The Struggle for Meaning

Immigration and Multilingual Talk in an Institutional Setting

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Introduction

This is one of the first studies to address issues of language and immigration in Spain. Existing work provides sociological, demographic and anthropological accounts, but for the first time, the new social realities brought about by the arrival of non-European immigration are considered from a micro-linguistic perspective. This study analyses key communicative situations in the lives and experiences of immigrants, and tries to draw conclusions about their process of incorporation into Catalan and Spanish society. The context is unique, and difficult to access. It is an immigration office in the city of Barcelona. The nature of this site enables researchers to get a glimpse of how adequately a state institution, through the work of its individual bureaucrats, copes with the challenges posed by the arrival of ethnically and linguistically diverse speakers.

Percentages of immigration in Spain are still low if compared with other European countries, but not as low as they used to be in the early 1990s. In some areas, like Catalonia, registered immigrants amount to almost five percent of its total population. The present historical moment is crucial for the future of intercultural relations in our country. Prospective social harmony is contingent upon the ways in which, as a society, we manage to understand diversity as a fundamental aspect of citizenship. Immigrants' opportunities for incorporation into Catalan and Spanish society depend largely on material and symbolic factors. Language is key in gaining access to both types of resources.

Language use plays a fundamental role in creating spaces for participation. Immigrants' sense of social position, that is, whether they feel included or excluded in the social arena, emerges as a result of their situated experiences in social events. These occasions of interaction with members of the recipient society are at least partially constituted in language. This highlights the relevance of the study presented here. Linguistic practices do not just reflect the broader contextual dimensions in which they are embedded, but they continually reproduce them. Particular unequal

representations of the social world are sustained and reinforced in situated communication.

This study takes a critical approach. It highlights the unequal distribution of resources in society, and tries to uncover the linguistic mechanisms which aggravate the already peripheral position of immigrants in the social sphere. On a macro-societal level, the analysis of an immigration office shows how both institutional and individual power is exercised through talk. While state bureaucracies in Spain have long been known for their inadequacies and inefficient information providing practices, in the case of immigrants these practices accentuate the grim social conditions they endure. For the majority, access to social services, employment, decent housing, schooling, and health care is not straightforward.

The broad research question this thesis aims to answer is what the examination of situated activities and language use in a state immigration office can tell us with regard to the ways in which public institutions are or are not facilitating the incorporation of immigrants into Spanish social life. More specifically, it seeks to discover whether the treatment, linguistic and otherwise, that immigrants receive is appropriate, and respects their fundamental rights as individuals.

The study focuses on multilingual encounters, in which speakers, mainly of South Asian origin, strive to communicate meaning. Most of the time this is accomplished in English, although a few other languages are occasionally employed. Immigrants' limited linguistic skills add complexity to the research question posed. It is in the light of communication difficulties that certain social and discursive processes become foregrounded. To make the broad research question presented manageable, a few major themes have been considered in detail. They are relevant to the specific nature of the site and the data gathered.

The first topic investigated is asymmetries of knowledge between speakers, that is, essentially the ways in which institutional information is represented discursively, and the extent to which it is open to negotiation. Information is vital in this institutional context, because what is at stake is the outcome of immigrants' applications for legalisation. The analysis of the process of information provision is complex. It requires the simultaneous investigation of both the institutional order of

Spanish bureaucratic practices, and the interactional order of participants' discursive strategies.

The second major theme is asymmetries of power, and the ways in which these are drawn upon to control the unfolding of the exchange, prevent co-participants from having access to valuable information, and define a social and moral order in which immigrants' behaviour is strictly controlled. The issue of immigrants' linguistic resources is clearly relevant to both themes. The amount of detailed information about the bureaucratic procedure they are able to gather depends on how capable they are of requesting further information, negotiating meaning and contesting inconsistent institutional messages. As regards power, its exercise tends to hinge on the existence of structural linguistic asymmetries which are reinforced rather than balanced out.

Another main focus of interest of the study is the conflictive relations between the state and the individual. In the case of immigrants, the state exercises social control by regulating their access to scarce socio-economic resources. This is basically accomplished through the approval or rejection of work permit applications. In the case of public bureaucrats, by contrast, their position is defined by numerous contradictions. They are the face of the institution, and have to carry its policies through, regardless of how fair and democratic they consider them to be.

Finally, this study also concentrates on the linguistic and interactional strategies mobilised by the different social actors to achieve their goals. From the perspective of language use, the situations of communication presented are particularly relevant because they are oriented to the demand and provision of information. As a verbal service, information is communicated, but also concealed, negotiated and contested through linguistic means. Immigrants' access to information is difficult because of their limited linguistic skills in Spanish, and the fact that institutional provisions in their native languages are very limited. The role of global languages, like French or English, to facilitate communication is fundamental. Immigrants' proficiency in these languages indicates the importance of the colonial legacy in their countries of origin, and in some cases, their idiosyncratic

migration routes, which often include periods of residence in different European countries.

In order to provide a contextually-rich account of participants' linguistic practices, this thesis integrates the analysis of different types of data. The empirical basis on which claims are made is a corpus of twenty hours of face-to-face service interactions involving foreign immigrants and local bureaucrats. The core goal of these interactions is the provision of information. The study focuses on those exchanges in which speakers draw on their multilingual repertoires to construct their interactional contributions. In most of the exchanges studied, English is employed, either by immigrant information seekers or by institutional representatives. Interactional data is supplemented by ethnographic information material and interviews with the actors involved.

On a methodological level, this is an interpretive study which aims to integrate micro- and macro-levels of analysis. The approach to the understanding of the macro-societal level is critical, and draws on concepts from contemporary social theory. Giddens' notion of *structuration* (1979, 1984) provides the link between situated activity and social processes. Bourdieu's concept of *resources* (1991) highlights the ways in individuals' opportunities for social action are constrained by their limited access to certain forms of capital. The ways in which the notion of power is conceptualised draws on Foucault's image of the web (Gordon 1980) and on his understanding of power as largely "productive" (Fraser 1989). It is also based on the relationship established by Giddens between routine, agency and power.

The detailed analysis of face-to-face communication is influenced by the postulates of different authors and methods. Particularly important are Goffman's notion of the *interaction order* (1983), Gumperz' concept of *contextualization* (1982a, 1992b), later refined by Auer and di Luzio (1992) and Duranti and Goodwin (1992), and the technical analyses of talk-in-interaction undertaken by conversation analysts (Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998; and ten Have 1998 among others). As regards the status of the data as institutional communication, the approach adopted follows Sarangi and Roberts' "integrative" perspective (1999a). Goffman's theatrical metaphors (1959) to account for conduct in public

establishments are also useful to explain a number of the discursive phenomena observed.

The present thesis is organised in eight chapters. At the end of each chapter, the main topics discussed are summarised. Chapter One aims to relate the investigation presented to past and current research in the area. Since there are numerous antecedents to this work, a thematic rationale has been adopted for selecting the traditions reviewed. Chapter Two presents the interdisciplinary theoretical backdrop of the study. It introduces the main concepts from critical social theory which have been used to understand the ways in which social life is organised and social change enabled. The empirical basis for the claims about social processes made in this thesis comes from the fine-grained examination of interactional data. For this reason, the main concepts from the traditions of study of face-to-face communication drawn upon in this investigation are also presented. Finally, this chapter outlines the approach adopted for the analysis of the interactions presented as instances of institutional communication.

Chapter Three situates the data gathered in its socio-historical and political circumstances. First, it outlines some of the characteristics of economic immigration to Spain, with special reference to Catalonia and Barcelona. Second, it reviews the Spanish legal framework on foreign residency and immigration, and examines the numerous changes it has undergone in recent years. This provides the political framing of the interactions presented, which were gathered during an exceptional campaign of legalisation of immigrants organised by the Spanish government in the year 2000. The unfolding of the campaign and its consequences are examined in the last section of this chapter.

Chapter Four is devoted to methodological considerations. The first sections discuss the process of fieldwork. In particular, they explore the numerous challenges the study of immigration in institutional settings poses for researchers. That is followed by a description of the research site, the participant groups involved, and the types of data gathered. The following section focuses on the process of data collection. Finally, the main difficulties encountered during the processes of transcription and coding, and the ways in which they were solved, are presented.

Chapter Five is meant to frame the analysis undertaken in the ensuing chapters, and to facilitate the comprehension of the data presented. The first part focuses on the sequential organisation of the encounters analysed. The main social activities are exemplified and described in detail. The second part outlines the bureaucratic procedure defined by the institution to handle immigrants' applications for legalisation. A depiction of the different administrative stages applications go through, together with the institutional labels they receive, is provided. Finally, a brief characterisation of the ways in which all this information is represented interactionally is introduced.

Chapter Six focuses on the process of information exchange, and examines the institutional conditionings of bureaucrats' linguistic practices. From a critical perspective, it analyses the different types of responses immigrants are provided with, and assesses their information value in the light of immigrants' needs. Emphasis is placed on the examination of the important consequences of a change in the institution's policy for providing information. This change, which strains social relationships in the office, exemplifies the way in which bureaucrats endure and at the same time exert institutional power.

Chapter Seven examines the process of information exchange as it unfolds in interaction. It explores immigrants' discursive reactions to the information provided. The different strategies of contestation mobilised to try to uncover more details about their applications are exemplified. Finally, the chapter examines the strategies devised by institutional representatives to cope with both immigrants' challenging moves and the pressures of the institution.

Chapter Eight discusses the ways in which bureaucrats' exert individual power in interaction. Information is no longer the centre of the argument. The chapter focuses on bureaucrats' attempts at defining a closely regulated social and moral order. These attempts are instantiated in various ways, from the tight control over conversational organisation to language choice.

The conclusions summarise the main claims of the study. They highlight the implications of the discursive practices presented for understanding the ways in which public institutions are or are not making space for the incorporation of

immigrants into the fabric of Spanish social life. A list of works cited is provided in the reference section.

Appendix A contains a collection of fieldwork materials. The documents enclosed are the letters written to obtain permission from the different sites researched, relevant institutional forms, and the information booklet published by the institution about the exceptional legalisation campaign of immigrants examined. Appendix B contains three tables with detailed information about the corpus gathered. Appendix C presents the interview data used for the present study. Appendix D gives information on transcription conventions and presents the transcripts on which the present thesis is based.

1

Minority speakers in immigrant contexts

It is impossible to locate the antecedents of this work in a single research tradition. This study draws on work in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, linguistic anthropology, critical approaches to discourse, and intercultural communication research among others. The fundamental theoretical and methodological premises of the study are outlined in the following chapter. The aim of this chapter is to frame the investigation presented within past and present research so that its scientific relevance is foregrounded.

It would be unfeasible to attempt to review all the studies that are in some way or other in the background of this research project. I have limited my undertaking to a couple of thematic areas in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis to which the work presented here is particularly relevant. These are studies related to the social interaction of ethnically diverse speakers in Western societies on the one hand, and to research on institutional discourse on the other. They are also the two foci of interest in this thesis. However, it is always complicated to classify a specific piece of research unequivocally. Most of the studies reviewed in this chapter follow more than one line of inquiry. They are classified according to the thematic component that they highlight. The most relevant similarities and differences between these studies and my own research are identified at the end of each section.

The chapter is divided into four parts. The first part presents a number of studies centred on the detailed sociolinguistic investigation of verbal interactions between ethnic minority speakers and members of the host society. These studies belong to somewhat different traditions, but they all share a critical perspective on inter-group relations, power, and socio-linguistic asymmetries. In the second section, the tradition of analysis of public discourse on immigration is reviewed. Thirdly, the field of institutional discourse studies is briefly examined. Finally, some of the main research currents connected with immigration within the Catalan and Spanish contexts are presented.

Institutional contexts and verbal interaction

Four lines of research are presented in this section. All of them are concerned with the analysis of verbal interactions involving speakers of immigrant origin and members of the recipient society. All the studies reviewed here share a concern with issues of social inequality, racial and ethnic discrimination, equal opportunities, and social justice. Methodologically, they all focus on the fine-grained examination of talk as the way to unveil the subtle mechanisms through which social inequality is constructed along ethnic lines. The studies in this section maintain the centrality of linguistic practices in the constitution of social life, and the role of language use in reflecting and creating the social context. Local, evanescent talk is the social space in which asymmetrical social relations are reinforced or challenged, linguistic resources valued or discredited, and social change prevented or made possible. A critical perspective is shared by all researchers. They all problematise the relationship between language and social life. Finally, a common feature to all studies is that they examine talk in institutional settings. Institutions are the social arenas in which individuals' life chances are decided. They are thus crucial sites for the examination of the ways in which social justice –or injustice– is constructed.

Interpretive sociolinguistics and gatekeeping encounters

The research tradition presented in this first section is particularly relevant to this thesis for a number of reasons. First of all, it was the first tradition to examine issues of linguistic diversity and social inequality from an interactional perspective. The work undertaken in this area served to unearth the discursive origin of subtle practices of ethnic discrimination. Secondly, research within this tradition focuses on formal occasions of talk embedded in institutional contexts. What is at stake in all these encounters is minority speakers' access to valuable socio-economic resources. For the first time, the connection was established between details of speech and speakers' real-life opportunities. Culturally specific modes of behaviour in interaction are matters not just of difference but of disadvantage, given the power differential existing between interlocutors in institutional contexts. Thirdly, the

ethnic community that has usually been focused upon in these studies is the community of South Asians living in the United Kingdom.

Research on interethnic communication within the interactional paradigm began in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the seminal work of John Gumperz (1982a, 1982b). It has since been pursued by a number of researchers (Roberts and Sayers 1987; Gumperz and Roberts 1991; Hinnenkamp 1991; Meeuwis 1994;[1] Tyler 1994, Roberts and Sarangi 1995; Sarangi 1996). Most research has focused on gatekeeping encounters. The notion of *gatekeeping*, first coined by Erickson and Schultz (1982), refers to those social situations in which an institutional representative decides, within the constraints of the organisation s/he works for, whether a given individual should be allowed "through the gate", that is, should be given access to limited resources and opportunities. When these gatekeeping interviews happen to be interethnic, that is, when the gatekeeper belongs to the majority social group and the interviewee belongs to an ethnic minority, there is strong potential for discrimination to occur.

The data analysed in those studies consists of tape-recorded and sometimes video-recorded interactions. It has to be pointed out that in many cases the interactional data presented is not naturally-occurring, but semi-spontaneous, as in Roberts and Sayers (1987), Roberts and Sarangi (1995) and Sarangi (1996). This is, in my view, one of the shortcomings of these studies. Interpretation is aided by researchers' access to participants' retrospective comments on each other's contributions. To highlight the hidden nature of interpretive processes, many of these studies focus on minority speakers who have a high degree of proficiency in the language in which the interaction unfolds (Gumperz 1982b). The goal is to show the extent to which speakers rely on socio-cultural knowledge to make judgements about each other's communicative intent. These are processes that operate on a subconscious level, which explains why, in spite of participants' repeated attempts, they often fail to achieve a common communicative frame for the interaction (Gumperz and Roberts 1991). Because of the highly conventionalised and culture-

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[1] Meeuwis (1994:392) maintains that Gumperz' work on interethnic communication is responsible for the boom in intercultural discourse research. He states that "the extent of his influence is such that we can safely speak of a well-established research tradition within the study of cross-cultural encounters".

specific nature of certain types of gatekeeping encounters, such as job interviews, interviewers rarely engage in metadiscursive talk about, for example, what is expected from interviewees. Awkward moments, such as those resulting from non- or misunderstandings and the applicant's lack of relevance, can be due to mismatches in schemata and interactional frames. These elements have to do with participants' expectations as to social roles, social activities, language style and register, social relationships, appropriate moves and such like. When the performace of less-proficient applicants is examined, as in Roberts and Sayers (1987), the analysis centres on the ways in which speakers' differing socio-cultural background knowledge and the minority speaker's non-standard second language grammar interact to make discursive synchrony even more difficult.

An interesting issue raised by this type of work is the question of what it means to treat all candidates equally. Some of the interviewers reported in Robert and Sayers (1987) believe that equal treatment can be achieved by ignoring minority speakers' language difficulties. This has, in fact, opposite effects. When institutional representatives attempt to overlook candidates' linguistic problems, they look for justification of their decisions elsewhere. Thus, they attribute negative impressions to candidates' personal attitudes or general intelligence. What distinguishes most of these studies is that the gatekeepers and institutions involved are concerned about the potential for discrimination that gatekeeping situations entail. An instance of this is Roberts and Sayers' analysis (1987), which was undertaken as part of a government-funded training course for equal opportunity. The objective of the researchers was to unveil the hidden mechanisms whereby ethnic discrimination is unwillingly practiced, as interviewers are in most cases unable to pin down the factors that led them to make a specific decision about a candidate. Frequently, their negative impressions of applicants can be traced back to the emergence of uncomfortable moments in the interaction.

In the 1990s, the analysis of gatekeeping encounters involving South Asians and white native-born British in the United Kingdom pursued related but somewhat different research interests. Roberts and Sarangi (1995), for example, try to illustrate how, within the tightly regulated social space of the classroom and the job interview,

gatekeepers' local discursive practices may make room for minority speakers' negotiation of their social identities. The authors examine these two types of gatekeeping situations to throw new light onto the ways in which individual agency and creativity are possible in fairly constrained social activitites. In both contexts, decisions are made as to participants' suitability. Gatekeepers' assessments are the result of the interaction between objective criteria, like academic performance or work experience, and subjective evaluations of candidates' identity. Roberts and Sarangi combine notions from Gumperz' interpretive sociolinguistics, such as rhetorical strategies, with Bourdieu's notion of "the game" (1991). The game is a metaphor for the ritualised activities of everyday life. The rules of the game are usually established by members of the dominant group. The study investigates the extent to which, in the contexts mentioned above, gatekeepers allow the subversion or questioning of the rules, and so the local enactment of social change. An interesting aspect of this study is the conceptualisation of teachers as gatekeepers, in their professional roles both as assessors of student work and as creators of appropriate conditions for learning. In the two classroom contexts studied, the respective teachers use totally different linguistic routines. These routines work to create more or less open social spaces where the number of allowable discourses and identities varies considerably. Whereas in one of the classrooms, students must either conform to the rules of the game or they will not succeed, in the other, more ambiguous, fluid and egalitarian social relationships are enacted. This social environment is assumed to enhance students' success. In the job interview situation, one of the interviewees manages to stretch the boundaries of the social activity by creating an identity for herself which draws on the emotional and solidarity bonds she establishes with her ethnic minority interviewers. The study illustrates how it is possible for majority group members to create social and discursive space for minority speakers' negotiation of roles and identities.

Sarangi (1996) examines job interviews and social service encounters between young Asians and white British gatekeepers. He tries to go beyond previous research on gatekeeping by spelling out the limitations of "activity-based analyses of communicative mismatches", that is, interactional and linguistic analyses that

highlight differences in participants' culture and discursive style. For Sarangi, researchers need to go beyond the immediate context of interaction and explore the societal and ideological orders in which majority-minority interactions are embedded. He exemplifies it by examining some of the resources minority speakers draw upon to articulate their discursive behaviour in institutional talk. He shows how South Asians conceptualise the behaviour of British gatekeepers in terms of cultural stereotyping. In other words, they tend to see gatekeepers as representatives of the dominant social group rather than as representatives of the institution. Unfavourable treatment or decisions are attributed to bureaucrats' discriminatory practices against clients' ethnicity. This practice obscures the conflictual relationships that often obtain between bureaucrats and clients, as well as between bureaucrats and the institutions they represent. Finally, Sarangi draws his attention to the reasons that might motivate immigrants to interpret institutional encounters in terms of ethnic conflict. He argues that negative "other"-stereotyping is a strategy of positive self-presentation. By appealing to bureaucrats' discriminatory practices, the voices of the "insignificant others" (1996:361) manage to be heard. Whatever participants' reasons, the study unveils some of the background assumptions and considerations individuals of immigrant origin bring to intercultural encounters of an institutional nature.

The most recent work on gatekeeping interactions is Roberts and Sarangi (1999). They present a study of oral examinations oriented to granting membership of a professional body. As with other studies reviewed previously, the institution was concerned about the potential for discrimination in their oral interview examinations. The researchers were called in as consultants. This gave them unrestricted access to different data sources.[2] One of the most interesting aspects of this research work is the holistic approach adopted by the investigators. Instead of focusing on the ways in which ethnic minority candidates did not conform to expectations in terms of conduct, Roberts and Sarangi centre their study on understanding the social activity of the oral interview in a global sense. Their goal is

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[2] The effect on data gathering of researching committed institutions and individuals is discussed in more detail on page 19.

to discover what it is in the interview that contains a potential for discrimination against minority candidates to take place. The answer is the hybrid nature of these interactions. The investigators indentify three modes of talk, professional, personal experience, and institutional. They are interconnected and combined in the interview in unexpected and complex ways. This hybridity is in itself difficult for participants to handle but may pose particular problems for ethnic minority candidates. In such cases, the hybridity of modes of talk may compound mismatches of background expectations or communicative style.

In conclusion, the detailed sociolinguistic investigation of social situations of gatekeeping continues to be a very influential research tradition. Gumperz' research endeavours laid the ground for subsequent critical analyses of institutional communication involving ethnically diverse speakers. Likewise, they have inspired the work presented in this thesis in two ways. Thematically, the links are obvious. Methodologically, my study comes close to some of the later works reviewed (Roberts and Sarangi 1995; Sarangi 1996; Roberts and Sarangi 1999). However, I wish to take my own analysis one step further. As Heller (2001a) indicates, one of the shortcomings of the interactional sociolinguistics tradition is that researchers fail to employ their findings concerning the mechanisms of production and reproduction of social inequality to "develop critiques of the world immediately around us". This is a central objective of this thesis.

Language use and ethnicity

The aim of the second section is to examine work carried out in Britain on the linguistic practices of adolescents in interracial friendship groups. The focus is on the research conducted by Rampton (1995, 2001) on language *crossing*, that is, the use by inner city adolescents of language varieties typically associated with a different ethnic group. Language plays a fundamental role in these adolescents' negotiation of group membership and social identity. The study has an ethnographic orientation, and combines extensive fieldwork with detailed examinations of tape-recorded interactional data. In line with the study presented here, Rampton's work tries to link the micro-sociolinguistic investigation of social activities and talk with broader

political and social concerns. Rampton centres his study on the analysis of local contexts of talk among a specific group of speakers to understand the politics of ethnicity, racial discrimination and inter-group contact in a Western European society.

The settings examined by Rampton are connected with the school context, but unlike in most educational studies, his observations extend beyond the classroom. Informal meeting places, such as corridors, playgrounds and dining halls, are some of the settings in which the social activities analysed take place. One of the distinctive features of this study is that for the first time it focuses on youngsters of South Asian descent, whereas earlier work had dealt largely with Afro-Caribbeans. In addition, this study differs from previous work on interethnic communication in the United Kingdom in that it focuses not on public, formal gatekeeping interactions between strangers occupying different power positions, but rather on private, informal exchanges between teenagers who know each other well.

As regards linguistic diversity, in Rampton's study speakers are aware of their diverging language practices and make use of them in creative ways. By contrast, in the gatekeeping interactions reviewed previously, participants are mostly oblivious to the hidden features of each other's distinctive communication styles. This constructs negative categorisations and processes of stereotyping which result in discriminatory practices against ethnic minority speakers. Although my work has many elements in common with these institutionalised gatekeeping interactions, it shares with Rampton's work the assumption that "grand" social theoretical models cannot automatically predict speakers' behaviour in situated face-to-face communication. It is not possible to assume syntax-like standards of precision in the study of society (2001:262). Speakers make a creative use of the linguistic resources at hand to behave in ways which are unexpected if one attends to the dictates of reproductive social theory. In Rampton's work, for example, ethnicity is not a static notion that determines speakers' conduct, but a social construct that is open to redefinition and subject to negotiation.

Second language acquisition

Another study that has contributed to making the daily reality of migrant workers visible to the scientific community is that of Bremer et al. (1996). Their goal is to examine language development in groups of foreign workers residing in several European cities. This research foregrounds the role of language as a social practice and of language learning as a social activity. The study tries to provide a social account of adult second language acquisition by focusing on the embeddedness of minority workers' language development within the wider socioeconomic contexts in which they are immersed. Thus, Bremer at al.'s book is an attempt to link local contexts of talk to broader social issues. The linguistic difficulties minority speakers in immigrant contexts face compound their already marginal social positions. The authors present their undertaking as a social perspective on second language acquisition, but unlike most research in this area, they use an interpretive approach to data analysis. The theoretical and methodological sources from which they draw are ethnography, interactional sociolinguistics and conversation analysis.

The focus is on talk produced in institutional encounters, because as the authors claim (1996:208), these are frequently the only opportunities minority speakers have to come into contact with the local population, and thus, to develop their communicative skills in the new language. Being able to communicate successfully in institutional contexts is crucial for immigrant workers. It is on these interactions, which are asymmetrical in many ways, that their life chances depend. The fundamental asymmetrical nature of these verbal exchanges is highlighted by the authors' use of the term gatekeeping to depict them. The local bureaucrat exercises his/her power to restrict immigrants' access to valuable socioeconomic resources, such as a job, housing, social security benefits, and so on. In addition, immigrants' experiences of unsuccessful communication in these encounters creates feelings of exclusion and discrimination, affects individuals' motivation and attitudes towards learning, and discourages intergroup contact.

Bremer et al.'s book focuses on understanding rather than on production. The development of understanding abilities has often been overlooked within second language acquisition research. The causes of difficulties in comprehension are to be

found not only in linguistic imbalances, but also in socio-cultural and power differences that structure encounters in hierarchical ways (1996:10). The perspective adopted is interactional. Understanding and misunderstanding are assumed to be dynamic, public and mutually constructed activities that cannot be dissociated from the business of being conversationally involved.

Difficulties in understanding may remain to a large extent hidden if minority speakers do not know how to signal deficient comprehension or are afraid of doing so. The role of the native participant is key in pre-empting and solving problems in understanding. To a large extent, the interactional behaviour of the native participant will determine the success or failure of the exchange (in terms of whether mutual understanding has been achieved or not). The study makes explicit recommendations on how to proceed interactionally for both the native and the non-native participant. One interesting aspect is that researchers examine the different levels that may affect understanding, from the purely linguistic level to the level of information structuring and framing of episodes within the exchange.

In the final chapter, the study takes a more critical stance. The authors review some of the issues raised from the perspective of critical social theory. Most of the topics presented are also developed in the present thesis. One major argument is the need to relate the analysis of local situated data to broader social concerns. Bremer et al. underscore the importance of examining institutional face-to-face contacts between immigrants and local bureaucrats to "work through the detail of how an interaction both reflects and sustains unequal power relations [...]" (1996:218). The ways in which power is exercised by the majority participant through discourse are discussed. Like the present thesis, Bremer et al.'s study detaches itself from deterministic positions on the reproduction of the social order by emphasising immigrants' instances of individual agency and creativity "in their use of resources both to function effectively and resist or attempt a resistance to social practices they will not submit to" (1996:220).

One of the weaknesses of this piece of research on immigrants' language acquisition processes is the nature of the data analysed. Because of the difficulties in gathering naturally-occurring data, the authors resort to simulated gatekeeping

exchanges. The influence of the set-up nature of the data on the interactive patterns observed cannot be underestimated. Another factor that surely had a bearing on the nature of the data is the fact that the gatekeepers whose behaviour is analysed had volunteered to collaborate in the project. Their conduct, beliefs and attitudes are likely to be significantly different from those of gatekeepers who are tape-recorded in authentic work contexts and who have no individual commitment to the research project. An advantage of using simulated interviews and volunteer gatekeepers and immigrants is that access to feedback data is simplified. This in turn facilitates the triangulation of data and enhances analytical reliability. In the case of the present study, the sensitive nature of the context studied put significant methodological limitations on data collection. My behaviour at the immigration office was conditioned by the numerous difficulties I encountered during fieldwork. For instance, I refrained from trying to obtain certain types of data, like feedback comments from immigrant clients, because I was wary of possible hostile reactions from institutional representatives.[3] Bremer et al. do not dwell upon methodological considerations in their study. My fieldwork experience, by contrast, is extensively discussed in Chapter 4. It has influenced the shape of the data in this thesis in significant ways.

Asylum seekers' narratives

The investigation of immigrants' narratives constitutes a new line of research into the ways in which social inequality is constructed along ethnic lines. Blommaert (2001) and Maryns and Blommaert (2002a, 2002b) analyse the narratives produced by asylum seekers in the Belgian context. Applications for asylum are assessed on the basis of the information furnished in asylum seekers' oral accounts. The mechanics of the procedure rests heavily on officials' impressionistic analyses of asylum seekers' narratives. In these narratives, asylum seekers are expected to explain the socio-political motivations for leaving their countries and seeking asylum

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[3] The point of view of immigrants was gathered through an extensive interview with Hussain, a Pakistani young man who went through the process of applying for residency in 2000, and was finally granted a work permit that same year (see further details in Chapter 4).

in Belgium. A great deal of what goes on in the procedure has to do with the asylum seekers' discursive abilities to present a given definition of reality.

It is often the case that narratives are told in a lingua franca, that is, a linguistic code which is not native to any of the interlocutors. The use of a second or foreign language reduces the number of linguistic choices available to asylum seekers and constrains their possibilities of expression significantly. Yet, these limitations are not sufficiently acknowledged by the institutionalised Belgian procedure. A great deal of information about asylum seeker's motivations for leaving their countries is conveyed through complex patterns of narrative structuring and argumentation which nevertheless get obscured by their lack of control over the linguistic codes or codes employed. Another element that compounds the situation is that, frequently, the linguistic code in which asylum seekers tell their stories is a non-standard variety acquired in informal ways in post-colonial contexts. All these features enhance the likelihood of their being misunderstood, and of their narratives being discounted for being irrelevant, incoherent, and meaningless. Narratives are evaluated according to criteria which are ideologically-laden and highly culture-specific. These criteria emphasise textual consistency, linearity, logic, rationality and factuality. They are associated with narrative conventions which have a strong literacy basis. The asylum-seeking procedure fails to acknowledge the existence of linguistic diversity which translates itself in different story-telling conventions. Mismatches between asylum seekers' productions and officials' expectations are often assessed in terms of character and character attribution, as likewise attested by Gumperz a number of years ago (1982a, 1982b).

Another source of conflict in which the power asymmetry that characterises encounters between the asylum seeker and the state is made evident is in the *entextualisation* processes that narratives go through. The notion of entextualisation refers to the institutional procedure whereby asylum seekers' oral accounts are turned into a complex web of written documents over which they have no control, but for which they are normally held accountable. This is based on an ideology that assumes that written texts are faithful reproductions of spoken accounts. In fact, the

textual trajectories to which narratives are subject work to decontextualise and recontextualise asylum seekers' stories and to transform them in significant ways.

One of the aspects that this line of inquiry underscores is invisible forms of linguistic inequality. These are conceptualised as "pretextual gaps" (Maryns and Blommaert 2002a). Pretextual gaps are preconditions for communication which determine speakers' communicative behaviour but which most often pass unnoticed. These gaps are differences between the types of discursive and communicative abilities and styles that are recognised and valued in the Belgian asylum procedure, and asylum seekers' actual communicative repertoires. Pretextual gaps have to do with the socio-political dimensions of language use in Bourdieu's sense (1991). Asylum seekers cannot meet the discursive expectations of Belgian officials because there is a huge difference between the resources they can mobilise to compose their stories and the narrative style that is considered appropriate and relevant in this institutional context. As the authors argue, there is conflict between two semiotic centres, a personal and an institutional one, which is resolved in favour of the former.

This thesis shares most of the theoretical and methodological concerns of the research presented in this section. Both works engage in the fine-grained examination of migrants' linguistic productions. Likewise, they try to establish connections between the details of micro-level situated talk and the wider socio-political context. The goal is to investigate the ways in which social inequality is produced and reproduced in situated occasions of social interaction. In both studies, the data is gathered in state bureaucracies which are responsible for controlling foreigners' access to the limited welfare resources of Western democracies. In the two contexts, the issue of linguistic resources feature prominently. State bureaucracies in both Belgium and Spain assume that migrants have command over the communicative resources needed to make sense of the procedure and to act in institutionally relevant ways. However, the reality is that immigrants lack the appropriate linguistic resources to communicate efficiently with local officials. When they resort to the use of global languages such as English, their linguistic competencies are negatively evaluated by officials who are also non-native speakers

of the languages concerned. Finally, equality of service is a fundamental principle of both democratic systems. However, equality cannot be achieved by treating everyone in the same way. This ignores speakers' unequal access to valuable communicative resources and only serves to reinforce "pretextual" inequality.

Public discourse on immigration

Another prominent line of investigation on foreign immigration in Western European societies examines public discourse on ethnic relations, cultural and linguistic diversity, racism, and prejudice from a critical standpoint. Because of researchers' emphasis on public discourse, the type of data examined is usually written texts. Most research in this area is carried out within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1989, 1995; Wodak 1995; Wodak and Matouscheck 1998; Martín Rojo et al. 1998; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). The focus on public discourse (mass media, political institutions, and academia, among others) is programmatic. Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) assumes, following Foucault (1984), that power is tied up with the notion of discourse. Power means, essentially, control over the production and circulation of discourse(s). Not all discourses have the same social importance (Martín Rojo and van Dijk 1998; Blommaert and Verschueren 1998). Indeed, public discourse is the fundamental means through which specific groups exert their social power, and the vehicle for the reproduction of ideologies.

Van Dijk (1996) underscores the role played by dominant elites in shaping social cognition through the use of public discourse. He is interested in social power rather than individual power. Social power is exercised through social control and dominance. Both have a clear cognitive dimension. Powerful social groups exert power by influencing social cognition, that is to say, society's norms, knowledge, prejudices, beliefs, attitudes, and so on. Social cognition is shaped through public discourse and the ways in which social actors and situations are recursively depicted. Logically, access to public discourse is an important asset because it enables access to the mechanisms that shape people's minds. The power of producing discourses is intimately bound up with the power of defining reality. In the same vein, Wodak

and Matouschek (1998) argue for the need to analyse the discourse of the mass media, since it works to reinforce existing stereotypes and offers arguments and metaphors that can serve to legitimise prejudiced attitudes. The problem, according to van Dijk (1991, 1993), is that access to public discourse, whether political, academic or mass media discourse, is barred to minority group members. In the case of news items, for instance, the members of the dominant group control the selection and production of news. They decide which situations and social actors to talk about, and in what ways (style, lexical choices, perspective, and so on). The end product is ideologically-laden media discourse that divides social life in dichotomic groups, describes the in-group in positive terms while disfavouring the outgroup, and focuses on differences rather than similarities.

The public discourse of racism and prejudice has also been extensively analysed by Wodak and her associates in the Austrian context (Wodak 1996; Wodak and Matouschek 1998). They investigate the influence that the public discourse of politics and the mass media has in shaping hostile attitudes towards the immigrant population. They adopt what they call a "discourse-historical approach". Special significance is attached to the historical embedding of discourses in relation to the changing nature of social processes. Thus, one of their goals is to examine the evolution of public discourse on immigration over a period of time in relation to changes in the socio-economic and political sphere. They draw on different data sources to achieve a detailed understanding of the "contextual worlds" in which the texts they analyse are embedded. They claim to follow an interdisciplinary approach in that they undertake psycholinguistic, sociolinguisitic and textual analyses of the data.

The stance taken by this group of researchers is a politically active one, in that they conceive of academic research as a tool to bring about social change. In the field of ethnic relations, for example, this should translate into the production of non-racist school materials, the setting-up of training courses to do away with discriminatory practices in the public administration, and such like. CDA researchers' political commitment has led them to join forces to denounce the racism in public discourse on a European level. In van Dijk and Wodak (2000),

parliamentary discourse about immigrant issues in six Western European countries is compared and analysed. The language of politicians is examined for what it reveals about the ideological ways in which immigrants are conceptualised and represented by influential social actors.

Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) carry out a pragmatic analysis of the dominant public discourse on foreign immigrantsin Flemish-speaking Belgium. From a critical perspective, Blommaert and Verschueren's book focuses on representations of immigrants in public discourse. The authors' goal is to discover the fundamental ideological framework underlying attitudes towards diversity in the discourse of the "tolerant majority". In that respect, it differs significantly from the studies discussed above. The texts analysed are not produced by (overtly) racist institutions, but by organisations and individuals that are assumed to hold non-racist attitudes and beliefs. Data comes from publicly available written texts on migrants (newspaper articles, socio-scientific research and migration policy papers). An ethnographic and historical approach to the data is adopted to complement the fundamental discourse-analytical methodology. This perspective aims at situating discourses spatially and temporally within a pattern of social relations and practices. Thus, public discourses are chosen because of the important role they play in shaping social consensus.

The authors conclude that the "discourse of tolerance", that is the discourse produced by social groups which show non-racist attitudes towards immigrants, is essentially based on the same premises as the discourse of clearly anti-migrant groups. This is the doctrine of "homogeneism", that is, the belief that the ideal society should be as uniform and homogeneous as possible. A homogeneous society is the pre-condition for the existence of social harmony. The ideological consequences of this doctrine are clear. Fundamental social diversity is rejected. Diversity is only accepted as a temporary situation. In this context, difference is made to seem a problem, and feelings of rejection towards foreigners on the part of the host population are normalised.

The book examines and tries to counter some of the ideologically-laden features of the migrant debate, such as the static views of culture often assumed, the

tendency to provide cultural explanations for immigrants' actions and behaviour, the absence of immigrants' voices in the public discourse, and the predominance of a "managing" paradigm in which immigration is presented as a phenomena to be contained. With regard to "hot" topics, like integration, the authors point out that it is often conceived of as ideal solution to the difficulties generated by the existence of diversity. Integration is what is demanded from immigrants, but what exactly is meant by it is often underspecified. In addition, the onus is placed on immigrants' will to integrate, without examining what mechanisms the recipient society sets into motion to ensure it.

Although this thesis does not examine data from public discourse, the critical view of the language-society relationship is shared. The study of the ways in which immigrants are represented in public discourse gives us insights into widely shared ideologies which create and/or reinforce stereotypes and naturalise exclusionary practices towards minority ethnic groups. In the analysis of local institutional interaction, these ideologies lie at the bottom of asymmetrical constructions of social relationships which compound the already unequal nature of client-bureaucrat interaction.

Studies of organisational settings

The investigation presented here also owes a debt to the tradition of institutional discourse studies. As the amount of research in this area is large, this section focuses on the most representative analytical traditions. Institutional research has been of interest to both sociology and linguistics, and both disciplines have been influential in the development of this field of inquiry.

On the sociological front, Foucault's seminal studies on the creation of public institutions in seventeenth-century Europe (1973, 1984) has inspired subsequent work in this area. He is interested in the characteristics of modern societies, particularly with regard to power. Modern power is based on the visibility of individuals. It acts in a "capillary way" through the micro-practices of everyday life (Fraser 1989). The origin of modern power is to be found in the establishment of disciplinary institutions (prisons), as well as in the advancement of the social

sciences, which subject the social body to exhaustive examination. Of more importance to the development of institutional discourse research, however, is Goffman's micro-sociology (1959, 1961, 1983). Goffman's depiction of the minute techniques of impression management in public establishments has influenced a number of researchers of institutional communication, such as Sarangi and Roberts (1999b). His theatrical metaphors are illuminating. They describe in vivid terms the ordinary experience of individuals as clients of public institutions and private establishments. Goffman's notions provide the backbone of some of the analytical sections presented in this thesis. An overview of the key concepts is included in the following chapter. Albeit brief, his examination of service transactions in *The Interaction Order* (1983) are equally insightful. Goffman manages to capture the gist of role and impression management in these type of dealings.

On the linguistic front, interest in talk produced in institutional settings began as early as the late 1970s (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Labov and Fanshel 1977). The orientation of these initial studies was formalistic. They were interested in positing the rules for discursive action within a context. Focusing on classroom discourse, Sinclair and Coulthard identified the famous Initiation-Response-Feedback sequence, which was posited as a nuclear exchange in this social setting. The constrained environment of classroom interaction allowed for this type of formal analysis, which proved to be unworkable in less constrained environments. Besides, it obscured unequal social relations and the ideological underpinnings of particular discursive practices (Drew and Heritage 1992).

