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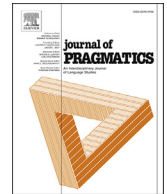
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Toward a multimodal pragmatics analysis of ambulant vending on a Buenos Aires trainline

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the occupational practices of four ambulant vendors (AVs) over a 20-day period, as they board, occupy, and alight trains to make a living in the popular economy. It captures for the first time some of the multimodal communicative practices they deploy to present an engaging sales pitch, attempt to convert passengers into prospects and sustain their livelihoods on the move. A multimodal pragmatics analysis of their sales pitch as video-recorded by the AVs reveals three clear stages marked by body motion in alignment with other bodily and verbal activities to capture the audience as they zero in on the product attributes. The article highlights the dexterity and professionalism of these workers in combining different modalities to augment their presence and chances of securing sales as they navigate the challenges of the unequal working conditions they inhabit as captured from a novel first-person perspective.

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1. Introduction

This article examines the communicative practices of ambulant vendors (AVs) working on a Buenos Aires trainline and how they respond to some of the complexities of the structural conditions of making a living on the move. Ambulant vending (AV) comprises the sale of products or services exchanged for cash with customers in any public space without sales support (Rodríguez Romero, 2014: 26). It represents one of the more significant manifestations of the informal economy¹ (Roever and Skinner, 2016) which in Argentina constitutes up to 50% of country's GDP (Wiego, 2020).

Contrary to sales encounters in formal economy settings where people enter shops to buy, browse, or passers-by walk past market stands and, by so doing, signal some interest (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2015), passengers do not board trains to procure products but do so as means of transport. They are under no obligation to pay attention to vendors as they pitch products.

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¹ The informal economy is a politico-economic process at the core of many developing and developed countries (Baruah, 2023). Informal economy workers such as AVs lack legal and social benefits and have to ignore health and safety issues to sustain their livelihoods. In Argentina, as well as in other Latin American countries where AV constitutes a pervasive working practice, AVs are best described as workers of the popular economy. "Popular economy" recognises the skills, abilities and dynamic strategies through which workers question, negotiate and attempt to change established socio-economic orders (see Fernández Álvarez and Pacifico, 2022 with special attention to workers of the popular economy in Argentina).

Indeed, the video data on which this paper is based show that passengers tend to shun interpersonal encounters (Goffman, 1963) with vendors by avoiding eye contact with them or looking at the products.

This study evidences the embodied precarity of a group of AVs on one of Buenos Aires' trainlines in a context where vending, though not illegal, is not officially permitted (Fernández-Álvarez, 2019). Over a 20-day period, before the first wave of Covid-19 was officially confirmed in Argentina, four AVs video-recorded their working practices on the trainline. This first-person perspective enabled the recording of a unique data set that considers for the first time the role of multimodality in the achievement of AVs' sales pitches, and their considerable adroitness in navigating the inadequate dimensions in which they strive to maintain their sustenance.

The trainline the authors focus on is akin to a metropolitan overground train. It does not have a trolley service or buffet car where products are sold or consumed, and a video-camera could be set up. AVs walk along the train coaches offering their products. Movement along the coaches is an essential part of their work which previous studies have not examined.

The paper concentrates on the sales pitch. It demonstrates how AVs manoeuvre the conditions they inhabit to sustain their livelihood in the light of their constrained agency (Perelman, 2013) relative to the choice of products they sell, and the physical space where they are sold. The products are unsolicited and sold in a moving space requiring spatial, visual and oral-auditory management. This involves AVs' movement along the train coaches, time- and self-management around train stops and passenger flows, including boarding and alighting, as well as coordinating the co-working space with other AVs. These factors need to be carefully orchestrated to try to establish a connection with passengers with a view to turning them into prospective customers and achieving sales.

In the shared public space of the train where passengers have a right to enjoy relatively undisturbed journeys, AVs need to draw attention to themselves and create a demand for products of potentially little or no immediately apparent appeal to passengers, while manipulating them in a moving space within a relatively short timeframe (in between stations).

