Birte Asmuß*

What Do People Expect from Public Services? Requests in Public Service Encounters

Abstract

What do customers expect from public services? This question has been addressed in numerous ways, and there are plenty of reasons why this question is worthwhile asking. One of them has to do with service quality: If counsellors in public service encounters know about customer expectations, they may be able to adjust their actions accordingly and thereby increase public service quality. One way to find out about customer expectation is to look closer at the actual encounter between the public and public services. The current study will investigate public service encounters at the Danish Public Employment Service. Here, one specific activity will be investigated in more detail, namely requests. Requests are a common and crucial activity in public service encounters. Research on requests has shown that participants in interaction orient to aspects of entitlement and contingencies in regard to the recipient's ability to comply with the request. The current study will investigate in how far these findings correspond with the customer's orientation to public service encounters at the Public Employment Service. The study will conclude by discussing implications for the workplace.

1. Introduction

What do customers expect from public services? This question has been raised recurrently and the answers are as numerous as customers and employees in public services. For many years, public services have struggled with clichés such as providing bad service and being old-fashioned and bureaucratic. Despite the fact that much has changed, it may still be worthwhile to have deeper insights into what customers actually expect from public services in the public service encounter.

One way to find out about customer expectations is to make surveys or interviews with the customers. These methods assume, though, that

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* *Birte Asmuß*
  ASB Centre for Business Communication
  Aarhus School of Business, University of Aarhus
  Fuglesangs Allé 4
  DK-8210 Aarhus V
  bas@asb.dk

the overall view of public services remains unchanged over time. But studies indicate that expectations towards the co-participant within a conversation are dynamic and subject to constant changes. For the public service encounter this means that the expectations of the public to public services change locally within the conversation. Therefore it will be helpful for public service counsellors to have an indication of how customers' expectations to public services are produced locally in the interaction and what orientation to public services various interactional activities reveal.

The current study will investigate public service encounters at the Danish Public Employment Service. Here, one specific activity will be investigated in more detail, namely requests. Requests are a common and crucial activity in public service encounters. Research on requests has shown that participants in interaction orient to contingencies associated with the recipient's ability to grant the request. Moreover, by using specific types of requests, participants show an orientation to aspects of entitlement to pose the request. The current study will investigate to what extent these findings correlate with the customers' orientation to public service encounters at the Public Employment Service. The study will conclude by discussing implications for the workplace.

2.   Public services and the public

In recent years there has been increased focus on the need for public services to improve their communication with the public and thus improve their reputation. As Page 2006 puts it: "Today's public services have to meet customer expectations; they have to be customer driven" (Page 2006: 10). This sounds easy to do, but one of the dilemmas public services have to deal with is that they have to provide service to two main groups of customers: the job seeking person on the one hand and the public or society on the other hand. These two groups may have conflicting interests in regard to specific topics, and the counsellor needs to take both customer groups (and their expectations) into consideration during the public service encounter.

Another challenge for public services lies in professionalizing communication with the public. Pedersen 2004 highlights the need for increased strategic communication, if the public sector is to be agenda setting and wants to have the public and the press on its side (Pedersen

2004: 20). He elaborates on the need for improved professionalism in the public sector which goes along with an increased focus on both the strategic and practical level (Pedersen 2004: 22). By directing its communication more towards the public, public services will take a relevant step in the right direction towards strengthening its relationship with the public (Pedersen 2004: 23). Ways to do this are via homepages, advertising and last but not least face-to-face communication with the public.

A different area of increased interest in regard to public communication is related to questions of credibility and reliability. Garnett (1997) points out that there is an "overall loss of credibility and influence", and according to him this should be seen as one of the main challenges for public service communication. Pedersen (2003) links to that by pointing to a dilemma in regard to reliability: "the agency that is supposed to help, is in the case of public services in many cases also the one that has the power to allow or to disallow specific actions" (Pedersen, 2003: 104). This asymmetry in regard to power in public service communication might result in a loss of reliability from the public. Instead of ignoring the problem, public services may be better served by accepting this and act and communicate accordingly.

Another crucial criteria for successful communication is pointed to by the increased focus on the interactive nature of communication between the public and public services. Graber (2003) highlights the aspect of framing and claims that "effective communication requires framing messages […] so that they are comprehensible to the receivers who decode them" (Graber 2003: 3). In line with this, Garnett (1997) points to bilateralism as a "necessary condition of administrative communication" (Garnett 1997: 4). This is according to Garnett in line with Grunig/Grunig's (1992) claim that communication needs to be "symmetrical and negotiated". Garnett (1997: 14) also points to the fact that there is a current lack of research in the domain of public communication where the area of communication practice has been marginalized.