One of the most powerful lines of analysis within institutional studies is that developed by researchers with a conversation-analytical orientation (Drew and Heritage 1992; Boden and Zimmerman 1991). The motivation for engaging in analyses of institutional talk lies in the centrality of institutional discourse in social life. Studies based on Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA) attempt to explain how the institutional nature of the interaction is accomplished through talk by means of participants' orientations to an institutional context. For CA, what characterises an interaction as institutional is the special nature of the forms of talk in which participants engage. Yet, these distinctive features are not the result of the

influence of external parameters, such as the institutional settings in which interactions take place. For CA-researchers the institutional dimension cannot be assumed; rather, it must be demonstrated. Researchers need to show that participants design their turns in ways that define and construct the verbal exchange and the occasion of talk as institutional. The institutionality of the talk is, thus, endogenous to the interaction. The methodological basis of CA-analyses of institutional talk is the "comparative method". Evidence from ordinary conversation is treated as baseline data. Claims on the specificity of institutional discourse are made on the basis of comparisons with generic conversational organisations (Drew and Heritage 1992).

Because institutional talk is goal-oriented, the focus on activities has dominated CA studies of talk at work. CA focuses on the formal organisation of institutional interaction, and on the relationship between specific social roles and forms of talk. Different lines of investigation can be identified.[4] In formal settings, such as courtrooms, certain classrooms, and news interviews, CA analyses centre on reduced turn-taking organisation systems. This is one of the most remarkable features of talk in such institutional contexts. As opposed to what happens in ordinary conversation (Sacks et al. 1974), turn-taking is strongly constrained and for the most part, pre-allocated. This strongly regimented turn-taking organisation serves to tightly control participation. In less formal settings, such as medical consultations, service encounters, call centres and social service settings, research focuses on formal features of talk organisation different from the turn-taking mechanism. The aim is to shed light on speakers' use of basic structures to accomplish role-specific tasks. These range from turn design to overall structural organisation. Cross-cutting features of institutional talk, such as professional enactments of cautiousness (Clayman 1992), and the various types of asymmetries that characterise institutional exchanges are also explored. One of these asymmetries concerns the ways in which a number of institutional exchanges are structured though question-answer sequences, framing service seeker's participation within a highly responsive mood and enabling institutional incumbents to exercise control

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[4] See Drew and Heritage (1992) for a comprehensive survey.

over the unfolding of the interaction. Another dimension of the asymmetrical nature of institutional talk concerns speakers' differential access to knowledge, and the ways in which this determines particular perceptions and understandings of the situation. The third type of asymmetry relates to the tension deriving from the routine treatment of the case by the institutional party and the uniqueness of the interaction for the client.

Recently, CA's theoretical and methodological principles have been applied to the analysis of foreign language and lingua franca interactions in institutional contexts (Firth 1996; Wagner 1996; Seedhouse 1998; Codó i Olsina 1999). The focus of these studies is on the foreign language nature of the data rather than on its institutional character. The interactions examined involve native and non-native participants both in a migrant and in a non-migrant context, such as a tourist information office. No difference is made between the two, as the goal is to show how a CA perspective can throw new light onto the way in which foreign language data is conceptualised, essentially as disorderly and unamenable to systematic examination.

The common feature to all these studies is the emphasis on the interaction order to the detriment of the institutional order (Sarangi and Roberts 1999b). Because of the methodological imperative to demonstrate the relevancy of whatever contextual element is drawn upon in the analysis, considerations of the role played by institutional arrangements are backgrounded. The conventional nature of certain interactional practices is acknowledged (Drew and Heritage 1992:26), as is the possibility of social change. Nevertheless, CA researchers of talk in institutional environments are keen on describing the "status quo". Their goals are descriptive and explanatory. Reference is made to the ways in which interactional practices relate to the management of social roles and identities. However, no connection is established between the ways in which local activities are "accomplished" and the processes of articulation of social life. CA studies contain no critique of the social function of institutions in the twenty-first century, of their relationship to citizens, of particularly constraining enactments of professional roles, and more generally, of the role institutions play in the creation and reinforcement of inequalities of

knowledge and social boundaries. It is the aim of the study presented here to attempt to explore a number of these issues.

The second strand of research in institutional contexts tries to establish firm connections between the interaction order on the one hand, and the institutional and societal orders in which institutional interactions are embedded on the other. The research presented here inscribes itself in this tradition. In analysing medical encounters, Cicourel (1992) argues for the need to integrate ethnographic information about organisational arrangements into "technical" analyses of institutional talk, which allow investigators to grasp the different layers of meaning accessed by participants. Within the field of educational research, a number of studies have examined the role of the school in the production and reproduction of social inequality and class or ethnic stratification (Collins 1987; Heller 1994, 1999, 2001b; Heller and Martin-Jones 2001). The fine-grained analysis of activities in the classroom sheds light on to the ways in which social and ethnic boundaries are created and recreated in the school context.

Agar's work (1985) was pioneering in upholding the need to explore institutional discourse as a mid-level framework that mediates between grand social theory and interactional organisation. For Agar, the detailed analysis of institutional discourse provides the empirical data for the idea that critical theories of the social order need to show a more firm grounding in reality. One of Agar's significant contributions is his emphasis on the "systemness" of institutional talk. This shifts analytical emphasis away from individual speakers towards social actors that are constrained by the institutional context in which they act. For fear of appearing too deterministic, Agar acknowledges that institutional representatives have a certain leeway to behave in more or less constraining modes. Drawing on Habermas' universal pragmatics, Agar postulates that institutional discourse is organised so as to prevent the raising of "validity claims", that is, clients' questioning the legitimacy of certain institutional practices. This is only possible if institutional incumbents make room for it, but in the light of the pressures of the institutional order, it is highly unlikely. From Foucault, Agar borrows the idea that discourse is the space where the tightly regulated distribution of power and knowledge in a society is

reflected. The examination of institutional discourse allows insights into the ways in which access to institutional knowledge, or as he calls it the "institutional frame", is controlled and constrained by the institutional representative. It is by focusing on the unequal distribution knowledge that links can be established between the wider social order and situated data. Philips (1987) shares Agar's emphasis on the social organisation of knowledge. Philips distinguishes between bureaucrats' insider knowledge and clients' outsider knowledge. Differential access to knowledge about organisational constraints has a determining effect on the organisation of discourse. Like Agar, Philips argues that insider knowledge is usually not transmitted to clients, but merely indexed through the organisaton of bureaucrats' productions. Philips maintains that, unlike ordinary conversation, institutional discourse is not premised on participants' shared knowledge frames, but on the assumption that these frames will be different.

Research on institutional discourse has also questioned widely-accepted notions within pragmatics, such as Grice's Cooperative Principle (1973). These studies aim at showing how pragmatic analyses need to move beyond the linguistic aspects of communication to focus on the social anchoring of discourse. Sarangi and Slembrouck, for example, provide evidence to counter Grice's claim that cooperation and goal sharing are "overarching presumptive features in interactions" (1992:138). Drawing on talk from a variety of institutional settings, they advocate a social pragmatics that foregrounds the key role of social factors in the process of meaning creation. They suggest that researchers trascend the immediate context of speaking to examine the ways in which elements of the wider societal and institutional orders, such as asymmetries of power and knowledge, define social positions of speaking. Assessments of relevance, truthfulness and value are univocally made from certain positions of speaking. This runs counter to Grice's consensual view of cooperation and conversational relevance. The analysis of institutional discourse shows that goal sharing cannot be assumed, but also that static conceptualisations of social situations as "cooperative" or "uncooperative" do not serve to account for the multiplicity of speakers' interests and allegiances and the ways in which these are played out in actual interactions. In a later work (1996),

Sarangi and Slembrouck extend their critique to other key notions such as directness and indirectness, and face and politeness considerations.

Connected to this and previous work by Agar and Philips is Sarangi and Roberts' (1999a) edited volume on discourse in different professional settings. The studies presented attempt to establish connections between the close details of interaction and the broader institutional and societal orders framing the data. Their approach is referred to as "integrative". Emphasis is placed on the complexity, "the thickly textured" nature, of institutional talk (1999b:2). The approach highlights the need to gather different types of data, as well as talk from different kinds of social activities, both *backstage* and *frontstage*.[5] The focus is not only on explaining the data but also on understanding the complex web of pressures and interests shaping the institutional order. The assumption is that no institutional data can be fully understood without taking into account the many conflicting demands made on social actors. The role of clients in sustaining institutional modes of proceeding is underscored, which reinforces the need to examine workplace interactions from both the perspective of the client and that of the professional/institutional representative.

The study presented here aligns itself with the second major strand in institutional discourse research outlined in this section. Within it, the work by Sarangi and Roberts (1999b) is particularly relevant. The need for an integrative perspective seems clear in the case of the institutional setting examined in this thesis. The nature of the data obtained, including participants' interactional behaviour, cannot be explained without an understanding of the institutional context framing it. The immigration office analysed is a bureaucratic institution. As a bureaucracy, its workings are strictly regulated by the criteria of rationality and fairness. As a Spanish bureaucracy, it is embedded in a distinctive tradition of practice. Over the decades, the public administration in Spain has been notorious for its general malfunctioning, and the lack of accountability of its representatives.

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[5] These two notions, taken from Goffman (1959), will be presented in detail in the following chapter, as they are part of the theoretical notions employed in this thesis.

The particular office involved, in turn, has its specificities. All these elements make up the institutional order. On a larger scale, the impact of the wider social and political context on the local encounters examined cannot be overlooked. The negative constructions of immigrants disseminated by the mass media are part of the ideological substrate underlying given forms of social practice. These are the some of the elements that bear upon the data studied. They will be specified in subsequent chapters.

Discourse in bureaucratic organisations

A limited number of studies have addressed the linguistic analysis of discourse produced in bureaucratic organisations.[6] The classical account of bureaucracy is that by Weber (1947, 1948). Weber provided a sociological model of bureaucracy as an organisational system, which he believed to have "technical superiority" over any other form of organisation (1948:214). A bureaucratic organisation is defined in terms of its efficiency, reliability and precision. For Weber, bureaucratic systems ensure fairness of treatment to all citizens independently of their social status and origin. Bureaucracy is a way of "doing things" (1948:220), a specific procedure for collecting information and making decisions rationally.

Most studies of bureaucracy and language have concentrated on the formal aspects of mainly written discourse, that is, on the identification of the features of "bureaucratic jargon". The objective is to simplify bureaucratic language to make communication produced by bureaucratic organisations more accessible to the public. Sarangi and Slembrouck (1996) claim that, in these types of studies, bureaucracy is conceptualised as a social organisation that exists independently of language use. It is treated as an external contextual variable determining forms of talk. The majority of these studies overlook the interpersonal dimension of

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[6] In some studies "bureaucracy" is understood in broader terms than those described by Weber (1948). Thus, in Collins (1987), educational settings are referred to as bureaucracies, and in Philips (1987), physicians are referred to as "bureaucrats". Without denying the bureaucratic side of medical encounters and educational establishments, the perspective adopted in this thesis is more narrow. Bureaucracy, as it is understood here, is broadly connected with paperwork and rational-decision making; it is associated with the technical way in which state institutions and large private corporations are organised and work.

bureaucracy and the ways in which bureaucratic events are locally constructed through language use. Sarangi and Slembrouck go one step forward in their understanding of bureaucracy. For them, bureaucracy is a "social event", a "process which happens to those involved, whether they are clients or bureaucrats" (1996:3). Bureaucracy is a form of social practice, a set of procedures, a way of relating to cases and clients, in sum, a "mode of practice" (1996:84).

Sarangi and Slembrouck's qualitative study is an insightful contribution to linguistic analyses of bureaucratic processes. Theoretically, their work can be inscribed within the tradition of critical linguistics. Methodologically, it draws from discourse analysis and pragmatics. Their goal is to link up the detailed analysis of situated social interactions to wider processes of social reproduction and change. A few of the key themes developed by the authors are taken up in this thesis, as are some of the theoretical concepts drawn from contemporary social theory (centrality of discourse, emphasis on social struggle and conflict, and relationship between power and forms of knowledge). The book is innovative in various respects. It represents one of the few attempts to apply some of the postulates of critical discourse analysis to the study of interactional data. Secondly, it understands the relationship between bureaucracy and language as dialogic. Language does not just reflect the context in which it is used, but it shapes and constructs social realities. Thus, bureaucracy is not merely a result, but a process.

As in the study presented here, one of the foci of interest in the book is information exchange. Information is the raw material upon which bureaucratic cases are built. A detailed understanding of the procedures whereby information is demanded and supplied in social interaction is relevant to the analysis of bureaucratic events. The mechanics of information exchange are intimately interwoven with participants' positions of speaking. For this reason, the study also undertakes an analysis of the multiplicity of social role configurations and their indexing through specific modes of talk. The authors maintain that role categories cannot be unequivocally defined, as they are multi-layered and characterised by contradictory demands. They advocate a "diversification of perspectives" which

takes account of participants' perceptions of self and other and does away with static external definitions of social roles.

The analysis of the ways in which participants draw creatively on various facets of professional roles to negotiate particular positions of speaking is also a major analytical theme of this thesis. Another shared theme is social control and the ways in which bureaucratic institutions have a disciplinary dimension. Most bureaucracies are in charge of the organisation of some domain of social activity. They act as distributors and regulators of rights and obligations, and thus exercise a considerable degree of control over the lives of social actors. This is nowhere more evident than within the domain of the regulation and control of foreign immigration.

Foreign immigration in the Catalan and Spanish context

The different social phenomena associated with the arrival of foreign immigrants to Catalonia and Spain has attracted the interest of researchers from a variety of disciplines. The creation of specialised research centres and study groups[7] as well as the organisation of postgraduate programs focused on international migrations have stimulated research in this area.[8] The complexity of this social phenomenon is reflected in the large number of fields in which research is conducted. These are sociology, anthropology, political science, law, geography, demography, educational studies, linguistics and communication. The main universities where research on immigration is currently undertaken are located in the regons of Madrid, Catalonia and Andalusia. As shall be seen in Chapter 3, these are the areas with the highest percentage of foreign population in Spain.

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[7] Although there are some research centres specialising in the study of foreign immigration, such as the *Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración* (Permanent Observatory of Immigration) belonging to the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs, or the University of Granada's *Laboratorio de Estudios Interculturales* (Laboratory of Intercultural Studies), these are still few in comparison with other European countries. There is, by contrast, a substantial number of research groups working within different university departments. The *Centre d'Estudis d'Immigració i Minories Ètniques* (Research Group on Immigration and Ethnic Minorities) at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, or the *Grup per a l'Estudi dels Drets dels Immigrants* (Group for the Study of Immigrants' Rights) at the University of Barcelona are some examples in the Catalan context. In addition, research on immigrant affairs is conducted and funded by institutes devoted to the investigation of social life in general, such as the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (Centre for Sociological Research), and both the *Fundació Jaume Bofill* (Jaume Bofill Foundation) and the *Fundació CIDOB* (CIDOB Foundation) in the case of Catalonia.

[8] According to García Castaño and Muriel López (2002), more than 125 doctoral theses on topics related to immigration and intercultural relations had been defended in Spain prior to 2001.

New publications connected with the study of immigration in Spain appear every day. It is thus unrealistic to attempt to present a comprehensive review here.[9] I will restrict myself to mentioning a few key authors within each research domain, with special emphasis on studies carried out within the Catalan context. Within sociology, the examination of this new social phenomenon has been conducted both from quantitative (Colectivo Ioé 1999; Mancebo 2000; Solé 2000; Díez Nicolás and Ramírez Lafita 2001a) and qualitative methodological standpoints (Domingo Valls et al. 1995; Ramírez Goicoechea 1996; Pajares 1998; Pineda and Vaccaro 1999; Ribas Mateos 1999; Ruiz Olabuénaga 1999; Díez Nicolás and Ramírez Lafita 2001b; Arango Vila-Belda 2002). Significantly, most of these works focus on the analysis of immigrant communities themselves, and the examination of the role played by the recipient society in the migration process is generally overlooked. Gimeno Giménez's work (2001) tries to reverse this tendency by examining the attitudes of the Spanish population towards so-called "economic" immigrants.

Within human geography, the work of Capel (1997) and Pascual de Sans et al. (2002) analyses patterns of territorial distribution of immigrants. In the field of anthropology, the study undertaken by Kaplan (1998) examines the migration process of population from Senegambia and the sub-Saharan area to Catalonia. The practice of female genital mutilation, associated with these ethnic groups, is investigated in Kaplan et al. (2002). Delgado (1997) concentrates on the effects that the arrival of ethnically diverse immigrants have on large cities. Within the legal domain, Aja (1998) and Casanovas (2001) investigate different aspects of the existing legal framework on immigration in Spain. Finally, in the area of political science, Zapata-Barrero et al. (2002) examine the notions of democracy and citizenship in the light of the social and political changes brought about by the presence of new ethnic minorities in Spain. In particular, they examine the changes in the institutional policies implemented to ensure the "accommodation" of immigrants. On a less technical level, the book by Goytisolo and Naïr (2000) tries to explore the causes of economic emigration to developed countries in general. It

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[9] The book edited by García Castaño and Muriel López (2002), consisting of a collection of papers on immigration from different disciplinary perspectives, gives an idea of the main lines of inquiry within this field.

sketches out a description of the socio-economic conditions of migrants, while at the same time puts forward a number of suggestions as to what policies recipient societies should implement. The authors criticise and present alternatives to Europe's current protectionist policies, with special emphasis on the Spanish case.

Another area in which pioneer studies have been undertaken on the changes brought about by the growing presence in Spain of individuals from distinct social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds is educational studies. Often driven by practical concerns, teachers and educators have made suggestions to encourage non-discriminatory teaching practices, promote the values of linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom, and foster tolerant and non-racist attitudes among local and foreign children (Martín Rojo 1995, 1996; Abarkan and Aznar 1998; Boussatta 1998; Terrén 2001; Carrasco Pons et al. 2002). A number of the experimental projects presented are undertaken by immigrant support organisations and NGOs working in collaboration with dedicated school teachers. Carbonell (1998, 1999) provides a critique of educational models centred on the value of the notion of cultural diversity. He argues that educational policies should be aimed at promoting social equality. In his eyes, immigrants' cultural differences have often been called upon to in order to justify their socially unequal status. Folklore understandings of multiculturalism have worked to hide conflictive intergroup relations and processes of social exclusion. The school system should be involved in disseminating the idea of equal opportunities and identical civic and legal rights for all members of society, no matter their origin.

One of the most distinctive features of immigrant children is their variable command of the languages used within the school system. The educational system faces the challenge of providing them with the means to aquire the linguistic abilities necessary for them to function adequately within the school context. Siguan (1998) presents a rather impressionistic picture of the situation, and reflects on a few relevant issues, such as the pedagogical models followed to incorporate immigrant children into mainstream education, and the role played by family languages in their learning process. Along similar lines, Vila (1999) examines the social conditions necessary for immigrant children to acquire the languages of the host society

effectively. He highlights the need for the school to value children's family languages. Importance is also attached to making immigrant children feel significant social actors at school. Educators are encouraged to incorporate immigrant children into the activities and social life of the school so that they develop positive attitudes towards the recipient community and their languages. This is assumed to accelerate their process of language acquisition.

On a different front, some studies attempt to "give visibility" (Nussbaum 2002) to immigrants' native languages. Their goal is to unveil the linguistic reality of Spanish schools by presenting an overview of the linguistic repertoires of migrant school children (Franzé Mundanó and Mijares Molina 1999; López García and Mijares Molina 2001). Other studies examine the acquisition of Spanish and/or Catalan by immigrant children from a linguistically formal viewpoint. Maruny and Molina (2002) assess the significance of different variables, such as age of arrival and length of residence with regard to the achievement of proficiency in these languages. Finally, the design of appropriate materials for the teaching of Spanish as a second language to immigrants is another area of interest within linguistically-oriented educational studies (Baralo 1996).

Outside educational contexts, linguistically-oriented studies of foreign immigration in Catalonia and Spain have mainly centred on the analysis of public discourse. This analytical current has been inspired by the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis. It has focused on the examination of political discourse on the one hand, and of discourse produced by the mass media, mainly written media, on the other. Within the first group of studies, Martín Rojo and van Dijk (1998) and Martín Rojo (2000) examine Spanish parliamentary discourse on immigration. In the first study, the authors focus on the role of strategies of legitimation to reproduce state power and ethnic domination in Western European societies. Legitimation is presented as a social act in which social actors, social actions and a set of social relationships are presented as acceptable. State representatives employ strategies aimed at establishing, maintaining or reestablishing the dominant social position and the authority of a social group or institution. Thus, strategic lexical and syntactic choices work to ensure the legitimacy of state actions against illegal immigrants

questioned by NGOs, social organisations and opposition parties. A powerful element in the articulation of legitimising discourse is dichotomic presentations of the world whereby the actions of the in-group are presented as correct and beneficial, while those of the "others" are presented as negative and a menace to the established social order. Ribas Bisbal (2000), in turn, focuses on Catalan parliamentary discourse. She analyses the questions asked by Catalan political leaders to the members of a study group on the situation of foreign workers in Catalonia. Inspired by the work of van Dijk on the interrelationship between discourse, ideology and social cognition, Ribas Bisbal tries to unveil the different political parties' ideological conceptualisations of the social world. Through a detailed linguistic analysis of lexical choices, rhetorical arguments, naming strategies, the presentation of agency, and syntactic and social roles, the researcher attempts to reconstruct the social representations structuring the discourse of political actors. Finally, the line of research centred on the investigation of the linguistico-semantic features of media discourse is represented by Bañón Hernández (1996), Casero (2001) and Velázquez et al. (2001), among others.

Concluding remarks

The topic of the present study is in line with current research undertaken at an international level, both thematically and methodologically. From a theoretical perspective, it seeks to contribute to a growing body of research aimed at undertaking a critique of the social world we live in from microsociolinguistic investigations of social interactional data. The central role of language and interaction in the articulation of social life is a fundamental assumption of this line of inquiry. One of the prominent issues in today's social debate is the articulation of ethnic and linguistic diversity in the hitherto rather homogeneous societies of Western European countries. From a critical perspective, the aim is to unveil the mechanisms which contribute to the reproduction of a fundamentally unequal social order. Diversity does not have to be synonymous with social inequality. Rather, the goal should be to guarantee equal opportunities to everybody without this entailing a reduction in social diversity. The study presented in this thesis aims at giving

"visibility" to immigrants in Spain and their difficulties, and to provide a critique of the often inadequate treatment they receive from the public administrations. In addition, it contributes to the advancement of science in the Spanish academic context by opening up a line of research which has as yet not been explored. The main theoretical concepts drawn upon in this work are outlined in the following chapter.

2

The role of language in social life

The present investigation of linguistic practices at an immigration office in Barcelona is thematically and theoretically relevant to a number of fields of inquiry, which include the study of language and social life, processes of incorporation of immigrants into a host society, linguistic diversity, institutional discourse, and miscommunication. The complexity of the present study demands a heterogeneous and interdisciplinary theoretical backdrop which draws on linguistic traditions of face-to-face communication and on social theoretical models about the organisation of social life. As a micro-sociolinguistic study, this piece of research aims to contribute to the understanding of processes of negotiation of information and institutional accountability at a bureaucratic organisation. On a macro-level, it seeks to analyse relations of authority and power between the state and the individual. This is a qualitative investigation of processes of construction of social inequality through language use. Social life is assumed to be structured in and through situated social action. As a critical study, it is based on the problematisation of the role of language in society.

This thesis inscribes itself within "integrationist" perspectives on social life in that it purports to go beyond the long-standing opposition between endurable social arrangements and evanescent situated talk. The relationship between structure and action is understood as dialogic. Structure and action shape each other, so neither of them can be made sense of without the examination of the processes of mutual structuration. The study tries to provide an answer to the question of what the local communicative practices of immigrants and public officials at a key state bureaucracy can tell us with regard to the broader socio-political context of the management of diversity in Spain. Through the analysis of situated talk, the study assesses whether speakers of immigrant origin are given the chance to participate in the creation of meaningful communication or whether, instead, their linguistic repertoires are constructed as constraints to their possibilities of action. The goal is

to provide a "thick description" (Geertz 1973) of linguistic practices at a public organisation. Attempting such a holistic description requires a thorough examination of the different social orders in which the interactions analysed are embedded. A holistic perspective does not ignore the details of face-to-face interaction but tries to understand them in all their interpretive complexity. This requires an examination of the larger societal context where issues of social inequality and power feature prominently. Shedding light on the ways in which language mediates in the accomplishment of processes of social inclusion and exclusion is one of the key objectives of the study.

This chapter is divided into different sections. In the first one, I present and define the conceptualisations of language that the present study assumes. My ways of understanding language are related to the critical stance the study adopts. The objectives and concerns of the study as a critical piece of research are presented in the second section. The third section addresses the integration of micro- and macro-levels of analysis, and presents the main concepts from social theory employed in the discussion of the data gathered. The following section highlights the micro-level of linguistic analysis, and reviews a few fundamental concepts from studies of face-to-face interaction. Special emphasis is placed on the notion of contextualisation and the dynamic creation of context. The final section presents a few concepts from institutional communication studies taken up by the research reported here.

Defining language

The present investigation examines the relationship between situated interactional events and macro-level social developments. This study assumes that the detailed analysis of talk provides revealing insights into the ways in which participants define social situations, convey meaning, enact social roles, construct social identities, relate to one another, exert power and position themselves in the social space. The study of micro-interactional data uncovers relevant information about how our social world is organised. The ways in which language is conceptualised in the present study underscore its fundamental social nature. The notion of language adopted

draws on different research traditions in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and anthropology.

Language is conceived of as a vehicle for social action, a tool whereby individuals accomplish their social and personal goals. In its transformative capacity, language is the instrument available to social actors to bring about changes in the social world. Language is also conceptualised as a social practice. Its characteristics cannot be dissociated from the social contexts in which it is inevitably produced. Language also plays a fundamental role in the construction and definition of social situations. Language is studied for its social import, that is, for what it can tell us about how social life is organised. Social questions are largely questions about language. Language is not peripheral, but a central element in social processes, and as such, it deserves to be analysed in its own right.

Language is not the reflection of some superordinate social structure, but rather, a structuring element itself. Yet, it is also a means of social reproduction. These two representations of language stand in a dialectical relationship to one another. Language articulates the relationship between social structure and social action. That is to say, it is in and through linguistic practice that particular ideological representations of the social world are represented, but is is also in and through situated talk that they may be challenged. Local interactional practice is the locus of both social reproduction and social change. Finally, language is a major social resource, which is unequally distributed among groups in society. Certain communicative styles enable or hinder individuals' possibilities of social advancement. Language may be used as an element of inclusion or exclusion. There is a dual dimension to the role of language in inclusionary or exclusionary practices. On the one hand, language practices are the social elements around which these processes are often articulated (see Heller 2001a); on the other, the creation of groups, and the definition of social boundaries are accomplished in and through linguistic practice.

A critical perspective

The present study adopts a critical perspective. It embeds itself in a "new critical paradigm", now embraced by researchers working in different contexts and academic disciplines (sociology, discourse analysis, social psychology, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology and applied linguistics, to cite a few). The main objective of critical linguistic studies is the problematisation of language, and of the relationship between linguistic practice and social life. A major locus of interest is the role of language in the process of production and reproduction of social inequality. This stems from the concern of critical scholars with issues of social justice, and the possibility of social change. In that sense, the analysis of micro-processes of information exchange at an immigration office is meant to be the point of departure for undertaking a critique of ethnic relations in contemporary Spain. The ways in which participants in these encounters are differently positioned within the interactional space, with bureaucrats exerting tight control over discursive production, reflects but also reinforces the marginal position of immigrants in Spanish social life. This marginal position is, as Roberts (1996:218) claims, not only represented discursively but "acted out daily in the harsh experiences of physical labour, poor living conditions and education, and lack of connection with the political life of the majority group at national or local levels". Another aspect of critical studies is that they undertake analyses of linguistic data which incorporate concepts from critical social thinking. This stems from their conception of language as an essential element in the articulation of social life. It is necessary to understand the ways in which the social world functions and is structured to make claims about the role of language. This is where social theory comes in. What the relationship should be between sociolinguistic studies, based on empirical linguistic data, and social models, largely theoretical, is a topic of debate among critical researchers. Some of the most prominent positions in this debate are outlined in the following section.

The impetus for a critical paradigm in linguistically-oriented disciplines came from the field of discourse studies. In the late 1980s, a current of thought and practice began to take shape through the programmatic work of several European

researchers on discourse, among whom Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) Teun van Dijk (1991, 1993, 1996) and Ruth Wodak (1995, 1996) stand out. This school of discourse analysis came to be known as Critical Discourse Analysis. The first appearance of the notion of "critical linguistics", however, occurred earlier, more specifically in the late 1970s. According to Fowler (1996), it was first mentioned in his book *Language and Control* (Fowler et al. 1979). The concept, in turn, derives from the notion of critique, which developed in the social sciences under the influence of the Frankfurt School of Thought. Critical studies have often been associated with the work of CDA researchers, although in fact the critical "turn" in linguistics represents a much wider development. Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) define it as a partial convergence in time of several research traditions and practices. It is, therefore, not reducible to a single framework. As a matter of fact, it is best conceived as a perspective rather than as a specific methodology.

Even though there is a common core of themes, overall goals and background assumptions, the tradition of CDA is not homogeneous in terms of methods of discourse analysis. Titscher et al. (2000) focus on the two most prominent currents, namely, the methodology employed by Fairclough, based on systemic-functional linguistics, and Wodak's discourse-historical approach, based on cognitive models of text planning. The present thesis, albeit critical, does not fall into the category of CDA studies. CDA-oriented research has tended to focus on the examination of written texts, often from the field of public discourse. This explains why CDA is generally perceived as being methodologically ill-equipped for the analysis of interactional data. Some of the emphases of CDA (Fairclough's framework in particular) are shared by my investigation. I present them in the ensuing paragraphs. Subsequently, I mention some of the criticisms levelled against CDA research, which this thesis has attempted to overcome.

Like the present study, CDA attempts to integrate micro- and macro-levels of analysis within a single framework. A major goal of CDA is the development of a *critical consciousness* in which the significance of language in the sustainment and reproduction of relations of power and dominance is brought into the open (Fairclough 1989). CDA aims to unearth the effects of discourse on the organisation

of the social world. These effects are usually invisible to citizens. CDA departs from the assumption that discourse is a major instrument of power and control. The goal of CDA is, accordingly, to unveil the mechanisms whereby control and dominance are exerted through language practice. Another fundamental assumption of CDA is that discourse is a social practice. Therefore, questions about social life are inevitably questions about discourse (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). The notion of discourse as a social practice highlights the relationship between the particular discursive event and the numerous elements enmeshed in its production.

The unequal distribution of power in society is a major topic of investigation within CDA. The notions of struggle and ideology are closely bound up with the notion of power. CDA studies are interested in the exercise of power, but also in speakers' resistance moves. This emphasis on the struggle of social actors is taken up by the study presented here. It examines bureaucrats' dominance, but also immigrants' attempts to resist it.

Another notion shared with CDA is the "denaturalisation" of ideological practices. Fairclough (1989, 1995) employs the notion of ideology to highlight the ways in which specific distributions of speaker rights and obligations have acquired the status of "normative frameworks" –in Giddens' terms (1984). He attributes the "naturalisation" of ideological modes of interactional conduct to descriptive pragmatic studies. These studies describe participants' expectations and assumptions in specific speech situations. The sharedness of speakers' assumptions facilitates the "orderliness" of talk. Talk is "orderly" as long as participants adhere to forms of behaviour that are naturalised, that is, presented as common sense. What these studies fail to grasp is the effects that such practices have on the reproduction of particular ideological representations of the social world which serve the interest of specific social groups. The present study aims at uncovering the effects of naturalised interactional practices at a public administration office. As in the bureaucratic exchanges described by Sarangi and Slembrouck (1996), the normative framework enacted is one in which participants have unequal discoursal rights and obligations (see Chapter 7 for details).

The connections between Fairclough's work and the present study in relation to discursive site are clear. Fairclough highlights the importance of the study of institutions in the examination of the social world. He describes institutions as "the pivot" between the abstract level of social structuring and the concrete level of situated events and practices. The discursive side of institutional life is defined by the Foucauldian notion of *orders of discourse* (1984). Institutions are orders of discourse in that particular repertoires of discursive genres are associated with them. For Fairclough, the critique of institutional discourses plays a fundamental part in the critique of the role of social institutions in contemporary social life. One key theme in CDA studies is relations of power and authority between institutions and the individual, and the ways in which these are recreated discursively. Fairclough claims that one of the features of contemporary institutional discourse is the changes it is undergoing. One of these tendencies is hybridisation. Discourses from one field of social life are colonising discourses from another, and these in turn, are becoming increasingly hybrid. For example, Sarangi and Slembrouck (1996) show how the discourse of traditional bureaucratic organisations is being colonised by the discourse of advertising. This carries along processes of "debureaupretation" and the increasing conversationalisation of bureaucratic practice. On the face of it, bureaucracies are becoming more accessible to individual citizens. However, the detailed examination of discourse reveals that conversationalisation is becoming yet another form of institutional practice. Conversationalisation has not brought about changes in the social distribution of power, which is what critical researchers are concerned with. Besides, while some bureaucratic institutions are undergoing processes of debureaupretation, bureaucratic practices are colonising new fields, such as institutions of tertiary education. The bureaucratisation of public life seems to be on the increase.

A number of criticisms have been levelled against CDA.[1] The most pervasive one is related to the conflation of issues analysis and interpretation. Schegloff (1997, 1998, 1999) criticises CDA for reading into texts more than there actually is. This derives, in his view, from impressionistic internal analyses of texts. The appearance

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[1] For a review of criticisms against CDA, see Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) and Sarangi (2001).

of specific linguistic and interactional features is interpreted in the light of CDA's research questions, and not for the import these features have in the overall structure and organisation of the text. CDA studies tend to present one reading as "the reading", [2] and as Widdowson (1998, 2000) argues, this raises questions of representation. The extent to which the researcher's interpretation of the text may come closer to the ordinary reader's interpretation of it is questionable. Another major source of criticism is the treatment of context. Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000:456) point out that, in some CDA work, context tends to be treated as "backgrounding and narrative".[3] These two researchers suggest that CDA could benefit from developments in the investigation of contexts, in particular from the notion of contextualisation. The use of texts as illustrations of the argument presented rather than as the basis for that argument has been pointed out by other investigators, such as Roberts (2001).

Boundaries between CDA and critical studies in general are fuzzy. A number of the theoretical assumptions of CDA are shared by most critical research. Likewise, research programmes and preferred topics overlap. One of the main differences lies in the relationship between the linguistic analysis of data and social theory. CDA has a strong commitment to social thinking, to the extent that some scholars have criticised the often uncritical adoption of social models by CDA researchers (Sarangi 2001). This is attributed to the importance attached to the theorisation and description of the social structures and processes in which discoursive productions are embedded. This emphasis is less marked in other critical approaches, which in spite of drawing on critical social thinking too, argue for the need to base claims about social life on the detailed analysis of empirical data from interactional events.

One distinctive aspect of critical approaches to the analysis of language in society (CDA and others) is the importance attached to issues of practical relevance. This refers to the usefulness of sociolinguistic research in the real-life world. One

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[2] However, see Sarangi and Roberts (1999b:33) for an alternative viewpoint.

[3] In response to criticisms about the use of context, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) advocate the collaboration of ethnography with CDA. Ethnographic research can provide the information about the context of discourse that CDA investigators often extrapolate from texts.

dimension of practical relevance is the politically-engaged role of the researcher. It is generally perceived that sociolinguistics has influenced societal perceptions of the nature and functions of language very little (Coupland 2001). By contrast, the socio-political engagement of critical researchers seems to be bringing about changes in that direction. The commitment to social change on the part of CDA scholars, for example, has found expression in a number of both practical and more theoretical initiatives. On the theoretical level, their goal has been to raise public awareness about the hidden connections between linguistic practices and the exercise of power. One major area of study along these lines has been the discourse of racism, and more specifically, the ways in which "racist" texts are discursively constructed. With regard to the objectives of critical research, Roberts points out that the goal of investigators working on talk produced in institutional settings is not merely to "sniff out political incorrectness from the huge complexities of institutional life" (2001:323). The disclosing of political incorrectness is part of a broader concern with processes of construction of inequality in social life. Along the same lines, Heller (2001a:139) argues that taking sides is not really what critical studies are about. They are about laying bare discourses, the conditions of their production, the reasons why they exist and the ways in which different actors are positioned with respect to them.

Focusing on institutional research, in which the present thesis may be included, Sarangi and Roberts (1999b) claim that the ethics of practical relevance should guide research in this field. The increasing significance of institutions in contemporary social life demands that researchers commit themselves to achieving change in institutional practice. Critical approaches imply researchers' evaluation of social norms and modes of conduct and their active participation in denouncing the mechanisms whereby social inequality and exclusion are accomplished. These two researchers suggest a collaborative approach in which the actors in the field and researchers work together. Their goal should be the joint problematisation of discursive events rather than the unidirectional intervention of researchers as external experts into the institutional domain. Even when cooperation is not feasible, it seems clear that linguistic research in institutional domains should be

aimed at stimulating change so that practices become more democratic and egalitarian. This is the aim of the study reported here.

Reflexivity is an inherent part of critical research. Heller (2001a) discusses the need to reflect on the status of knowledge produced by researchers and on the interests it may serve. Reflexivity also concerns taking stock of the role played by the researcher's subjectivity in the choice of sites, data and methodology, and of his/her relationship with the people researched.[4] Finally, a reflexive stance needs to acknowledge the invisible ways in which the researcher's social persona mediates any process of data interpretation (see Chapter 4 for a full account of these processes).

Integrating micro- and macro-levels of analysis

The sociolinguistic investigation reported here integrates different levels of analysis, and inquires into the ways in which these different domains bear upon one another. On a macro-structural level, it is concerned with issues of power, social inequality and ideology. Through the examination of the institutional order, it attempts to shed light on the conflict between the state and the individual. The state controls immigrants' access to scarce socio-economic resources. Control is carried out by means of state policies implemented by individual bureaucrats. The tensions inherent in this conflict are played out in the interactional terrain. This is the micro-analytical level. Social actors resort to different strategies to cope with the multi-faceted demands made on them.

To understand macro-level social processes, the present investigation draws on concepts from the sociological models of Bourdieu (1977, 1985, 1991), Giddens (1979, 1984) and Foucault (1984). The partnership of sociolinguistics –based on analyses of empirical data– and social theory raises a number of methodological questions, which are addressed in the ensuing paragraphs.

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[4] See Cameron et al. (1992) for a discussion of types of research relationships in the field, in particular, the differences between conducting research *on*, *with* and *for* social subjects.

Social-theoretical models are attempts to understand and explain the social world, but rarely do they engage in the examination of micro-level data. The effect of this neglect is that social models tend to be too deterministic. This criticism, for example, has been levelled against Bourdieu's work. His theories place too much emphasis on the mechanisms of reproduction of social life, and leave little room for the possibility of social change occurring. A number of sociolinguists, among them Erickson (2001), denounce the unreflexive acceptance of reproduction theories by some scholars, which leads them to jump to conclusions about their data which do not withstand close examination. In many cases, the problem stems from a neglect of the dynamic and indeterminate nature of local interactional practice. Erickson insightfully shows how participants in a gatekeeping interaction intuitively draw on their resources in ways which are unexpected and innovative, and how they manage to create spaces where counter-hegemonic practices may be deployed. Along the same lines, Rampton's detailed analyses of data (1995, 2001) from interethnic adolescent friendship groups in the United Kingdom reveal that individuals are creative in their use of social group categories such as ethnicity.