The analysis goes beyond the discursive elements of the sales pitch that have been given primacy in linguistics studies of AV by adopting a multimodal pragmatics approach (cf. O'Halloran et al., 2014). It incorporates the visible bodily actions (Kendon, 2004) captured in the AV's own video-recordings, which occur simultaneously with or are supplementary to actions carried out verbally, considering the contingencies surrounding the products and physical space where they are sold, salient prosodic features of the sales pitch, as well as contextual factors, such as the relational asymmetries between AVs and passengers regarding their legitimacy in this public space, their respective goals, and the sociocultural context where AV occurs. The analysis provides an embodied description of how some of the structural dimensions AVs inhabit (e.g., having an undefined workplace, relying on locally available products which may prove hard to sell, the labour intensity of AV and its physical demands), are continually re-produced in the sales pitch (e.g., having to carry their merchandise with them and store it in an unobstructive place on trains) and the practices through which they are re-enacted (e.g., accounting for their presence on trains, demonstrating audibly and visibly the product authenticity).

The article foregrounds AVs' professionalism, an important aspect of their competency which has been overlooked in the literature on deficient conditions (UN Sustainable Development Goal 8) of workers of the popular economy and extends pragmatic research to real-time sale encounters in a context of deep-seated inequality.

In the next section, we provide a review of research on ambulant vending with special attention to Buenos Aires. This is followed by a description of the data and methods deployed (3.) and its analysis (4.) before the conclusions of the study are presented.

2. Research on ambulant vending in Buenos Aires

AV has primarily received attention from social scientists, especially those interested in various aspects of the informal economies of the Global South (e.g., Bhowmik, 2012). Prominent examples include, but are not limited to, research on the working lives of street vendors in the cities of Mumbai (Saha, 2011), Bogotá and Medellín (Vargas and Urinboyev, 2015; Blandón, 2017), market vendors in Cochabamba (Goldstein, 2016) as well as disputes about the use of public space in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (Hirata, 2015; Pires, 2020) and during Covid-19 (Belcic, 2022). Overall, these studies reveal the unequal conditions and struggles that AVs face in different locales where informal economic activity plays an important role.

Perelman's anthropological research (2013, 2014, 2016) on how AVs work on the Buenos Aires underground is particularly relevant. The author discusses how AVs create and maintain relationships and reciprocal obligations among themselves beyond the economic sphere to develop their economic activity and assign co-workers on work circuits. Also relevant are the anthropological studies conducted by (Fernández Álvarez, 2016; Fernández-Álvarez, 2018, 2019) on the dynamics of AVs' syndicate organization, workers' mobilization and demands on the trainline examined here.

In terms of linguistic studies, Ergueta et al. (2002) and Leisch and Murata Missagh (2019) examined the discourse of AVs' sales pitches in the Argentinian capital's transport system (buses, underground and trains). Based on the authors' mobile phone audio-recordings and observations during transport journeys, Ergueta et al. (2002) conceptualised the sales pitch as performance (Bauman, 2002) and approached its analysis by recurring to contextualisation cues (Gumperz, 1982) and Goffman's (1967) notion of positioning. In so doing, they noted some of the performance differences between AVs' discourse and that of beggars who often occupy the same physical space.

Similarly, Leisch and Murata Missagh (2019) provided a discursive study of "street vending discourse" as a genre on a Buenos Aires underground line and distinguished it from "begging discourse". While Ergueta et al. (2002) integrated an account of the spatial configuration of the sales pitch informed by social semiosis (via Bauman, 2002), including

impressionistic prosodic elements, Leisch and Murata Missagh (2019) principally focused on the presence, absence, and distribution of discursive elements of the genre of street vending vs. begging.² Movement, however, is an integral part of AV which prior research has not fully considered, especially in relation to its coordination with speech in the accomplishment of the sales pitch.