In the concluding chapter following the data analysis, main aspects of the reviewed research will be discussed.

2.1. The Danish Public Employment Service

The increased focus on improvement within public services can in the Danish context be seen by the fact that a National Knowledge Centre for Education and Job Guidance was established in 2006 [Videncenter 2006]. One of the main areas for guidance in public services is in the Danish Public Employment Service.

The Danish Public Employment Service is a public service organization which main aim is to support companies in finding qualified employees. Hence, unemployed people[1] are required to try to qualify themselves in order to meet the needs defined by the labour market. The Public Employment Service offers customers guidance interviews to find out what kinds of jobs the customers are interested in, what their qualifications are and whether they need further education to qualify themselves for the job market. These guidance interviews can take place several times, but may also be limited to just a single encounter.

It is in encounters like these that the public meets public service. It is here views and expectations towards each other are supported, altered, and re-evaluated. This process takes place not just once within the encounter, but it is a recurrent activity throughout the course of the conversation. To gain more insights into how expectations are recurrently negotiated within the talk could be of help to the counsellor in order to be able to better align with the customer's expectations. This has to be seen as a basic precondition to provide best service.

There are several studies dealing with public service standard and the publics' expectations towards public services. Below, four main areas related to the issue of expectations will be outlined.

1. A study dedicated to investigate guidance interviews between counsellors at the Danish Public Employment Service and their customers show that in only 20% of the conversations was the customer actually presented a specific job (Damgaard, Hohnen, Madsen 2005: 8). This finding may indicate problems regarding the main aim of the talk, namely to find a job for the customer. Nevertheless, this finding also indicates that a lot of other things than the specific job placement take

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[1] In the course of the article, "unemployed people" will be referred to as "customer", the person working for the Public Employment Service will be called "counsellor" and the strategic conversations between a customer and a counsellor are called "guidance interviews".

place in these kinds of interactions. It would therefore be interesting to look closer at what actually happens during the large parts of the guidance interview where no direct job offer is discussed.

2. In the last couple of years, more and more private consultant agencies have taken over job consultancy from public services. Studies of whether customers prefer private organizations to public or public like ones show that less than 20% actually prefer a private organization in the form of a consultant agency, approximately 75% prefer either the Public Employment Service, trade unions or unemployment insurance companies (in Denmark part of the trade unions) to do the consultancy work (Wilke 2004: 11). This may indicate that the public has much respect for public services and believes them to be the most reliable and trustworthy. It will be one aspect of the following analysis to show whether this expectation is made visible by the customer in the encounter.

3. Studies of the Danish Public Employment Service in regard to recruitment of workforce show that companies in general are very satisfied with the Public Employment Service's homepage for recruitment of workforce (Arbejdsmarkedsstyrelsen 2006a: 2). Even though this study evaluates written communication, it may be relevant for expectations towards public services in general, as this positive evaluation may influence a positive image of the Public Employment Service also for other users of the services. Still it needs to be investigated further, whether this general positive attitude coincides with local expectations during the guidance interview.

4. Due to an increased lack of manpower, the Danish government has in recent years increased the focus on getting unemployed people back to work. These initiatives resulted in an Act on Active Employment from July 2003 (Lov om aktiv beskæftigelsesindsats 2003), which demands a greater sense of responsibility towards public needs and interests from each counsellor. This means that the counsellor not only has to support the customer in clarifying his or her interests, but he or she has to act according to public interests as well. These partly conflicting interests may influence the ways counsellors act during public service encounters as well as shape the customers' expectations to the encounter.

3. Guidance interviews in the Danish Public Employment Service

The public gets into contact with or is contacted by public services in many ways: via the internet, through brochures, advertisements, by telephone or through face-to-face encounters. In the current study, the point of interest is the face-to-face encounter between a customer and a public service counsellor. The direct encounter plays a crucial role in the construction of an image of public services. It is in these encounters that attitudes towards public services are expressed, assured and/or altered. These attitudes are rarely expressed directly, but an orientation to them can be traced by close investigation of the customer's line of action within the encounter.