The position adopted in this thesis follows Roberts' (2001) work. Social theory should be viewed as a resource and a thinking tool rather than a constraining theoretical apparatus. In Roberts' words, "[social theory] sharpens our political senses and provides illuminating metaphors as thinking tools" (2001:327). She also defends the position that authority in sociolinguistic work does/should not come from its drawing upon concepts from social theory. Authority comes from providing grounded explanations of the ways in which language functions in the social world. Social theoretical models are of limited use in that respect. It is in the local ways in which social actors cope with the demands of the interactional and institutional domains that explanations are found. This leads to my second claim, in line with Heller's positions (2001b), that sociolinguistics should be considered a form of social theory. Because sociolinguistics is well-equipped to examine the micro-level of situated social practice it can throw light onto the ways in which local interactions are related to one another, and therefore, onto how social reality is constructed out of evanescent social activities. Erickson's examples of speakers'

non-deliberate innovation and intuitive contestations of hegemony show that micro-sociolinguistic work should serve as a counterbalance to macro-level social theoretical thinking. The most appropriate relationship between sociolinguistics and social theory is defined by researchers' continuous movement from theory to the data and vice-versa.

A historical perspective on the relationship between society and individual

The beginning of sociolinguistics as a discipline can be dated to the 1950s. The early work in this field is associated with the work and interests of urban dialectologists. The theoretical backdrop which inspired what came to be known as "variationist sociolinguistics" was adopted from "functionalist-structuralist" theories in sociology. These traditions highlight the importance of macro-level social organisations to the detriment of micro-level practices. Individuals' actions and life chances can be predicted on the basis of their position within the social structure. Theoretical constructs such as social class, age, gender and ethnicity are reified. Linguistic variation is viewed as socially conditioned. Although variationist sociolinguists concern themselves with the details of speech (e.g. Labov's studies of phonological variables), their orientation is macro in nature. The units of analysis considered are discrete elements, such as phonological or morphological features. They are handled from a quantitative perspective. The aim of variationists is to establish generalisations about speech patterns on the basis of group membership. Group membership is treated as a fixed and objectively identifiable category. It is usually assumed beforehand, and then confirmed or disconfirmed by the data obtained. Methodologically, variationist sociolinguistics assumes a positivist stance. Reality is what is observable through scientific methods. Value-free observation is possible and a desirable objective.

Both ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967) and phenomenology (Schutz 1974) appeared as a reaction to the deterministic view of society contained in the works of structural sociologists. Within these approaches, social action is given priority to the extent that the existence of social structures outside interaction are denied. Epistemologically, reality does not exist independently of individuals' perceptions of

it. Ethnomethodologists focus on the actors' experiences of reality. That is, for them, the only existing reality. This is a radical anti-positivist stance. Emphasis is placed on the micro-level of situated social interaction. It is the application of Garfinkel's ideas to the study of talk that has become what is known as Conversation Analysis.

CA-oriented researchers view social structure as *endogenous* to the talk (Schegloff 1991), that is, as a feature of situated social interaction. They take a highly empiricist stance in relation to this issue. For them, to be able to posit that an element of social structure or participant categorisation is "relevant" to a situated piece of talk, it must be demonstrably oriented to by the parties engaging in talk. That is to say, in order to determine whether or not a particular feature of the societal context is "consequential" for the shape or unfolding of the interaction, it must be evident from the detailed analysis of speakers' talk. This is what Schegloff refers to as the principle of *procedural consequentiality*.[5] CA's conceptualisation of the relevant socio-political context has been amply criticised for being too narrow (Duranti 1997; Wetherell 1998; Billig 1999a, 1999b). Duranti, for example, criticises the methodology employed by orthodox CA researchers to establish the relevance of a particular feature of the social context, rather than the principle of relevance itself. It is difficult for researchers to know what elements of the socio-institutional order may become relevant unless contextual information is obtained from sources that go beyond the local context of the interaction. This can be achieved through ethnographic methods of data collection. A further criticism levelled against CA's technical approach to the relationship between local talk and social structure is that it works to "decategorialise" interpretations, that is, to remove social accounts of data from them (Coupland 2001).

In recent years, there has been a move towards social theoretical models that try to transcend the dichotomy between endurable social structures on the one hand, and observable local interactional practice on the other. These models emphasise the ways in which the social order is constituted out of temporally and

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[5] Some CA-based studies (Moerman 1988, 1996; Watson 1997) have adopted a less "orthodox" approach to the notion of *procedural consequentiality*, allowing for ethnographic material to be considered in the analysis of social categorisation processes.

spatially bounded events. Within sociolinguistics, a much closer link to social theory has been acknowledged. Rather than an implicit background influence, the role of social theory in sociolinguistic studies has been much more explicit. In the majority of cases, this has not entailed the abandonment of detailed analyses of talk (see Woolard 1989; Rampton 1995; Heller 1999; and Pujolar 1997, 2001 among others). In the section that follows, the fundamental concepts from the theories of Giddens, Foucault and Bourdieu that have influenced my ways of looking at the data gathered are presented.

Fundamental theoretical concepts

This thesis brings together concepts from different theoretical frameworks. They function as magnifying lenses that enable the visualisation of features of social organisation. One fundamental concern of the research reported in this thesis is how to relate the detailed investigation of local situations of speech with broader processes of *social structuration*. Bourdieu and Giddens attempt to integrate the individual and the societal within one single paradigm. At stake is the role of human agency in the constitution of social life. Both Bourdieu and Giddens defend the position that individual actions shape the social world. Yet, the nature of these actions is determined by actors' position within the social structure. Whereas Bourdieu emphasises the importance of the structure in social processes, Giddens' theories underscore the local, situated nature of social life. This can be attributed to the influence of ethnomethodology and Goffman's micro-sociology in Giddens' work. The approach to the relationship between individual action and social structure adopted in the present thesis draws more upon Giddens' understanding of the social world than upon Bourdieu's conceptualisation of it.

Giddens' theoretical framework revolves around the notion of structuration. This concept highlights the dialogical relationship between local activities and social structures. For Giddens, social structures do not exist. They are instantiated in local practices, that is, in the local accomplishment of social activities. This explains why Giddens replaces the static notion of structure with the dynamic notion of structuration. Social structures are the result of a process of structuration. For

example, the disadvantaged social position of certain social actors, such as immigrant groups, is the outcome of processes of marginalisation and exclusion which take place in situated events. When an immigrant worker is rejected in a job selection process, his unstable social position is worsened. Language plays a fundamental role in processes of structuration. Social activities are at least partially constituted in language. It is likely that the reasons for the rejection of the immigrant worker have to be found in language use.

It is through language that particular representations of the social world are sustained and reproduced, but it is also through language that they may be changed. Bureaucrats' use of language at the site investigated recreates social relations of inequality. Bureaucrats exert such tight control over the structure of the interaction that contributions by immigrant information seekers that are considered sequentially misplaced are totally ignored. These types of actions go beyond the enactment of bureaucrats' social role. They have to do with naturalised ideologies about social relations at a public administration office, which embody a particular ideological construction of the social world. Clients of bureaucratic organisations are expected to adopt a passive stance and hand control over to the bureaucrat. When these clients are, as in the case of the study presented, immigrants in an irregular situation, the perception that such clients have no possibility of intervening in the shape of the interaction explains bureaucrats' constraining behaviour.

Social structures are brought about in local practice. The resources which enable these processes of structuration are not local but social. One of Giddens' most insightful claims is that structures are not only constraining, but also enabling. Structures give individuals the tools to carry out the practical activities of their daily lives. It is the social structure that renders speakers' actions intelligible. That is to say, it is against the backdrop of Spanish bureaucratic practices that officials' language use is made sense of. Public administrations in Spain have long been known for their inadequacies and inefficient information-providing practices. These practices shape officials' actions, but these very actions work to sustain and reinforce them. Thus, in their status as "creators" of actions, inadequate information routines are enabling, yet for the immigrants, they are profoundly constraining.

The notion of structuration is intimately related to that of social practice. For Giddens, the study of social life is the study of social practices ordered across space and time. Social practices are the locus of articulation of the relationship between actors and social structures. A social practice is a habitual way of doing things. This idea is closely connected with Giddens' conceptualisation of social life as routine. The routinised, repetitive character of social endeavours is a necessary psychological mechanism to inspire a sense of "ontological security" in social actors' understanding of what they do. At the same time, routinised practices are the mechanisms of reproduction and continuity of social life. In that sense, routine is not accidental; it is not something that happens but something that is *made* to happen, albeit unintentionally. This links up with another fundamental notion in Giddens: agency. For Giddens, agency is not related to considerations of intentionality. An agent is the "perpetrator" of an activity, independent of whether or not s/he is aware of the consequences of his/her actions. Giddens' claim that social systems would not exist without human agency has to be understood in that sense. The implication of human agency in the continuity of social life does not mean that social actors set out to create social systems intentionally. Their agency role resides in their ability to reproduce social systems through their routine participation in social events.

The notions of routine and agency bear directly upon the study presented. The routine implementation of certain linguistic practices prevents immigrants from having access to relevant insider information. This information is crucial for their life projects in Spain. Information is a resource, a form of capital, which is denied to them. The effect is that immigrants are allowed no degree of control over the progress of their applications. In a more general sense, they are prevented from gaining a general understanding of how the administrative procedure is organised, and how Spanish bureaucratic institutions work. Immigrants are often categorised as a disturbance, rather than as co-participants with equal rights over discursive production. Yet it is hard to claim that this is all done intentionally. Information providers implement a series of linguistic routines which have unintended effects, but which nonetheless reinforce their powerful position in this situational context.

This ties in with Giddens' notion of power, which is discussed in the following pages.

Another concept that Giddens highlights is that of *positioning*. Social encounters are situated in time and space. Social actors are also situated temporally and spatially, but more crucially, they are positioned within a network of social relations and vis-à-vis one another. Whenever they talk, they do so from specific positions of speaking. Giddens conceives of social positions as specific categories which carry with them certain rights and obligations which the actor occupying them may activate or deactivate. In that sense, Giddens' notion of position is similar to the concept of *role* but without accepting the consensual view of role advocated by some social theorists. Role prescriptions, for Giddens (1979), may incorporate contradictions and focus conflict, as their enactment requires the activation of resources which connect up with structures of domination. In the same vein, at the site investigated, bureaucrats' professional role is defined by numerous tensions and conflictual demands. These have to do with their professional duty to provide information on the one hand, and the pressures of the institution not to disclose too many details on the other.

The discussion of bureaucrats' subordinate position in the institutional hierarchy sheds light on the multi-faceted workings of power at this site. Bureaucrats take advantage of their privileged position as possessors of valuable capital, i.e. essentially knowledge and linguistic resources, to exert power over their interlocutors. But it has been pointed out that they also endure power by having to abide by institutional regulations as to what information can or cannot be transmitted. The ways in which the notion of power is conceptualised in this thesis draws on the work of Giddens (1979, 1984) and Foucault (1984), also discussed in Fraser (1989) and Gordon (1980). Giddens understands power as intimately bound up with the idea of agency. For him, power is fundamentally a transformative capacity. In other words, it is the ability to get things done, that is, to achieve outcomes. Yet power is not necessarily related to the notion of intentionality. A social actor can yield power unintentionally, that is, without consciously intending to do so. It is in its ability to bring about changes that power is conceptualised as

enabling. In this sense, Gidden's notion of power relates closely to Foucault's. Foucault argues that modern power is "productive" rather than "prohibitive". Power produces reality; it creates groups and boundaries; it defines "domains of truth" and forms of knowledge. This is one crucial idea of how power at the social setting studied is wielded. Information providers use language to construct a bureaucratic reality which bears little resemblance to the actual procedure. They exert power by defining and controlling the meaning of words, and the external realities they denote.

A fundamental idea borrowed from Foucault is the web-like character of modern power. Foucault claims that it is misleading to think of power as the prerogative of certain social groups. It is more appropriate to conceptualise power in terms of a complex network of relations of domination defined by specific local interests. Everybody is an a position to simultaneously exert and endure power. Human beings are described as "vehicles of power". This is one of the aspects mentioned above in relation to bureaucrats' powerful and at the same time powerless positions. Thus, researchers have to pay attention to the full complexities of power in the settings they investigate. Linked to the conception of power as a web of interests is the notion of the practical character of power. Foucault upholds that power should not be understood as something that exists in a vacuum and can therefore be given or exchanged, but as something that is exercised. Power exists in action (Gordon 1980); it is "anchored" in the micropractices of everyday life. In that respect, Foucault defends the need to examine the visible side of power, that is, its mechanics and effects, rather than its internal, invisible side, that is, individuals' motivations for exerting power. The micro-analysis of talk in interaction sheds light on the many-sided strategies whereby power is exercised at the office where my research was carried out.

Both Giddens and Bourdieu relate power in interaction to the ability to mobilise appropriate resources. The notion of resources –as used in this thesis– comes from Bourdieu's *theory of practice* (1977, 1985, 1991). Bourdieu applies an economic logic to the understanding of the ways in which individuals behave in society. Human action is oriented to the achievement of goals or interests, usually

related to the increase in forms of capital, that is, resources which are valued within a specific social sphere or marketplace. There are different forms of capital, namely economic, social, cultural and linguistic capital. All of these forms of capital lend themselves to transformation into symbolic capital –what is usually known as "status" or "prestige". This happens when a particular type of capital is recognised as "legitimate". Resources are fundamental social structuring devices in that they are unequally distributed among social actors. The consequence is that not all social actors have the same opportunities for action. The production, distribution and access to valuable resources is strictly surveilled, and so is the possibility of attaching social value to them. Although social activities are situated in time and space and locally constructed, the resources employed in their construction are not local in origin. Resources are socially ranked and differences among available resources are made consequential, that is, they are turned into elements of social distinction. Social distinction creates boundaries and articulates processes of exclusion. Differences in capital are thus differences in power (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999).

The issue of resources features prominently in the analysis of the interactions between immigrant information seekers and local bureaucrats in the institutional setting under study. It serves to facilitate understanding of the ways in which immigrants' access to forms of capital is prevented in and through talk. This constrains immigrants' opportunities for participation in the social space. They mobilise all sorts of strategies to obtain information, because information is a vital resource for them. Language is the means through which information can be obtained, but not all languages have the same value in this context. For example, immigrants' native languages have minimal value. Global languages, such as English or French, have some communicative value, but not as much value as Spanish, which is the language of the state and the language in which immigrants are addressed. By contrast, Catalan has symbolic value as the "in-group" language, and it is never used in immigrant-official talk. It is used to redefine the participation framework of interactions, and has the effect of creating spaces of exclusion. A detailed examination of language use and choices is presented in Chapter 8.

"Fields" are social spaces articulated by networks of social positions defined by particular distributions of resources. Yet, at the same time, they are sites of struggle in which social actors try to maintain or alter the distribution of capital. Alternatively, they may fight over the value attached to different forms of capital. The notion of struggle is fundamental to an understanding of the dynamics of social processes. Actors' chances of success depend on their particular position within a given social field. Their resistance also has a symbolic dimension in that what is at stake is agents' ability to intervene in the definition of the social world and their position within it. Immigrants' discursive struggles, that is, their attempts to challenge bureaucrats' ambiguous information-providing practices, are presented in detail in Chapter 7.

Foregrounding analyses of interactional data

In the previous sections, the main concepts from critical social theory which this study draws upon have been presented. Social theoretical models are helpful because they shed light on the ways in which social life is created and reproduced. They also provide insights into the relationship between local events and macro-level social structures. In the present study, I use concepts from critical social theory to discuss the ways in which local practices at a public institutional office have implications for intergroup relationships on a broader level. However, the empirical basis of my research is the sequential investigation of speakers' moves in these social interchanges. As has been argued, the relationship between theory and empirical data should be dialogic. The examination of situated talk may confirm the predictions of macro-theoretical frameworks, but it may also work to restrict or refute them. The goal of this section is to present the main concepts related to talk, interaction and context as assumed by the present study. The ways in which these concepts are put to use in the analysis of information encounters at the immigration office are illustrated in Chapters 7 and 8.

Relationship between talk and social organisation

I suggested earlier that talk is an instrument of both continuity and change. The social order is reproduced in local interactional practice, but it may also be contested. Whether participants' contributions in an exchange will work to sustain or challenge existing social practices can, to a certain extent, be predicted on the basis of their position in the social space. These predictions, however, are not always borne out in actual practice. This is because social interaction has its own rules, modes of conduct, and organisation.

The postulation by Goffman of the *interaction order* as "a domain of study in its own right" (1983) is one of the most notable contributions to the understanding of the complex relationship between language and the social world. Goffman tries to spell out the correspondences between macro-structural arrangements and interactional frames. He tries to counter the argument that macro-structural variables such as social class, age or gender shape the interactional domain in a deterministic way by positing the "relatively autonomous nature of the interaction order". Yet, at the same time, he distances himself from ethnomethodological perspectives. The fact that some elements of social structure can actually be traced back to the workings of face-to-face interaction does not mean that social structures do not exist and are reductible to the reality of situated verbal exchanges.

Goffman defends a "loose coupling" of the interactional realm with macro-level social processes. The way in which structural arrangements bear upon verbal exchanges is described as "a membrane selecting how various externally relevant social distinctions will be managed within the interaction" (1983:11). Goffman stresses that the dependence of linguistic data on external, "situational" factors, that is the social situatedness of talk, which he argues for in *The Neglected Situation* (1964), does not entail a dependency on social structures. The loose coupling that he advocates enables him to account for the possibility of social change occurring.

Along similar lines, Zimmerman (1998) claims that participants do not possess theories of discourse or society but that they can manage their local affairs in systematic ways which have intended or unintended consequences, some of which are beyond their notice. For Erickson (2001:175), while issues of power and

ideology from the wider societal order may permeate a social encounter, participants will work at sustaining a "moral order indigenous to the encounter itself", in which issues of ritual and face play a prominent role. This is because interactions are multidimensional. "There is enough ambiguity, indexicality, and contingency in any social situation that its character can shift as the interaction plays out" (2001:160). Social situations are never fully determined. Instead, they are dynamically co-constructed by participants in the course of their interactional dealings.

Features of face-to-face verbal interaction

The need to conduct a fine-grained analysis of talk in social situations of interaction is a fundamental methodological principle of the investigation presented. Conversation Analysis is the research tradition that has undertaken the most comprehensive "technical" investigation of talk-in-interaction. This study draws on a number of concepts and methodological procedures developed within CA.[6] However, my approach also differs from CA in significant ways. The main difference concerns the relationship between talk and social life. Because of the principle of *procedural consequentiality*, outlined on page 53, the influence of the social in talk has to be demonstrated in the actual features of the interaction. If it cannot be shown, it cannot be posited.

Furthermore, the ways in which language mediates processes of inequality and exclusion are not tackled by CA researchers. CA analyses concentrate on the ways in which interactions are organised, and on how specific organisations enable the accomplishment of social activities. What is never addressed is why certain social actors end up with more opportunities for action than others. CA-based studies, like a great deal of research in pragmatics, adopt an egalitarian stance in relation to language use.[7] This is due to the emphasis on ordinary conversation as the baseline form of interaction (Drew and Heritage 1992). Even when institutional discourse is examined, CA research falls short of providing an ideological critique of language

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[6] For a comprehensive overview see Atkinson and Heritage (1984), Psathas (1995); Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998), and ten Have (1998).

[7] See Fairclough (1989).

use. The present study does not align itself with the CA perspective on social life, but it does draw upon the principles of interactional organisation characterised by CA to explain talk in local sequential contexts. These are outlined in the ensuing paragraphs.

CA understands language as a mode of social action. In that sense, CA is not interested in the purely formal features of talk, but in what talk is used to "do" in the social world. Put in other words, CA is interested in the interactional organisation of social activities. Interaction is said to be jointly constructed by speakers because following turns build on previously produced talk. Likewise, meaning is not the sole responsibility of an individual participant. Meanings are co-constructed and emergent in the unfolding of interactional events. One of the hallmarks of CA is its *emic* perspective. CA tries to uncover the organisation of talk not from the outside, but from the perspective of participants themselves. Emphasis is placed on accounting for *members' methods* (Garfinkel 1967) as the way to overcome "ironical" accounts of social life, that is, accounts which are only valid within the researchers' social worlds.

Because the turn is the building block of conversation, the turn-taking mechanism is its basic organising principle (Sacks et al. 1974). Another fundamental assumption of CA is that talk is situated. Talk is situated in two ways. It is situated within a specific interactional context defined in terms of the kind of communicative event being accomplished by participants. Secondly, talk is situated in specific sequential contexts. This takes us to another fundamental notion within CA, notably the principle of sequentiality. Talk occurs in sequential contexts. In other words, turns at talk are not linked serially but sequentially. A turn creates a framework of expectations that constrains and provides for the interpretation of subsequent turns. This sequential linkage of turns is most evident in the case of paired action sequences or *adjacency pairs*. These are pairs of sequentially implicative social actions. The appearance of a first action requires the production of some relevant second. The implications of the principle of sequentiality are far-reaching. Sequentiality is the means whereby the achievement of intersubjective understanding can be investigated. Speakers display in their turns their

understanding of the previous talk. This is what is referred to as "next-turn proof procedure". The "invisible" aspect of understanding is thereby brought into the open.

Talk, context and social interaction

The way the relationship between talk and context is understood in this study is shaped by work carried out within CA, interactional sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. In line with CA, this investigation assumes the *doubly contextual* nature of talk. A turn at talk is always uttered and interpreted in relation to previous talk, and that turn shapes a new context of action for ensuing talk. Put in other words, social actions are simultaneously context-shaped and context-renewing (Heritage 1984).

The interactive nature of context came into sharp focus through the work of John Gumperz and his associates (Gumperz 1982a; Auer and Di Luzio 1992). The notion of *contextualisation* is central to an understanding of context as dynamic and constantly changing rather than as a static set of elements established before the social interaction begins.[8] The notion of contextualisation aims at bridging the gap between approaches which focus on the macro-societal dimensions of talk and those that underscore the interactional construction of context. The theoretical ground is provided by Peirce's notion of *indexicality* (1965-6).

Gumperz underscores the role of contextualisation in interpretive processes, that is, in speakers' methods for retrieving information and processing verbal messages. Contextualisation refers to "all activities by participants which make relevant, maintain, revise, cancel... any aspect of context which, in turn, is responsible for the interpretation of an utterance in its particular locus of occurrence" (Auer and Di Luzio 1992:4). In other words, contextualisation is the process whereby any "brought along" element of the contextual background, be it social, cultural, material or situational, is "brought about" by participants in the course of an interactional event. Speakers' productions are intended to be

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[8] The notion of contextualisation enables researchers to dispense with the question of how much context is relevant for linguistic analysis. Contextual relevancies are made available in the text itself by co-participants.

understood against the background of this new brought about contextual framework. This is how processes of conversational inferencing work.

Following Duranti and Goodwin (1992), this study also understands the relationship between talk and context as dynamic and mutually reflexive. The linguistic and non-linguistic elements of communicative events shape each other in a dialogical manner. Talk is defined by the social context in which it occurs, but it also defines that context. From this assumption derives the idea that the context is not something that exists outside the interaction, but its creation is internal to the talk. Context is created on-line in the minute-to-minute unfolding of interactional events; it is emergent in character.

Maryns and Blommaert (2002b) problematise the notion of contextualisation. They uphold that speakers' access to relevant context is not automatic; it is subject to the constraints of social life, and thus, determined by issues of power and inequality. Looking at an institutional context related to immigration, they claim that immigrants' –or in their case asylum seekers'– interpretations of talk are hindered by their lack of access to the contextual spaces in which the language produced can be made sense of. These contextual spaces are strictly controlled by local bureaucrats and the whole official procedure. In relation to contextual spaces, Maryns and Blommaert (2002a) distinguish a dimension of context which has to do with constraints on participants' actions which precede any interactional event. This is what they call the notion of *pretext,* a notion explored, among others, by Hinnenkamp (1991) and Meeuwis (1994) in their analyses of intercultural communication. In these studies, ethnic stereotype, and predetermined beliefs about certain minority groups function as pretextual contexts in that they have a clear influence on participants' interactional behaviour. This certainly seems to be true at the immigration office under analysis, where bureaucrats' categorisation practices respond to ideological conceptualisations of immigrants circulating on a societal level.

Maryns and Blommaert explore the notion of pretext in relation to participants' communicative resources and linguistic repertoires. These are said to act as pretextual contexts in the sense that they impose often socially invisible

conditions on what can be produced, valued and understood. When conditions on sayability and interpretability differ across speakers, the form of interaction is defined by pretextual gaps. These gaps are contextual in the sense that linguistic productions need to be assessed against the backdrop of differential access to valuable resources and thus of constrained language choices (Blommaert 2001). Along the same lines, the importance of immigrants' limited linguistic resources is fundamental to understanding the ways in which speakers act at the office that is the object of my study. Immigrants' but also public officials' language use is influenced by immigrants' –perceived or real– difficulties with language.

Institutional communication

The forms of verbal communication investigated in this thesis are produced in the context of a bureaucratic administration. They are forms of institutional talk and, as such, connect up with the huge body of research conducted in this area. This section intends to outline the fundamental assumptions guiding the analysis of social exchanges investigated as forms of institutional communication.

This study adopts an "integrative" or "holistic" approach to the understanding of institutional discourse, as defined by Sarangi and Roberts (1999a). The objective is the understanding of talk produced in institutional contexts in all its complexity. Methodologically, this entails the gathering of different types of data. On the one hand, there is the need for researchers to obtain interactional data from different occasions of talk occurring within the institutional domain investigated, including "frontstage" and "backstage events" (see below). On the other hand, they should collect different forms of data, especially ethnographic material, to contribute to the understanding of the institutional backdrop against which interactions are played out.

My study is articulated around the fine-grained examination of empirical data from social interactional events. Yet its scope is broader. Indeed, this study assumes that the analysis of locally situated talk can throw light on the ways in which social life is organised. The investigation of the institutional domain plays a fundamental part. In line with Sarangi and Slembrouck (1996), this piece of research assumes that

institutions are orders of discourse defined by particular articulations of discourses and discursive practices, the enactment of specific social and professional identities, and the application of procedures of legitimation and delegitimation. In spite of its heavy emphases on the institutional dimension of talk, this study aims to go beyond it. It attempts to draw conclusions which have implications for the mechanisms of production and reproduction of the social order. Institutions are becoming fundamental pieces in the articulation of contemporary social life (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). Increasingly, more and more aspects of our daily lives are becoming subject to institutional regulation. The analysis of the position and functioning of institutions and especially of their practices will undoubtedly improve our understanding of the ways in which institutional life opens up opportunities for individuals or on the contrary limits participation and creates social boundaries.

Frontstage and backstage activities

The notions of "backstage" and "frontstage" have been employed in this thesis to characterise distinct institutional spaces and modes of talk. In his 1959 book, *The presentation of self in everyday life*, Goffman draws on a number of theatrical metaphors to account for the various ways in which individuals behave in social establishments. He divides these establishments into two basic regions, namely frontstage and backstage. Regions are spaces bounded by "barriers to perception" (1959:106). These two regions comprise the whole range of activities that take place in social establishments. The front region is the space where the "performance" is given, where the "show" is staged. The back region is the place where the "performer" can relax and step out of character. No member of the audience is allowed to enter this region. The backstage is not necessarily a physical space. As Goffman points out, any space can be transformed into a backstage region by invoking a backstage style. This style is characterised by, among other things, sloppy sitting, use of non-standard speech, playful aggressivity, and such like. Another feature of backstage behaviour is that performers tend to ridicule, caricature and criticise their audiences. These derogatory practices may serve to create a bond of solidarity among servers

to make up for frontstage situations in which the demands of the audience may bring about disregard for one another.

Frontstage activities have traditionally been the main focus of research into institutions, as it is both in and through these interactions that institutions meet the public. Sarangi and Roberts (1999b) advocate a shift of emphasis towards backstage activities and towards the interplay between backstage and frontstage regions. As Goffman argues, the backstage is the space where the show is prepared, where illusions and appearances are constructed. Exploring the backstage is fundamental to getting to an understanding of the complexities shaping the frontstage, and of the contradictory pressures and conflictual demands that are made on institutional representatives. As frontstage interactions are increasingly seen as contingent on backstage activities (Sarangi and Roberts 1999b), researchers need to access a range of data types and interactions to get a grasp of organisational constraints and interests and how these bear upon participants' procedures for sense making.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has foregrounded the interdisciplinary nature of the theoretical framework adopted. The challenge of the present study is to integrate macro-social theoretical concepts with the analysis of the local activities of situated actors. It also aims to show how the social-institutional order is entangled in the production of the interactional order.

A fundamental aspect of the approach outlined is the critical stance adopted. The main concern of critical studies is social inequality. The investigation of the ways in which inequality is created and sustained centres around the notions of power, authority and struggle. These are some of the key macro-level concepts drawn upon in the study presented.

The notion of resources is equally important to understand immigrants' marginal position in the social space. Socio-economic resources are the most obvious type, as the desire to improve their socio-economic status is behind immigrants' decision to emigrate. But there are more subtle ways in which resources

play a role in their daily lives. Valued communicative practices give immigrants' the chance to participate in the production of institutional discourse. This is particularly important at the site examined, where what is at stake is immigrants' ability to make sense of key information provided. Lack of these resources aggravates their social exclusion. However, there are limits to immigrants' opportunities for action. These are defined by the constraints imposed by the institution, and the social control exerted by the state.

3

Socio-historical and political context

The aim of the present chapter is to provide background information on the demographic, historical and legal context framing the data gathered. Social events and actions are always situated in time and space. The socio-historical and political circumstances in which particular types of data are embedded have largely been overlooked in sociolinguistic and pragmatic investigations of spoken data. Yet certain types of data may only become available at specific socio-political moments, such as the asylum seekers' narratives examined by Blommaert (2001). Likewise, the features of some interactions can only be explained by referring to the historical and political contexts to which they are intimately bound.

This chapter begins by providing background information on the demographic context of foreign immigration to Spain. The characteristics and distribution of the immigrant population are briefly presented. Since the interactional and ethnographic data on which the present thesis is based comes from an office in Barcelona, information is provided about the Catalan context. The second part offers a brief description of the legal circumstances framing the verbal exchanges analysed. They were gathered in the very specific context of an exceptional campaign to legalise "irregular" immigrants. Massive legalisation campaigns are the mechanisms to which national states resort to try to bring into the open large numbers of illegal aliens. In the majority of cases, the procedure by which immigrants may acquire legal status is simplified, and it therefore becomes more amenable to examination.

Exceptional legalisation campaigns are bounded in time. The campaign examined in the present thesis took place as a result of the passage in 2000 of a new immigration law, in spite of opposition from the ruling conservative party which did not have an absolute majority in parliament at the time. The social and political climate surrounding the legalisation campaign was thus rather hostile towards immigrants. Indeed, the government launched a media campaign intended to create a state of opinion which was favourable to the implementation of more restrictive

policies. After a national election that same year, the recently passed immigration law was amended in that direction. An examination of the Spanish legal framework on immigration and the numerous changes it has undergone in recent years is provided. The section ends with a discussion of the historical unfolding of the 2000 legalisation campaign and the significant events that took place in its aftermath.

Foreign immigrants in Spain

Economic immigration from developing countries is a relatively recent phenomenon in Spain. It was only in the 1990s that Spain began to attract significant numbers. The large-scale arrival of immigrants must be framed within the context of changing patterns of immigration on a European level. The Mediterranean countries have gradually replaced the countries of the North as preferred destinations, so that in 2001 Spain was the country which contributed the largest number of immigrant residents to the European Union.

Some of the characteristics of immigration into Spain are also typical of other Southern European countries, such as Italy, Greece or Portugal. One of these is the high percentage of individuals without proper work or residence permits. This is related to the similarities of these economies on a macro-structural level, such as loosely regulated labour markets. At the moment, foreigners with appropriate legal authorisation represent nearly 3% of the Spanish population, though in some areas like Catalonia, the percentage is significantly higher at around 4.5%. The proportion of unregularised foreigners is uncertain, but according to some estimates (CONC 2000), numbers might be close to 400,000. On the whole, immigration in Spain is still a reduced phenomenon, but not as reduced as it used to be. The noticeable numerical increases of the years 2001 and 2002, and the changes in occupational trends, socio-demographic characteristics and countries of origin have led analysts to state that the phenomenon may be at a decisive crossroads (Arango Vila-Belda 2002). This underscores the importance of the study undertaken in this thesis. Before taking a closer look at the number of foreigners, their distribution and main ethnographic features, some remarks need to be made on the terminology employed in the present study.

From a legal standpoint, a fundamental division is established by the Spanish Constitution between "nationals" and "foreigners". The distinguishing element is citizenship. Spanish "nationals" are those citizens in possession of Spanish citizenship. The term "foreigner", by contrast, is applied to any individual who find her or himself on Spanish soil and does not have Spanish citizenship. The term "foreigner" does not, therefore, establish a distinction between individuals from developed countries that settle in Spain for a variety of reasons, and people from developing countries who immigrate to improve their socio-economic circumstances and those of their families. The Spanish Constitution[1] grants foreigners all rights and public freedoms guaranteed by it (except for the rights to vote and hold public office)[2] in the terms established by treaties and the law.[3] Foreigners may or may not be in possession of a permit entitling them to reside legally in the country. Those with legal authorisation are termed "foreign residents", whereas those without are termed "illegal" or "irregular foreigners" refer to the second type.[4] Since 1985, the Spanish law on immigration has recognised a further distinction based on immigrants' country of origin. Foreign residents who are nationals of other European Union (EU) member states fall into one legal category, the *régimen comunitario*, whereas citizens of non-EU countries fall into another, the *régimen general*.[5] This is a legal rather than a factual distinction. Indeed, EU status is granted not only to citizens of states belonging to either the European Union or the European Economic Area –which includes all EU countries, plus Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland– but also to members of their immediate family, regardless of whether these relatives are EU citizens themselves[6]. This means that a number of individuals originally from non-EU countries fall into this category (26.4% of all EU

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[1] Chapter 1, Articles 13 and 23.

[2] One difference is that EU-status have the right to vote in municipal elections.

[3] This is where immigration laws come in.

[4] In actual fact, these terms are normally employed to refer exclusively to non-EU foreigners. For EU foreigners living without proper documentation in the country the term "non-registered" is preferred (see Arango and Vila-Belda 2002).

[5] These are also referred to as "third-party countries".

[6] This means parents, spouses, and children, as well as spouses' parents and children. Parents need to show that they are financially dependent on the EU citizen. As for children, they have to be under 21; if they are older, they need to show that they are financially dependent on their parents.

foreign residents in 2001 according to data from the Spanish Interior Ministry). The consequences of having EU rather than non-EU status are far-reaching, since EU foreigners are automatically entitled to a residence permit,[7] whereas non-EU foreigners are required to apply for a residence and/or work permit. Thus, a EU citizen cannot be denied a residence permit, while a non-EU individual can.

It is important at this point to clarify my use of the word "immigrant". In the literature written in English, the term "migrant" is preferred to the term "immigrant". As Goytisolo and Naïr (2000) point out, the concept of "immigrant" is ethnocentric. We define foreigners from our perspective, that is, as individuals who are coming to "our" country. The term "migrant" is neutral in that respect. Another difference between "migrant" and "immigrant" is that the first term does not carry the same sense of "completed journey" as the second one does. Thus, the word "migrant" is defined by the dictionary as "someone who moves from one place to another", whereas an "immigrant" is "someone who comes as a permanent resident to a country other than his/her native land".[8] The term "migrant", therefore, seems a more appropriate term to use when discussing movements of population in the era of globalisation and generalised travelling, since it suggests not a person who leaves his/her place of origin and goes to a specific country with the goal of settling there, but someone who may reside in different places before deciding to stay in one of them for good. In spite of all this, the term "immigrant" has been chosen for the present study. To some extent, this reflects popular usage in the local context, where the Catalan term "*migrant*" or the Spanish "*migrante*" (migrant) are rarely used.[9] The way the word "immigrant" is conceptualised in this study, however, does assume final permanent residency in Spain.[10]

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[7] According to the Spanish Interior Ministry's Annual Report on Foreign Residents (Anuario de Extranjería, 2001:19), "*los extranjeros residentes en régimen comunitario son documentados con una tarjeta de residencia*" (EU foreign residents are documented with a residence card).

[8] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 8th ed.

[9] I am aware that this may be due to the newness of the phenomenon. To date, there are relatively few studies devoted to the analysis of immigration in Spain. It is, thus, not surprising that there has not been reflection on language use in this area. As has happened in other European countries, the term "migrant" may eventually come to replace the word "immigrant" in Spain too.

[10] The increasingly restrictive legislation of the different countries of the European Union may encourage the movement of immigrants from one place to another driven by the prospects of acquiring legal status in one

Distribution of foreigners

According to official statistics, in 2001 there were 1,109,060 registered foreigners in Spain (Ministerio del Interior 2002).[11] This amounts to 2.7% of the total Spanish population.[12] The arrival of non-EU immigrants in Spain started in the late 1970s. Catalonia was one of the first regions to receive economic immigrants, most of whom took up jobs in the agricultural sector. A well-known case is the Maresme area, in the Barcelona region, where Gambian and Senegalese citizens were employed to work in strawberry and flower fields. According to data from the Spanish Interior Ministry, in 1981 there were 198,042 foreign residents in Spain. As Table 3.1 below shows, the figure had risen to 1,109,060 by 2002. Thus the number of foreign residents has increased by 911,018 individuals over a period of 20 years.

Table 3.1
Foreign residents in Spain between 1997 and 2001

Year	Total number of foreign residents	EU residents	Percentage of total number of foreign residents	Non-EU residents	Percentage of total number of foreign residents
1997	609,813	332,558	54.5%	277,255	45.5%
1998	719,647	380,927	52.9	338,720	47.1
1999	801,329	418,374	52.2	382,955	47.8
2000	895,720	419,874	46.9	475,846	53.1
2001	1,109,060	449,881	40.6	659,179	59.4

Source: Adapted from Ministerio del Interior (2001:29) and (2002:52).

On the whole, the number of foreign residents in Spain has experienced a moderate and steady growth, reaching peaks on the occasion of exceptional legalisation campaigns, as in 1991 and 2000. As a result of the legalisation campaigns which started in the year 2000 the total number of registered foreigners rose by 23.8% in 2001. This contrasts with increases of only 11.4% in 1999 and 11.8% in 2000. The

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or the other of its member states. I was able to observe this phenomenon in Spain during the 2000 legalisation campaign of the year 2000 analysed in this thesis.

[11] All figures presented in this dissertation are taken from official sources, essentially the Spanish Interior Ministry (Ministerio del Interior 2001 and 2002) and the "National Statistics Agency" *(Instituto Nacional de Estadística)*. The most recent data available is for the year 2001. Official statistics only take into consideration foreign residents, that is, foreigners living legally in Spain. The number of illegal residents varies depending on the sources, but as a rule, it tends to be fairly large. According to some estimates (CONC 2002), there were approximately 36% more immigrants than the official figures acknowledged at the end of 2002.

[12] According to data from the newspaper *El País* (22 December 2000, p.27).

evolution of the distribution of foreign residents by status, namely, EU *(comunitario)* or non-EU *(general),* is also significant. Until 1999, EU foreigners outnumbered non-EU foreigners. However, the tendency has been for the latter group to grow faster than the former. Thus, in 1998 the number of non-EU foreigners increased by 22.2%, while that of EU foreigners grew by just 18%. This tendency continued during 1999, when the figures were 13.1% growth for non-EU as opposed to 9.8% for EU. As a result, in the year 2000 the number of non-EU residents in Spain was, for the first time, larger than the number of residents with EU status.

Table 3.2
Main concentration of foreign residents
by autonomous region in 2001

Autonomous region	Number of foreign residents in each region	Percentage of total foreign population in Spain	Percentage of total population in the region[13]
Catalonia	280,167	25.3%	4.5%
Madrid	231,295	20.9	4.4
Andalusia	157,157	14.2	2.2
Valencian Community	101,368	9.1	2.5
Rest of Spain	339,073	30.6	1.9
Total	**1,109,060**	**100.0%**	**2.7%**

Source: Adapted from Ministerio del Interior (2002:52/56).