Research in ethnomethodological conversation analysis (EMCA) has examined movement in sales encounters within the formal economy, especially gaze, head and gestures in customers' embodied actions, and the manipulation of products in sequences of talk (e.g., Svinhufvud, 2018; Moody, 2022) where participants were mainly stationary. The findings demonstrate the mutually constitutive and sequential relations between visible bodily actions and talk (e.g., Haddington et al., 2013). They highlight, among others, the role of gaze and eye contact as a preliminary to verbal contact with prospective customers (see, also, Clark and Pinch, 1995; Llewellyn and Hindmarsh, 2010).

Of relevance to the data examined here are Mondada's (2014) and Broth and Mondada's (2013) studies on guided walks. Although the authors did not focus on a sales encounter setting, they show how walking and talking reflexively build one another – with one modality adjusting and achieving the order of the other– Smith (2021), and how walking away achieves closings in guided walks.

The current study differs from discourse pragmatics (see Félix-Brasdefer and Márquez Reiter, 2021 for an overview) and EMCA research on sales encounters in several ways. It concentrates on a setting where selling is not officially permitted or necessarily expected despite constituting a ubiquitous practice. AVs are not “posted” servers (Merritt, 1976), nor are passengers necessarily guaranteed customers. The projects of the AVs and passengers are different. While AVs attempt to make a living by selling products they have access to on a given day on trains, passengers use the trains as a means of transportation. Furthermore, unlike multimodal EMCA studies of sales encounters in semi-mobile settings, such as open markets where passers-by browse products in stalls and are propelled into buying (e.g., Clark and Pinch, 1995; Mondada, 2022), or officially permitted vendors approach passers-by (Llewellyn and Burrow, 2008) AVs are the mobile party. They stand and move along train coaches as they attempt to bring instantaneous product delivery to passengers to the comfort of their seats.


This article outlines the enactment of the sales pitch as synergistically constituted by the interaction of verbal and bodily contributions and how it responds to the unequal conditions AVs inhabit. The data examined capture the visual field of AVs at chest level: what they see in front of them, including the products they sell, passengers, other vendors, their hands and arms movement, physical orientation, positioning and movement on the train (walking, stopping, torquing, turning around).

3. Data and methods

The study was originally conceived as participatory ethnographic research (e.g., Bodó et al., 2022) with both researchers and participants actively involved in the research and knowledge production process. Covid-19 prevented travelling to Buenos Aires. As a result, four AVs from a workers' cooperative participated by recording their working practices on a trainline over 20 days in early 2021³ by placing their mobile phones in a transparent pouch hanging from a chest belt (see Table 1 below where the products offered by each AV and the number of videos recorded by them is shown). They decided when to start and to stop videorecording as they engaged in their daily work on trains and the data they shared.

Table 1

Identifies the four AVs (anonymised) who collected the data by recording their own working practices on a trainline over 20-day period and the type of products they offered to passengers during those days. It also includes the number of videos recorded per participant.

	Ambulant Vendors (AVs)	Products	Videos
	AV1L (man)	headphones, harnesses, phone, charges.	69
	AV2N (man)	water balloons, alfajores, chewing gum and sparkles.	71
	AV3A (man)	cold drink (water, coke, etc.)	69
	AV4R (women)	notepad, pen and LED lights.	54
			Total 263

The video data comprise a total of 28 h (263 videos). It captures everything that can be seen within the mobile phone field in the direction the vendor is facing, especially the use of their arms, hands, and body movement (walking, torquing,

² See also (Alonso Piñero, 2018) on mitigation and politeness in informal vendors' sales pitch in Mexico City's subway system and Solon (2013) on touristic service encounters in Yucatán, Mexico.