The focus in the following analysis will consequently be on a specific activity which is crucial and common in public service encounters, namely requests. Recurrently within such an encounter, the customer will pose a more or less direct request. By designing these requests in specific ways, customers show different kinds of expectation to the interaction. In the following paragraph, the main line of research in regard to requests will be summarized and their relevance for the current study will be outlined.

3.1. Requests

In numerous studies, requests have been related to activities in interaction that participants orient to as socially problematic (Brown & Levinson 1987: 132ff., Levinson 1983: 356ff., Schegloff 1979). This shows in the way requests are designed which corresponds to the speaker's orientation to the degree of entitlement to perform the request. Some of these studies deal with everyday conversation, while others focus on institutional data like British doctor-patient interaction and Danish and Swedish home help data. The studies have in common that all of them in one way or the other show that speakers in interaction have a range of interactional resources to their disposal in order to design their requests. Hereby they are able to show different kinds of expectations towards institutional aspects of the interaction.

Curl / Drew (in press) show a difference in the way requests are initiated. This difference corresponds to different orientations by the speaker to assumed contingencies associated with the recipient's ability to

grant the request. Curl / Drew distinguish between a "Can you…"-initiated format and "I wonder if…"-initiated format. According to their findings the "I wonder if"-initiated format is the one used most frequently in their institutional data (doctor-patient interaction). This may indicate that people in institutional encounters design their activities in ways that correlate with their expectations for the encounter. This could be worth while investigating further in relation to public service encounters as this will reveal insight into the negotiable expectations for the institutional encounter.

In another study on requests focusing on Swedish home help data, Lindstrøm 2005 claims that requests can be done in numerous ways (imperatives, statements and questions), and the syntactic choice reveals the speaker's orientation towards his or her entitlement to do the request within the institutional framework. Whereas imperatives show that the speaker expects himself to be entitled to perform the request, requests as questions open up for the possibility that the speaker may not be entitled to do the request. Statements are found at the end of the scale. They underscore that whether something is treated as a request or not needs to be negotiated between the interactants (Lindstrøm 2005: 222-223). It seems interesting to investigate closer in how far these findings are specific to the home help data or whether they can be transferred to a different institutional setting like public service encounters. The following analysis will address this question.

In a study on Danish home help data, Heinemann 2005 points out that negative interrogatives are recurrently used to perform indirect requests. Moreover, Heinemann shows that negative interrogatives are rarely treated as yes-no questions: the participants show an orientation to these activities as performing requests. This makes them potentially ambiguous. This ambiguity can be used as a resource in interaction (Heinemann 2005: 17).