A significant feature of foreign residents in Spain is that their distribution within the territory is uneven. Foreigners tend to concentrate in a few areas, namely along the Mediterranean, in the Madrid metropolitan region and along the Andalusian coastline. Together, these areas account for 69.4% of the total foreign population in Spain. As can be observed in Table 3.2, Catalonia is the autonomous region which has the largest share of foreigners (25.3%), followed by Madrid (20.9%), Andalusia (14.2%) and the Valencian Community (9.1%). Another good indicator of the concentration of foreigners is the proportion they represent with respect to the total population. Whereas for the country as a whole it is 2.7%, within Catalonia it represents 4.5% of the total population, and in the autonomous region of Madrid, 4.4%. If we look at the distribution of foreign residents by province (Table 3.3 below), the top position in absolute number is occupied by the province of Madrid, followed very closely by Barcelona. In distant third and fourth places come the

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[13] Percentages that refer to the total population in a given area are based on projections by the Spanish National Statistics Agency *(Instituto Nacional de Estadística)* as to population on 31 December 2001.

provinces of Malaga in Andalusia and Alicante in the Valencian Community. Thus only four of the fifty-two Spanish provinces host half of the total foreign population in the country.

Table 3.3
Main concentration of foreign residents
by province in 2001

Province	Number of foreign residents	Percentage of total foreign population in Spain
Madrid	231,295	20.9%
Barcelona	206,395	18.6
Malaga	62,957	5.7
Alicante	62,664	5.6
Rest of Spain	545,749	49.2
Total	**1,109,060**	**100.0%**

Source: Adapted from Ministerio del Interior (2002:56).

To obtain a clearer picture of the nature and distribution of the foreign population in Spain, it is necessary to break down these figures according to the two distinct *regímenes* or statuses into which foreign residents fall.[14] Table 3.4 below shows the figures for non-EU residents by autonomous region.

Table 3.4
Main concentration of non-EU residents
by autonomous region in 2001

Autonomous region	Number of non-EU foreign residents	Percentage of total non-EU foreigners in Spain	Percentage of total foreign population in each region
Catalonia	206,442	31.3%	73.7%
Madrid	165,426	25.1	71.5
Andalusia	80,713	12.3	51.4
Valencian Community	43,540	6.6	43.0
Rest of Spain	163,058	24.7	48.1
Total	**659,179**	**100.0%**	**59.4%**

Source: Adapted from Ministerio del Interior (2002:52).

A total of 31.3% of non-EU foreigners in Spain reside in Catalonia, while 25.1% live in the autonomous region of Madrid. More than half of all non-EU residents in Spain (56.4%) are found in these two regions alone. Doubtless, the concentration of industrial and economic activity in these areas accounts for such high rates. If these

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[14] This is a useful analytical distinction, as the socioeconomic conditions and therefore the welfare needs of the two groups are radically distinct.

figures are compared with those presented in Table 3.2, it is possible to observe that, although both Andalusia and Valencia host a large number of foreigners, a significant percentage of them are EU nationals. This is also shown by the percentage of the total foreign population that non-EU residents account for. In both Catalonia and Madrid, the proportion of non-EU immigrants is substantial (73.7% and 72.5% respectively). By contrast, they represent just above half of the foreign population in Andalusia, and only some 40% in the Valencian region. Another interesting indicator of the distribution of economic immigrants in Spain is the percentage of non-EU residents per province in relation to its total population.

Table 3.5
Main concentration of foreign residents by province
relative to their total population in 2001

Province	Percentage of total population in each province	Percentage of non-EU foreigners in relation to total foreign population in each province
Almeria	8.3%	83.8%
Girona	7.1	69.7
Balearic Islands	5.8	19.9
Las Palmas	5.6	44.4
Melilla	5.4	51.8

Source: Adapted from Ministerio del Interior (2002:56).

Almeria in Andalusia is the Spanish province with the highest percentage of foreigners relative to its total population. They make up 8.3% of its population. Girona in Catalonia comes in second place, with foreigners accounting for 7.1% of its total population, while the Balearic Islands are third, with 5.8%. Yet this indicator alone falls short of providing the whole picture. Whereas in Almeria 83.8% of all foreigners are non-EU immigrants, this rate drops to 19.9% in the case of the Balearic Islands. Although both are provinces with a significant percentage of foreigners in their total population, the nature and socio-economic needs of foreign residents in Almeria from those living on the Balearic Islands are likely to be completely different.

Table 3.6
Origin of foreign residents in Spain
by continent in 2001

Continent	Number of foreign residents	Percentage of total foreign population in Spain
Europe	414,555	37.4%
Africa	304,169	27.4
America	298,798	26.9
Asia	91,552	8.1
Oceania	944	0.1
Stateless and unknown	1,095	0.1
Total	**1,109,060**	**100.0%**

Source: Adapted from INEbase (2003).

As concerns the origin of foreign residents in Spain, the majority come from the European continent (37.4%). Although most are EU nationals, in recent years there has been a rise in the number of non-EU European nationals, mostly from Eastern European countries like Rumania, Bulgaria and Russia. The second continent most widely represented in Spain is Africa (27.4% of the foreign population). In third place comes the American continent. The number of individuals coming from Latin American and Caribbean countries, especially Ecuador, Peru and the Dominican Republic, has increased significantly in recent years. In 2001 they accounted for up to 25.6% of all foreign residents in Spain. By nationality, the group of Moroccans is the largest (234,937), followed by Ecuadorians (84,699), and interestingly, British (80,183). It must be noted that the distribution of nationality groups by province differs significantly. Latin Americans are the largest group in the autonomous community of Madrid, whereas in Catalonia Moroccans occupy the first place. In Andalusia and the Valencian region, by contrast, the largest group of foreigners is made up of individuals from the European Union.

The distribution by gender shows that males (55%) outnumber females (45%). There are, however, significant differences by continent. Whereas up to 57.7% of foreigners from Latin America are women, the figure drops to 30.8% in the case of individuals from Africa. The country with the highest rate of migrant males is Pakistan (91.6%), while women predominate among Brazilians (71.8%). As regards age, 83.0% of foreigners are between 16 and 64 years of age. By professional occupation, in 1999, 58.5% of work permit holders worked in the service sector,

21.2% in the agricultural sector, 9.4% in the construction sector, 7.4% in industries and 3.6% developed an unclassifiable work activity.[15]

Catalonia hosts 31.3% of non-EU residents living in Spain, even though its population is only 15.4% of the total Spanish population.[16] The percentage of foreign residents is 4.5%. If we consider that on top of this the number of illegal immigrants may amount to 120,000,[17] the percentage of foreigners rises to 6.4% of the total Catalan population. Even though this percentage is still below that of neighbouring EU countries such as Germany or France, it is significantly higher than the Spanish average, which is around 2.7% of the total population.

Table 3.7
Foreign residents in Catalonia by province in 2001

Province	EU residents	Non-EU residents	Total number of foreign residents	Percentage of total foreign population in Catalonia
Barcelona	52,575	153,820	206,395	73.6%
Girona	12,235	28,087	40,322	14.4
Lleida	1,687	10,297	11,984	4.3
Tarragona	7,228	14,238	21,466	7.7
Total	**73,725**	**206,442**	**280,167**	**100.0%**

Source: Adapted from Ministerio del Interior (2002:52).

In terms of the distribution of legal foreign residents among the provinces that constitute the autonomous region of Catalonia, Table 3.7 shows that Barcelona takes the lead, with 73.6% of the total foreign population; by contrast, Lleida occupies the last position, with only 4.3%. Note that the province with highest proportion of foreign residents in relation to its total population is Girona, which, with 7.1% foreigners, occupies the second position on a Spanish level as we saw in Table 3.5. Within the Girona province, there are certain *comarques* (districts) -the *Alt Empordà*, for example- with rates equalling European averages, i.e. around 8%. As regards continent of origin, contrary to the picture on a Spanish level, African residents outnumber European foreign residents in Catalonia. American residents

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[15] These numbers are taken from Ministerio del Interior (2001). Official data on foreigners' professional activities from the years 2000 and 2001 is unavailable.

[16] This high rate is the argument recurrently used by Catalan politicians to demand greater political control over immigration flows. At the moment, immigration policies are the sole responsibility of the Spanish central government.

[17] As estimated by CONC (2002).

(from both North and South America) continue to be the third largest group. Asians occupy the fourth position. With respect to professional occupation, the highest concentration is found in the service sector, followed by agriculture, industry and construction.

As regards the city of Barcelona (see Table 3.8 below), foreign residents –both legal and illegal– represented 4.9% of the population in the year 2000, a figure higher than the Catalan average (4.5%).[18] By nationality (see Table 3.9 below), Ecuadorians constituted the largest group (11.2% of foreigners), with Latin Americans in general being by far the largest foreign community. The second largest nationality group was that of Moroccans (9.6%), followed by Peruvians, Colombians, and citizens of the Dominican Republic. Asian communities come in only sixth and seventh places –Pakistan (4.6%) and Philippines (4.3%) respectively.

Table 3.8
Spanish nationals and foreigners in the city of
Barcelona in 2000

Population group	Number of residents	Percentage of total population in Barcelona
Spanish nationals	1,438,890	95.1%
Foreigners	74,081	4.9
Total	**1,512,971**	**100.0%**

Source: Adapted from Ajuntament de Barcelona (2002).

Table 3.9
Main foreign nationality groups in the city
of Barcelona in 2000

Country of origin	Number of residents	Percentage of total foreign residents in Barcelona
Ecuador	8,322	11.2%
Morocco	7,134	9.6
Peru	6,895	9.3
Colombia	4,708	6.3
Dominican Republic	4,136	5.5
Pakistan	3,404	4.6
Philippines	3,187	4.3

Source: Adapted from Ajuntament de Barcelona (2002).

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[18] There is no official data for 2001 and 2002. The data presented here comes from the municipal census *(Padró municipal d'habitants)*. The fact that it includes both legal and illegal foreigners and the tendency for immigrants to concentrate in urban areas may account for the apparently higher proportion of foreigners in Barcelona as compared to the Catalan average. According to data from the newspaper *El País* (14 April 2002), this percentage rose to 7.6% at the beginning of 2002. In the inner city districts *(Ciutat Vella),* 26.7% of all residents were foreign. As in 2000, the largest nationality group was that of Ecuadorians.

Features of immigration

This section does not aim to present a complete picture of immigration in Spain. Its goal is to complement the quantitative data presented in the previous section. It draws on sociological analyses undertaken by Díez Nicolás and Ramírez Lafita (2001a) and Arango Vila-Belda (2002). One of the first notions to be underscored is that it is not appropriate to conceive of foreign immigration as a homogeneous whole. There are different types of immigrants depending on their geographical origin, mode of entry, type of professional activity, gender distribution, patterns of family and social relations, level of formal education, and so on.

One of the most prominent features of foreign immigration in Spain is that it is quite heterogeneous. This is attributed to the fact that Spain is a "latecomer" as a country of immigration (Arango Vila-Belda 2002). A large proportion of legal foreign residents have entered the country over the last five years. Current international migrations differ considerably from previous ones, mainly with regard to its diverse composition. In the era of globalisation, Spain is receiving immigrants from almost every region in the world. This has important consequences for public policies targeted at immigrants. In addition, the origin and composition of the immigrant population is constantly changing. One example is the sudden increase in the number of Ecuadorians, which in just three years have become the second largest foreigner group in Spain after North Africans.

Another feature to be highlighted is the low proportion of asylum seekers and refugees fleeing conflict, a feature which Spain shares with other southern European countries. Immigrants in Spain are predominantly young, and the majority are starters in the "migratory chain", which will later be continued by "derived" immigrants (family relatives, friends, fellow countrymen, and so on). In addition, they tend to be fairly mobile geographically. These characteristics are said to be typical of the initial stages of the migratory cycle (Arango Vila-Belda 2002).

As mentioned above, one of the distinguishing characteristics of immigrants in Spain is the large proportion who lack legal documentation. This has been a constant feature since the late 1980s. In a study by Díez Nicolás and Ramírez Lafita (2001a), only 17% of the 765 immigrants surveyed had arrived in Spain with a valid

work permit. The vast majority either entered the country illegally or entered legally but then remained beyond the period of time stipulated in their original visa. According to the authors, the fact that an immigrant is illegal conditions his or her integration process, but to a lesser extent than has often been asserted. Arango Vila-Belda argues that the large number of illegals is a good indicator of the restrictiveness of the law, which accounts for why "backdoor" methods are resorted to. Family and friends are mentioned as main sources of advice in trying to acquire legal status.

With regard to immigrants' insertion into the job market, the tendency has been for them to concentrate in a few occupational "niches", mainly retail businesses, agriculture, construction, hotel trade, and domestic service. However, the current trend is towards diversification. Informal ethnic support networks play a fundamental role in helping immigrants find a job, especially in the case of Latin Americans.[19] This experience seems to be harder for North Africans and sub-Saharan Africans. One element that stands out is the high rate of unemployment among immigrants, attested by Díez Nicolás and Ramírez Lafita, in spite of the high demand for workers in certain sectors. This may be due to the lack of proper legal status in some cases, but it may also reflect the lack of flexibility of the job market. Finally, it seems that, by and large, the goal of immigrants arriving in Spain is to settle in the country for good.

The following section gives an overview of the legal framework regulating foreign residency in Spain. The political circumstances surrounding the passing of a new immigration law in 2000 are outlined. One of the provisions of this new law was an exceptional campaign to legalise foreigners residing in Spain illegally. The data examined in this thesis was gathered during that campaign. This section also discusses other innovative aspects of the law, which was considered one of the most progressive in Europe at the time. Some of the most significant changes it introduced with respect to the previous statute are examined. During the year 2000,

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[19] The language plays here a fundamental role.

this new law was reformed. A number of amendments were introduced which made it significantly more restrictive. These changes are also discussed below.

Spanish legal framework on immigration

The first immigration law to be passed in Spain after the establishment of the 1978 Constitution was the *Ley Orgánica 7/1985 sobre derechos y libertades de los extranjeros en España* (Constitutional Law 7/1985 on Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain), commonly known as the LO 7/1985. The name *ley orgánica* comes from the fact that, as a law bearing on foreigners' rights and freedoms, it concerns a number of articles in the Spanish constitution, most notably Article 13.[20] To be passed, it has to be voted for by an overall majority of members of parliament.

The text of the bill was drafted with utmost urgency. The reason was Spain's entry into the European Community, scheduled for January 1, 1986, which entailed the creation of a new legal category covering foreigners who were citizens of fellow EC countries *(régimen comunitario).* Under this new status and in keeping with EC regulations, nationals of EC states were to be granted freedom of movement to and from Spain. Thus, a need to unify and especially update legal regulations on immigration prompted the socialist PSOE government of the time to submit a new immigration law to parliament. The law was finally passed in 1985. The focus of the LO 7/1985 was on regulating foreigners' entry and residency, as well as on determining the circumstances that could lead to deportation. Essentially, it emphasised elements of administrative and police control (Ruiz de Huidobro de Carlos 2000).

In the years following the enactment of the new immigration law, the number of foreigners arriving in Spain continued to increase. Due to the restrictive nature of the law, significant numbers were unable to regularise their legal status. Public opinion became increasingly aware of the growing number of illegal foreigners and

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[20] Article 13 states very broadly that "*Los extranjeros disfrutarán en España de las libertades públicas que garantiza el Título presente en los términos que establezcan los tratados y la ley*" (Foreigners in Spain will enjoy the public freedoms guaranteed by the present Title in the terms established by treaties and the law).

political attitudes with regard to immigration started to change in favour of facilitating legalisation and integration. Thus, six years later, in April 1991, the Spanish Parliament passed a motion encouraging the government to formulate and implement more "active" policies on immigration, policies that would pursue three objectives: (1) to regulate immigration flows; (2) to promote immigrants' social integration; and (3) to stimulate socio-economic development in immigrants' countries of origin. Interestingly, one of the by-products of this motion was the creation of specific immigration offices to deal with the bureaucratic aspects of immigration control, the *oficinas de extranjería* (immigration offices). In 1994, a national plan for the social integration of immigrants was presented by the government, and a working group made up of representatives from the public administrations, trade unions, immigrant organisations and NGOs –the *Foro para la Integración Social de los Inmigrantes*– was created. The goal of this working group was to encourage discussion among all social actors, and facilitate the participation of immigrants in the host society. In the same vein, in 1996 new directives regarding the application of the LO 7/1985 came into force *(Real Decreto 155/1996)*. The rationale was to adapt the by then eleven-year old law to the new administrative structure of the state and to the social changes that had occurred since 1985. For the first time, immigrant associations, NGOs and welfare organisations intervened in the drafting process. From a technical as well as a legal viewpoint, the final text was a remarkable improvement on previous regulations (Ruiz de Huidobro de Carlos 2000).

In spite of the improvements to the LO7/1985 occasioned by the new directives, by the late 1990s there was a significant consensus among the different political forces that a wider legal reform was needed. Several factors combined to make this reform necessary. The LO 7/1985 constituted too restrictive a legal framework for the social measures contained in the *Real Decreto* of 1996. Indeed, the provisions of the new directives were sometimes in open conflict with specific articles of the LO 7/1985. Moreover, the new mechanisms established to regulate and control immigrant flows still failed to eliminate the presence in certain areas of a large number of illegal residents.

Drafting a new law

Between 2 February and 19 March 1998, four bills were submitted to Parliament by the following three parties: *Izquierda Unida*[21] (2), *Convergència i Unió*[22] (1) and the *Grupo Mixto*[23] (1). All four bills had a common purpose, namely to promote a law aimed at achieving the social integration of immigrants. A large number of amendments were proposed to all bills. Am all-party committee *(ponencia)* was then set up to prepare a new draft of the bill. Since the committee had agreed to operate on a principle of consensus, the draft had to be acceptable to all parties represented in Parliament. In November 1999, a new text was finally presented by the committee, and quickly passed by the Lower House of Parliament *(Congreso)*.

The politicians of the conservative *Partido Popular* (PP), by this time in power, soon backed away from their favourable positions. They announced their intention to amend the approved text when it came before the Senate *(Senado)*. A total of one hundred and twelve amendments were then proposed. After intense negotiations, almost all of them were incorporated into the text. When the bill went back to the Lower House, however, all the amendments were rejected. The vote was not without controversy, as all opposition parties joined forces to defeat the PP government.[24] The former text of the bill, without the amendments suggested in the Senate, became law on 22 December 1999. It was the last law passed by the Spanish Parliament before the 2000 general election; most significant, however, is the fact that it was finally passed against the government's will. In the wake of the election, President José María Aznar and other leading PP figures[25] made it apparent that, should they end up with an overall majority in Parliament, their first and foremost objective would be to revise the new immigration law. In this vein, Jaime Mayor

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[21] The former Spanish Communist Party.

[22] The main centre-right Catalan nationalist party.

[23] Parliamentary group made up of minority parties.

[24] It must be remembered that the *Partido Popular* did not have an outright majority in Parliament during José María Aznar's first term of office (1996-2000).

[25] Not all prominent PP figures were against the LO 4/2000 Law; in fact, the government's rejection prompted the resignation of the at the time Minister of Work and Social Affairs, Manuel Pimentel, who was favourable to it.

Oreja, Interior Minister at the time, stated that "we, in Spain, cannot behave as if we were nouveaux-riches; we cannot have the most progressive law in Europe".[26]

The new law came into force on 1 February 2000. Although its official name is *Ley Orgánica 4/2000 sobre derechos y libertades de los extranjeros en España y su integración social* (Constitutional Law 4/2000 on Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain and their Social Integration), it is usually referred to as the LO 4/2000. As its name suggests, one of the objectives of this new law was to actively promote the social integration of immigrants. It also aimed at correcting one of the most prominent failures of the previously existing legal regulations: the persistent presence of a large proportion of illegal immigrants.

The presence of so many foreigners without proper documentation was a source of great concern among public authorities from both a legal and a socio-economic viewpoint. Yet most prominent was their worry that the yearly *contingente*, that is the official quota of non-EU workers allowed legally into the country every year, was in fact being used by immigrants in an irregular situation as a means to legalise their status. [27] This was so because the legal-administrative procedure to allow the entry of a foreign worker was based on the previous granting of an official work visa, which could in principle only be requested from abroad, and no visa would be provided without a corresponding job offer. However, what an increasing number of immigrants were doing was to look for a job offer after having entered the country on a tourist visa. If they were successful, they would ask a relative to apply for a work visa in their name at the Spanish embassy in their countries of origin. When the visa was ready, they would travel back to collect it and then enter the country legally. This practice brought about a sharp decline in the number of people who actually obtained work visas prior to their arrival in Spain. Logically, it was much more difficult for foreigners abroad than for foreigners already living in Spain to be offered a job, which, as we have mentioned, was the necessary

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[26] "*No podemos hacer la legislación más progresista de la Unión Europea [...] no podemos actuar como nuevos ricos, tenemos que ser razonables y prudentes*". Newspaper *El País* 2 February 2000, p.22.

[27] This yearly quota is established depending on the needs of the job market. These needs are determined in consultation with the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs on the basis of data provided by the *INEM* (the National Employment Agency). The reliability of official data on (un)employment in describing the actual job situation in Spain is questionable.

requirement for a work visa application. Immigrants stood more chances of obtaining a visa trying to enter the country as tourists, for example, or through other means, and then staying on to look for a job opening than doing it through the officially established channels. To bring this situation to an end, the new law established a general mechanism to enable all those illegal immigrants who had been *empadronados*, that is, registered as residents with their local neighbourhood councils, for a minimum of two years, and who could demonstrate that they had economic means of support to become legal on an automatic basis. Additionally, an exceptional campaign to grant residency to all immigrants who had arrived in Spain before June 1999 was provided for by the new law.

On the whole, the LO 4/2000 was favourably received by large segments of the Spanish population. Immigrant support organisations and NGOs, as well as nearly all political parties, welcomed a statute whose objectives were centred not simply on controlling immigrant flows, but also on achieving the social integration of an ever-growing immigrant population. Immigrant support organisations, such as the Red Cross, referred to it as "the most humane law possible" or a law that "offers tools opening up fruitful possibilities for integration" (Page 2000:6). Scholars like Eliseo Aja, Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Barcelona, remarked, "there has been a democratic revolution in the law [...] With the exception of the right to vote and to hold public office, immigrants now have all the rights of citizens", as reported in Southon (2000:10). Yet the political circumstances leading to the passage of the new law marked a point of no return; indeed, the political consensus with regard to immigration policies which had prevailed in the Spanish political scene throughout the 1990s vanished with the enactment of the LO 4/2000. Thereafter, the social and legal treatment given to immigrants became a matter of political –and most worryingly– electoral dispute.

The LO 4/2000 introduced three main innovations with regard to the existing mechanisms for controlling immigrant flows. First, it made it significantly easier for illegal immigrants to legalise their status. This was effected by means of two different mechanisms: nearly automatic legalisation for those illegal foreigners who could prove an uninterrupted two-year residence period in Spain, and an exceptional

one-shot legalisation campaign to take place during the year 2000. Secondly, it ensured greater legal protection for immigrants by forcing the government to justify all rejections of visa applications. Thirdly, deportation was abandoned as a method of flow control: for the first time offences were graded, so that only very serious criminal offences could lead to deportation; by contrast, administrative offences, such as the lack of a valid work or residence permit, could not cause deportation. However, the LO 4/2000 did not facilitate things for would-be immigrants from non-European Union[28] countries who wished to obtain a work visa prior to their arrival. They faced the same bureaucratically difficult application process and, remained hostages to political control over the numbers that were to be left in via the annual quota.

The most innovative aspects of the LO 4/2000 were its welfare provisions. Access to public health,[29] education and legal aid became universal, even for those without legal documentation.[30] Besides, foreign residents were entitled to the same welfare benefits as Spanish nationals, including housing benefits. For the first time, the law also recognised immigrants' rights to become members of trade unions and to go on strike. With respect to work opportunities, foreign residents were allowed to work for the government and other public institutions on a contract basis (as *personal laboral)* but not as civil servants. The right of non-EU foreign residents to vote in municipal elections was another significant provision of the law. Finally, the law simplified the administrative procedure to bring immigrants' spouses and children to live in Spain (*reagrupación familiar* or family reunification).

Reforming immigration law 4/2000 was one of the campaign pledges of the *Partido Popular* during the 2000 election. The tragic events that took place in the Andalusian town of El Ejido in February 2000, when the murder of a local woman by a North African man sparked a wave of racist attacks against immigrants, contributed to a growing feeling of social unrest. After the PP's election in the

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[28] The European Community became the European Union in 1993, following the implementation of the Treaty of Maastricht (1992).

[29] Up to then, only pregnant women and individuals under 18 could receive non-emergency health care within the Spanish public system.

[30] The only requirement was that they had to be registered with their local neighbourhood councils.

victory in March 2000, reform of the law became the government's number one priority. The need for a reform was justified by the so-called "magnet effect" *(efecto llamada)* that the existing law, according to the government, generated. That is, it was the government's contention that the LO4/2000, and especially the exceptional legalisation campaign it provided for, had encouraged a massive influx of immigrants.[31]

It was initially thought that the changes would concern only the most controversial aspects of the law. Yet it soon became apparent that the intended amendments were broader and deeper in scope. In the new immigration law that was finally passed, called *Ley Orgánica 8/2000 de reforma de la Ley Orgánica 4/2000 sobre derechos y libertades de los extranjeros en España y su integración social* (Constitutional Law 8/2000 reforming Constitutional Law 4/2000 on Rights and Freedoms of Foreigners in Spain and their Social Integration), 80% of the articles of the LO 4/2000 had been altered. Though the PP held an absolute majority in parliament, it was joined by *Coalición Canaria,*[32] *Convergència i Unió* in passing the bill. The remaining parties, namely *PSOE, Izquierda Unida, Partido Nacionalista Vasco*[33] and *Grupo Mixto* voted against. The new law came into force on 23 January 2001, and it continues to be the governing legislation at the present time.

Amendments to the law

The goal of this section is to simply present an overview of the main changes as regards Spanish immigration policies brought about by the LO 8/2000. It does not intend to be comprehensive. For instance, a number of minor amendments to specific articles of the law were introduced at a later stage, but I shall not dwell upon these changes here. The defining characteristic of the LO 8/2000 is that it reintroduces the crucial legal distinction between legal and illegal immigrants. This is no trivial matter, since unlike the 4/2000, the new law does not grant to illegal

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[31] Not all of these immigrants arrived in Spain directly from their countries of origin. Some had actually been living in other European countries and were drawn to Spain by the chance to acquire legal status.

[32] Centre-right political party from the Canary Islands.

[33] Basque Nationalist Party.

foreign residents certain political rights, namely the right of assembly, the right to join an association or trade union, and the right to demonstrate or go on strike.[34] Illegal immigrants are also denied the right to non-compulsory education.[35] In addition, the availability of legal aid is restricted to immigrants who possess proper documentation.

With respect to the mechanisms for becoming legal, the system of automatic legalisation after a two-year residence period, allowed by the LO 4/2000, disappears. In addition, the minimum length of residence required moves from two to five years. A subtle yet very significant distinction is established by the LO 8/2000 in this respect. Becoming legal after a two-year residence period was treated as a "right" by the 4/2000 law; by contrast, it is considered only a "possibility" by the LO 8/2000. The LO 8/2000 is particularly regressive as regards the issue of deportation. Like in the LO 7/1985, administrative offences, such as lacking a work or residence permit or having entered the country illegally, are causes for deportation,[36] and deportation can be executed in 48 hours.

In relation to administrative procedures, the government is no longer under the obligation to justify rejections of visa applications. Furthermore, the principle of "negative administrative silence" is implemented. If an immigrant who has applied to become legal still has not received an official response after three months, it must be assumed that the application has been turned down. Significantly, the opposite principle, that is, "positive administrative silence", applies to Spaniards in their administrative dealings with official institutions. Arguably, the most striking provision of the 8/2000 law is the obligation imposed on transport companies to make sure that all passengers travelling to Spain are legally entitled to enter the country. Alternatively, companies have to face heavy fines.

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[34] The government argued that those were political rights. By contrast, the *Consejo General del Poder Judicial* (General Counsel of the Judiciary) claimed that these were fundamental rights, as the 1978 Constitution states, and therefore should be granted to all foreigners, whatever their legal status (newspaper *El País*, 3 August 2000, p.15).

[35] For instance, they are not allowed to attend state-funded adult education courses.

[36] The LO 4/2000 establishes fines in these cases.

Development of the legalisation campaign of 2000

The linguistic data presented in this dissertation was gathered during the exceptional campaign to regularise immigrants which began on 21 March 2000 and ended on 31 July 31 2000. It thus took place early in the eleven-month period before the LO 4/2000 was superseded by the LO 8/2000. The "2000 Legalisation", as it is often referred to, was intended as a one-off campaign aimed at legalising the status of a large number of non-EU foreigners. The campaign was officially defined as follows:

> Regularisation is an exceptional procedure which is designed to **document aliens** who **have been** in an irregular situation **in Spain since before 1 June 1999**, without needing to obtain a **Spanish** entry visa or exemption from this. (Bold in the original, Administración General del Estado 2000:1).

The special legalisation period of 2000 was one of the most visible provisions of a new immigration law (LO 4/2000) passed by the Spanish Parliament in December 1999. Specifically, the above-mentioned legalisation campaign was provided for in the *disposición transitoria primera*[37] of the LO4/2000, and the specific guidelines governing it set out by the *Real Decreto 239/2000*,[38] which was published in the *Boletín Oficial del Estado*[39] on 19 February 2000. Subsequently, on 16 March 2000, specific instructions were issued by the government.

It must be noted that this was not the first such legalisation campaign. In fact, two previous legalisation campaigns had taken place in the 1990s: one in 1991, and another one in 1996. They were a consequence of the restrictions of the previous law on immigration (the LO 7/1985), which failed to regulate immigration flows effectively.

The legalisation campaign of the year 2000 was intended for nationals of countries not belonging to the European Union or the European Economic Area without a valid residence permit who could prove they had arrived in Spain before 1 June 1999, and had at some point in the three years previous to 1 March 2000 held or applied for a work or residence permit.

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[37] First transitory provision.

[38] Literally Royal Decree (general provision or decision of the Government).

The government spent 2,700 million *pesetas* on this legalisation campaign. Some 150,000 information booklets were published in six different languages, namely Spanish, English, French, Arabic, Chinese and Russian. Application forms were also available in all these languages. A free call-in information service was offered. Calls were answered in Spanish, English and Arabic from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Information and applications were also available on the World Wide Web. Nine hundred and eleven new employees –including bureaucrats, interpreters and technicians– were hired to assist in the campaign.[40]

The number of applications for legalisation dramatically exceeded the government's forecast, which predicted that some 70,000 to 80,000 immigrants would take advantage of the campaign. On 26 May 2000, a couple of months before the campaign ended, the number of applications had already reached 126,889. The government was then forced to modify its initial figures, which came closer to some 200,000 applications at the end of the campaign. As the Table 3.10 below shows, the final figure (246,392 applications) more than tripled the initial forecast.

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[39] Daily Spanish government publication in which new laws, directives and executive decisions are published together with advertisements for public-sector posts and contracts.

[40] According to data from the newspaper *El País* (20 March 2000).

Table 3.10
Applications for legalisation by autonomous region
as of 31 December 2000

Autonomous region	Number of applications for legalisation
Andalusia	**41,979**
Aragon	4,441
Asturias	1,205
Balearic Islands	4,462
Basque Country	2,404
Canary Islands	14,086
Cantabria	822
Castille-La Mancha	3,400
Castille and Leon	2,759
Catalonia	**61,961**
Ceuta	1,190
Estremadura	2,665
Galicia	2,764
La Rioja	1,437
Madrid	**55,479**
Melilla	1,419
Murcia	18,403
Navarre	2,450
Valencian Community	**23,066**
Total	**246,392**

Source: Ministerio del Interior (2001:196).

The autonomous regions where the largest number of applications were submitted were Catalonia (61,961) in first place, Madrid (55,479) in second place, Andalusia (41,979) in third place, and Valencia (23,066) in fourth place. These figures confirm that migration is heaviest in three broad areas: the Madrid metropolitan area, the Mediterranean coast and the Andalusian region, especially the province of Almeria (nearly half of the applications in Andalusia were submitted there). By province, the largest application rate corresponds to Madrid, with 54,707 applications, followed very closely by Barcelona, with 51,572.

Table 3.11
Outcome of applications for legalisation
as of 31 December 2000

Submitted	Successful	Rejected	Being processed	Filed
246,392	138,490	84,810	16,518	6,574

Source: Adapted from Ministerio del Interior (2001:198).

Table 3.12
Outcome of applications in the province of Barcelona
as of 31 December 2000

Submitted	Successful	Rejected	Being processed	Filed
51,572	14,042	34,982	2,301	247

Source: Adapted from Ministerio del Interior (2001:198).

As regards the status of applications, as of 31 December 2000, 138,489 applications had been successful (56.2%), whereas 84,810 had been turned down (34.4%) in the whole of Spain. Significantly, 16,518 (6.7%) were still being processed, although the legalisation campaign had officially concluded on 21 December 2000. Even more significant are the figures concerning applications in the province of Barcelona (see Table 12). As of the same date, only 14,042 applications for legalisation had been successful, which amounts to 27.2% of all applications submitted; 34,982 applications (67.8%) had been rejected. If we compare this percentage to the percentage of rejections on a Spanish level, we observe that it is much higher in the case of Barcelona –67.8% for Barcelona vs. 34.4% for Spain as a whole.

The figures released by the government on 31 July 2000 are even more illuminating. The way applications were being processed in the province of Barcelona seems to differ greatly from the way they were being handled in other provinces.

Table 3.13
Outcome of applications in the province of Barcelona
as of 31 July 2000

Submitted	Successful	Rejected	Being processed	Filed
48,148	9,857	0	37,561	730

Source: Adapted from the newspaper *El País,* 3 August 2000 (p. 16).

Table 3.14
Outcome of applications in the province of Madrid
as of 31 July 2000

Submitted	Successful	Rejected	Being processed	Filed/Not classified
48,796	30,233	3,356	14,855	352

Source: Adapted from *El País* (3 August 2000, p. 16).

With approximately the same number of applications submitted, as of 31 July 2000, 30,233 applications had been accepted in the province of Madrid, while only 9,857 had been successful in the province of Barcelona. 78.0% of applications (37,531) were still pending a final decision in Barcelona, as compared to only 30.4% in Madrid (14,855). These figures seem to indicate that, in general terms, the time immigrants were supposed to wait until a final decision was made on their applications was significantly longer in Barcelona than in Madrid. Logically, the longer they had to wait, the higher the number of times they would go to the immigration office to enquire about the status of their applications, and the longer the queues. High rejection rates, together with a slow processing of applications, may explain the feeling of social unrest that could be sensed in Barcelona at the end of the year 2000. Thus, it is no wonder that immigrant protests against the coming into force of the LO 8/2000 started off in Barcelona and not elsewhere in January 2001. The nature and objectives of these protests will be discussed in the following section.

Additional legalisation campaigns in 2001

The exceptional campaign to legalise immigrants provided for by the LO 4/2000 was aimed at "making a clean start". That is to say, the government's objective was to document all unregistered immigrants, so that a new policy intended to promote the legal entry of foreigners could be successfully implemented. The reality was that a large number of immigrants whose applications were rejected because they did not fulfil the requirements of the 2000 legalisation campaign remained illegally in the country. During the following year, two more opportunities were provided for them to become regular residents. Since these two additional legalisation campaigns were motivated by the unsuccessful outcome of many of the applications submitted in the first one, some authors, like Arango Vila-Belda (2002), refer to the three as one

long legalisation campaign which began in spring 2000 and ended in the summer of 2001. The ensuing paragraphs contain a brief historical narration of the events that took place over those sixteen months.

With the enforcement of the LO 8/2000 which, as has been discussed in previous sections, provides for the immediate deportation of immigrants being found without proper documentation, a witch-hunt on the government's part was feared. Its likelihood was enhanced by the fact that information on immigrants' details, such as their addresses, was available to the police: indeed, at the end of January 2001, the bulk of "irregulars" in Spain was made up of applicants for legalisation whose application had been rejected. As can be seen in the table above (Table 3.12), in provinces like Barcelona this was the case for 67.8% of applicants, that is, 34,982 people. Although there were reassurements by government ministers that there would be no such "hunt", there was a climate of social unrest.

In November, the PSOE party, in the opposition, had introduced an amendment to the bill reforming the LO 4/2000. It was proposed that legalisation applications which had been rejected only because uninterrupted residence from before 1 June 2000 could not be proved were accepted .[41] The government voted in favour of the amendment, which was incorporated into the law *(disposición adicional cuarta)*.[42] It was forecast that some 61,000 applicants would benefit from this automatic revision of their applications. Yet there were still some 22,000 immigrants who had not been granted legal status for other reasons. These people, as mentioned above, could easily be tracked down; in fact, letters requesting them to leave the country had already been sent out by January 2001.

Immigrants' fears about the way in which the LO 8/2000 would be implemented culminated in a massive sit-in in a church in Barcelona *(Església del Pi)* on 20 January 2001. Not only did immigrants shut themselves in but the majority also went on a hunger strike. Their purpose was to put pressure on the government to legalise their situation. Other sit-ins began. At the end of the protest, there were

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[41] That is according to the criteria set out by the government. Only documents issued by state-run institutions, that is, post offices, city councils, Social Security offices, were accepted as proofs of residence.

[42] Fourth additional provision.

700 *sense papers* (immigrants without proper documentation) who had shut themselves in eight different churches in Barcelona for forty seven days. The sit-in ended officially on 28 February 2001. The so-called "Barcelona Agreements" *(Acords de Barcelona)* were the outcome of this protest. The main provision of these agreements was the granting of a temporal residence permit to all immigrants who could demonstrate that they had arrived in Spain before 23 January 2001, and that they were "settled" in the country *(por situación de arraigo)*. There were three methods to demonstrate "settlement": (1) by means of a job offer; (2) by having previously held a residence and/or work permit; and (3) by having Spanish relatives or relatives residing legally in the country. Immigrants with a job offer would also be granted a temporary permit to work. In addition, a committee was set up to ensure the correct implementation of the agreements. This committee was made up of representatives from the government, trade unions, the bishopric, the Red Cross and a few other social organisations.

Later in the year, these agreements were extended to the rest of the country. On 8 June 2001, the government announced that a "third legalisation campaign" was underway. Immigrants were given the last opportunity to legalise their situation before the coming into force of the *Reglamento* (or set of guidelines) implementing the new law, the LO 8/2000. At the end of this campaign, on 31 July 2001, 322,761 new applications for legalisation had been submitted,[43] exceeding by far the official forecast (around 200,000 applications). The requirements immigrants were asked to meet were the same as for the Barcelona Agreements. The concept of "settlement" *(arraigo)* lay also at the root of this new campaign. By province, the largest number of applications were submitted in Madrid (110,000), followed by Barcelona (35,400), Murcia (25,739), Valencia (21,112) and Alicante (20,635). All in all, the overall number of applications filed since the beginning of the first campaign amounted to some 600,000. Approximately 400,000 individuals managed to legalise their status, while 200,000 did not. It is likely that the vast majority of them have remained in the country in an illegal situation.

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[43] This does not mean there were the same number of applicants, as some immigrants had been found to have submitted applications in several provinces.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has sketched out the demographic and legal context at the time the data analysed in this thesis was collected. On a demographic level, the service interactions examined, involving foreign immigrants and local bureaucrats, are framed by the growing presence in Catalonia of economic immigrants from Africa, Asia and Latin America. On a legal level, the exchanges gathered take place within the framework of an exceptional legalisation campaign provided for by a new immigration law passed in Spain in 2000. This exceptional measure was intended to bring to light the uncertain but definitely large number of unregistered immigrants living in the country.