³ The study was possible thanks to an SRA International Development and Inclusive Innovation grant. (PI:X) in collaboration with CITRA-CONICET-UMET. The four ambulant vendors who participated in the project are part of a workers' cooperative collaborating with CITRA (<https://citra.org.ar>). (Ethical clearance reference: X University HREC/3291 X 14/04/2021).

stopping) when manipulating and showing products to sell. Hence, the AVs' heads, head movement and gaze are not fully visible in the data unless when captured by another vendor's camera. In the light of this and that the products were met with little interest, the analysis focuses on the details that are hearable and visible as part of the achievement of the sales pitch.

The analysis integrates concepts and disciplinary concerns associated with language in use and action co-ordination (Clift and Haugh, 2021) to reach an understanding of the sales pitch during the AVs' work rounds, observe the individual and collective activity of AV, comprehend sales strategies, and document some of the challenges they encounter in their daily work activities as they transpire in the communicative practices reported. It adopts a multimodal pragmatics perspective that considers how the visible bodily actions (Kendon, 2004) that are evident in the videos interact with verbal actions in the enactment of the sales pitch. This allows us to account for the communicative tools AVs employ to create, sustain, and satisfy the (supposed) demand for the products being sold, which does not only hinge on speech. In parallel, context-based interpretations of language in use (verbal and non-verbal) are offered by examining the sales strategies deployed in the pitch according to the actions they serve to achieve and the sociocultural factors they orient to.

The data were transcribed following the Jefferson's transcription system (2004). Relevant visible bodily actions were described in double parenthesis, i.e., (()), with stills aligned to their anchor points (#) in the transcript. The transcription and annotation of bodily practices was done using ELAN software, while prosodic analyses used Praat software.

263 videos were analysed (see Table 1 above). The common stages which constitute the sales pitch (the opening, middle and closing) were identified and their components scrutinized according to their multimodal configuration across vendors and products. This was done by considering AVs' deployment of lexico-grammatical features, bodily behaviours, and salient prosodic resources as part of the composition of the actions through which the sales pitch is achieved. The simultaneity and/or complementary of multimodal resources and how they evolve in the temporal development of the pitch was also key to delimiting the stages and components of the sales pitch and the recognisability of this social activity within the physical and social ecology of the train.

4. The train as a pop-up mobile store on a Buenos Aires trainline

In the setting examined, passengers and AVs are co-present in a shared public space. As contributors to the Argentinian economy, AVs who work on this trainline use the train as their workplace. This requires making themselves visible and audible relative to others occupying the same space. AVs attempt to bring unsolicited products to passengers who are under no obligation to show an interest in them or acknowledge their presence on trains. In public space, people arrange their co-presence through mutually monitoring each other, anticipating others' trajectories, and organising their own conduct accordingly (Goffman, 1963, 1971). For AVs, this entails monitoring and responding to passengers' visible bodily practices, such as gaze, head movements, and language, as indices of interest rather than mere displays of civil (in)attention (Goffman, 1963). One of the biggest challenges that AVs face is switching passengers' interactions with them from unfocused to focused (Goffman, 1961) and turning them into prospects. The corpus attests to this difficulty by noting how passengers tend not to look at the products or AVs and the limited sales achieved in a single day of work. Moreover, AVs share this public space with other train dwellers, such as other vendors. The data show how the coach space is collaboratively managed, for instance, by respecting co-worker space (e.g., waiting for other AVs to finish their pitch before starting their own, see Excerpt 11.2).

Public space both enables and restricts the kinds of social interactions that can occur therein; that is, space shapes and is shaped by the forms of sociality that are possible (Simmel, 2011). In simple terms, social interactions are intimately related to space insofar as space is supported by social relations but is also producing and produced by them (e.g., Zieleniec, 2007). Space is thus political (Lefebvre, 2014); it is a "non-neutral" (even agentive) zone in which specific ordered identities, actions and meanings can be generated (Blommaert, 2013:15). This is observed by AVs' bodily orientation to passengers' right of way and in their efforts to convert passengers into prospects.

