESMAE55H00320090618> (last accessed June 2009).
17. Native speakers from northern and central Spain have commented that the *cachondeo* in service encounters (and possibly other contexts) is much more prevalent in Andalucía than in other regions in Spain. This possibly fits with Hickey's (2005: 320) observation that Southerners in Spain are 'more positive-polite and effusive' than Northerners.
18. For instance, a newspaper interview in the *Saturday Guardian* with a bartender in a Manchester pub points to some possible similarities and differences ('A Working Life: the Bartender', *Work, Saturday Guardian*, 11 July 1999).