As part of this campaign, the application procedure was simplified in the sense that immigrants did not need to have a prior job offer to obtain a work visa, nor did that visa have to be collected in their country of origin. One result of this simplification of the procedure was to prompt illegal immigrants living in other European countries to come to Spain to apply. As we will see, their multilingual language practices bear the traces of their migration experiences. At the same time, there are signs that the bureaucracy responsible for processing applications was moving slowly in Barcelona and rejecting a higher proportion of applications than in other parts of Spain. On a political level, the party in power was opposed to the spirit of the new law and was striving to create a state of opinion favourable to more restrictive measures. All these elements made up the socio-political climate surrounding the exchanges investigated. Chapter 6 examines some of the ways in which these factors bear upon institutional arrangements and managerial decisions. The methodology employed for the present study as well as the characteristics of the site researched and the different types of data gathered are presented in the following chapter.

4

Data and methodology

The present thesis examines micro-linguistic data from a Spanish public administration office in charge of processing applications for legalisation from non-European immigrants. Apart from tape-recorded interactional material, the study considers ethnographic information collected during fieldwork, and two semi-formal interviews. One of the interviews is with a local bureaucrat from the office investigated, and the other one is carried out with a young Pakistani man who managed to become a legal resident in 2000. One of the major difficulties of the present study was gaining access to the research site. An immigration office is a highly sensitive institutional context. Obtaining audio-recordings of the interactional events in which immigrants and bureaucrats engage is an important achievement of this research endeavour.

The first part of the chapter deals with my fieldwork experience. It presents a brief description of the different sites where I carried out fieldwork, and the types of data I collected. The second part concentrates on the specific site examined, and provides a brief description of the social actors involved. The third part presents the different types of data considered, and examines the process of data collection. The final part focuses on relevant issues in the process of transcription and coding.

The role of the researcher in interpretive studies

This study uses qualitative methods of data collection. In addition, the approach to the analysis of the data gathered is interpretive. The goal is to understand social events and individuals' behaviour and actions for what they mean and accomplish in social life. One fundamental methodological assumption is that social realities are not transparent to the observer. This is because social life is indeterminate and constantly changing. Therefore, any investigation into the social world is an act of interpretation. In addition, researchers are socially located people. Their whole social persona mediates any piece of research they undertake. Researchers' subjectivities

influence the design and goals of their investigations. The subjectivity of the researcher is conceptualised in the present study as an element of interpretation rather than a disturbance. Its influence needs to be acknowledged and carefully explained. Insofar as it is possible, an emic perspective has been adopted in this thesis. The aim is to provide an account of social reality as experienced by participants themselves. In line with Sarangi and Candlin, I assume that a total alignment of participants' and researchers' perspectives is not feasible. Hence, what I aim at is "a considerable degree of mutuality between researcher and researched" (2001:379).

There are different ways in which my subjectivity and background experience have shaped the present study. The most immediate influence is choice of topic. I came to focus on immigration through my personal interest in linguistic research with clear social underpinnings, and the coming together of a group of researchers interested in the same topic.[1] These two factors provided the impetus for my investigation. As regards research design, the experiences I had in the field influenced my choice of data and speakers. The difficulties I encountered during fieldwork, especially at the beginning, made me extremely sensitive to possible rejections.

The knowledge that my chances of gaining access to certain contexts were limited also influenced my data collection procedures (see section on data collection for further details). Once I managed to be allowed into the setting that seemed most appropriate for the research questions I intended to answer, I felt the need to secure my position in it. Certain moves, such as talking to immigrants waiting to be served, were not attempted for fear of endangering the trusting relationship I had managed to build with immigration office staff. The decisions I made were based on my perception of the social context, and my intuitions as to what counted as appropriate conduct. This is what fieldwork is about. There are no fixed rules on behaviour, only researchers' social skills and intuitions. In spite of some possible limitations of the data presented, such as the amount of feedback data available,

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[1] This is the CIEN or *Comunicació Intercultural i Estratègies de Negociació* (Intercultural Communication and Strategies of Negotiation) research group. It is an interdisciplinary team formed by researchers from different Catalan and Canadian universities.

especially from immigrants, or the small number of bureaucrats investigated, this study brings to light key interactional situations shaping the lives and experiences of immigrants in Barcelona. These are realities largely unknown to the local population. By examining them with a critical eye, I will hopefully contribute to bringing about change in Spanish institutional practice.

Gaining access

As was mentioned earlier, obtaining permission to carry out my research at the site examined was an not easy task. In fact, permission to tape-record was obtained only after a fieldwork experience of several months. During this time I got acquainted with the world of foreign immigration in Barcelona. I observed immigrants' daily lives in the context of several institutional settings, and outside of them. Fieldwork began in November 1999 and ended in March 2002. The goal of this section is to present some of the problems I encountered during fieldwork and how I managed to solve them. A constant reflexive stance towards my fieldwork conduct is adopted.

One of the things I learned at an early stage is that the study of immigration gives rise to a great deal of concern among some of the actors involved, in particular the local population. This statement needs to be clarified. What made my research project particularly difficult was the nature of the social settings chosen, as my objective was to analyse the handling of immigration in institutional contexts. I did not mean to focus on public institutions only. In fact, I intended to consider other non-public organisations which play a prominent role in the daily experience of immigrants, such as NGOs, trade unions, community centres, immigrant support groups, and so on.

The reasons why observing what happens at an immigration office may become complicated are fairly apparent. In a modern democracy, no decent individual wants to be accused of deploying discriminatory practices against ethnic minority groups. The state is supposed to be particularly careful in that respect. If institutionalised racism is proved, the treatment given to immigrants is likely to become a matter of political dispute. It may seriously endanger the position of the political party in power. A stranger who is allowed into an immigration office may

raise concerns among bureaucrats and senior managers as to what his/her intentions are. Likewise, the use the researcher is going to make of the information obtained may become a source of worry. The first concern was voiced to me in one of the interviews I had with a representative of the Catalan government. This was a particularly tough meeting, in which I had to defend the relevance of my research project and make it clear that criticising the institution was not my objective. With regard to the uses of the data, one of the bureaucrats at the immigration office once remarked that I could take my data to a newspaper or an NGO, and accuse them of mistreating immigrants. Apart from what the comment reveals about the bureaucrat's perception of his own professional performance, it indicates the extent to which employees were concerned about the consequences of my presence there.

I did not only encounter problems at public institutions. Private organisations were also reluctant to accept my presence in their context. I expected that trade unions and NGOs would be receptive to my research, as they are non-governmental institutions providing aid to immigrants. One of the first sites I explored was a centre run by the city council in which a number of services were offered. Each service was provided by a specialist institution. Legal advice was offered by the Barcelona lawyers' professional association, medical assistance by the Red Cross, work-related information by the two main Spanish trade unions, that is the *Unió General de Treballadors* (UGT) and *Comissions Obreres* (CCOO),[2] and specific legal assistance for asylum seekers by the *Associació Catalana de Solidaritat i Ajuda a Refugiats* (Catalan Association for the Support and Help of Refugees). Since all these services were coordinated by the Barcelona City Council, I tried to obtain permission through the corresponding councillor's office (see Letter #1 contained in Appendix A). After extensive negotiations, all the associations refused permission. This led me to analyse the reasons for their rejection. I had underestimated the delicate nature of the site, as I did not insist on meeting the representatives of the different organisations personally, but had left my negotiations in the hands of the manager. A personal interview would have aided my case.

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[2] Their specific services for immigrants are called AMIC *(Associació d'Ajuda Mútua d'Immigrants a Catalunya* [Support Association for Immigrants in Catalonia]), and CITE *(Centre d'Informació per a Treballadors Estrangers* [Information Centre for Foreign Workers]) respectively.

When I thought about how these organisations would view my proposal, I did not consider the possibility that my presence would be perceived as interfering in their interactions with the immigrants. They were not concerned with what I might do with the data, as was the case with the public administrations, but with the ways in which my presence in the office would be taken by immigrants. This, for example, was mentioned by the representative of AMIC, the immigrant support service provided by the UGT trade union, who eventually agreed to have an interview with me in spite of her doubts about the project.[3] She felt that allowing an insider into the office would amount to betraying immigrants' trust in her. She mentioned the illegal situation of most of the individuals who attended the service as the main reason for her caution. The difficulties I experienced in this setting made me more aware of how tactful I needed to be. I also realised that it was necessary for me to get a sense of the daily lives of immigrants in the city before I could explore any site in detail. This constituted the following stage in my fieldwork.

A friend introduced me to someone working at an adult education centre. This person, who shall be referred to as Teresa, worked as a part-time teacher of Spanish. The centre offered free Spanish courses as well as literacy classes to foreigners and a lesser number of Catalan courses. My friend's personal acquaintance with Teresa made it easier for me to make observations at the centre. This made me aware of the importance of "the human side" in fieldwork. A researcher who is a stranger to an organisation needs to project an image of trust and goodwill if s/he is to obtain permission. This takes time and effort. Having personal ties of some kind with an insider to the institution accelerates and enhances the trust-building process.

I mentioned to Teresa that I might want to record some classroom activities, but only at a later stage and provided all social actors agreed to it (see Letter #2 in Appendix A for details). My primary objectives were, first, to observe the social events and interactions unfolding at the centre, and secondly, to get to know some of the students closely. This would give me the chance to obtain ethnographic

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[3] This institution offers assistance to immigrants in work-related matters. The activities of the person working at the service consist in keeping updated information on job offers, helping immigrants to fill in application forms and prepare their curricula vitae, counselling them on professional training courses offered by public and private institutions, as well as other matters for daily survival.

information on their migratory experience, work and family situation, living conditions, feelings, attitudes, sources of concern, and so on. I went to the centre regularly for about four months (from March to June 2000). The atmosphere was relaxed, which facilitated my presence there. The composition of the students attending the class changed constantly. This gave me the opportunity to meet individuals from a variety of countries: Morocco, Russia, Sierra Leone, Bulgaria, Lebanon, Brazil, Nigeria, Rumania, the Philippines, and Pakistan. There was a mixture of legal and illegal immigrants in the classroom. Not all students came from non-EU countries. A few EU foreigners attended lessons, too. Social relations between the two groups were friendly. In fact, this distinction is only valid as a descriptive tool; it never became socially or procedurally relevant in the classroom. On the whole, class attendance was very irregular. The majority of students were male.

I observed two Spanish courses: one for beginners and one at the intermediate level. They met every morning except Fridays for one hour and a half. The emphasis of the beginners course was on developing students' speaking skills. The rationale was to provide them with the linguistic and communicative resources in Spanish that would enable them to get by in Barcelona. Among the social situations discussed in class were getting to know new people, answering the phone, shopping for food and looking for a job. The second class was more oriented towards developing students' writing abilities. Most of the students could communicate rather fluently in Spanish. Average student age was higher (most of the students were in their late twenties or early thirties), and the tone of the lesson was more formal than in the first class. As regards language practices, lessons were delivered mostly in Spanish. Teresa spoke some English and French, and was familiar with a few words in Arabic. In the beginners class, there were frequent code-switches into other languages, mainly Moroccan Arabic. These were produced by students of Moroccan origin. The most proficient students would translate the teacher's explanations into their native languages to facilitate their classmates' understanding. Occasionally this practice provoked complaints from the rest of the students, as when Moroccan students engaged in lengthy interactions among themselves.

Intermediate students resorted less frequently to using other linguistic codes. Code-switching by the teacher involved individual lexical items. English was generally the language preferred for that purpose. A few of the students could speak English rather fluently: a Lebanese man, a woman from Sierra Leone, a young Brazilian man, a Filipino woman, and most of the Pakistani students who began attending lessons later in the year. Teaching practices allowed the students' and the teacher's occasional use of English as a resource to facilitate understanding, and at times, also production.

Apart from the language lessons, the centre also offered a mediation service. The mediator was a young Moroccan man called Said. Said had been living in Barcelona for several years, and spoke Spanish and Catalan. He was more fluent in Spanish than in Catalan. He always addressed me in Spanish, which he also used to talk to Teresa. By way of contrast, Teresa and I usually interacted in Catalan. In describing his job, Said explained that there are two types of mediation: natural and intercultural mediation. Natural mediation is something "anybody can do". It consists of, for example, helping somebody fill in a form, understand an official letter, and so on. Intercultural mediation, by contrast, requires specialist training. The mediator's task is to try to solve intergroup conflicts. Unfortunately, I only saw Said perform natural mediation tasks. His job was to assist immigrants with administrative procedures. Although he served a variety of people, the majority were of North African origin. The language he often spoke with immigrants was Moroccan Arabic interspersed with some French words. With immigrants who were not of North African origin he regularly employed Spanish. Because of Said's easy-going nature, many people would often walk into the school just to have a little chat with him. The school functioned as a meeting space for many ethnic minority group members. They socialised before and after classes. It was an established practice to go for a coffee to a nearby bar before the beginning of the intermediate class, that is, around eleven o'clock in the morning. This gave me a good opportunity to converse with students. I quickly realised that most of them enjoyed talking to me about their lives, concerns, countries and families. The socialising function of the school was reinforced by the organisation of frequent multicultural social gatherings. Apart

from local feasts, celebrations from different countries were held. In March, for example, when I began observing, the Muslim Feast of the Sacrifice was celebrated.[4]

My work at the language school focused on trying to gather as much ethnographic information as possible about the different ethnic communities living in the city. Relevant aspects included place of residence, social networks, patterns of migration (including age, gender, social class and rural/urban origin), level of formal education, linguistic repertoires, professional activities, social attitudes and lifeworld concerns. I conversed with them mostly in Spanish. The fact that I was a teacher of English prompted some immigrants, mainly the group of South Asians and a young man from Nigeria, to address me in this language. The majority of them found that their proficiency in English was not useful for their daily lives in Catalonia.

One month after the beginning of my observation sessions, I started to tape-record the lessons (information on audio-recordings from the different sites investigated is contained in Appendix B). I asked the students for permission to be tape-recorded, and they did not object. The recording equipment was placed at the back of the classroom, outside the students' visual field. I sat next to it and made notes regarding actors' distribution in the classroom, relevant actions, gestures, and in general, whatever seemed interesting about the unfolding events. I gathered sixteen hours of classroom interaction. I have not analysed this data in detail, as it falls outside the scope of the present study.

Fieldwork in this setting allowed me to have access to individuals from a variety of immigrant communities. I observed their behaviour and patterns of social interaction in the institutional context of an education centre and outside. It gave me access to their perspective. This was necessary to complement the bureaucrats' perspective, which I easily got to know during my observation period at the immigration office. By contrast, the chances of learning about the immigrants' point of view there were limited. The ethnographic data gathered at the adult education centre was supplemented by data gathered at another site: a call centre.

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[4] This festivity, called 'Eid al Adha in Arabic, celebrates the sacrifice of Abraham. It the second most important festivity in the Muslim world after Ramadan.

This opportunity arose when I was introduced to a young Pakistani man who worked at one of the call centres *(locutorio)* in the inner city of Barcelona *(Ciutat Vella)*. The number of these call places has increased enormously over the last five years. They mainly offer two services: long-distance calls at cheap rates, and facilities for sending money to any country in the world. However, rates for phone calls are not equally advantageous for all countries, and each centre tends to specialise in a few of them. For example, the call centre I visited had particularly cheap rates for Ecuador and Colombia. Hence, most of its customers came from these countries. Spanish was the only language spoken between Hussain, the Pakistani attendant, and the customers. Service interactions were extremely brief. On occasions no words at all were exchanged over the counter. Apart from the ethnographic material I collected at the centre, Hussain constituted a good source of information on the Pakistani community living in Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia. We went out for drinks on a number of occasions and conversed informally on different topics, such as Hussain's family in Pakistan, living and clothing styles in the two countries, activities to do in one's spare time, and places to visit in Catalonia.

When we first met, Hussain had been living in Barcelona for two years without a work or residence permit. He was entertaining the idea of leaving the country if he had not become legal by the end of August 2000. He was eventually granted a work permit within the framework of the exceptional legalisation campaign described in this thesis. He experienced the long waiting queues outside the immigration office, and was involved in face-to-face interactions similar to those discussed in this study. I conducted an in-depth interview with him (see Appendix C), which sheds light on immigrants' experiences, perceptions and understandings of the legalisation campaign mentioned. Further details of this interview are presented in subsequent sections.

Fieldwork at the adult language school and the call centre provided me with crucial background information on foreign immigration in Barcelona. More importantly, it gave me the confidence to attempt to gain access to a public administration site, which I expected would be complicated.

I explored the possibility of doing research at the Social Welfare Offices *(Oficines de Benestar Social)* run by the Catalan government, especially those located in the old part of the city. The senior officer with whom I had an interview eventually gave his consent.[5] He suggested that the headquarters of the Spanish Immigration Service in Barcelona would be a more interesting institutional site to carry out research on immigration. He volunteered to put me in touch with the senior manager who could give me permission to carry out research and with whom he was personally acquainted. On the following day I was able to talk to this manager, who shall be referred to as Mr Puig. Mr Puig was sympathetic towards academic research. For a period of his life, he had lectured at university, and still kept in touch with some of his former colleagues. He recovered a letter I had sent to the manager of the immigration department the previous week in which I requested the collaboration of the institution in carrying out my research (see Letter #4 in Appendix A) and to which I had as yet not received a response. He read the letter, and showed no objection to my research proposal. Since I was interested in multilingual language practices, he provided some background information on language use at the different services of the immigration department. The only service which had specific foreign language provisions, that is, a translator, was the office that dealt with asylum seekers and refugees. He suggested I should visit different offices first to find out which one was convenient for my endeavours. He took me to one of those offices, which shall be referred to as Office A, introduced me to Rosa, the manager, and asked her to cooperate with me. I was reassured by the institution's willingness to cooperate and Mr Puig's personal commitment to my work.

Rosa turned out to be extremely cooperative and friendly. She was a permanent member of staff, and had been working at the institution for a number of years. Our conversations were conducted in Catalan, as were my interactions with Mr Puig. The main function of Office A, was to give out application forms for administrative procedures connected with immigration, and then to direct clients to the relevant desk(s). This office was staffed by three bureaucrats: Rosa, the manager,

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[5] See Letter #3 in Appendix A.

and Pili and Carmen, two non-permanent members of staff that had recently been employed. Work was stressful, as approximately a thousand people were served every day. In addition, the situations of these immigrants were by no means uniform. It was not straightforward for the new employees to know what the relevant form or procedure was for each case. The three women showed a great deal of interest in my research They were friendly and very informative. This was especially the case with the manager, who was a never-ending source of ethnographic information.

I made notes of my observations and the information provided by Rosa. In addition, on 19 April 2000, I began to tape-record the service interactions taking place at this office. My objective was to have recorded material I could listen to at home as contextualising information, and also to assess the frequency of multilingual language use. Rosa had no objections, and neither did Carmen or Pili. Exchanges were generally brief. As they involved the handing out of forms and documents, the microphone often got hit or covered. This reduced the quality of the recordings. In addition, the office was very noisy. The door was permanently open, and there were always up to ten people waiting to be served. Frequently, officials' voices overlapped, as it was a small place. With regard to linguistic abilities, neither Pili nor Carmen could speak English except for a few basic words. Rosa, by contrast, could make herself understood in this language. In total, I audio-recorded about eleven and a half hours of authentic face-to-face interactions in this setting (see Table B.1 in Appendix B for details).

Apart from Office A, I visited two other offices. Office B was the general information office. It was fairly large in comparison with Office A, and had more employees (between nine and eleven). The manager was not as cooperative as Rosa. He introduced me to two of his employees, two young men in their early thirties, who were always helpful. I told them that I was interested in multilingual language practices in institutional settings. Whenever there was something they considered noteworthy in their interactions with clients, they would let me know. After a month of observing and making notes, I started to tape-record their interactions with immigrants. As in Office A, I wanted to have some tape-recorded material to assess

the suitability for my research of the linguistic data produced at this setting. I obtained almost nine hours of service encounter data at Office B (see details in Appendix B, Table B.1). These services exchanges were mostly conducted in Spanish. These two officials would talk in Catalan to each other and to me. They spoke Spanish to some of their workmates and Catalan to others. Language choice seemed to be addressee-oriented. English was only occasionally present in their service interactions. The two officials employed their limited linguistic resources in this language mostly with South Asian interlocutors. The majority of service requests were demands for information on the progress of immigrants' applications for legalisation. These applications were handled by a different office, which was not located in the same premises. Through these observations, I began to think that a good place to gather multilingual data would be the special office set up to handle applications for legalisation, which shall be referred to as Office C. Before that, I visited the office in charge of applications for asylum and refugee status.[6]

This office was staffed by two clerical workers and a translator. The translator was a specialist in Slavic languages, mainly Russian, although she could also understand some Serbo-Croatian. Her main task was to conduct interviews with asylum seekers, translate their written narratives into Spanish, and in general assist the police in anything having to do with asylum and refugee procedure. Occasionally she would also perform administrative tasks, such as the reception of documents and photographs for the renewal of residence and work permits, especially when individuals from former Soviet republics or Eastern European countries were involved. The majority of individuals I observed came from the sub-Saharan region, mainly Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and Guinea Conakry. Many of them had arrived at refugee camps located in Melilla, a Spanish enclave on the North African shore, with no personal identification documents. One task of the office was to provide them with an official registration card *(cédula de inscripción)*. If they wanted to travel outside Spain, the office would issue a travel document *(documento de viaje)* for them. The second largest group was made up of Eastern Europeans,

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[6] This is the only office in Catalonia which deals with applications for asylum and refugee status. Individuals living at a distance from the Barcelona metropolitan area have to travel to the city for any bureaucratic procedure related to their legal situation in Spain.

mainly from Rumania and former Yugoslavia, and individuals from former Soviet republics, such as Armenia, Moldova, and Georgia.

This was the most multilingual setting I visited. The most frequently employed languages, apart from Russian, were English, French and German. Although none of the officials I observed was very proficient in English, they all had some knowledge of the language, and could convey basic information. Most frequently, they would intersperse their talk in Spanish with single words in English. One of the officials was fairly fluent in French, whereas the other one was proficient in German. On the whole, the atmosphere was fairly relaxed. The officials' behaviour and attitudes towards clients were warmer than in the other offices.[7] Since the room was rather small, I could overhear most of the interactions taking place there, both between officials and clients, and among officials. These encounters were a good and easily-accessible source of ethnographic information. By contrast, it proved rather difficult to converse with officials, as most of them were overwhelmed with work.[8] After a month doing observations, I asked for permission to record interactions. Mr Puig agreed, but suggested I should consult the manager of the office.

The manager had been absent for a month, and did not know me. He was not acquainted with my work, and was not used to seeing me around doing observations. He did not give me permission to record. Even though I got Mr Puig's consent, I underestimated the extent to which, as Silverman (2000) highlights, gaining bottom-up access is as important as obtaining permission from the top. The manager's negative reply and the fairly monolingual character of the interactions obtained up to then made me consider the possibility of visiting a different office, Office C. Mr Puig phoned the manager of Office C, and explained the objectives of my research. He mentioned that I had visited several offices regularly over the last few months and tape-recorded interactions between bureaucrats and service seekers.

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[7] An illustration of this is provided by the fact that they had a little basket with sweets which they would give to children accompanying their parents.

[8] Apparently, not many civil servants *(funcionarios)* wanted to work in this office. It had a reputation for being a difficult post, mainly due to the type of clients to be served and the amount of work to be done.

The manager was reassured that no problems had arisen. We arranged a meeting for the following day.

My first visit to the manager of Office C was a rather informal occasion. I only wanted to make myself known to her, get acquainted with the physical setting, and prepare the ground for future visits. The interview was short and free of problems. I initiated the conversation in Catalan, as I had heard Mr Puig speak to her in that language. The manager briefed me on the organisation of the office, and the different services provided. She seemed pleased with her employees' behaviour. "*Estic contenta amb la gent que tinc*" (I am happy with the people I have), she said at some point. I stressed that my work was centred around multilingual language use. To pre-empt possible apprehension on the part of the office staff, I stated that I intended to focus on immigrants' linguistic practices. We also discussed language use in the office and bureaucrats' linguistic repertoires. Although the most frequently employed foreign language was English, there were no institutional provisions regarding this language. In addition, foreign language ability was not a requirement for newly employed members of staff. The office had two translators, one for Arabic and one for Russian. Both of them were Spanish nationals, and had been appointed to work at the information desk. They performed largely bureaucratic tasks. The manager pointed out that they "used" translators very little. As for English, she stated "*ens ho fem com podem*" (we manage as best as we can). There were no translators for this language. With regard to how to proceed with my data collection in the office, the manager suggested that I should not focus on those services run by the police department. She mentioned that police officers might feel uneasy about being observed, let alone about being recorded.

The manager never interfered with my work at Office C. She had a cooperative attitude towards my research. On the first day, for example, not only did she introduce me to the staff working at the information office, but she also asked them to help me with anything I needed. She advised me to undertake observation work in other sections too, so that I would get a clearer picture of the

range of social interactions taking place. On the whole, I found no resistance among the office staff.[9]

Research site

The public administration office investigated in this study, that is, Office C, belongs to the *Oficina Única de Extranjería de Barcelona*, the Barcelona branch of the Spanish Immigration Service. The Barcelona Immigration Office was created in 1991 following the guidelines contained in the *Real Decreto 1521/1991*.[10] It is under the supervision of the Spanish Interior Ministry, although its daily functioning is taken care of by the State Subdelegation Office for the province of Barcelona *(Subdelegación del Gobierno en Barcelona)*. It is in charge of all bureaucratic paperwork connected with foreign residency in the province of Barcelona. The adjective *única* (single), which features in its official name, refers to the fact that in Barcelona, like in Madrid, but unlike in smaller provinces, applications for work and residence permits are processed jointly. In provinces where there is no immigration office, applications for a work permit have to be made to the Department of Work and Social Affairs of the corresponding *Subdelegación del Gobierno*, whereas applications for residence permit have to be made to the police *(Jefatura Superior* or *Comisaría de Policía)*.

Office C was specially set up in March 2000 to handle the applications for work and/or residence permit submitted in the province of Barcelona within the framework of the exceptional legalisation campaign of immigrants provided for by the new immigration law (the LO 4/2000), which was passed in January 2000. Office C is not located in the same building as the rest of the services belonging to the Barcelona Immigration Office. It is actually located in another part of the city. This caused numerous problems for immigrants. At the beginning of the legalisation campaign, many applicants did not know about the existence of this new office. A large number queued for long hours outside the central offices until they were told

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[9] The majority of officials were non-permanent members of staff. In fact, most of them had been unemployed for a while before they were offered this job. On a number of occasions, they voiced their wish to become civil servants in the long run. They probably thought it was not in their interest to object to the manager's decisions.

[10] Royal Decree 1521/1991.

that their applications were not being processed there. The central offices are located close to the old part of the city, where many immigrants live. By contrast, the new building is located in a district unfamiliar to the majority of them. The location of this new office, together with the fact that it was not sufficiently publicised, added complexity to immigrants' application process, especially at the beginning of the campaign.

Description of setting

The study presented here analyses interactional data from Office C, in particular from its information desk. Office C occupies the entire ground floor (see office floor plan on the following page) of the premises of the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs in Barcelona. The door which gives access to it is guarded by policemen at all times. The office is divided into four public areas and a small restricted zone, which is not accessible to the general public. Applications for legalisation are processed there (documents sorted, new files created, data entered into computers, provisional decisions made, and so on). Two of the four services offered in the office are run by the immigration department, while the other two are run and staffed by the police department. The two services offered by the immigration department are (1) a registry, where applications are received and stamped; and (2) an information desk, where information is provided, either about the legalisation campaign in general (eligibility, administrative procedures, and such like), or about the status of specific applications. At the time when the data was gathered, the registry was regularly staffed by four or five full-time officials, while the information service was staffed by three or four.

Once legalisation is granted, immigrants are told to go to one of the sections run by the police department located next to the information desk. A police officer takes immigrants' fingerprints. After this, they are given a slip with information as to when their permit cards will be ready for collection. Finally, there is a permit collection desk, staffed by only one official. The fingerprint and information desks are the only two services with long queues. To prevent people from jumping the queue, turn numbers are handed out by door staff *(ordenanzas)*, when the office

opens at 8 o'clock. Turn numbers for each queue have different colours, so that they cannot be mixed up. However, the fact that there are two different queues so close together in space gives rise to a number of misunderstandings. Some information seekers wait for hours in the wrong queue. Others try to jump it by pretending not to have realised they did not have the appropriate number. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below present a floor plan of Office C, and of the information service area where my data was collected.

Figure 4.1. Office floor plan
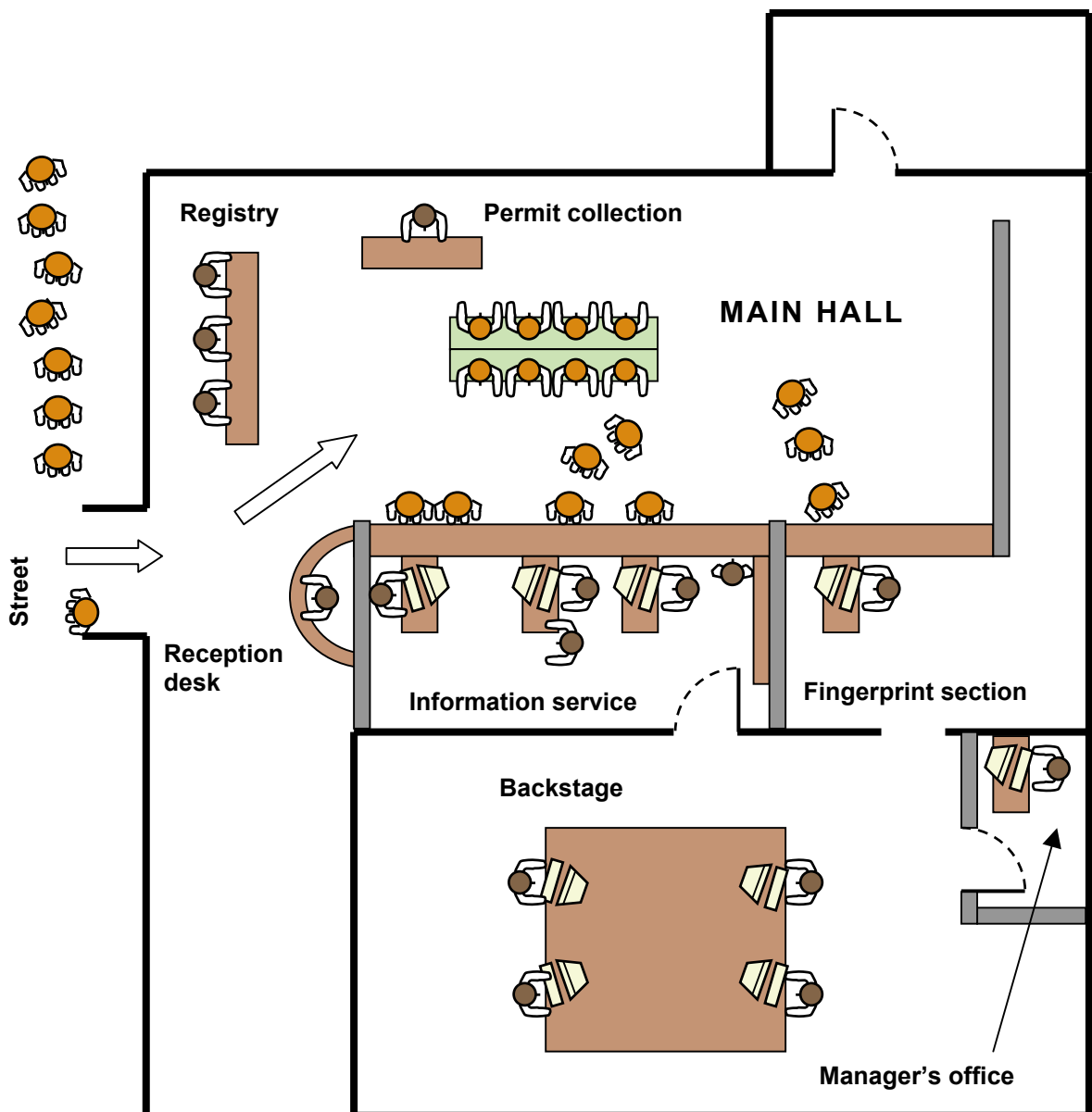
Figure 4.2. Detailed information service floor plan
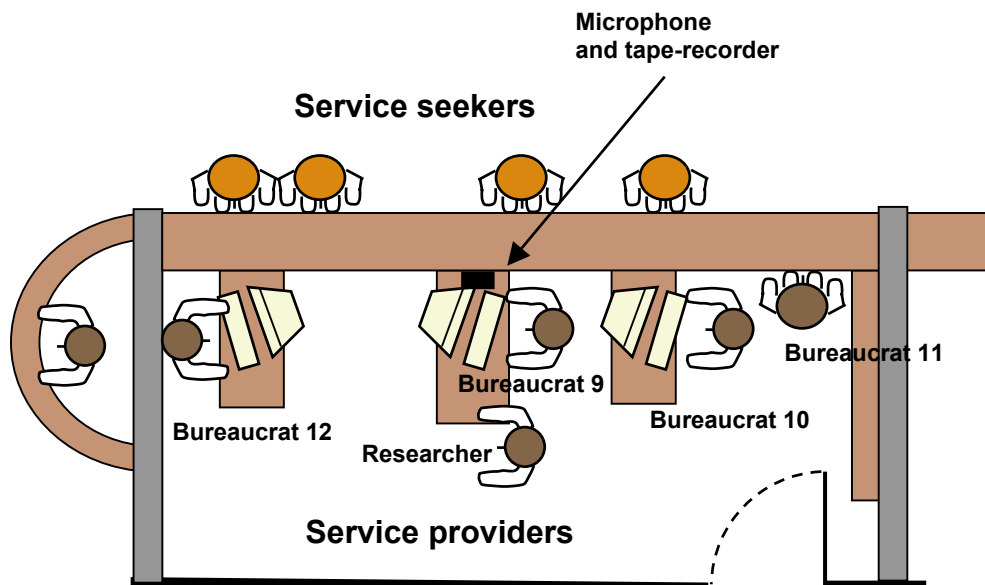
Distribution of work

Work in this setting is organised in two shifts: morning and afternoon. In the morning, work begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m., whereas in the afternoon, it begins at 3:30 p.m. and ends at 10:00 p.m. Each shift has a different manager, and there is no senior official to coordinate them. Relations between the morning and afternoon managers are bad –indeed, they are not even on speaking terms.[11] The result is that little coordination exists between the two shifts. In fact, they function as two independent offices: different managers, different employees, and even different rules as to what information clients can or should be told. An example is provided by the fact that, at a given moment in time, morning and afternoon officials supply distinct and often contradictory information. This is a never-ending source of conflict and frustration for the bureaucrats in the morning shift, whose interactions I recorded for this thesis. I shall dwell upon this specific issue in Chapters 6 and 7.

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[11] The unofficial reason I was given as to why they would not speak to one another had to do with the fact that both managers wished to work in the morning. Finally, one of them managed to receive the support of one of the senior managers and was put in charge of the morning shift.

An important factor concerns the distribution of applications between the two shifts. Many more applications for legalisation were entered in the morning than in the afternoon. As a consequence an agreement was reached concerning the distribution of work. Initially, the morning shift was put in charge of handling applications entered from 21 to 31 March 2000, whereas the afternoon shift was to take responsibility for applications entered from 1 to 15 April 2000. Since the number of applications submitted during the first ten days of the campaign, that is in March, was larger than the number of applications submitted in April, the first batch took longer to process than the second one. It is hard for an outsider to understand why this is so. In some of the encounters I recorded during the months of June and July, some information seekers complain that their applications were still being processed, while their friends', which were entered later, have already been decided upon. This is a sign of poor organisation on the part of the institution. It has a bearing on the interactional order of the exchanges examined. Later on, half way through the legalisation campaign, the policy for distributing work between shifts was changed, so that one shift would take care of applications entered on even days, whereas the other one would be in charge of applications submitted on odd days.

Participants

The participants involved in the face-to-face interactions discussed in this study are classified in two types. On the one hand, there are the clients of the service. These are usually unregistered immigrants seeking to become legal residents. Their goal is to obtain either general information about the legalisation process as prescribed during the period of the campaign, or specific information on the progress of their applications. Since they are focused on requesting information, they will be generally referred to in this thesis as "information seekers". Sometimes, the terms "service seekers" and "enquirers" are used. Some Spanish nationals may also be included in the enquirer group. These are advisory agents and lawyers asking for information on behalf of their clients, or simply Spaniards accompanying a foreign acquaintance. The other group is made up of local office staff, whose task is to deal with

immigrants' requests for information. Because of their official role as providers of information, they are referred to as "information providers". Although in some interactions, a few other participants intervene (the researcher and a caretaker, for example), this is the basic participant structure. Information providers are also referred to as "bureaucrats", "officials" and "institutional representatives".

Information seekers

The majority of information seekers came from countries not belonging to the European Union or the European Economic Area. The total number of information seekers involved in the service interactions recorded at Office C was four hundred and seventeen (see Table 4.1 below). The statistical data presented below refers to the three hundred and forty eight exchanges in the corpus. Information on place of origin was mainly obtained through the researcher's visual access to the computer screen. When an applicant's electronic file was called up by the official, information on nationality became immediately available. The two largest groups of information seekers were, by far, North Africans (39.8%) and South Asians (31.9%). Latin Americans came in third place, but they formed a significantly smaller group (only 6.9% of total number of enquirers). The fourth largest group was made up of Spanish nationals (6.7%), followed by East Asians (5.8%) and Africans from sub-Saharan countries (3.1%). The smallest group was that of citizens coming from the former Soviet Union, and Eastern European countries (1.5%). The origin was unknown for 4.3% of information seekers.

Table 4.1
Information seekers by place of origin

Place of origin	Number of information seekers	Percentage of total number of information seekers
North Africa	166	39.8%
South Asia	133	31.9
Latin America	29	6.9
Spain	28	6.7
East Asia	24	5.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	13	3.1
Former Eastern Bloc	6	1.5
Unknown	18	4.3
Total	**417**	**100.0%**

As regards the distribution of information seekers by gender, the overwhelming majority were men (85.1%), and only 14.9% of them were women (see Table 4.2 below). By looking at the male/female rate distribution by place of origin (see Table 4.3) it is possible to observe that there were no female information seekers among the South Asian and sub-Saharan communities. Women outnumbered men only among Latin Americans (that is, if we only take into account foreign information seekers and exclude Spaniards). They made up half of the total figure in the case of citizens from former Eastern Bloc countries, whereas only one East Asian information seeker out of four was female. Finally, among the largest group, i.e. that of North Africans, women represented only 12% of the total number of information seekers.

Table 4.2
Information seekers by gender

Gender	Number of information seekers	Percentage of total number of information seekers
Males	355	85.1%
Females	62	14.9
Total	**417**	**100.0%**

Table 4.3
Information seekers by place of origin and gender

Place of origin	Gender			
	Males		Females	
	Number of information seekers	Percentage of total number of information seekers	Number of information seekers	Percentage of total number of information seekers
North Africa	146	88.0%	20	12.0%
South Asia	133	100.0	0	0.0
Latin America	14	48.3	15	51.7
Spain	12	42.9	16	57.1
East Asia	18	75.0	6	25.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	13	100.0	0	0.0
Former Eastern Bloc	3	50.0	3	50.0
Unknown	16	88.9	2	11.1
Total	**355**		**62**	

Information providers

The office investigated was regularly staffed by four information providers, namely Bureaucrat 9 (B09), Bureaucrat 10 (B10), Bureaucrat 11 (B11) and Bureaucrat 12 (B12), as they are referred to in the transcripts.[12] Three of them were male (B09, B10 and B12), and one was female (B11). Two of the men (B09 and B10) were in their late twenties/early thirties and held a university degree in the Humanities. The third man (B12), and the woman (B11) were somewhat older –in their late forties. As far as I could gather, neither of them had a university degree. Apparently, the head of the information service was a female civil servant *(funcionaria)* in her late thirties. I did not have the chance to meet up with her during fieldwork, as she was on sick leave.