Below, there is an example of a negative interrogative performing requesting work. S is the senior citizen:

```
S: Ve' du ikk' gi' mig en pude til I ryggen,
   Won't you give me one more pillow in the back,
                    (excerpt slightly altered, Heinemann 2005:10)
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By using a request (instead of an offer), the patient highlights the institutional setting of the home help visit and emphasizes thereby his or her

own role as a senior citizen in the home help encounter. Transferred to the current study on encounters at the Public Employment Service, this study indicates that request made as negative interrogatives will emphasize the institutional asymmetry of the public service encounter. Moreover, this may indicate that the customer by using negative interrogatives as requests underlines his or her entitlement to ask a request and at the same time stresses the role of the Public Employment Service for granting the request.

Heinemann 2006 pursues some of the issues dealt with in Heinemann 2005 by now focussing exclusively on interrogative requests. She finds out that there is a difference in the interactional function of positive and negative interrogative requests. The difference is in regard to entitlement: whereas positive interrogative requests claim that the speaker is not entitled to make the request, a negative interrogative request shows an orientation to the request as one he or she is entitled to make.

Below examples of a positive and a negative interrogative request are inserted. Both examples are from a Danish home help setting, and speaker S is the senior citizen:

Positive interrogative request:

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S: Må jeg be om å komme længere ind i stolen?
   May I ask to get a bit further into the chair?
                    (excerpt slightly altered, Heinemann 2006: 1088)
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Negative interrogative request:

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S: Ka' du ikk' tænde loftlyset?
   Can't you turn on the overhead light?
                    (excerpt slightly altered, Heinemann 2006: 1093)
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In the example with the positive interrogative request, the speaker orients to the request as one, she is not entitled to make by using mitigating devices like "May I ask". This postpones and softens the actual request. The negative interrogative request, though, shows no signs of mitigation, instead it is designed directly and straightforward, thereby highlighting the fact that this request is not a problematic one. Instead, it is a request the speaker is entitled to make. This recurrently coincides with the home help assistant complying immediately with negative interrogative requests.

To sum up, numerous studies on requests indicate that there is a close relation between request design and an orientation by the speaker to questions of entitlement and contingencies. Looking at public service encounters in the Danish Public Employment Services, the issue of requests will be pursued in the following analysis. As the analysis will show, some of the main findings from these studies can (with some differences) be applied to the Public Employment Service encounters and reveal critical aspects about locally negotiated expectations towards public services.

4. Data

The data for the following analysis are from a dataset of guidance interviews at public employment services in Denmark and Germany. The full data set consists of approximately 12 hours of guidance interviews[2]. The data are videotaped interactions that have been transcribed according to conversation analytic transcription standards developed by Jefferson (as in Atkinson & Heritage 1984). The data are fully anonymized.

The examples in the following analysis are from two different guidance interviews and are representative for requests in the dataset as a whole. They include two different participants and two different counsellors from the Public Employment Service. Both conversations take place in Denmark. In both cases, it is the first meeting between the counsellor and the customer. The main aim of both conversations is to help the customer clarify his or her interest in and prerequisites for finding a specific kind of job. In one of the cases the talk concerns finding a job in Denmark, whereas in the other case the talk is about finding a job abroad.

In general, the customers' expectations to the guidance interview seem to be that they are interested in changing their status from unemployed to employed and that they expect help and clarification from the Public Employment Service to achieve this goal.

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[2] Thanks to Jakob Steensig, Aarhus University, for giving access to transcriptions of a corpus on guidance interviews at the Danish Public Employment Service.

5.   Analysis

In the following analysis, two main aspects will be in focus. First, the way requests are recurrently produced and dealt with in the beginning of the guidance interview, and second, the way different request formats coincide with different forms of entitlement.

5.1. Requests at the beginning of guidance interviews

In most of the data, the beginning of the guidance interview is characterized by a short introductory request by the customer to define his overall interest in and expectations to the talk. Expectations to the public service encounter can thus be clarified. Here the customer can clarify what she or he expects from public services, namely guidance and information about what to do.

The way the customer presents her request in this sequential placement is predominantly as a statement. Statements have been characterized by Lindstrøm 2005 as a way to perform a request that initiates a negotiation between the interactants whether the performed action has to be dealt with as a request or as a pure statement (and consequently has to be treated accordingly).

In the following example, which is representative of the ways the beginning of guidance interviews at the Public Employment Service are designed, C, the customer, presents her expectations to the talk by making a request for information:

Excerpt (1)[3]

```
1    E:  ↑Hva' ka' jeg ↑hjælpe dig med;
         How can I help you;