As regards employment conditions, all information providers were temporarily employed on a twelve-month contract basis. This was the case with most of the other employees, too, although a few of them had even shorter six-month contracts.

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[12] Bureaucrat 13 (B13), who appears in the transcripts, is not described here, as she is not a regular member of the office. She is a backstage bureaucrat who, in one of my visits, was asked to provide information. Because of space limitations, she was placed at a different counter. She only appears in transcripts OFC08_09.doc and OFC08_10.doc interacting with B09.

According to professional category, information providers can be classified into two distinct groups. Two of the officers (the middle-aged man [B12] and one of the two youngish men [B09]) were officially employed as translators (of Russian and Arabic respectively). That means that their professional category and their salary were slightly higher than those of the majority of their colleagues. They were all *auxiliares administrativos* (assistant clerks), which is the lowest category possible for clerical jobs in the civil service. If types of activities are considered, a distinction can be established between B09, B10 and B12 on the one hand, and B11 on the other.

The main task of the first three bureaucrats was to provide information. Each of them had access to a computer terminal to check the status of immigrants' applications. B11, by contrast, had no access to a terminal. Her main task consisted in receiving and stamping new documents. When a document considered necessary was missing from an applicant's file, a letter requesting it was issued to the person. Applicants had to go back to the office with the missing documents, fill in a form called an *expone*[13] (see Form #2 Appendix A) explaining what new information was being provided, and attach the relevant documents to it. B11 was assisted in entering these documents by B10, who took over from her whenever she was absent or had gone out for her midmorning break. Unlike the other officials, B11 had to remain on foot when serving the public. This was because the type of tasks she performed required moving around the office. In addition, she often had to go to the restricted area to consult with the officials in charge of processing applications. Although specific details about recording procedures are presented later, I will mention here that B11's interactions with clients –and often also those of B10– were extremely difficult to tape-record because they hardly ever remained in the same location for more than a couple of minutes.

It was mentioned previously that foreign language competence was not a requirement for bureaucrats working at the immigration department (not even for newly hired members of staff). However, most of the institutional representatives working at the information desk investigated actually had some knowledge of at least one foreign language. The aim of this section is to present the linguistic

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[13] Literally "one declares".

repertoires of the different information providers so that a picture of the linguistic ecology of the setting can be drawn (further information on language skills is provided in Chapter 8). I shall begin by referring to those information providers who had not officially been hired as translators, that is B10 and B11.

On the whole, both information providers were quite reluctant to use any languages other than Spanish or Catalan in their service interactions. Both had a poor command of English. Their knowledge of that linguistic code was limited to a few lexical items and short phrases. Their interactions in that language, especially B11's, were infrequent and minimal. Apart from English, both of them could speak French. Whereas B10's competence in French was largely passive rather than productive, B11 was very fluent. Her native-like accent impressed me the first time I heard her. It turned out that she had resided in France for a long period of time. As regards the linguistic abilities of the translators, i.e. B09 and B12, they were specialists in Arabic and Russian respectively. Apart from these languages, both of them had some knowledge of English. However, their linguistic abilities in English were limited to being able to get their messages across, as neither of them was really proficient in that language. B09 could also speak some French.

Two elements stand out as regards the institution's language policy. Firstly, the fact that Russian was among the linguistic codes officially supported is surprising. Applicants from Russia, former Soviet Union Republics or Eastern European countries, the potential beneficiaries of this service, constituted the smallest client group in my data. In fact, nationals of the above-mentioned areas came up in only 38% of my recording sessions. By way of contrast, the linguistic needs of information seekers from the South Asian region were not catered for, yet they formed the second largest immigrant group in the data. This quick examination of the site's linguistic ecology reveals that institutional language provisions, based on prior analysis of needs,[14] had in fact little to do with the organisation's real requirements.

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[14] Throughout 1999, individuals coming from former Soviet Union Republics as well as the Balkan region formed one of the largest immigrant groups arriving in Barcelona. A large number of them sought political asylum. Hence the fact that there was a permanent translator of Slavic languages in the asylum office described on page 112. Their applications, which were turned down in the majority of cases, gave them

The second factor to be highlighted in relation to official language policies is ideological. It concerns the institution's employment criteria. It reveals that priority is given to meeting the institution's rather than the clients' needs. When it comes to hiring a translator, priority is given to Spanish nationals over foreigners. There is an official lack of trust in ethnic minority group members. This is especially the case if, apart from working as translators, they are also expected to handle work permit applications. There were different indices of this widespread official mistrust at the sites where I gathered my data. When two translators were available and one of them was a Spanish national, s/he was appointed to work in the morning rather than in the afternoon work shift. The morning shift was considered the more "important" of the two.[15] Secondly, in my informal conversations with office staff, I asked why there was nobody who could speak Urdu, Hindi or Punjabi in the office, given the number of South Asian information seekers who were served every day. They all agreed in attributing this absence to the fact that managers did not like to employ minority group members.[16] As they could not find a Spanish national who was competent in South Asian languages, this linguistic service was not provided.[17]

Field techniques and types of data

This study considers different types of data. It takes into account ethnographic material gathered during fieldwork, tape-recorded service interactions and interviews with participants. The focus of the analysis is on the fine-grained examination of information exchange encounters between immigrant information seekers and local information providers. These verbal exchanges are of critical importance for the immigrant population. They are their only means of finding out whether their

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institutional "visibility". This may explain the choice of Russian as one of the languages to receive official support.

[15] This impression was confirmed by B09 in my informal interview with him.

[16] On another occasion, a bureaucrat from Office A voiced the mistrust of the institution towards officials of Moroccan origin. "*A veure què tal va, perquè els d'aquí no se'n fien*", she said referring to a recently hired member of staff (let's see how it goes, because the people from here [the managers] don't trust them).

[17] In that respect, Mr Puig, the senior manager who gave me permission to conduct my research, once said in reference to South Asians: "*Parlen una llengua que no entén ningú*" (They speak a language that nobody understands). The use of "nobody" is significant. It indicates that he did not consider employing "somebody" from the community who could speak the language(s).

permit applications are making headway. Becoming legal, that is obtaining a work and residence permit, is essential for the users of this service; without it, they stand no chance of finding a steady job and bettering their socio-economic situation. It becomes crucial for them to make sense of unfamiliar bureaucratic terms and complex administrative procedures. The question arises of whether they comprehend −or are given the resources to comprehend− what is going on and can make sense of talk addressed to them. This question can only be answered through a detailed examination of service talk and information provision practices.

Frontstage service interactions constitute the backbone of this thesis. The main arguments of the study are constructed on the basis of a fine-grained empirical analysis of the interactional practices of both information seekers and information providers. Yet the study of language practices in institutional contexts needs to go beyond the analysis of frontstage activities. Frontstage talk does not take place in a social vacuum; rather, it is contingent upon a constellation of backstage activities and social interactions. Frontstage interactional practices can only be made sense of in the light of a deep understanding of the socio-political and institutional circumstances framing the encounters. These contextual elements bear upon what goes on at an interactional level. A decontextualised, technical analysis of the linguistic data would fail to grasp the complexity of the events examined. Frontstage interactional data is, thus, supplemented by extensive ethnographic observations in Office C and related settings, field notes, backstage comments by officials, and informal and semi-informal interviews with members of both participant groups.[18] In what follows a description shall be provided of the types of data mentioned.

Frontstage service interactions

The corpus of authentic interactional data on which the study is based consists of twenty hours and eighteen minutes of audio-recorded material. The recordings contain three hundred and forty-eight verbal encounters, involving approximately

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[18] Some of these types of data overlap. The interview is the most common form of interaction during field work and a fundamental source of ethnographic information. Thus, at times it becomes hard to distinguish between what is referred to here as "ethnographic information", "interview data" and "backstage comments". These distinctions only serve a descriptive purpose.

four hundred and seventeen information seekers, and five information providers. A total of eight languages are employed, namely Catalan, Spanish, English, French, German, Arabic, Punjabi and Italian. Spanish, English and French are regular languages of communication between information seekers and information providers. Of those three languages, Spanish and English are the most frequently employed, whereas French is used in fewer interactions. As regards Arabic, only one service exchange unfolds partially in this language. In the rest of cases in which it is employed, only single words or phrases are inserted into conversations. This is also what happens with German and Italian, which are always used by information seekers. Finally, Catalan and Punjabi are not used as languages of interaction between information seekers and providers. Only one instance of the use of Catalan by an information seeker is documented (further details on the use of this language are provided in Chapter 8). As for Punjabi, it is exclusively employed among information seekers and was not generally picked up by my recordings. A detailed analysis of multilingual practice, language negotiation and language choice is provided in Chapter 8.

The encounters analysed here were gathered at the information desk of Office C. This was one of the services not staffed by police officers, who were reluctant to be audio-recorded. The other non-police service one was the registry. I carried out observations at the registry, but very few words tended to be exchanged between officials and immigrants. By way of contrast, face-to-face interactions taking place at the information section were longer, and involved more verbal activities. Besides, the number of service seekers served by the information section every day was fairly large. From the point of view of the type of service provided, information, as a *verbal service* (Ventola 1987), is particularly attractive. Information can be given, negotiated, challenged, contested, misunderstood and hidden. The description of who controls information, how this is carried out, and the motivations behind it appealed to me, especially because of the typology of information seekers involved and the significance for their life projects in relation to the information demanded. It was an ideal ground for the examination of the use of language as an instrument of social control.

In relation to audio-recorded material, I should note that the corpus of data on which this study is based does not include the recordings I carried out at the adult education centre, and at Offices A and B within the Barcelona Immigration Service. The value of carrying out fieldwork at the adult education centre was discussed previously. The data recorded at Offices A and B has been useful for retrieving information on administrative procedures and for contextualising the exchanges examined in this study. The table below presents a summary of all audio-recordings made during fieldwork.

Table 4.4
Summary information of audio-recorded data

Type of data	Location	Length of recording
Classroom data	Adult Education Centre	16h 11m
Service encounter data	Immigration Office A	11h 20m
	Immigration Office B	8h 46m
	Immigration Office C	20h 18m
Total		**56h 35m**

Ethnographic observations and field notes

Ethnographic observations constitute an essential part of this investigation. Research on interaction in organisational settings requires extensive ethnographic fieldwork. Researchers who are "outsiders" to the institution know little about institutional practices, organisational conditions and participant attributes, yet all these elements are constitutive of talk in social interaction. Researchers need to familiarise themselves with the social aspects of talk to be able to produce emic analyses of data, that is, analyses which account for participants' own contextual understandings and processes of sense making. As Cicourel (1992:294) claims, "Verbal interaction is related to the task at hand. Language and other social practices are interdependent. Knowing something about the ethnographic setting, the perception of and characteristics attributed to others, and broader and local social organisational conditions becomes imperative for an understanding of linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of communicative events".

My sources of ethnographic information at the bureaucratic organisation researched are varied. As I discussed earlier, I did extensive fieldwork in two related public offices (A and B). In both settings a large number of immigrants were served every day. The ethnographic background of this study comprises the valuable contextual information I was able to gather there. It also includes observations made at my primary research site (Office C). I made fieldwork notes of all the information I could gather. Note taking took place both inside and outside the office. Whenever it was impossible for me to write down an impression, a thought or a comment while at the site, I made a note of it right after getting back home. In my fieldwork diary I devoted a special page at the end of each day's notes for ethnographic material. Conversations with information providers proved to be a rich source of ethnographic data. I discuss the conditions for the occurrence of these interactions later. I also collected relevant printed material, such as application forms and information leaflets in several languages (Spanish, Arabic, English and French), supplementary forms, such as the *expone* form, which had to be enclosed when more documents were provided, and in general any form of written communication between the institution and immigrants (see Form #3 in Appendix A).

Backstage comments

I use the term "backstage comments" to refer to talk which is produced off-stage, that is not as part of the public activity of serving a client. Backstage comments are usually –but not exclusively– metacomments, namely, evaluative talk about the social interaction. Often, the events that occur during the exchange trigger participants' critical reflections on the institutional conditionings of their talk. Backstage comments occur at different times, involve different participation frameworks, and take on different shapes (questions, imperatives, statements and exclamations). They can occur while the service encounter is taking place (during one of the frequent periods of non-speech), or right after it. They can be addressed to me or to a colleague; they can be volunteered or requested. As regards content, they may contain the official's interpretation of what is going on, comments on the

information seeker's interactional or linguistic behaviour, official's accounts of their own communicative practices, and metalinguistic or metapragmatic comments. Since these comments took place interspersed throughout service talk, they were normally picked up by the tape-recorder. Some of them may be part of an interaction transcribed for the study, like Example 4.2, while others, like Example 4.1, are not. Below are two instances of what I have referred to as backstage comments. B09, B10 and B11 are office staff and RES is the researcher.

Example 4.1[19]

01	*B09:	no se han casado porque tiene que estar no sé cuánto tiempo sin trabajar i
02		*ara com està si no té papers ni res* !
	%tra:	they haven't got married because she can't work for I don't know how long but what about now if she doesn't have legal documentation or anything!
03	*RES:	*ara deu estar treballant sense papers.*
	%tra:	well now she must be working without proper documentation.
04	*B09:	*pues per estar treballant sense papers se podrien casar perfectament* !
	%tra:	in that case if she is working illegally anyway they might as well get married!

Example 4.2[20]

01	*B11:	*<jo no> [<] jo no sé què passa però sembla que les cartes es perdin* oye -!
02		*no arriba cap carta.*
	%tra:	<I don't> [<] I don't know what happens but it seems like letters get lost -! No one receives their letter.
03	*B10:	*i tots aquests mentida mentida mentida.*
	%tra:	these are all lies lies and lies.

In Example 4.1 above, B09 questions the statement by the service seeker according to which he (who is Spanish) and his girlfriend (who is Polish) have not got married because she is forced to wait for several months before she is legally allowed to work in Spain. It is interesting that B09 uses Spanish to quote the man's words and then switches to Catalan to comment critically on them. In this case, backstage comments occur after the interaction has been completed and are addressed to me (RES). Example 4.2 is an instance of intra-staff talk, which takes place while B11 is serving an information seeker who claims not to have received a letter he has been sent. B11 shows his surprise at the fact that many of the letters do not seem to reach their addressees. B10 responds to B11's comments by suggesting that she should

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[19] Extract taken from tape OFFICE(C)_07.

[20] Extract taken from transcript OFC02_04.doc.

not believe a word of what she is told. B10's perception of his interlocutors is revealing. According to him, information seekers cannot be trusted.

Informal and semi-informal interviews

The interview is one of the basic sources of ethnographic information in qualitative sociological and anthropological research. It is by asking questions that researchers get to know about participants' representations, understandings, values, perceptions and attitudes. My interview data consists of two lengthy, semi-informal interviews I held with two representatives of each participant group. In one of them I interviewed an immigration official, more specifically B09. He is also the official involved in the largest number of interactions transcribed. In the other, my interviewee was a young Pakistani man who, after having lived illegally in Spain for two years, had his status legalised in 2000. Both interviews are of a semi-structured nature, that is in both cases I was following previously prepared questions (see Appendix C), but allowed for digressions from the topic. There is an important difference between the two, namely that one of them was tape-recorded while the other was not.

The institutional representative explicitly asked me not to tape-record our conversation. He also seemed reluctant to be interviewed in a formal way. I decided to make the tone lighter by turning it into a rather informal chat. This was at a price: I had to hurriedly make notes of everything I could recall after our meeting (see Appendix C). There is no way in which my personal interpretation of his words that day can now be subject to scrutiny. I asked him about issues related to the distribution and organisation of work at the office, information providers' habitual language practices and his relationship with fellow workmates. In addition, I was interested in the reasons behind certain managerial decisions, such as the change in the institution's policy for providing information, and in the perceptions he had of the experience of communicating with individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. Our conversation unfolded in Catalan, as that was the language of interaction we regularly employed.

My interview with Hussain, the young Pakistani man, lasted for approximately 60 minutes. It was held in Spanish and took place at my home. The reasons were, on the one hand, that I needed a quiet environment for the recording, and on the other, that I wanted to give the impression that "I did not have anything to hide" (García Jorba 2000). On the whole, it was a relaxed event. Hussain comes from a middle-class family in Lahore, where he attended primary and secondary school. Spain was his third choice after having tried to settle in Holland and Germany. He arrived by plane and entered the country on a "business visa", as he reports in the interview. The main topics discussed were Hussain's migratory experience, the situation of his family in Pakistan, his reasons for emigrating, his choice of Barcelona and Spain, his linguistic difficulties, his experiences at the immigration office, his view of bureaucrats' information-providing practices, and his plans for the future. A complete transcript of the interview can be found in Appendix C.

Apart from these two interviews, I had a number of short chats with B09, as well as with most of his colleagues. Likewise, I talked regularly to different immigrant group members, usually at the adult education centre. Whenever it was conversationally and thematically appropriate I asked questions related to the issue of *los papeles,*[21] that is of becoming legal. Although these were not formal interviews, they can be considered a sort of "informal interview" due to their question-answer format. They proved to be a valuable source of information on immigrants' perceptions of their situation.

Data collection

My way of proceeding in relation to two of the methods of data collection is described in this section. These are the electronic recording of face-to-face social interaction, and the gathering of ethnographic material through participant observation and note-taking.

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[21] Literally, the papers.

Tape-recording service talk

In my preliminary interviews to obtain permission, it became apparent that making video-recordings was not a viable option. Mr Puig did agree to my tape-recording service interactions, yet he warned me that my proposal might be met with resistance by some members of staff. He advised me to devote time and effort to explaining in detail the purposes of my research, so that suspicions might be dispelled. Apart from ethical considerations, informing officials of my recordings turned out to be a practical necessity. Indeed, because of the general noise in the office, the recording equipment had to be placed close to the talk area if good quality recordings were to be obtained. Covert recordings would only have produced unusable data.

On the whole, officials' attitude towards my making recordings was favourable. I always tried to be as unobtrusive as possible with their daily work. In my explanations of the objectives of the study, the focus was on immigrants' linguistic and communicative practices. I did not want institutional representatives to feel I was judging their linguistic performances. As their cooperation was crucial for the success of the project, I took all precautions to prevent stirring up ill-feelings.[22] In spite of all this, one of the information providers, namely B12, did not want to be recorded. He was a lonely character who rarely interacted with his workmates. In fact, he was the only information provider to whom I was not introduced by the manager on my first visit. Thus, it did not seem appropriate for me to push him.[23]

As for information seekers, I was advised to handle any requests for information on my recordings with extreme care. Yet information was only to be provided on demand. The goal was to prevent complaints from information seekers: "We don't want anybody making a fuss," said Mr Puig.[24] No other special requirements were made by the managerial staff. Although enquirers were not

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[22] Some of them found it actually stimulating to have somebody interested in their daily routines and willing to listen to their concerns, opinions, and complaints. They always told me anecdotes, linguistic or otherwise, which had happened in the intervals between my visits.

[23] The only other

[24] "*No volem que ens muntin un cacau*".

explicitly told about the recordings, the microphone was always perfectly visible. Thus, recordings can be said to have been made in the "knowing presence" of service seekers (Lamoreux 1988/89). It must be pointed out that no information seeker ever made any comments concerning the recordings. The recording equipment employed consisted of a SONY Digital Audio Tape-Corder DAT Walkman TCD-D8, a clip-on AIWA lapel microphone Stereo Condenser CM-520, and SONY DAT tapes DT 60,90 and 120. A confidential handling of the data was ensured. Recorded material was only to be used for research purposes. In addition, anonymity was guaranteed for all participants. They were reassured that either generic categories or pseudonyms would be used for identification purposes.

Because of previous experience with recording naturally-occurring service data (Codó i Olsina 1998, 1999), I knew that the counter was not an appropriate surface on which to place the microphone. Indeed, in service exchanges involving the use of printed material, for example maps, as in my previous research project, or application forms, as in this case, the microphone easily gets covered. This has a significant effect on the volume of the recorded material. Further distortions are caused by the sound of rustling papers, which is easily picked up and amplified by the microphone. The way round these difficulties which I devised for my previous fieldwork did not seem to work on this occasion. It consisted in clipping the microphone to a small piece of paper hanging from the counter. This way, good quality data could be obtained without impinging on the speakers' freedom of action. However, in the setting under analysis the problem was that there were four officials serving along a rather short wooden counter. If I placed the microphone too close to the person whose interactions I was planning to record, it would easily get covered by his/her body; if I placed it too far, the microphone would pick up many different voices which would interfere with the interaction being recorded.

After several trials, I came to the conclusion that the best possible location for the microphone was on the of the computer each official used. It so happened that computer towers were not placed vertically below desks, as is often the case, but horizontally on top of them. A part of the tower was not visible, as it was covered by the counter, which formed a right angle with the desk. So, what I did was to

place my tape-recorder on the non-visible part of the tower and the microphone on the visible one (see detailed floor plan of information service area on page 118). This way it was close to both the information provider sitting in front of the computer and the information seeker standing behind the counter. The recordings obtained were fairly optimal in terms of sound quality. Although this proved to be a satisfactory solution for those officials who remained sitting while serving immigrants, it did not work when they were standing. This was particularly the case for B11, who, as explained above, took care of the reception of supplementary documents for immigrants' files. It was also mentioned that B10 often took over from her. This reduced my chances of tape-recording him in social interaction with immigrants. Thus, a large number of encounters in the corpus involve B09, while a smaller number involve B10 and B11.

Participant observation and note-taking

I was always present when interactions were tape-recorded. As video recordings were unfeasible, information on speakers' non-verbal activities, like gestures, body posture, use of objects, gaze, facial expressions, movements away from the counter and so on, as well as ethnographic details on age, gender and ethnic group had to be recorded by means of field notes. To make recordings "understandable" to me later, it was necessary to number encounters and note down a few key words for each so that I could keep track of the beginning and end of conversations.[25] When I perceived that a sentence had been uttered too softly for the tape-recorder to pick it up, I wrote it down. Another practice that I found useful was to make a note of the number of information seekers present at the counter and the number of applications they had checked. I used this as back-up information in cases in which I could not perceive different voices or understand the unfolding of the interaction.

In ethnographically-oriented work, the issue of the researcher's participation in the events being examined is a crucial one. Degrees of participation may range from passive to active, although this is in fact frequently difficult to control. In my case, I

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[25] Even with this information it was not easy to distinguish between different encounters, as many of them overlapped.

tried to be an "accepted by-stander" or "professional overhearer".[26] To be able to adopt that role, researchers need to find a blind spot, and this is always a hard task. A blind spot is a place which is near enough the events being examined but not so close that interlocutors feel the need to include the researcher. I used to sit next to the official whose interactions with immigrants I was recording. It was a good location, for I had visual access to the information that came out on the computer screen,[27] did not interfere with service talk, and was close enough to participants to overhear their verbal exchange.

My main difficulty was the management of gaze. Gaze, together with bodily posture, is one of the mechanisms whereby social actors display their mutual engagement in focused interaction. This is particularly relevant in service contexts, where eye-to-eye contact is the means employed by service seekers to attract servers' attention. If servers want to protect their territoriality, that is if they do not wish to be addressed by service seekers because they are engaged in some other undertaking, they have to carefully manage gaze and posture. Essentially, this involves refraining from looking up until availability for service is restored.

This is precisely what I experienced at the office. My presence behind the counter symbolically defined my status: I was categorised by information seekers as a member of the service team, and as such, likely to be engaged in service dealings. If I looked at information seekers for too long a time, I ran the risk of being addressed. This was something I did not want to happen to avoid interfering with seeker-provider communication, getting distracted from documenting what was going on, and giving the impression that I wanted to meddle in official matters. It was a case of finding the appropriate demeanour for the context. As I mentioned earlier, participation is not always easy to control: on two occasions I was actually addressed by enquirers (see transcripts OFC01_07.doc and OFC04_09.doc). I tried to reach a compromise between my need to look at information seekers regularly to be able to record their non-verbal activities in writing and my wish not to become

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[26] These terms are taken from Duranti (1997).

[27] This was an important source of information regarding nationality, and especially the "official" status of immigrants' applications.

an active participant. My condition as "expert" in the English language also motivated my active participation in a few exchanges. This happened in cases in which officials experienced difficulties in communicating with information seekers or translating a specific Spanish word or expression into English (see transcripts OFC01_06.doc OFC03_06.doc). I would either volunteer or be asked for help. My interest in language use even prompted officials on their own initiative to ask information seekers about their language abilities (see for example transcripts OFC01_05.doc and OFC06_03.doc).

The fact that I was sitting next to officials gave me extensive opportunities to chat with them. This was also facilitated by the episode structure of their service interactions. Indeed, most of them required the official to search for information in the computer database. Typically, information providers would enter the number of the information seeker's file into the computer, and wait for the information to appear on the screen. I took advantage of those few seconds to ask for clarifications and make comments on the current or previous enquirer(s). Most of the officials took advantage of my questions to display their professional knowledge.

Transcription and coding

Linguists working with samples of electronically-recorded spoken data need to render their research material into written form in order to be able to subject it to thorough examination. Before an interaction is transcribed, researchers need to go over the tapes carefully, and select those exchanges which will be useful for them in answering their research questions. Transcription is arduous and time-consuming. Transcribing a given stretch of talk entails making sense of what the situation is, what is being accomplished, who the participants are –including their sociolinguistic backgrounds– who is speaking, who is being addressed, and so on. Transcription is far from being a theory-neutral activity; transcription *is* theory (Ochs 1979).

Analysis is concomitant to transcription. Although this holds for all types of data, the need to interpret talk becomes more acute in cases in which the researcher deals with foreign language talk in intercultural situations. This is the case of the corpus presented here. I shall dwell upon the difficulties encountered throughout

the transcription process later in this section. For the purposes of my study, eighty-two service exchanges have been transcribed in full detail. These involve five information providers and approximately a hundred and twenty information seekers (see Table 4.2 below. For detailed information see Table B.3 in Appendix B). The choice of exchanges was motivated by multilingual language use. Those interactions in which a minimum of two languages were spoken were transcribed. These mainly involve speakers of South Asian origin, who employ English to communicate with information providers. Initially, multilingual practices were the main focus of my study. However, when the data was examined, other themes, such as the process of information exchange, or the strategies participants employ either to make sense of talk addressed to them, or, as in the case of the office staff, not to disclose particular types of information, gained prominence. Nonetheless, this does not invalidate the choice of data. It is precisely in situations in which the linguistic code is not shared that difficulties in negotiating meaning become more acute, and linguistic processes brought into the open.

Table 4.5
Summary information of transcriptions

Number of encounters transcribed	Number of enquirers involved	Geographical origin of information seekers		Languages spoken	
82	120	South Asia	101	Spanish	Arabic
		North Africa	12	English	Italian
		East Asia	3	Catalan	German
		Sub-Saharan Africa	2	French	Punjabi
		Latin America	1		
		Unknown	1		

The standard used for the transcription and coding of the data was LIDES (Language Interaction Data Exchange System).[28] I essentially followed the guidelines proposed by the LIPPS Group (2000), yet some modifications were made to adapt the system to the specificities and goals of my research. The main difference concerns the way in which I have signalled the use of distinct linguistic codes. In my

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[28] LIDES is a data transcription and coding standard based on CHILDES (MacWhinney 2000). It has specifically been developed to meet the needs of researchers working with/on multilingual data. One of the goals of the project is to create a database of multilingual language interaction data. The use of a common standard is meant to enable researchers to share linguistic data and address research questions which have as yet not been addressed. Thus, the main advantages of using LIDES can be summarised as (1) the existence of specific guidelines for the handling of language interaction phenomena, and (2) the possibility of making our data available through the LIDES database.

corpus different typefaces are employed to identify different linguistic codes.[29] Together with the actual data transcripts, a description is presented in Appendix D of the main constituent elements of a LIDES transcript. In addition, a complete list is provided of the transcription conventions employed in this work. Therefore, I will limit myself at this point to discussing some specific transcription practices which are of particular interest to my corpus.

The first practice to be examined is the representation of periods of non-speech. As is well-known, silences can be turn-internal, or they can occur between speaker turns. Assigning a silence one or the other position is a matter of interpretation. In addition, some silences are "transformable" (Sacks et al. 1974): a silence at a possible speaker transition point can be turned into an intra-turn pause if the current speaker resumes his/her talk. Even when it seems clear that a silence has occurred between turns, it is open to distinct local interpretations, either as a *gap*, *lapse* or *silence* attributable to one of the speakers (Levinson 1983:299). The main difficulty for the representation of silences within LIDES is due to the fact that, for technical reasons, whatever occurs on a main tier needs to be assigned to a speaker. Yet, as has been pointed out, assigning a silence to one of the participants implies a particular interpretation of the ongoing talk. The solution adopted here has been to use the "UUU" speaker identification code for silences. "UUU" stands for "undecidable" speaker, and it signals that a period of non-speech is not attributed to any of the participants. This convention needs to be distinguished from "XXX", which is used to refer to a speaker who cannot be identified. The transcriber is not sure whether that speaker is a participant in the interaction or not.

Another convention which deserves attention is the use of "www". In the LIDES Coding Manual (2000:257) this convention is employed to represent talk left untranscribed for whatever reason.[30] In my corpus, "www" is also often used to represent spoken material which is confidential, such as immigrants' names,

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[29] This differs from the recommendations made by LIPPS (2000). To identify different linguistic codes, language tags are attached to individual words. This is particularly useful for quantitative analyses of data, but it was thought to render transcripts extremely difficult to understand.

[30] This is different from the convention "xxx" (lower case), which stands for a word or stretch of talk which is not understandable to the researcher.

addresses and places of residence. The use of "www" for confidentiality reasons is exemplified in the excerpt below. B09 is one of the office staff and ENQ an information seeker.

Example 4.3[31]

[...]

01	*B09:	**in three weeks we send him a letter to come here with photos to put the**:
02		# **fingerprints**.
	%act:	indicates action of having one's fingerprints taken with a gesture

| 03 | *ENQ: | +^ <u>eh</u>: **yes** para: <u>eh</u> <u>uh</u>: xxx informe **letter** # <por favor> [>]. |
| | %tra: | +^ <u>eh</u>: yes fo:r <u>eh</u> <u>uh</u>: xxx work report letter # <please> [>]. |

| 04 | *B09: | <without> [<] **passport no** |
| 05 | | informe **letter**. |

| 06 | *ENQ: | +^ <u>eh</u> **yes**. |

| 07 | *B09: | **you need this and the passport**. |

| 08 → | *ENQ: | +^ **yes** <u>uh</u> **this** persona www www **this is** <u>uhm</u> <u>eh</u> **my brother**. |
| | %tra: | +^ yes <u>uh</u> this person www www this is <u>uhm</u> <u>eh</u> my brother. |

| 09 | *B09: | **yes** [=! impatient tone] **I need the passport**. |

| 10 | *ENQ: | <u>eh</u> pasaporte <u>eh</u> xxx +/. |
| | %tra: | <u>eh</u> passport <u>eh</u> xxx +/. |

| 11 | *B09: | +^ **you have the passport here**? |

| 12 | *ENQ: | <u>no</u> <u>no</u> <u>no</u>. |

[...]

The specific use of "www" to preserve participants' anonymity is normally indicated by means of a "%com" dependent tier, unless its specific use is clear from the local sequential context, as in line 08. When no specific comments are made, the "www" symbol stands for a stretch of talk which is not transcribed because it is not considered relevant to the specific service interaction (as is the case with backstage comments).

A key element to interpret what is going on in the service interactions examined is paralinguistic information: prosody, intonation, pace of speech delivery, tone of voice, and so on. John Gumperz (1982a, 1992a, 1992b, 1999) has shown

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[31] Extract taken from OFC07_02.doc.

that contextualisation cues, which guide our assessments of communicative intention, are mostly of a prosodic nature. In this vein, an effort has been made to render prosodic information as accurately as possible.[32] Four main turn-internal symbols are used: (1) **-,** for fall-rise intonation contour, indicating there is more to come; (2) **-?** for rising intonation contour, as in questions; and (3) **-.** for falling intonation contour, as for statements and at the end of utterances. Apart from intonation markers, comments on paralinguistic phenomena are inserted by means of the scoped symbols "[!]" (stressing) and "[=! text]", as shown in the extract below.

Example 4.4[33]

[...]

| 01 | *B10: | espera: hombre -! pero esperar allí *collons* [=! louder] # *aquí sobre tots* ! |
| | %tra: | wait: mate -! but wait over there bloody hell [=! louder] # all here! |

[...]

One of the contextual elements that caused most trouble was noise. As has been mentioned earlier, the office where recordings were made was particularly noisy. This was due to the considerable number of immigrants that were served every day by the different sections. Because only tape-recordings were allowed, it was difficult to identify who was speaking at any given point. In an attempt to solve this problem, I tried to make a note of the number of service seekers involved per exchange. This proved to be very helpful information. Immigrants' linguistic productions tend to be short, disfluent and uttered in a soft voice. In addition, their capacity to announce forthcoming non-verbal actions is extremely limited. For example, sometimes they suddenly move away from the counter to get a fellow countryman to help them communicate with officials. There are no verbal cues in the encounter, and yet a third, different voice is suddenly perceptible. It seems clear then that noting down all types of non-verbal information was essential for an understanding of the sequential unfolding of the encounter.

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[32] That entails having to strike a compromise between the need to provide necessary prosodic information and the need to present transcripts which are understandable to the reader.

[33] Extract taken from OFC05_01.doc.

As was briefly announced above, during the transcription and coding process a number of difficulties were run into as a consequence of the foreign language nature of the data gathered. The complexities of this linguistic material can be best spelled out by examining the notion of *foreign language talk*. This notion can be conceptualised in two major ways. Firstly, it can refer to the interactional situation in which participants employ a linguistic code which is not native to them (either to one of them, or to either of them).[34] Secondly, it can allude to the transcriber's handling of linguistic data which is "foreign" to him/her. In the latter case three different realities can be denoted. First, the notion of *foreign language data* can refer to data from linguistic codes which are non-native to the researcher but of which s/he has some command. In my case, this includes English, French, German and Italian data. Secondly, this notion may include linguistic data from languages unknown to the researcher, such as Punjabi and Arabic.[35] Thirdly, but not negligibly, it may cover the fact that the researcher, despite being proficient in some of the languages mentioned above, like English, is not acquainted with the variety spoken. This is the case with the English spoken by South Asian information seekers. Instances of all these categories occur in the data presented in this dissertation. The complexities of the process of data transcription and coding were enormous. Further details are provided in the ensuing sections.

Transcription as intercultural communication

Researchers of verbal interaction among members of different linguistic groups, the area of study known in the literature as *intercultural communication*, face a serious difficulty. On the one hand, they aim to explain participants' processes of sense making in order to, in most cases, unveil the "hidden" causes of miscommunication phenomena.[36] If researchers are to produce emic accounts of interactional practices,

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[34] When the linguistic code is not native to any of the participants, it has the status of lingua franca.

[35] I needed the aid of people proficient in these two languages. As regards Arabic, B09, who as I said was officially employed as a translator of Arabic, helped me with the data in that language. As for Punjabi, I was aided by Hussain. Since Punjabi does not use the Roman alphabet, and Hussain was not literate in Spanish, I had to transliterate Punjabi sounds myself.

[36] The analysis of communication difficulties has been so pervasive in intercultural communication research that some authors have identified what they refer to as an "analytic stereotyping" in the discipline (Sarangi

that is to say interpretations which try to grasp participants' understandings of what is going on interactionally, they have to adopt an insider's perspective. Yet researchers are usually outsiders to at least part of the data analysed. Thus, their own communication with the linguistic data examined is also of an intercultural nature. As Blommaert and Verschueren put it, "In the field of intercultural communication there is no real theoretical difference between talking with the other and talking about the other. Linguistic analysis, as a way of talking about the other, is an instance of intercultural communication itself, subject to all the influences, conditions and rules that govern intercultural interactions in general. Therefore, the linguist can never be a "detached bystander" (1998:36).

The interpreting difficulties inherent to intercultural communication research find a practical correspondence on the level of data transcription and coding. Transcribing talk produced by speakers belonging to a cultural and linguistic group different from the researcher's own is no easy task. In the corpus analysed here, most immigrants belong to the South Asian community living in the Barcelona area (see Table 4.5 above). This community is not homogeneous in terms of linguistic repertoire. On the one hand, a number of different languages, such as Sindi, Hindi, Urdu, Shindi, Punjabi and Sikh are spoken in the South Asian subcontinent. On the other hand, there is no homogeneous migration experience; in fact, there are many distinct migration itineraries. Some South Asians arrive in Spain directly from their countries of origin; others, by contrast, end up in Spain after a long journey spanning several months or years, and usually, involving irregular residence in one or several European countries. Immigrants' communicative practices carry the trace, as Blommaert (2001) notes, of individual migration trajectories. This is illustrated in Example 4.5 below. As can be observed, information seeker EN1 alternates between English and French to communicate with information provider B09. His knowledge of French is probably the result of a period of residence in France. This impression is confirmed by the service seeker involved in Example 4.6, which was recorded immediately after the interaction transcribed in 4.5 The second

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1994). It consists in the automatic association of the notion of intercultural communication with the idea of conflict.

information seeker, labelled ENQ is presumably a friend of EN1's. As ENQ also used French words in his talk, I asked the officials whether they could enquire about the origin of this linguistic knowledge. His illuminating response, which confirms our intuitions, is contained in line 08.

Example 4.5[37]

01	*B09:	pasaporte?
	%tra:	passport?

02	*EN1:	0.
	%act:	hands B09 his passport.

03	*B09:	a ver #0_10 esto quién lo ha puesto esto?
	%tra:	let's see #0_10 this who wrote this?

04 →	*EN1:	so no ça www ça **pakistani name**.
	%com:	name of EN1
	%tra:	no no this www this pakistani name.

05	*B09:	ya ya.
	%tra:	okay okay.

06 →	*EN1:	ici so.
	%tra:	here so.

07	*B09:	es diu www llavons aquí ha posat això algú altre # xxx perquè aquí no surt
	%add:	RES
	%tra:	his name is www then here somebody else has written this # xxx because this is not in here

08	*RES:	a més fa una altra lletra no ?
	%tra:	and the handwriting is different too, isn't it?

09	*B09:	a ver.
	%tra:	let's see

10 →	*EN1:	+^ ça **embassy** ça c'est tout.
	%tra:	+^ that embassy that's all.

[...]

Example 4.6[38]

[...]

01	*RES:	si li pregunto m'entendrà ?
	%tra:	if I ask him do you think he'll understand?

02	*B09:	lo qué ?
	%tra:	what?

03	*RES:	si ha viscut a França [//] si ha vingut de França ?
	%tra:	if he has lived in France [//] if he has come from France.

04 →	*B09:	tú has estado en Francia?
	%tra:	have you been in France?

05	*ENQ:	un tiempo.
	%tra:	a while.

---

[37] Extract taken from transcript OFC02_02.doc.

[38] Extract taken from OFC02_03.doc.

```
06    *B09:    ah ah!
07    *B10:    un petit ou un gros?
      %tra:    a small or a big one?
08 →  *ENQ:    +^ un petit peu Francia.
      %tra:    a little bit France.
09    *RES:    una mica.
      %tra:    a little bit.
10    *B10:    una mica xxx!
      %tra:    a little bit xxx!
[…]
```

There is no effective solution to the difficulties sketched out above; there are as many migration trajectories as immigrants involved. Even if the researcher could get the aid of a member of the ethnic community, it would not be enough. The most honest option, from a scientific standpoint, is to acknowledge that what is on a transcript is mediated by the researcher's understanding of the interaction. Although this is always the case with transcription, this interpretive process becomes undeniably more visible when dealing with data from intercultural contexts.

Reproducing broken language use

A different yet somewhat related difficulty encountered during transcription concerns the reproduction of "broken" language use. This broad notion involves a variety of linguistic phenomena that can affect different levels of linguistic structuring. The uses and meaning of broken language are different depending on who produces it. When immigrants' productions are "broken", it is because their linguistic abilities in the communicative code are limited. By contrast, the use of broken language by bureaucrats may be intended to mock or ridicule immigrants' talk.

With regard to transcription, the phenomena which are most easily rendered orthographically are those involving non-standard morphology and syntax. The most disturbing question for the researcher is how to represent pronunciation, that is, how to show visually what participants' talk sounds like. Because of this difficulty, one needs to decide whether phonological information is necessary. In the case of the present study, information on pronunciation has not been included unless it is relevant for the sequential unfolding of the interaction. This is illustrated

in Example 4.8. Phonological information is contained in a separate ""%pho" tier placed below the main tier. In Example 4.7, by contrast, non-standard pronunciation is easily rendered through orthographic means. Phonological information is included, firstly, because it can be represented on the main tier, as it does not affect the understanding of subsequent talk, and secondly, because it constitutes evidence for the information provider's poor command of English.

Example 4.7[39]

[...]

01 →	*B10:	**no the last day in computer are eh: thirtith of april last day that you can**
02 →		**see in computer** -. **and this may aight** [//] **eighth of may nine of may and five**
03		**of may** -. **these two weeks when when you come here for see this another**
04		**time** # <u>eh:</u> **bring the others** # **papers** -. <**these papers**> [>] **bring bring the four**
05		**papers for check a: again**.

[...]

Example 4.8[40]

[...]

01	*B10:	trámite.
	%tra:	being processed.
02 →	*EN4:	**wait**?
	%pho:	/vet/
03	*B10:	trámite [=! more slowly].
	%tra:	being processed [=! more slowly].
04 →	*EN4:	**wait** xxx.
	%pho:	/vet/
05 →	*EN4:	**wait**?
	%pho:	/vet/
06	*B10:	*què diu* ?
	%tra:	what's he saying?
	%add:	RES
07	*EN5:	<u>ah</u> <u>no</u> <u>no</u>!
08	*B10:	<**what**> [>] ?
09	*RES:	<**where**> [<].
10	*EN4:	<u>tram</u> <u>experi</u>.
11	*B10:	+^ espera.
	%tra:	+^ wait.
12	*EN5:	<u>experi</u> # xxx.
13	*B10:	*què ens hem entès o no* ?
	%tra:	so have we understood each other or not?
14	*EN5:	<u>no</u> <u>no</u> <u>no</u> <u>no</u>.

---

[39] Extract taken from OFC02_07.doc.

[40] Extract taken from OFC02_04.doc.

15   *B10:   *no diu* !
      %tra: he says no!
[...]

Example 4.9 below is similar to Example 4.7 in that phonological information is provided on the main tier, and in that it affects information providers' productions. However, it is different from 4.7 in that the information provider's non-standard pronunciation is not the result of his lack of linguistic skills but rather a desire to ridicule his East Asian interlocutor's talk (see line 03). In all similar cases, where specific syntactic or phonological features are meaningful, they are always represented in the transcriptions.

Example 4.9[41]

01   *B10:   qué hay?
      %tra: what's up?

02   *ENQ: es eh para +...
      %tra: it's uh for +...

03 → *B10:   pala qué -? pala qué?
      %tra: what fol -? what fol?

04   *ENQ: <u>ma</u> español sólo un poco.
      %tra: <u>ma</u> spanish only a little.

05   *B10:   poco español -? y cómo te las apañas en el restaurante?
      %tra: little spanish -? and how do you manage at the restaurant?

[...]

Concluding remarks

One of the important contributions of this investigation is the type of data analysed. Rarely does naturally-occurring interactional data from an immigration office become available to researchers. In the Spanish context, a study of this nature has never been conducted. Because of the difficulties in gaining access, the analysis of the process of fieldwork plays a prominent role. I have tried to combine a historical presentation of events with a critical reflection on my role and conduct in the field. I hope to have shown that trying to gain access to an institutional site is arduous and

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[41] Extract taken from OFC06_03.doc.

time-consuming, but also feasible. Usually, it entails extensive negotiations with the actors involved.

This chapter also presents some of the characteristics of the participants involved, and the site examined. The institutional pressures information providers have to cope with, and the numerous contradictions of their role shape the talk produced. The fine-grained analysis of the interactional level cannot proceed without a deep understanding of the multiple conditionings of the institutional order. In Chapter 5, some general features of the encounters examined are presented. Because of their specificity and "discontinuous" nature, it becomes hard to identify what is going on. A basic linguistic and structural description is presented to facilitate the comprehension of the ensuing chapters.

5

Face-to-face communication
at an immigration office

This chapter introduces the institutional encounters on which the present study is based. It is an account of participants' social activities and language use. It is also a characterisation of the administrative procedure whereby applications are processed and decisions on entitlements made. One of the features of the corpus gathered is that all social interactions are very similar, both linguistically and structurally. The setting researched is the information desk of a state immigration office in Barcelona. This is an unusual immigration office; it is specially set up to process applications from illegal immigrants seeking to legalise their status in Spain. This is possible because of the opening of an exceptional legalisation campaign in the year 2000.

The information desk provides information on eligibility conditions, and required documentation. This information is also available from other sources. It is available from officials at the registry, booklets on the legalisation campaign (see Appendix A), newspapers, Internet, and bureaucratic staff at other immigration offices. By way of contrast, it is only possible to obtain information on the status of applications already submitted from the information desk researched. Due to the long queues that are formed outside the office every day, individuals needing general information try other sources. This explains the similarity of the exchanges presented in terms of content. As regards structural similarities, they may be accounted for by the tight control exerted by public officials over discursive production. Finally, the reason for the similarity in officials' information providing practices is found in the routinisation of responses and the institution's specific information policy.

The first section of this chapter presents the prototypical organisation of information exchange encounters at the immigration office studied. The second section, in turn, focuses on the description of the different stages making up the administrative procedure to process applications. This information was obtained

through numerous informal conversations with office staff. A clear understanding of institutional labels, bureaucratic stages and participants' activities is essential to comprehend the meaning of participants' talk and be able to assess it from a critical perspective. The information presented in this chapter is descriptive. The extent to which immigrants' understanding of the procedure is facilitated by bureaucrats' information providing practices is evaluated in Chapter 6.

Organisation of information exchange encounters

The face-to-face verbal interchanges in which officials and immigrants engage are of a service nature. They involve an institutional participant in interaction with one or several non-institutional participants. The goal of the "lay" participants is to request some type of service from the institutional representative, whose professional duty is to provide it. At the setting examined, the institution is a public administration office, the service requested and provided is information, the institutional representatives are information providing officials, and the lay participants are non-EU immigrants applying for legalisation.[1] In their status as service interactions, the encounters presented here share their basic structural organisation with other types of service exchanges. Their *core* or *nuclear* (Ventola 1987:119) activities, that is, those that realise actors' goals are the "service request" and the "service compliance" (see Figure 5.1 below). They are present even in the most minimal interactions, and may be performed verbally or non-verbally. The "collect turn number" activity is specific to this setting. It is marked as a core activity in Figure 5.1 because its accomplishment seems to be obligatory, as Example 5.3 below illustrates. This is the stage at which the information seeker hands his/her turn number over to the service provider. This sequence of actions is usually conducted non-verbally. If it is not performed, its absence is made interactionally relevant. Apart from the three core activities mentioned, a number of other actions may or may not be present. Their optional nature is attested by the fact that interactants never remark on their absence. These are "greeting", "gather all applications", "sort out applications", "check computer", "request further information", "contest information provided",

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[1] In a few encounters, the information seekers are local advisory agents.

"closing" and "goodbye". Figure 5.1 below shows the prototypical organisation of information exchange encounters.

Figure 5.1
Organisation of information exchange encounters
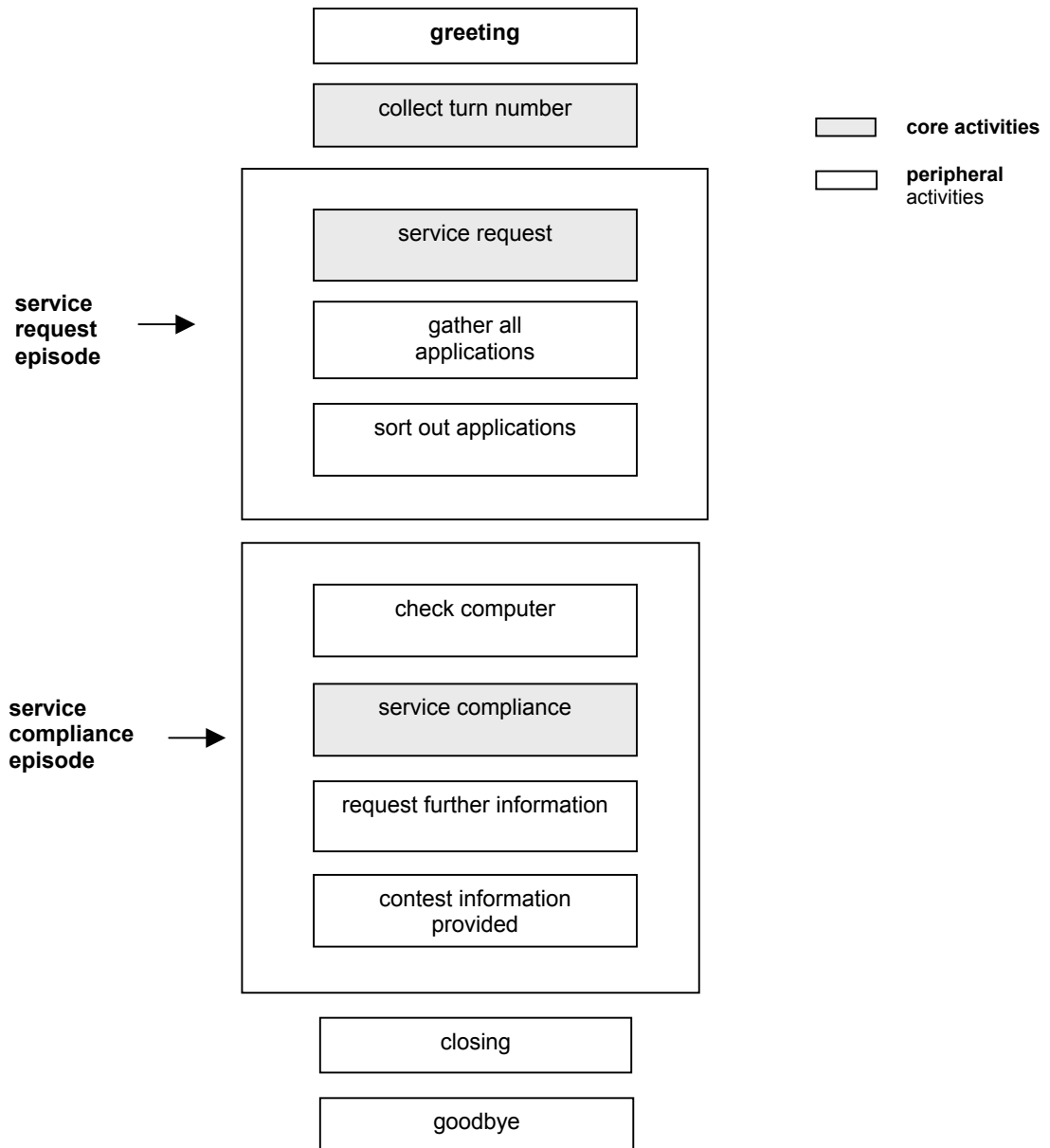
Two main episodes are identified. These are the "service request" and the "service compliance" episodes. The central activities are, respectively, the service request and the service compliance. Each of these episodes may contain other social activities. In the case of the service compliance episode, the two additional activities identified (i.e. "gather all applications" and "sort out applications") are employed by the public

official to specify the service request further (additional details on how this is accomplished are provided in the ensuing section). In the case of the service compliance episode, the "check computer" activity refers to bureaucrats' preparatory actions prior to the service compliance. They involve searching the institution's computerised database for information on immigrants' applications. The social activities "request further information" and "contest information provided" build upon the information given by the official in the service compliance turn. Providing a response to these two activities is perceived to be part of bureaucrats' compliance moves. It must be highlighted that the notion of "activity" rather than "turn" has been used in this account of structural elements. "Activity" is understood as a sequence of actions, either verbal or non-verbal, oriented to the accomplishment of a specific goal. Uptakes, comprehension checks and reformulations may accompany the "core" turn of any one activity.

The above figure does not aim to be comprehensive; it seeks to represent the most frequent social activities undertaken by participants in the verbal exchanges under examination. The most common type of interactions, namely those in which immigrants are informed that they have to keep on waiting because a final decision on their applications has still not been made, are taken as baseline data for the figure to present a range of possible activities.[2] The overall description of the exchanges formulated here is an idealisation. In actual practice, social actors deviate from the organisation presented. For example, activities not related to the service nature of the exchanges may be present. A case in point are comprehension checks and language negotiation sequences. They have not been included in the chart for two reasons: firstly, because of their general conversational nature; secondly, because they can occur at a number of interactional places and are, consequently, problematic to represent. Despite these considerations, a general sequential outline of information exchange encounters is useful to understand participants' contributions, and make sense of the analysis of language practices presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

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[2] This explains the presence of activities like "request further information" or "contest information provided".

A defining characteristic of the social interactions investigated is their discontinuous nature. The adjective "discontinuous" is used to refer to the very frequent moments without verbal participation which characterise these encounters. These moments of "discontinuity" may be structurally-motivated periods of non-speech, as in the "check computer" activity, in which the institutional representative searches the computerised database for information. Other breaks, by contrast, are unrelated to the organisation of the exchange. They have to do with the specificity of the setting investigated. For example, the long queue of people waiting to be served prompts many individuals to approach the counter. They try to obtain information without having to queue up. Bureaucrats refuse to serve them (see Chapter 8 for a detailed analysis). Service seekers' attempts to jump the queue give rise to a number of brief exchanges which get inserted into the ongoing interaction.

More significant than the "discontinuous" nature of these social exchanges on a structural level is their "discontinuity" on the level of social relationships. I refer to the extent to which the channel of interaction is kept open throughout the exchange, even when non-verbal activities are accomplished. In her analysis of service transactions at a bank, Cook-Gumperz (2000) shows how clerks and customers collaborate in concealing the clerk's movements away from being on a direct body alignment with the customer. This happens when the clerk enters any new deposits or check balances into the computer. This is the key to a "successful" encounter. Social alignment is kept in the absence of talk. The client does not feel the clerk has withdrawn from the relationship established. In Cook-Gumperz' view, only when the social channel is kept open can the client go away with the feeling that a truly personal service has been delivered. None of that "effort" is present in the service interactions under analysis. On the contrary, officials take advantage of every occasion to withdraw from any social space of intercourse with their interlocutors. When no talk is exchanged, the channel is intentionally kept closed. Public bureaucrats show no interest in creating a harmonious interactional space. They want to reduce interaction to a minimum. Talk can only be produced within pre-established social activities, such as those presented in Figure 5.1. As was

mentioned in Chapter 4, my presence gave them the perfect excuse to busy themselves with tasks unrelated to the service exchange.[3]

The following extract illustrates officials' refusal to engage in talk which is not perceived to be "sequentially appropriate". EN1 is a particularly articulate enquirer. He is very fluent in Spanish. In turns previous to the excerpt shown here, he tries to establish a friendly relationship with the public official by making small talk. He brings up the topic of the bureaucrat's holidays, as the encounter takes place on the last day of July, and mentions the very hot summer the city is having. The turns presented below take place while B09 is waiting for information on the service seeker's application to appear on the computer screen.

Example 5.1[4]

[…]

01	*EN1:	el chico éste www www me parece ## es ésta lo que esta mirando ,, no?
	%com:	name of a person
	%tra:	this fellow this www www I think ## is the one you're checking now ,, right?
02	*B09:	sí.
	%tra:	yes.
03	*EN1:	me parece ya lo tiene concedido ,, no?
	%tra:	I think he's already been granted the permit.
04	*B09:	no lo sé.
	%tra:	I don't know.
05 →	*EN1:	me parece que sí yo ahora lo miraré porque: vino el otro día a preguntar -, y ahora
06		lo que me falta por favor +…
	%tra:	I think so Ill have a look now because he came to ask the other day -, and now what I need please +…
	@Situation:	one of the door staff approaches the counter
07 →	*B09:	**Shania Twain**.
08	*POR:	qué más.
	%tra:	what's the surname?
09	*B09:	no sabes quién es?
	%tra:	don't you know who she is?
10	*POR:	no.
	%tra:	no.
11	*B09:	es una cantante de country que hace canciones como las de Mónica Naranjo pero
12		en inglés.
	%tra:	she's a country singer that sings songs similar to those of Mónica Naranjo but in English.

[…]

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[3] I took advantage of that behaviour, as I mentioned in Chapter 4, to chat with them and gather ethnographic data.

[4] Extract taken from transcript OFC08_03.doc.

It seems that EN1 is trying to formulate his specific service request in lines 05 and 06, although he leaves his utterance unfinished. As becomes apparent later in the interaction, EN1 wants to be given an *informe* letter.[5] Yet this request can only be formulated after the information provider is certain that the permit has been granted. While B09 is waiting for the computer to show the information requested, EN1 produces two turns concerning the application that is being checked (lines 01 and 03). These two turns end in a tag question, which entails that B09 is sequentially "forced" to respond. His rather laconic answers index his unwillingness to get interactionally involved until the status of the enquirer's application has been determined. In line 07 he finally disengages himself temporarily from the service exchange by resuming a previous conversation with one of the door staff (POR) and myself about a famous pop singer. This inhibits the information seeker from pursuing his line of talk.

Social activities

This section provides a detailed sequential description of each of the social activities identified in Figure 5.1. Their goals and functions are explained. Illustrative examples are provided for each activity. Slight variations are remarked, and also illustrated. One of the most visible structural elements in these interactions is that the "greeting", "closing" and "goodbye" episodes are rather infrequent. The most rare of all is the greeting episode. Social intercourse is usually initiated by immigrants' getting close to the counter and establishing eye contact with officials. The standard procedure is for officials to ring a bell located under the counter indicating readiness to serve. A screen displays current client number. Whenever a new number is called, the corresponding information seeker gets close to the counter. The first step is to hand his/her turn number to the official. Previous to it or simultaneously, a greeting sequence may be produced. Yet it must be pointed out that this happens rather infrequently. The next move consists in producing the application forms the information seeker wants to have checked. This constitutes the initiation of the service proper. In the majority of encounters, these initial moves

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[5] This is a provisional letter certifying that this person has been granted legal residency.

are performed non-verbally. This may be due to the limited linguistic skills of information seekers or to their uncertainty about which language to use.[6]

It may well be the case that no talk is produced until the institutional representative provides his/her service compliance turn. A great deal of what goes on in these interactions unfolds on a non-verbal level. The service request, for example, tends to be formulated non-verbally. The mere production by immigrants of their application forms works as a service prompting move. Some examples of verbal service requests are given below (Examples 5.2 and 5.3). As was remarked above, these are the exceptions rather than the rule.

Example 5.2[7]

01	*B10:	**you**?
02	*ENQ:	**yes**.
03	*B10:	**okay**.
04	*ENQ:	**hi**.
05	*B10:	**hi.**
06	*ENQ:	**how are you**?
07	*B10:	www.
08	*PEN:	www.
09 →	*ENQ:	**tell me please in detail what is going on with me**?
10	*B10:	**one moment.**

[...]

In excerpt 5.2, the service request is contained in line 09. One interesting feature is that it is formulated in personal terms. The use of "me" instead of "my application" in "please tell me what is going on with me" foregrounds the personal dimension of immigrants' information requests. It must also be noted that this verbal information request co-occurs with a rather extended greeting sequence (lines 04 to 06). The co-presence of these two elements point to the articulate nature of the information seeker involved. As can be observed, the presence of greetings and verbal service

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[6] It is true, however, that in foreign language context situations, greetings in the local language(s) are very easily picked up. In service contexts, greetings in the local code may be exchanged, even when service seekers have no knowledge of it. This behavioural pattern was attested in service exchanges at a tourist information office (see Codó i Olsina 1998). It is, thus, possible that the absence of greeting sequences may be due to other situational factors.

[7] Extract taken from transcript OFC03_01.doc.

requests are not contingent upon immigrants' command of Spanish. In this extract, both turns are produced in English. Example 5.3 below contains another instance of a verbally-realised service request ("*mira por favor*" [check it please]). If in the previous example the request was made in English, this time it is uttered in Spanish (line 03).

Example 5.3[8]

```
01    *B09:    número.
      %tra:    number.
02    *EN1:    0.
      %act:    gives B09 the number together with one application form
03 →  *EN1:    mira por favor [=! softly].
      %tra:    check it please.
04    *B09:    vale only one?
05    *EN1:    0.
      %act:    makes a gesture indicating non-understanding
06    *B09:    only one?
07    *EN1:    0.
      %act:    indicates one with his finger
08    *B09:    no more.
09    *EN1:    no.
[...]
```

This example is interesting because it also attests to the obligatoriness of the "collect turn number" activity. Since the information seeker does not hand his turn number over to the information provider, he asks for it. The fact that it appears in the first turn underscores the need for this action to be accomplished before the exchange can proceed. Two things may happen after the service request has been formulated (whether verbally or non-verbally). If the information seeker has only handed one application form over to the official, s/he will normally be asked if this is the only application s/he wants to have checked. This is the stage referred to above as "gather all applications". The immigrant may then produce more application forms or s/he may state s/he does not have any more. This sequence was also present in Example 5.3 above (lines 04 to 09). In line 03 EN1 utters his service request. The official's next move is to ask if he has only one application for checking (line 04). This question is repeated again in line 06, after the service seeker's indication of

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[8] Extract taken from transcript OFC03_02.doc.

non-understanding.[9] EN1 provides a non-verbal response in line 07. Lines 08 and 09 contain a confirmation check on the part of the official, who tries to ensure mutual understanding. The bureaucrat's insistence is significant. Producing all application forms at the beginning of the encounter is one of the many unwritten procedural rules at this setting. This type of procedural information is not available to immigrants anywhere. It can only be obtained in and through service communication.[10] In addition, it seems to contravene standard practice in service settings, where requests are usually made one at a time. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 8, immigrants' knowledge of "appropriate" norms of interactional conduct is taken for granted, and deviations are severely punished. If many applications are produced by the information seeker, the public official will only take five for checking.[11] The rest will have to be examined some other day. This type of sequence is illustrated by Example 5.4 below.

Example 5.4[12]

```
01    *ENQ:        0.
      %act:        hands copies of several application forms over to B09

02    *B09:        sobran dos -. te quito estos dos?
      %tra:        there are two too many -. do you want these two back?

03 →  *B09:        only five.

04    *ENQ:        okay.

      @Situation:          B09 checks status of applications

05    *B09:        está en trámite.
      %tra:        it's being processed.

06    *ENQ:        0.
      %act:        nods

07    *B09:        trámite.
      %tra:        being processed.

08    *B09:        trámite.
      %tra:        being processed.

09    *B09:        trámite.
```

---

[9] The service seeker's non-understanding may have to do with the unexpected nature of the request. Presumably, he is not aware of the unwritten procedural rule being invoked .

[10] The other alternative source of information is fellow countrymen having previously engaged in face-to-face interaction with officials.

[11] As far as I know, this rule was established not by the institution but by information providers. What the institution did establish was that information seekers could take applications from other immigrants for checking. Towards the end of September 2000, this policy changed. If applications other than the immigrants' own were taken to the office for checking, a document from the applicant authorising it was required. This made the process of obtaining information even more complicated.

[12] Extract taken from transcript OFC06_08.doc.

```
        %tra:    being processed.
10      *B09:    trámite.
        %tra:    being processed.
        @End
```

In line 02, B09 announces that ENQ, the information seeker, has given him too many applications for checking. His move is in Spanish and does not seem to be understood by the information seeker. This is evidenced by his lack of uptake. One may wonder whether the reason is the language employed by the official or the unexpectedness of the turn's content. The official takes it to be a language problem, and utters a new turn in English explaining why he is giving two applications back to the information seeker. This time the immigrant seems to grasp what is going on, as proven by his agreement token "okay" in line 04. The rest of this interaction furnishes evidence for the claim that bureaucrats make no effort to ensure that their talk is understood by immigrants. This claim will be developed in following chapters. It can be seen in lines 05 to 10 that ENQ's requests for information are responded to by means of the single word *trámite* (being processed). The official's lack of contextualising information is outstanding in this sequential context. The immigrant's linguistic skills in Spanish are uncertain, since he did not react to the official's turn in line 02. The same official interpreted the immigrant's lack of response as a linguistic problem and provided a translation. Yet no translation or explanation is attempted in the service compliance turn, which, nevertheless, accomplishes the main goal of the exchange, that is, to provide information to immigrants.

In the next stage after the "gather all applications" activity, the official examines the forms given to him/her. The objective is to find out when applications were entered. This is the "sort out applications" stage. This activity is undertaken because it takes up to a month for the institution to process newly entered applications (creation of a new file and preliminary assessment). If all the applications handed over for checking were entered long enough before to have been processed, no verbal sequence is produced. Information providers know approximately until which date applications have been processed by their backstage colleagues. This information is also usually available to the doorpeople *(ordenanzas)*

in charge of sorting out the queues. They try to advise enquirers whether it is worthwhile for them to wait. If, for instance, all applications a given information seeker has for checking have still not been entered into the institution's database, s/he may want to leave. However, door staff do not seem to follow any systematic procedure for passing this information on to immigrants. Example 5.5 below illustrates this phenomenon.

Example 5.5[13]

[...]

| 01 → | *POR: | está hasta el ha: [/] hasta el diez de mayo me parece no? |
| | %tra: | it's available until the: [/] until May tenth I think right? |

[...]

| 02 | *B09: | hasta el cuatro de mayo sólo. |
| | %tra: | only until May fourth. |

| 03 | *POR: | entonces tengo que echar a muchos fuera. |
| | %tra: | then I have to throw many out. |

[...]

04 →	*B11:	<veintidós de mayo> [<1] no está no hay no está el veintidós de mayo <#> [<2]
05		cinco de mayo no está -. *tindríem que dir-li que el maig no hi és <que* xxx *que no*
06		*fagin cua>* [>3].
	%tra:	May twenty second is not available there is May twenty second is not available may fifth is not available –. we should tell them that May is not available so that they don't waste their time queuing up.

[...]

07	*B11:	*però que no fagin cua pobres si és del mes de maig* -! # *si no hi és per què fan*
08		*la* [//] *per què tenen que fer cua* !
	%tra:	but they should not be queueing up poor things if their applications are from May -! if their applications have not been processed yet, what do they have to queue up for?

[...]

This extract is part of an interaction recorded around 11:30 a.m. As can be seen in line 01, POR, the doorperson, still seems to have doubts as to what to tell immigrants. She thinks information on all applications submitted until 10 May 2000 is available (line 01). She is corrected by one of the officials (line 02). He states that applications submitted from 4 to 10 May 2000 are yet to be processed. POR has been misinforming immigrants for a significant part of the morning. In line 03, she is confronted with the practical consequences of her actions: she has to ask many information seekers to leave, since there is no point in their waiting if no information is available. Another official, in this case B11, complains a few turns

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[13] Extract taken from transcript OFC02_04.doc.

later that more accurate information ought to be provided to information seekers (lines 04 to 07).

If among the applications handed over for checking, one or several are found which have still not been entered into the computer, they are given back to the information seeker. This step may require some explaining on the part of the official, as immigrants tend to be unaware of the lapse of time existing between the submission of applications and their bureaucratic processing. In the extract below (Example 5.6), B09 sorts out the application forms he is provided (lines 05-06). This example is particularly illustrative because, quite exceptionally, the information provider produces explanatory talk to facilitate the enquirer's understanding of what is going on. In line 10, after a question-answer sequence motivated by the information seeker's incomplete understanding of the official's previous turn, the official ventures a prediction as to when details on the enquirer's applications will be available for consultation.

Example 5.6[14]

01	*ENQ:	0.
	%act:	hands document over to B09.
02	*B09:	sólo uno?
	%tra:	only one
03	*ENQ:	tres más.
	%tra:	three more.
04	*B09:	dámelos.
	%tra:	give them to me.
[...]		
05 →	*B09:	diecinueve de mayo todavía no está -. once de mayo todavía no está -. quince
06		de mayo todavía no está -. sólo tenemos hasta el diez de mayo.
	%act:	gives application forms back to ENQ
	%tra:	May nineteenth is not available yet -. May eleventh is not available yet -. May fifteenth is not available yet -. information is only available until May tenth.
07	*ENQ:	cuánta mayo?
	%tra:	how many May?
08	*B09:	diez.
	%tra:	tenth.
09	*ENQ:	diez?
	%tra:	tenth?
10 →	*B09:	hoy diez -. la semana que viene seguramente estará pero hoy no.
	%tra:	today tenth -. next week it'll probably be available but not today.

---

[14] Extract taken from transcript OFC05_05.doc.

```
11      *ENQ:     vale.
        %tra:     okay.
[...]
```

The following step after the "sorting out of applications" sequence is not verbally realised. It is a preparatory stage for the official to be able to comply with the service request. It consists in entering the name and surname of each applicant into the computer. If the data entered is correct, the applicant's electronic file will be shown on the computer screen. Each new file that is created is allocated a number. Usually, the service provider writes down this file identification number on the application the first time it is taken to the office for checking. The file number and not the applicant's name and surname will be employed on subsequent searches. When the bureaucratic information on a specific application is available to the official s/he is ready to comply with the service seeker's information request. This verbal sequence is referred to in Figure 5.1 as the "service compliance". As in the case of the service request, the service compliance activity may contain one or several non-understanding sequences, comprehension checks, language negotiation episodes and reformulations. Simultaneous to the provision of information details, the immigration official writes the date and the information provided at the top of each application form in an shortened manner. By means of this specific practice, bureaucrats manage to exert a high degree of social control over their interlocutors' behaviour (see Chapter 8 for a detailed analysis). Since they know on what date a given application was checked for the last time, they reprimand enquirers severely if they do not wait for the prescribed period of time before having their applications checked again. This is precisely what happens in the excerpt below. The backstage comments addressed to me in lines 01 and 02 throw light on the official's motivations for employing a loud tone of voice in addressing his interlocutor, namely to admonish him for his "inappropriate" behaviour.

Example 5.7[15]

```
01      *B09:     este és del cinc de maig -. va vindre el dia vint i dos -, li vam dir que s'esperés tres
02                semanes -, i el vint i vuit torna a estar aquí.
        %add:     RES
```

---

[15] Extract taken from transcript OFC04_03.doc.

	%tra:	this one is from may fifth -. he came on the twenty second -. we told him to wait for three more weeks -. and on the twenty eighth he is back here again.
03 →	*B09:	en trámite -. <**three more weeks** -. **three weeks** -. **three** -. **no one** -.
04		**no two** -. <**three**> [>]> [=!shouting].
	%tra:	being processed -. <three more weeks -. three weeks -. three -. no one -. no two -. <three> [>]> [=!shouting].

Hussain, the information seeker interviewed in detail for this study, was very aware that this enquirer practice was a constant source of anger for officials. In the extract below, he recounts his own way of proceeding and contrasts it to that of other immigrant information seekers. He presents himself as a knowledgeable participant who knows how to act appropriately in this setting.

Example 5.8[16]

[...]

01	*RES:	o sea las veces que has ido allí a la oficina uh cómo cómo explicarías la experiencia
02		de ir allí -. o sea es un es algo difícil es difícil hablar con esa gente -, es fácil o sea +...
	%tra:	in other words when you've been to the office uh how would you explain your experience -. is it something difficult is it difficult talking to those people -, it's easy or +...
03	*HUS:	no es [///] para mí no es difícil porque yo como sabía un poquito a mí me dicen una
04		vez cuando yo me fue me dicen oye # trámite está bien -. me vienes dentro de un
05		mes -. yo no vayas dentro de un mes -. yo me vayas un mes y medio -. por ejemplo
06 →		yo siempre llegas tarde no pierdes el tiempo.
	%tra:	it's not [//] for me it's not difficult because since I knew a little bit they told me once when I went they told me # listen being processed it's okay -. you come back in a month's time .- I did not go after a month -. I went after a month and a half -. for example I always arrive late I don't waste my time.
07	*RES:	[=! laughs].
08 →	*HUS:	porque yo sí sabes como gente vayas cada semana cada quince días -, molestan
09		así -. por ejemplo una persona te dice de oficina -,.
	%tra:	because I do know like people who go every week every fifteen days -, they annoy them -. for example somebody from the office says to you-,.
10	*RES:	sí.
	%tra:	yes.
11	*HUS:	oye tú tienes venir # venir dentro de un mes.
	%tra:	listen you have come back # come back after a month.
12	*RES:	sí.
	%tra:	yes.
13 →	*HUS:	pero tú vayas dentro de una semana qué te dicen otra vez oye vayas otra dentro de
14		un mes por mejor +/.
	%tra:	but you go back after a week, what do they tell you again, listen come back after a month better +/.
15	*RES:	y tú crees que se enfadan si ellos ven que has ido dentro de una semana?
	%tra:	and do you think they get angry if they see that you're back within a week?
16	*HUS:	sí sí.
	%tra:	yes yes.

---

[16] Extract taken from the interview with Hussain, lines 959-978, contained in Appendix C.

17	*RES:	se enfadan.
	%tra:	they get angry.

18	*HUS:	sí enfadan por +/.
	%tra:	yes get angry for +/.

19	*RES:	pues es mejor hacer <lo que te dicen> [>].
	%tra:	so it's better to do <what they say> [>].

20	*HUS:	<es mejor si haces lo que te dicen> [<].
	%tra:	<it's better if you do what they say> [<].

21 →	*HUS:	oye esperamos un poco días más -. porque si tú no vayas tú no pierdes -. ## por
22		ejemplo tus papeles si salen -, sale este mes el próximo mes -, cuando tú vayas ellos
23		ya te dicen oye ya tal día está concedido -. ya sabes.
	%tra:	listen let's wait some more days -. because if you don't go you don't lose -. ## for example your papers are granted -. they are granted this month the following month -, when you go they tell you listen on that day [the permit] will be granted -. you already know.

24	*RES:	sí sí.
	%tra:	yes yes.

25 →	*HUS:	pues no hace falta que vayas cada semana -. que si vayas pero bastantes veces
26		no sale papeles -. no es seguro que si vayas muchísimas veces te dan el papeles.
	%tra:	then there is no need for you to go every week -. if you go many times you won't get your papers -. it's not certain that if you go very many times you'll get your papers.

27	*RES:	ah no!
	%tra:	yeah no!

28	*HUS:	porque gentes piensas -,.
	%tra:	because people think -,.

29	*RES:	sí.
	%tra:	yes.

30 →	*HUS:	como hay muchas gentes que no saben -. gente piensan cuando vayas cada
31		días -, cada semanas -, ellos molestan él dicen él pobre viene cada semana puede
32		ser -. porque ellos no saben -. que como sale éstas quién hace concedido quién hace
33		denegados ellos no saben.
	%tra:	since there are many people who don't know -. people think if you go every day -, every week -, they annoy [them] he says poor thing he comes every week can be -. because they don't know -. what how [permit] is granted who makes granting who makes rejection they don't know.

34	*RES:	uh huh.
	%tra:	uh huh.

35	*HUS:	bastantes -. ahora cuando como una persona si sabe -, él no vayas bastantes él
36		va dice vale ya va dentro de un mes quince días.
	%tra:	many -. now when somebody knows -. he does not go many [times] he goes he says okay then he goes back after a month or fifteen days.

[...]

Upon being asked whether he found communication with immigration officials a difficult experience (lines 1-2), Hussain responds that he did not, because he knew "a little bit". It is significant that he describes what he refers to as his "little" knowledge in behavioural rather than linguistic terms. That is to say, for him, knowing "a little" means knowing how bureaucracy works and how the procedure is organised, rather than just being able to communicate linguistically with his interlocutors. He seems to attach more importance to procedural knowledge than to

linguistic skills. In this, he shows he is a truly "knowledgeable" service seeker. Only by understanding how the procedure works can service seekers make full sense of bureaucrats' compliance moves. Hussain knows how to behave: there is no need for him to inquire about the status of his application too many times; once is actually enough (lines 35 and 36). He even claims that it is always better to wait longer than advised (line 06). This is what he does in order "not to waste his time". Here we can observe how he constructs himself in a particular way. He categorises himself as a busy individual who cannot afford to queue up for hours on end –as many others do– unless it is absolutely necessary.[17] He knows what to do because he understands how the institution works. He is aware that there are eligibility criteria that have to be met, and that permits will not be granted just because applicants go to the office every day (lines 25 and 26). Besides, he shows a clear understanding of the decision making process. Frontstage officials do not make decisions on client applications (lines 32 to 33). It is, therefore, no use trying appeal to their sense of pity (lines 30 to 33).

Bureaucrats are not always successful in their attempts to control information seekers' behaviour. Social processes are never completely predetermined. The creativity of social actors and their potential for subverting the established order is an element that researchers of social life need to take into account. As B09 explains in the following fragment, information seekers make copies of their stamped application forms before having them checked for the first time, that is, without the file number. This way they can have them checked as many times as they want, and they can confront officials if they are given contradictory details (see lines 04-05).

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[17] It is interesting to note that this feature, namely being a "busy person", is also resorted to by another immigrant in the corpus to construct a self-identity which distinguishes him from the rest of service seekers. In the case of Hussain, we have seen how he portrays himself as a knowledgeable person who has a clear understanding of how Spanish institutions work. We have also shown how he contrasts his own behaviour to that of other less knowledgeable service seekers. These two characteristics, that is being busy and understanding the workings of public institutions, are conflated to construct a particular identity for himself, namely as somebody who is settled in the country, knows how its institutions work, and has plenty of other things to do. In this, he is probably trying to detach himself from the typical image of the helpless foreigner who wanders about because s/he has nothing else to do and queues up outside the immigration office driven by groundless rumours. Interestingly, in the other case mentioned, the service seeker, who was very fluent in Spanish, provided the same "busy" categorisation of himself alongside attempts to make small talk with the office employees and the occasional use of Catalan. Given the undoubtedly symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1992) that competence in this language has in the setting investigated, where it functions as the *insider* code, we can state that the "busy" feature works to help construct the foreigner identity we have sketched out above.

Example 5.9[18]

[...]

01 →	*B09:	*se fan fotocòpies sense lo número i quan els ho posem lo número te porten la que*
02		*no té el número no sé per què te'l fan tornar a buscar.*
	%add:	RES
	%tra:	they make photopies [of the application] without the number and then when we write down the number they bring the one that does not have the number I don't know why and they make you check it again.

03	*B10:	*això és una cabronada !*
	%tra:	this is a dirty trick!

04 →	*B09:	*ja m'ho han fet vàrios i després els hi dius lo número i et treuen l'altre si però si este*
05		*dia ja em vas dir això i dius # i per què no m'ho deies -? se ho guarden !*
	%tra:	several of them have played it on me then you tell them the number and they take out the other one and say but the other day you told me that and you go # well why didn't you tell me -? -. they keep it for themselves!

[...]

After the service compliance turn, the information seeker may decide that s/he is satisfied with the information s/he has been furnished, or else that s/he wants more specific details. S/he may then initiate a "request further information" activity. The most frequent type of question has to do with how to relate current details with what information seekers were told on previous occasions. The objective is to understand whether their applications are making progress or not. One prototypical case is that of applicants who try to comprehend how officials' current response *en trámite* (being processed) relates to previous information, according to which the documentary evidence furnished by the immigrant to prove arrival in Spain by 1 June 1999 had not been accepted.