2    C:  Det var fordi ø:hm jeg spurgte derude >eh<
         It is because uhm  I   asked out here uh

3        Jeg overvejer *ø:h* og søge noget job i
         I am thinking about uh to seek some job in

4        Schweiz,
         Switzerland,
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[3]   In all data examples, C stands for customer, and E stands for employee (=counsellor). The English translation for excerpts (1) to (3) are made by the author.

```
5    C: ↑Ja?
         Yeah?

6       (.)

7    C: O' så ville jeg høre hvordan jeg sku': (.)
         And so I want to hear how I should

8       forholde mig eller hva' jeg ska' gøre,
         proceed     or   what I shall do,

9       ·hh ø:hm (.) Jeg har statsb- Je:g halv
           uhm      I  have citiz-  I am  half

10      schweizer halv dansker,
         Swiss half Danish,

11 C:   Så [jeg] har sådan set ø:h statsborgerskab,
         So I   have in a way  uh   citizenship

12 E:      [Ja,]
             yes

13      (.)

14 E:   °Ja:.°
         yes

15      (.)

16 C:   Arbejds o' opholdstilladelse.
         Working and residence permit

17      (.)

18 E:   J[a:,
         yes

19 C:   [ø:hm,=
         uhm

20 E:   =Jamen så øh (0.3) ka du jo (0.3) bare
         yes but then uh you can simply just

21      (0.4)

22 E:   (kø) ta' derned netop [altså]=
              take down there really
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After having accounted for her presence and given initial background
information on herself in lines 2 and 3, the customer puts forward a re-

quest for information in lines 7 and 8. After a short hesitation in line 9 and no uptake from the counsellor, the customer continues with a list of information (ll.9-11 and 16) in the form of a statement ("so I have in a way uh citizenship, working and residence permit"). The more direct request for information in lines 7 and 8 has not resulted in any uptake by the counsellor. The following statements open up for a negotiation about whether this in fact is a request for information or a simple statement. Here, as part of the institutional setting of a guidance interview, the counsellor seems to go along with the implicit request for information by giving a solution straightaway, namely that the customer can just go to Switzerland and find a job (ll. 20, 22)

Another interesting feature of the request for information is the customer's focus on herself by saying "I want to hear how I should proceed or what I shall do" in lines 7 and 8. She could alternatively have focused on the Public Employment Service by formulating something like "I want to hear whether you can help me with this". An ongoing study on Danish emergency telephone calls to the police indicates a different orientation in regard to entitlement by using the I-centred versus the you-centred version (Larsen 2006). It would be interesting to pursue this aspect further by looking closer at this phenomenon in public service encounters.

To sum up, the analysis of excerpt (1) indicated that a request made as a statement initiates a negotiation about the statement being a request or not. In all the data, the counsellor treats statements at the beginning of the talk as a request for information and assistance and acts accordingly. This indicates a difference in expectations by the public to different institutional settings: In the home help data, the employee has to perform multiple tasks (personal assistance, house cleaning and so on). Hence, a negotiation about the relevance of a request made as a statement might be more relevant than in public employment service encounters, which consist of a single task, namely to give information and guidance. This is supported by the fact that in all the data, the request for information and guidance presented at the beginning of the guidance interview is granted. Further research on differences in regard to request formats and institutional settings could help to understand the underlying mechanisms for this crucial activity in guidance interviews.

5.2. Request formats and entitlement

According to Lindstrøm (2005) requests worded as questions open up for the possibility that the customer may not be entitled to make the request. As shown before, Heinemann (2005) points out that negative interrogatives show an orientation by the customer to being entitled to make the request. Thereby negative interrogatives highlight the asymmetry and institutional character of the talk.

In the following excerpt, the customer initiates the topic by showing his interest in computer courses and by pointing to his existing expertise in that area at the moment. The counsellor does not interrupt him, but lets the customer continue. The customer's talk results in a request.

Excerpt (2) ((B/6/23:40))

```
1    C: så:: æ::m: (.) >det ved jeg ikk',< (0.2)
        so uhm       I don't know

2       ku' jeg ikk' (0.2) så starte med lige prøve
         couldn't I      then start by simply trying

3       å'- å' få sådan et kursus der på, (0.2)
        to get    such a class there of

4       .h↓ja >det ved jeg sgu ikk' det er< jo::
         yeah this I don't really know, this is

5       (0.3) nå=de:t fire dage; det er måske lidt
            right this is four days; this is perhaps a little

6       (0.2) men så'n en måneds tid
              but then like a month

7       eller et par stykker, (0.4) så'n lige for
        or   a couple of months    just to

8       å' .hh (0.2) å' komme i gang med så'n
        to get going with such

9       noget [edb.
        computer things.
10   E:       [hja,
                yes,
```

The customer produces in lines 1 and 2 a straightforward request, namely that he would like to participate in computer courses and he wants to know whether the Public Employment Service can support him in

that. He uses a negative interrogative to perform his request ("couldn't I"). This shows no orientation to social problematicity of the talk or to problems in regard to entitlement: the customer shows a clear orientation that he sees himself as being entitled to ask the request, and the supervisor aligns with this by granting his request afterwards. In that way the negative interrogative supports the institutional character and asymmetry of the talk.

The following excerpt is from the same guidance interview as excerpt (1). Here, the request is not done by a negative interrogative, but instead by a statement. Thereby, the negotiable character of a request made as a statement becomes salient:

Excerpt (3) ((DKB2/109/110))

```
1   C:   ·hhh  De:t en ny ide.
                This is a new idea.

2        Ø:hm, (.) O' >je' har været< inde
         Uhm              I have been inside

3        °(i)°/(Ø) Je' fandt en eller anden portal¿
                    I found a homepage

4        *ø:h[m* sådden lidt tilfældigt,=
           uhm      such a little by coincidence

5   E:        [Ja¿
                yes

6   C:   Ja¿
         yes

7   C:   ø:hm,
          uhm

8        (.)