After the "request further information" activity, information seekers may initiate a "contest information provided" sequence. This activity is independent of the previous one. They may co-occur but not necessarily. A contesting sequence may take place right after the official's compliance turn. Service seekers employ a variety of strategies to voice their complaints. They are presented in detail in Chapter 7. Usually, they refer to the long period of time that has elapsed since the submission of applications. Alternatively, they may challenge the administrative procedure by exposing its inconsistencies. A common resource is for information seekers to mention that applications entered on the same day have already been granted while theirs are still pending a final decision. A different strategy may

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[18] Extract taken from transcript OFC02_03.doc.

consist in making a personal appeal by underscoring the importance of being given a work permit as soon as possible. Example 5.10 below illustrates the different activities that it is possible to find within the service compliance episode.

Example 5.10[19]

01	*B09:	a ver él dos y tú tres.
	%tra:	let's see he's got two and you've got three.
02	*B09:	ya está -? no tenéis más?
	%tra:	is that all -? don't you have any more?
03	*EN1:	no no ya está.
	%tra:	no no that's all.
	@Situation:	B09 checks state of applications in computer
04 →	*B09:	en trámite tiene que <esperar tres semanas más> [>].
	%tra:	it's being processed you have to wait three more weeks.
[...]		
05 →	*EN1:	vale quiero preguntar un [/] una cosa # está todo bien o:: <falta> [>] +...
	%tra:	okay I want to ask so [/] something # is everything alright or is there anything missing?
06	*B09:	<no se sabe> [<] cuando
07		está en trámite quiere decir que están mirando si los papeles están bien # y todavía
08		no se sabe si falta o no falta.
	%tra:	<it's not known> [<] being processed means that they are seeing if the papers are okay # and it is yet not known whether something is missing or not.
09	*EN1:	señor [?] no no no falta nada no?
	%tra:	sir [?] nothing nothing is missing right?
10	*B09:	no se sabe.
	%tra:	it is not known.
11	*EN1:	<u>ah</u>!
	%tra:	oh!
[...]		
	@Situation:	B09 continues checking applications
12	*B09:	eh: trámite <tres semanitas> [>].
	%tra:	uh: in process <three weeks> [>].
13	*EN1:	<también igual> [<]?
	%tra:	<same as well> [<]?
14 →	*EN1:	uh discúlpeme señor # uh # éste ya pasó cuatro mes xxx no tengo xxx.
	%tra:	uh sorry sir # uh # four months elapsed for this one xxx I don't have xxx.
15	*B09:	el día treinta y treinta y uno de marzo vino muchí::sima gente y van muy lentos.
	%tra:	on March thirtieth and thirty first very many people came and applications are being processed slowly.
16	*EN1:	por qué?
	%tra:	why?
17	*B09:	+^ no lo sé -. no lo sé -. en principio está en trámite.
	%tra:	+^ I don't know -. I don't know -. in principle it's being processed.
18 →	*EN1:	y otra perso(n)a # y de paso once de abril o siete de abril # ya ha recibido de
19		una carta de residencia no sé y treinta y uno de marzo <#> [>] no tengo ayudar.

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[19] Extract taken from transcript OFC08_08.doc.

	%tra:	and somebody else # who gave application on April eleventh or seventh # has already received a residence card I don't know and March thirty first <#> [>] I don't have any help.
20	*B09:	<ya> [<].
	%tra:	<yes> [<].
21	*B09:	el treinta y el treinta y uno de marzo van muy lentos.
	%tra:	those entered on March thirtieth and thirty first are being processed very slowly.
22	*EN1:	vale muchas gracias señor.
	%tra:	okay thank you very much sir.
23	*B09:	de nada.
	%tra:	you're welcome.

The example begins with the "gather all applications" activity. The "sort out applications" activity is likely to have been accomplished non-verbally. There are no traces of it in the encounter. The official searches the institution's database for information and utters the service compliance turn in line 04. In line 05, EN1 asks for further details.[20] He is interested in knowing whether the official's previous response implies that everything is fine with his application. The official reply is contained in lines 06 to 08. This turn is followed by a new question by EN1 on the same topic. He wants a confirmation that no more documents are needed. EN1 has handed over several applications for checking. In all cases, he is told that the applications are in *trámite* (being processed) and that he needs to wait for three more weeks. After the official's compliance with the fourth request in line 12, the information seeker utters what could be interpreted as an indirect complaint. ("*también igual*" [same as well]). In line 14, he formulates his grievance more clearly. He resorts to a time adverbial ("*cuatro mes*" [four months]) to convey his displeasure with the situation. The bureaucrat, B09, responds by explaining the reasons why it is taking so long to process his application. Many applications were entered on the same day as his, that is, on 31 March. It is taking a long time to process them. EN1 does not seem satisfied with B09's response. He does not understand how the administrative processing of applications is organised (line 16). This lack of understanding becomes more apparent in the light of his ensuing talk (lines 18 and 19). He states that somebody he knows, who entered his application in April, has

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[20] A few intervening turns occur between the compliance and the service seeker's request for further information. They have been omitted here because they involve another official (B11), who asks whether the service seekers own a mobile phone that has just been found on the counter.

already been granted the permit.[21] At end of line 19, the service seeker makes a shy personal appeal. The official sticks to his institutional role and simply repeats the content of his previous turn. Finally, when interactants wish to bring their service interchange to an end, a closing sequence is produced. In the example above, this sequence occurs in lines 22 to 23. Its function is to close the service encounter by acknowledging the service provided and thanking the server for it. A goodbye episode may or may not be present. As a rule, the "closing" and "goodbye" episodes are initiated by the service seekers, as it is up to them to decide whether they are satisfied with the outcome of the encounter "for all practical purposes". In some cases of interactional conflict, information providers are seen to bring the exchange to an end in a brusque manner (see Example 5.11 below).

Example 5.11[22]

[...]

01	*B09:	uhm `maintenant` #0_1 esto `quel` número?
	%tra:	uhm now #0_1 this which number?
02	*B09:	esto el número del # ordenador.
	%tra:	this the number of the # computer.
03	*EN1:	ah ordenador #0_3 vale [=! soft].
	%tra:	ah computer #0_3 okay [=! soft].
04 →	*EN2:	entonces yo amigo.
	%tra:	and now I'm friend.
05	*B09:	<amigo> [=! shouting] -? te he dicho uno -? uno -? uno sólo -? <nadie más> [>1] -?
06		no amigo? no nadie? no -. sólo uno -. pues sólo <uno> [>2] -. adiós.
	%tra:	<friend> [=! shouting] -? I've said one -? one -? only one -? <nobody else> [>1] -? no friend? no nobody? no -. only one -. then only <one> [>2] -. goodbye.
07	*EN2:	<yo amigo> [<1].
	%tra:	<me friend> [<1].
08	*EN2:	<vale> [<2].
	%tra:	<okay> [<2].

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[21] This inconsistent procedure for processing applications has to be traced back to the way in which work is distributed between the two work shifts. It was explained in Chapter 4 that the morning shift is initially put in charge of applications entered from 21 to 31 March, while the afternoon shift takes care of applications entered from 1 to 15 April. The second group of applications is processed more quickly, as many more applications were entered during the first ten days than afterwards. This is a clear sign of the malfunctioning of the institution. The bureaucrat needs to preserve the institution's image of rationality. This is why he cannot provide a reasonable explanation to the information seeker. It is in the light of these institutional pressures that his talk in line 21 has to be understood. This is a clear example of the complex ways in which the institutional order is entangled in the production of the interactional order, and how it sets limits to bureaucrats' behaviour. A detailed account of officials "coping" strategies is provided in Chapter 7.

[22] Extract taken from transcript OFC01_03.doc.

In line 4, one of the enquirers tries to have his application checked. The institutional representative gets annoyed because it seems that, in the "gather all applications" stage, the enquirers stated that they only wanted to have one application checked. B09 ends his turn in lines 05 and 06 with the lexical item "*adiós*" (goodbye), making it clear that, for him, the interaction is over. This is one example of the tight control bureaucrats exert over their interlocutor's interactional behaviour. A detailed analysis of this phenomenon will be presented in Chapter 8.

Bureaucratic procedure and decision making process

The goal of this section is to describe the ways in which the bureaucratic procedure to handle immigrants' applications for legalisation is organised. The different stages applications go through are described in detail. Their overall function in the decision making process is highlighted. The different actors involved in each administrative stage are also presented. Background information on the bureaucratic context framing the service interactions examined is essential to make sense of them, and capture the significance of participants' interactional contributions, especially those of the institutional representatives. From a critical perspective, it is important to pin down what institutional participants know. It is in the light of this insider information that a critical assessment of their information provision practices can be undertaken.

Reception of applications

Immigrant affairs are the sole responsibility of the Spanish national government. On a political level, only the Spanish national Parliament is constitutionally empowered to pass laws regulating the conditions of entry and residency of foreign citizens in Spain. On a bureaucratic level, paperwork related to foreign residency is handled by immigration offices, the *oficinas de extranjeros*. In the case of the exceptional legalisation campaign of 2000, an agreement was reached between the different public administrations in Spain (local, autonomous and national) to facilitate the

submission of applications.[23] Immigrants are allowed to submit their applications at a variety of public offices. The main requirement is that the office in question has an official registry, where records are regularly kept of all documents entered. The civil servant working as a registrar stamps a copy of whatever letter, official request or application is filed. This stamped copy works as a sort of counterfoil slip *(resguardo)* to prove submission. In their dealings with public administrations, Spanish citizens are always advised to keep a stamped copy of all documents presented. By means of this stamped copy, they are safeguarded against documentary losses. The public institution is legally responsible for all official submissions.

In the case of the legalisation process examined, this stamped copy is essential. Immigrants are requested to provide it every time they wish to enquire about the status of their applications. The information booklet published by the Spanish Immigration Service gives very specific indications as to this requirement:

> **"If presenting the application at the Registry of an Administrative Unit:**
>
> - To request a **duly stamped copy** of the application showing the date, which will be valid as a counterfoil proof of presentation". (Bold in the original, Administración General del Estado 2000:8)

Several public registries are available for submission of applications in the city of Barcelona. These are located at (1) Office C, the office especially set up for the exceptional campaign of legalisation of immigrants; (2) the headquarters of the *Delegación del Gobierno en Cataluña* (State Delegation Office in Catalonia); (3) the *Oficines de Benestar Social* (Social Welfare Offices), run by the Catalan autonomous government; and (4) any post office.[24] All applicants are required to fill in and sign an official form, which has to be accompanied by three copies (see Form #1 in Appendix A). These forms are available in six languages, namely Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, English and French. In addition, immigrants are asked to provide a copy of their valid passport, travel document or registration card, together with

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[23] Whereas applications can be entered at all registries under the administration of regional authorities, this is not the case with town/city councils. Only those with which the Spanish government has reached an agreement are entitled to receive applications.

[24] The procedure employed to send applications through the post office is known as *correo administrativo* (literally, "administrative mail"). This is a type of registered mail. The envelope must be left open for the postal worker to examine the documents. S/he acts as a registrar, stamps one of the copies and gives it to the sender. Only then can the envelope be sealed for sending.

documents showing their arrival in Spain before 1 June 1999.[25] Besides, they are required to provide a copy of any previous work permit applications. This is one of the eligibility conditions to be granted legal residency. All illegal immigrants need to have applied for a work permit application in Spain by 31 March 2000.[26]

Administrative procedure

The description of the bureaucratic procedure undertaken in this section is based on information gathered during fieldwork. The information booklets published by the government do not contain any details on the organisation of the procedure or the decision making process. At the end of this section (page 179), a figure showing the main stages and the actors involved in each stage is provided.

Three months is the minimum amount of time immigrants have to wait before a final decision on their applications is made. In fact, only successful applications are granted at the end of three months. All unsuccessful applicants must wait a minimum of six months before the authorities notify them that their applications have been turned down (this issue will be discussed in detail later in this section). The first step after the reception of applications by the institution is the creation of a new file *(expediente)*. Files are created physically, that is by means of folders where documents are kept, and also electronically, with a new entry in the institution's computerised database. This process does not take place immediately or shortly after immigrants submit applications. It takes three weeks or even a month for applications to be processed. In charge of those tasks are the officials who are referred to in this dissertation as "backstage". The majority are not permanent civil servants. They are employed to take care of the paperwork generated by the exceptional campaign of legalisation of immigrants organised in 2000. For most of

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[25] The travel document and registration card are known in Spanish as *documento de viaje* and *cédula de inscripción* respectively. It was explained in Chapter 4 that these documents are issued to document immigrants who arrive in the EU without any means of personal identification.

[26] This was the list of documents required for 'standard' cases. Of course, depending on the type of applicant, different documents might be necessary. For example, asylum seekers whose applications had been rejected were also eligible for regularisation. In their case, they were asked to present a copy of the official notification of refusal. In the case of relatives of applicants for regularisation or of legal residents, they need to provide a legal document certifying their family relationship *(vínculo de parentesco)*. More details on these issues can be found in the information documents published by the institution. A sample is contained in Appendix A.

them, this is a temporary job. In Chapter 3, the socio-political circumstances surrounding this legalisation campaign were examined. It was shown that the final number of applications submitted exceeded by far the official forecast. While the government had foreseen that some 80,000 applications would be received, the figure actually rose to 250,000. Logically, the number of officials employed to work throughout the campaign was determined by the official forecast. When, at the end of May 2000, it became apparent that the government had clearly underestimated the number of possible applicants, the office's workforce was not enlarged. As will be seen later, this scarcity of human resources is consequential for the kind of information practices officials implement.

After a new file has been created, officials examine all the documents provided by applicants. If, in their view, everything is correct, the application moves forward. Officials' positive evaluation of the application is recorded in the immigrants' computerised file as *fase de instrucción* (preparatory phase).[27] Whenever they find that not enough documentation has been provided,[28] or that documentation is faulty,[29] they negatively assess the application. In those cases, applications do not make progress; they get temporarily stuck. This state of affairs receives the official label of *propuesta denegatoria* (proposal for rejection) or *F83 (fase ochenta y tres* [phase eighty three]).

At the beginning of this section it was pointed out that waiting time for notification of outcome was longer for unsuccessful than for successful applications. In the paragraph above it was mentioned that applications which are evaluated negatively get stuck in the *propuesta denegatoria* stage. Applications in the province of Barcelona were not officially rejected until September 2000, six months after the beginning of the legalisation procedure. As is shown in Table 3.13 (p.95), 37,561 applications were in *trámite* (being processed) in the province of Barcelona on 31 July 2000, and no applications had been rejected. This amounts to 78% of the

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[27] The word *instrucción* comes from the judicial domain, more specifically from the expression "*instruir una causa*", to investigate a case.

[28] As would be the case if the application for a work permit by 31 March 2000 had not been enclosed.

[29] There are two reasons for this: firstly, that the applicant has entered forged documents, and secondly, that the type of documentary evidence provided is not considered valid according to government regulations.

total number of applications submitted. This long waiting time was allegedly related to the lack of a political decision by State government officials as to the number of immigrants that would "have to" be regularised at the end of the campaign.[30] Bureaucrats' explanations highlight the fact that the government is under pressure by European institutions to accept a minimum number of foreigners. If that quota is not reached, rejected applications will finally have to be accepted.[31] In the excerpt below, B09, one of the officials, explains the situation in the following terms:

Example 5.12[32]

[...]

01 →	*B09:	xxx *Espanya està obligada per la Comunitat Europea a legalitzar-ne cent i pico mil no*
02		*sé quants llavons los que tenen tots los papers són molt poquets.*
	%tra:	xxx Spain is forced by the European Community to legalise more than a hundred thousand or something like that and the ones that are eligible are very few.

03	*RES:	xxx.

04 →	*B09:	*sí la comunitat europea ha obligat a Espanya a legalitzar-ne no sé quants.*
	%tra:	yes the European Community has obliged Spain to legalise I don't know how many.

05	*RES:	*un mínim?*
	%tra:	a minimum?

06	*B09:	*crec que sí.*
	%tra:	I think so.

07	*RES:	anda::!
	%tra:	what a surprise!

08 →	*B09:	*però això és un acord intern de la Comunitat Europea perquè estava calculat que si*
09		*no es legalitzen tots estos després l'economia no funcionarà el 2026* [?].
	%tra:	but this is an internal agreement of the European Community because it was foreseen that if these are not made legal the economy will not work in 2026 [?].

10	*RES:	*però això no ha sortit enlloc no* ?
	%tra:	but this has not been published anywhere, has it?

11	*B09:	*no això és que això:: ho sap poca gent.*
	%tra:	no because very few people know about this.

12	*B09:	*total que ara natros sabem que no sorten ni borratxos els que tinguin els papers.*
	%tra:	in short by a long shot we know now that the number of eligible applicants does not reach that quota.

13	*RES:	<u>ja</u>.
	%tra:	I see.

14 →	*B09:	*tots estan en propuesta denegatoria i estem esperant al trenta u de juliol a veure*
15		*quants han sortit bé i llavons sabrem falten tants pues allavons tots els que*

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[30] If the figures presented in Table 3.14 (p. 96) are taken into account, only 30.4% of the applications submitted in the province of Madrid were being processed at the end of July 2000. The question arises as to why the situation in Barcelona was different from Madrid. The data shows that the bulk of applications being processed at the end of July 2000 in Barcelona was made up of applications which would later be rejected (93.1%).

[31] This is in fact what happened during 2001. In Chapter 3, it was pointed out that the applications rejected because arrival before 1 June 2000 could not be demonstrated were finally accepted.

[32] Extract taken from tape OFFICE(C)_04.

16		*tinguin que comenci el nom per a pues també xxx i direm hasta arribar als que*
17		*tenim que arribar.*
	%tra:	they have all been negatively evaluated and we are waiting to see how many [permits] are granted by July thirty first to know how many more we need then those [applicants] whose name begins with an "A" we'll also take and we'll continue till we reach the figure we have to reach.

[...]

18 →	*B09:	+^ *la* www *no en tenia ni idea al principi i fa cosa d'un mes li van dir a*
19		*ella algo així i llavons va dir un dia no si al final els agafarem a tots no sé què*
20		*així -. no però vamos encara no se sap.*
	%com:	name of office manager
	%tra:	+^ www didn't have a clue at the beginning. About a month ago she was told and then one day she said eventually we'll take all of them, but the truth is we don't know yet.

[...]

According to the bureaucrat's account, the manager had not been aware of the political circumstances framing their work until recently. This example sheds light on the ways in which the socio-political order impinges on both the institutional and the interactional levels. Public institutions follow government regulations. The state exercises power through the work of its civil servants. At the site analysed, certain eligibility conditions are established. Applicants must demonstrate that they fulfil them. In a bureaucratic system, characterised by its rationality, if eligibility conditions are not met, applications must be rejected. However, this does not happen at the site examined. The stagnation of applications discredits the institution. It also has straining consequences for the provision of information, as will be presented later.

The official requirements to prove uninterrupted residence in the country from 1 June 1999 are worth examining. Only certificates issued by public institutions are considered valid documentary evidence. The only exceptions are large "bureaucratised" corporations, like banks. In those cases, an individual having a savings book in his/her name is able to certify that s/he was in Spain at the time the bank account was opened (physical presence at the time of opening is a requirement). Among the remaining valid documents are official certificates of registration with the local town/neighbourhood council *(certificado de empadronamiento),* counterfoil slips from the post office, police entry stamps on passport, and any document issued by the police or by a medical practicioner working for the public health system provided it has the applicant's name on it.

Once the first stage in the selection of applications is completed, those that have received a favourable assessment are passed on to the police department. Police officers' task is to make sure that no mistakes have been made by immigration bureaucrats, that is, essentially to confirm that the documentary evidence provided by immigrants is "in order", and that the documents provided have not been forged. It must be noted that applications are double-checked only after an initial positive evaluation by immigration officials. Applicants whose request for legalisation is rejected straightaway do not get a second chance. This practice reveals a particular ideological conceptualisation of the social world. The institution needs to be safeguarded against immigrants' cheating practices, but no need is seen to safeguard immigrants' interests against institutional mistakes.[33] This practice seems to be common currency in institutional settings. As Sarangi and Slembrouck claim (1996:48), suspicion provides the basis for institutions' construals of client identity.

At the end of this stage, and provided everything is found to be in order, applications are classified into a new bureaucratic category, namely *propuesta de concesión* (proposal for approval). A different police department then takes over. Its role is to give applicants a *NIE. NIE* stands for *Número de Identificación de Extranjeros* (Foreigner Identification Number), and it is the "foreigner" counterpart to the *NIF/DNI*, the ID number which all Spanish nationals have. This number is a necessary requirement for many administrative procedures in Spain. A second major task at this stage is to check applicants' criminal records. Unless records are clean, the permit will not be granted.[34] Example 5.13 below illustrates how the administrative procedure for processing applications, described here, may get seriously delayed if there is the slightest suspicion the applicant has been involved in

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[33] I am sure there are informal channels of communication between individual officials encountering difficulties sorting out files and police officers. Yet it is revealing that the officially established procedure for handling applications does not contemplate the possibility of institutional mistakes. This is particularly worrying if we take into account that it is not experienced civil servants who handle applications but workers on a temporary contract.

[34] This requirement excludes, of course, any criminal offences related to the applicant's illegal situation in the country. For instance, many immigrants have *órdenes de expulsión* (deportation orders) in their police records as a result of an unsuccessful work permit application process. Those *órdenes* have to be repealed before the application can make progress. This takes a particularly long time when the *órdenes* are issued in a province different from the province where the application is being processed. In our technological times, these enforced delays remind us of the backwardness of certain public institutions.

criminal activities. This is the case even when the information seeker, as in 5.13, was found not-guilty of criminal charges.

Example 5.13[35]

01	*B10:	a ti al final con un poco de suerte te lo van a dar lo que te van a hacer sudar -.
02		te vas a tener que esperar tela tela y tela.
	%tra:	with a bit of luck they'll give it to you, but they're going to make you sweat -. you will have to wait and wait and wait.

[...]

03	*ENQ:	me peleé con uno éste dice +...
	%tra:	I fought with someone this says

| 04	*B10:	a mí me da lo mismo lo que hicieras como si le pegases xxx pero lo que pone en tus
05		papeles es robo con intimidación y entonces eso se lo tienen que mirar bastante -.
06		yo creo que al final te lo van a dar pero te van a hacer esperar tela.
	%tra:	I don't care what you did even if you hit him xxx but what it says in your documents is armed robbery and they have to look at this carefully -. I think in the end they'll give it to you but they'll make you wait and wait.

At the end of this stage, if everything is found to be in order, the application for legalisation is officially accepted. The official category appearing on the officials' computer screens is *permiso concedido*, literally "granted permit". The application then goes back to the immigration office, where backstage officials are in charge of writing a letter of acceptance which is sent to the applicant's address. This new administrative step is recorded in the computer as *notificación de permiso concedido* (notification of granted permit). By means of the letter mentioned before, applicants are officially notified that their application has been successful. They are also requested to go back to the office on a specific date so that their fingerprints can be taken. This is a necessary step before the permit can be issued. Finally, once immigrants' fingerprints have been taken, the administrative status of their application becomes *citación de entrega de tarjeta* (request to collect card).

Once a permit has been granted, it takes approximately two months before immigrants can pick up their cards from the office. For employment purposes, immigrants can use the official letter of acceptance to prove legal residency. Since at least three weeks elapse from the moment the permit is granted until the official letter is sent out, a provisional letter is normally issued. This letter is a standard form

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[35] Extract taken from tape OFFICE(C)_03.

which is filled out by officials upon request. It contains the immigrant's name and NIE. The institutional name for it is *informe laboral,* literally "work report". Bureaucrats normally refer to it as *informe.* With this provisional *informe*, immigrants can legally work in Spain. Figure 5.2 below shows the ordering of the different administrative stages explained in this section, together with the institutional labels used to refer to them, and the groups of actors involved.

Figure 5.2   Administrative procedure
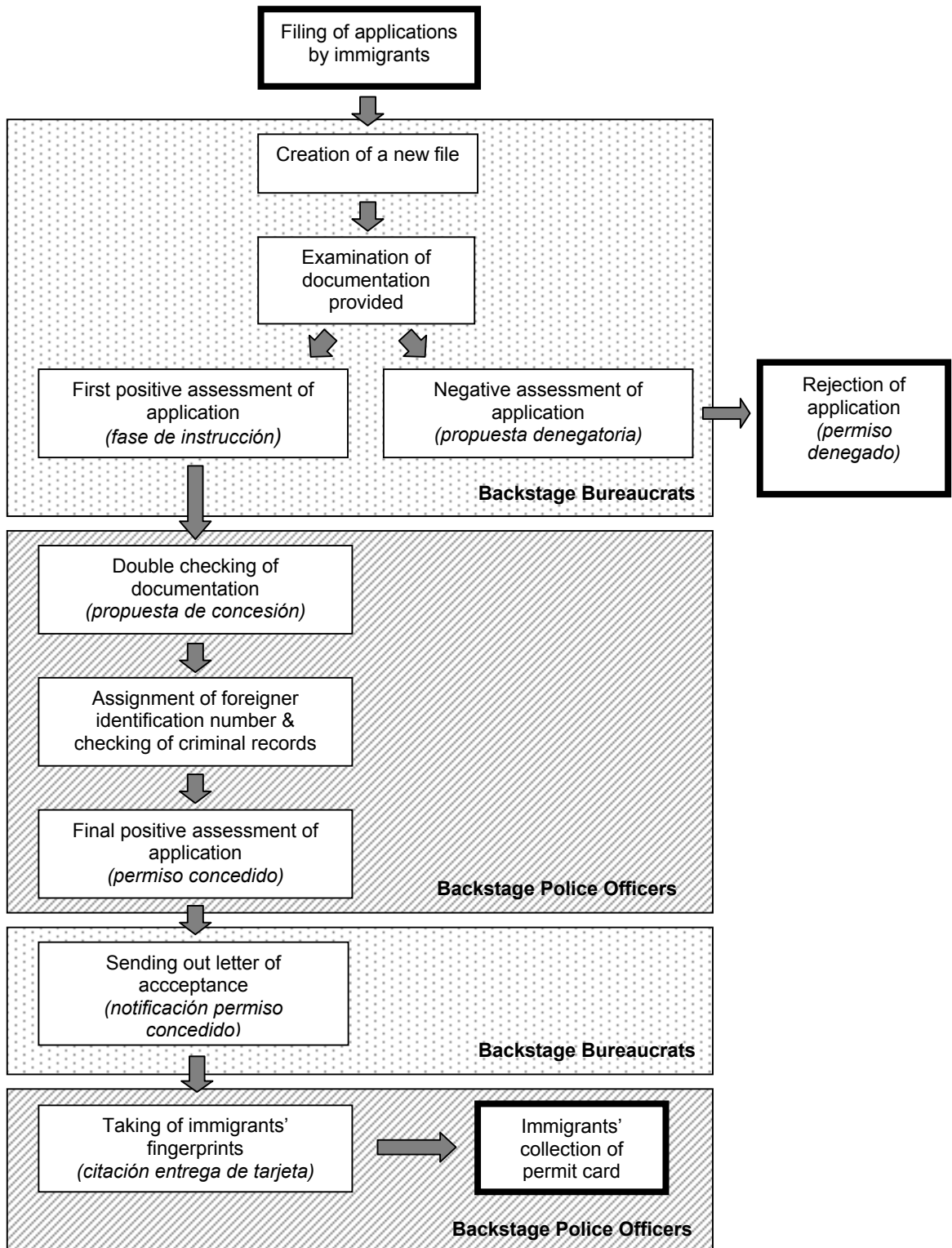
Bureaucrats' information providing practices

In the previous section, an account was provided of the different administrative stages making up the bureaucratic procedure for legalisation. The official label for each stage has been specified. The goal of this section is to present the ways in which bureaucrats interpret the insider information available to them and convey it to immigrants. Bureaucrats' linguistic practices are highly routinised. Correspondences between the official stage applications are at, and the ways in which that information is represented discursively can easily be established. This is the objective of this section. A critical analysis of bureaucrats' information providing practices is carried out in Chapter 6. A defining characteristic of the interactions examined is that public officials hardly ever use institutional terms to convey information on applications. They use a "parallel" set of terms instead.

The first bureaucratic step consists in sorting out applications. The goal is to separate applications which fulfil the requirements from those which, for various reasons, are found "faulty". Whenever an application is positively assessed, it is institutionally categorised as being in *fase de instrucción* (preparatory phase). If this first assessment is already negative, a proposal is made for rejection *(propuesta denegatoria).* These two possible administrative situations are referred to by information providers as *en trámite* (being processed) or *(te) faltan papeles* (papers are missing) respectively.[36] In the latter case, the meaning of the expression, as employed by officials, is fairly specialised;[37] it is used to indicate that more documentary evidence is needed to prove arrival in the country by 1 June 1999. Immigrants are informed that their applications are not making progress because their documentation has not been accepted. They are given the chance to submit more documents to strengthen their case.

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[36] In the case of applications which are negatively evaluated because of the lack of appropriate documentary evidence, the explanation contained in the applicant's computerised file states that the applicant *necesita demostrar estancia* (needs to demonstrate residence) in Spain before 1 June 1999. This very phrasing of the situation is never used by the immigration officials investigated. This is in accordance with officials' widespread tendency to reformulate the institution's labelling practices.

[37] If any other document is needed, such as a copy of the passport, a letter requesting it is sent to applicants.

Hardly ever are translations into English –or any other language– of the word *trámite* attempted. The following excerpts (Examples 5.14 and 5.15) illustrate this discursive practice.

Example 5.14[38]

[...]
```
01 →  *B09:    I don't know -. in the computer in trámite # they are looking if the papers
02              are good or don't -,.
```
[...]

Example 5.15[39]

[...]
```
01 →  *B09:    està en trámite.
       %tra:    it's being processed.

02    *AGE:    ah vale no han donat pas cap problema eh ?
       %tra:    oh okay there haven't been any problems then, have there?
```
[...]

Example 5.15 is particularly illustrative. B09 is serving AGE, a lawyer who is trying to get information on the status of her clients' applications. B09 and AGE interact in Catalan, and yet the word *trámite* is uttered in Spanish. Whereas in the case of Example 5.14 it could be argued that the official's code-switching into Spanish is motivated by his limited competence in English, that could hardly account for what happens in Example 5.15. The Catalan word *tràmit*, corresponding to Spanish *trámite,* is not likely to present accessibility difficulties for a regular speaker of Catalan like B09. The use of Spanish seems motivated by B09's linguistic routines, and the situational context. Spanish is the language in which a Spanish state administration office functions.

The expression *(te) faltan papeles* (papers are missing), mentioned before, and sometimes also *faltan pruebas* (proofs are missing) get shortened to the single lexical item *falta* in immigrants' and officials' talk. The word *falta,* initially used as a verb by bureaucrats, undergoes a double process of nominalisation and semantic specialisation. It gets embedded in a variety of sentence types, where the language of interaction may indistinctly be Spanish or English. Its idiosyncratic use, which I only

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[38] Extract taken from transcript OFC07_06.doc.

[39] Extract taken from tape OFFICE(C)_05.

attested in this setting, is illustrated by the following English sentences uttered by immigrants: "any *falta?*" "I don't know who checked it but they tell me that there is *falta*"; "what is the *falta?*". In all these sentences, *falta* functions as a noun. Its meaning is close to "problem". *Falta* functions as a contextualising device. It works to embed the social exchange in a series of interactional events. *Falta* foregrounds a particular type of bureaucrat response in the light of which the ongoing talk must be interpreted. A lengthy discussion of the meanings and functions of this word is provided in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 illustrates the ways in which it is employed in interaction. The use of *falta* is more popular among South Asians than among other ethnic groups. This might be due to the phonetic similarity of *falta* to the English word "fault". The following extract (Example 5.16) provides evidence for it. In line 03, the information seeker utters the word "fault" in a position where *falta* would be a likely choice.

Extract 5.16[40]

[...]
01	*ENQ:	**three weeks**?
02	*B09:	**yes**.
03 →	*ENQ:	<u>uh</u>: **three weeks no fault**?
04	*ENQ:	**<everything is clear>** [>]?
05	*B09:	**<I don't know>** [<].

[...]

North Africans employ *falta* but they also use other words like *probas* or *prufas*, probably derived from Spanish *pruebas*. So widespread is the use of *falta* among South Asians that it gets extended to non-bureaucratic domains. Its meaning is also similar to "problem". I could attest this idiosyncratic use of *falta* in my conversations with Hussain. It can also be observed in the following extract, where the meaning of *falta* in line 05 is close to the adjective "faulty".

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[40] Extract taken from transcript OFC04_10.doc.

Example 5.17[41]

[...]

01	*EN1:	ahora esto ya está señor?
	%tra:	is this now done sir?
02	*B09:	sí.
	%tra:	yes.
03	*EN1:	sí falta.
	%tra:	yes fault.
04	*B09:	qué?
	%tra:	what?
05 →	*EN1:	+^ uh antes uh antes sí falta la número.
	%tra:	+^ uh before uh before yes fault the number.
06 →	*B09:	había un número mal.
	%tra:	there was a wrong number.
07	*EN1:	oh vale!
	%tra:	oh okay.

[...]

Officials take up immigrants' peculiar use of *falta*, as attested by the following utterances: "*al principio salía falta, ahora no sale en el ordenador si falta*" (at the beginning "*falta*" came out, now it doesn't come out if anything is missing); "*no sé si falta, en trámite no se sabe si falta o no*" (I don't know if anything is missing, "en trámite" one doesn't know if anything is missing or not). In these two utterances, *falta* is used both as a noun and as a verb. As a verb, it is translated into English as "be missing". As a noun, the uses of *falta* shown here are not standard in Spanish. When *falta* gets embedded in bureaucrats' productions, it can be interpreted as some kind of "foreigner talk" employed to facilitate communication with immigrants. Information providers' uses of *falta* as a verb are also noteworthy. In the two sentences presented above, *falta* functions as an intransitive verb, while in standard Spanish *falta* is a transitive verb requiring a direct object complement.

The most relevant element to be pointed out in relation to bureaucrats' uses of *falta* is the extent to which they are aware of immigrants' understanding of it. Immigrants never use it as a verb, only as a noun. In Spanish, verbal uses of *falta* may occur in temporal expressions like "*faltan dos semanas*" (there are two more weeks to go). In those contexts, the meaning of *falta* has nothing to do with "problem". This creates confusion, and complicates information seekers' sense

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[41] Extract taken from transcript OFC07_05.doc.

making processes. The extent to which bureaucrats are aware of the potential for misunderstanding of the different uses of this word is questionable (see Example 5.18 below).

Example 5.18[42]

[...]

01 →	*B09:	está casi concedido pero faltan dos o tres semanas ,, vale?
	%tra:	it's almost granted but there are still two more weeks to go ,, okay?
02	*UUU:	#0_2.
03	*B09:	entiendes?
	%tra:	understand?
04	*UUU:	#0_2.
05	*ENQ:	**what** señor **is the** falta falta?
06	*B09:	no falta # todo bien.
	%tra:	no problem # everything okay.

[...]

In relation to the *falta* expression, it must be mentioned that a change in the institution's policy for providing information took place during my fieldwork. A managerial decision was made concerning the second possible status of applications discussed above, that is, the *propuesta denegatoria* (proposal for rejection) stage. Officials were requested by the institution to stop informing immigrants that problems had been found with their applications. Basically, the expressions *te faltan papeles* (papers are missing), or *faltan pruebas* (proofs are missing) ceased to be used. They were replaced by the phrase *en trámite*. This change in policy has two effects. On the one hand, immigrants are denied the possibility of intervening in the bureaucratic process; they lose control over the "fate" of their applications. Secondly, it creates confusion, as the information immigrants receive from the institution is often contradictory. Further details are provided in Chapters 6 and 7.

After the first positive evaluation by immigration officials, files are transferred to a police department where they are checked again. When this process is completed, if all documents are found to be in order, the application moves to the following stage, which is the "*propuesta de concesión*", or official proposal for granting the permit. This stage has no definite correspondence in the officials' desk language

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[42] Extract taken from transcript OFC02_06.doc.

practices. Sometimes, they tell information seekers that their applications continue to be "*en trámite*", without giving any more details. Often, they use long-winded paraphrases to convey the idea that applications are making progress, but that no official outcome is available yet. The following are some examples of this discursive practice: "this is are the papers okay but you have to wait three more weeks to be accepted # understand*?*" "*éste está más que en trámite pero todavía falta una o dos semanas para concedido*" (this is better than being processed but there is still one or two weeks to go before the permit is granted); "*aquí parece que todo está bien pero todavía faltan dos o tres semanas hasta que esté concedido*" (here it seems like everything is okay but there are still two or three weeks to go before the permit is granted). Sometimes, as in the excerpt below, the information seeker whose application is in *propuesta de concesión* is merely advised to wait (see line 03).

Example 5.19[43]

[...]
01	*AGE:	www.
02	*B09:	www.

03 → *B09:   **wait three more weeks** -,.

04   *EN1:   **this week** [=! softly]?

05   *EN2:   **this week** [=! softly].

       @Situation: B09 continues checking

06   *RES: *alguns posen una cara de resignació* !
       %tra:

07 →   *B09:   *este està en* propuesta de concesión *però si em poso a explicar-ho i no m'entenen*
08   *<#> [>] i em fot una ràbia i:* !
       %tra: this one is about to be granted but if I start explaining and they don't follow and it makes me so angry a::nd!

09   *RES: <[=! laughs]> [<].

10   *B09:   *i este també* !
       %tra: and this one the same!

11   *RES: *+^ això vol dir que d'aquí tres semanes estaran resolts* [?].
       %tra: this means that in three weeks' time a final decision will have been made.

12 →   *B09:   *no suposo que ja se'ls ho ha dit perquè ja ho posa.*
       %tra: no I think they have been told already because it says so.
[...]

In lines 07 and 08, B09 explains his behaviour. He justifies his decision not to provide any piece of relevant information on account of his frustrating

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[43] Extract taken from transcript OFC07_09.doc.

communication experiences. It is interesting that, in line 12, he seems to continue justifying his previous action ("*suposo que ja se'ls ho ha dit perquè ja ho posa*" [I guess they've already been told because it is written in there]). B09's turn does not appear to respond to my question in line 11, but rather to follow up on his previous account.

It was remarked above that officials use "parallel" terms and categories to describe the status of applications, instead of the labels employed by the institution. The only exception to this rule is *permiso concedido* (granted permit). This is the only case in which the term used by information providers and the institutional label coincide. When an application is officially granted and before a letter notifying this decision is sent out, immigrants can request what is called an *informe laboral* (a work report), whereby their new legal status is certified. This form is normally referred to in the interactions as *informe*. As is the case with the words *trámite* or *falta*, information seekers regularly employ the word *informe* in Spanish. The code-switched utterances in lines 02 and 03 below (Example 5.20) illustrate this discursive practice. It is interesting that the peculiar code-switched noun phrase "*informe* letter" is recycled by the bureaucrat B09 in his following speaking turn.

Example 5.20[44]

```
01 →   *ENQ:    mira perdón esta (a)migo tiene trabajo # muchos perdón # qué le falta # esta
02              informe letter informe.
       %tra:    sorry this friend has a job # many please # what's missing # this letter of acceptance.
03 →   *B09:    si no está concedido no hay informe letter.
       %tra:    unless it's granted I can't give you a letter of acceptance.
```

Concluding remarks

This first part of this chapter has described the typical sequential organisation of the information exchange interactions studied in this thesis. Participants' verbal and non-verbal activities have been identified and explained. In the second part of the chapter, I have concentrated on presenting information providers' linguistic routines. As institutional participants, they play a fundamental part in the process of information exchange. The ways in which they package information facilitate or

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[44] Extract taken from transcript OFC08_02.doc.

complicate immigrants' processes of sense making. To understand the import of officials' practices, it is necessary to understand how the bureaucratic procedure is organised. Applications go through a number of administrative stages. In each of them, a particular set of actors is involved. The outcome of each stage is consequential for the final outcome. The detailed description of actors and processes at each stage constitutes the background against which public officials' information providing routines are critically examined. The description presented in this chapter provides revealing insights into bureaucrats insider knowledge. The gap between what they know and what they convey is brought into the open in the following chapter. What immigrants never get to know may be vital information for them. The following chapter focuses on what details bureaucrats' compliance responses do not disclose, and on the important consequences of such information practices.