9   C:   (   ) jobportal se hå, ((CH))
                ((name of the job homepage))

10  C:   eller sådden [noget
         or something like that
11  E:                [Ja¿
                        yes

12       (.)
```

```
13  C:   o' je' går ud fra der er tonsvis (af),
         and I assume that there are loads of

14       Så de:t måske mere sådden lige o' hjælpe
         so this is perhaps more like just helping

15       me' o' sortere lidt i det,
         to sort out a little in it

16  E:   ·hhh Det jo: ø:hm (0.7) De:t jo så det.
             This is really uhm (0.7) This is really it.
```

The request here is launched in lines 14 and 15. Before the request is made, the customer informs the counsellor about her activities to find information herself which was difficult as there is so much information on the internet. The request in lines 14 and 15 is a request for assistance, and it is produced as a statement. The statement has features of mitigation in that it uses "perhaps" "just" and "to sort out a little" (ll. 14, 15). All these features contribute to minimizing the request for assistance to a minor task. Moreover, the customer refrains from addressing a potential agent for the request for assistance: the request is not addressing any specific party ("like just helping to sort out a little", ll. 14, 15). By using both a statement and mitigating devices the customer shows an orientation to questions of entitlement and contingency which thereafter need to be negotiated with the counsellor. The negotiable character of the request becomes clear by the way it is treated by the counsellor: in line 16, the counsellor takes over and starts out by aligning with the main statement, namely that there is lots of information to deal with. Both participants go on elaborating on the big amount of information and first thereafter (not shown in the transcript, but 20 lines after) does the counsellor take up the request part by offering direct assistance: "Let us now try and see".

In regard to questions of asymmetry and institutionality of the talk, it becomes clear that the customer in excerpt (3) orients to the institutional character of the talk and to the fact that what to expect from public services is negotiable.

6.   Discussion

Improvements in public services are necessary, and one way to do it is to improve the actual face-to-face-encounter. In a press release the

Danish National Labour Market Authority announced in early 2006 that it had developed a dialogue guide as a means to support public service dialogue with the public (Arbejdsmarkedsstyrelsen 2006b). Here, the focus lies mainly on content aspects like issues that should be raised during the guidance interview. But studies like the present one show that a closer look at the interactional features of guidance interviews can contribute to a better understanding of the nature of guidance interviews and support the public service counsellor in carrying out guidance interviews. In the long term, this can contribute to better service and hence a better image of public services in the public.

In more detail, the study showed that requests designed as statements are interactionally predominantly treated as requests even though they could also be treated as pure statements only. Using a request statement at the start of the interaction opens up for the interactants to define their interactional relationship: they negotiate aspects of institutionality and asymmetry, and the service level of the interaction is evaluated for the first time. If a pure statement is sufficient for it to be dealt with as a request and to have the request granted consequently, then the start of the interaction has to be seen as a crucial place for interactants to define and negotiate their initial expectations to the encounter.

The comparison between requests done as negative interrogatives on the one hand and pure statements on the other hand supported the claim that the chosen format reflects the customer's orientation to the degree of entitlement to make the request. A negative interrogative treats the request as one that is unproblematic (and therefore entitled to be made). They highlight the fact that asymmetry is established and that the customer does not see any problems in this asymmetry. The request as a negative interrogative shows in line with Heinemann 2006 that the customer is aware of this asymmetry. The customer shows that she or he is entitled to receive service by marking the request for information as unproblematic and one which is likely to be granted.

Requests done as pure statements highlight the fact that the institutional roles and contingencies in regard to getting the request granted are not settled or constant, but need to be negotiated. In this negotiation process, the public service counsellor can participate actively and define the statement as a request. He can thus play an active role in enhancing the service quality of the guidance interview.

Increased awareness of the local construction and negotiation of expectations towards public services can help public service counsellors align their activities with locally produced customer expectations. Hence, they may be able to achieve greater satisfaction in guidance interviews and in the long run thereby contribute to an improved image of public service encounters in the public. Who knows? Maybe people will end up actually getting what they want from public services.

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Transcription glossary

right	speaker emphasis
°yes°	noticeably quieter than surrounding talk
YES	noticeably louder than surrounding talk
u:	stretched sound
ka-	sharp cut-off of the prior sound
?	rising intonation
¿	small rising intonation
,	continuing intonation
;	small falling intonation
.	falling intonation
=	latching between utterances and words
> <	noticeably quicker than surrounding talk
< >	noticeably slower than surrounding talk

↑	rising intonational shift
↓	falling intonational shift
·hh	audible in-breath
ri(h)ght	laughter in word
(.)	micropause (less than 0.2 seconds)
(0.5)	time gap in tenths of a second
[yes] [no]	overlapping talk