Besides coordinating the space with others, both the movement of the train and the materiality of the product being sold on a given day, such as its size, need to be carefully managed to allow for easy handling and visibility, including its demonstration. The products offered range from branded products – typically beverages and confectionery – to generic unbranded items such as the ones mainly examined here – bulb lamps and headphones. In trying to create a demand for them, AVs address potential issues in product sellability, including its authenticity, quality, functionality and price. Products are generally offered at a lower selling price than at retailers and are presented as unique opportunities.

The analysis reveals how the sales pitch is influenced by the space on the train and the type of product that AVs bring on a given workday. The train's intermittent physical movement between stations and passenger flows, coupled with AVs' limited socioeconomic mobility obliges them to travel on trains to sell products which are largely available elsewhere, including at train station kiosks.

AVs respond to the lack of a delimited workplace by embodying elements of a store: they manage the space of the coach to reach and store their merchandise. Where necessary, they use parts of their body as a "rack" and themselves as a "window display" to describe and demonstrate the product as they construct their sales pitch in a time-sensitive way, subject to the timeframe of the train journey and typically between stops.

We next outline the stages and components of the sales pitch (4.1). This is followed by an analysis of how multimodal resources are orchestrated in the enactment of the sales pitch (4.2) and the way in which one vendor distributes them to deal with a product challenge (5).

4.1. The AVs' sales pitch

Once on the train platform, AVs' working days are made up of identifiable moments which the authors analyse as recurrent stages: getting on the train, standing on one side of a coach, delivering their sales pitch, walking along the coach offering and selling their products, repeating the process in every coach, getting off the train, and recycling the whole process several times a day.

AVs and passengers display different roles and goals as soon as they get on the train. AVs wait for passengers to board first, move along the coach and physically position themselves, taking a seat or standing. They thus orient from that moment to passengers' right of way, and to their ensuing activity as not necessarily commensurate with the kind of activities that are officially sanctioned within this space.

AVs attempt to make their presence known at the earliest available opportunity: they stand in a central area of the coach in a proximal position that respects the enclosed passenger area. Initially, they stand in a clearing in the coach between blocks of seats and tend to offer their product to the first half of the coach repeating the process to the second half, and subsequently move to the next coach repeating the same sequence. In this way, they reach a wider audience and maximise potential attention (Fig. 1 below).

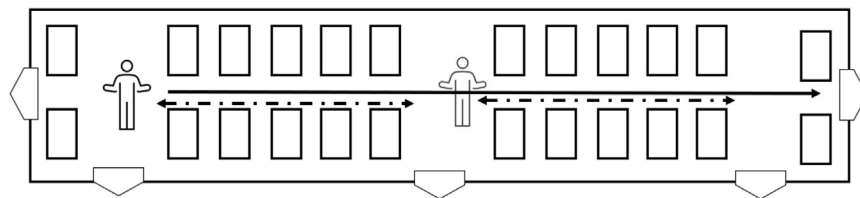


Fig. 1. Spatial configuration of the coach and AV activity. AVs stand in the clearing of the coach for the central part of the sales pitch. The sets of arrows show their typical rounds during the opening of the sales space, either in circuits going up and down the coach (dotted line) during the extended sales pitch or as a single pass through the coach (straight arrow) when offering drinks or other edible products.

The analysis revealed three main stages to the AVs' working practices on trains. Body motion, as kinetic component, was key to defining the major stages of the pitch.

The *pre-sales stage* which entails accessing the trains from the platform while preparing the merchandise to be carried and waiting for passengers to board first.

The opening of the *sales pitch* is done from stationary position. It involves AVs' preparation of the 'shop floor' by physical positioning themselves in the coach clearing and uttering a routinised access ritual (Basso and Senft, 2009) which serves to account for their presence and draw (further) attention to themselves. The middle of the sales pitch is also performed from a stationary position (cf. Ergueta et al., 2002). It comprises the product presentation (naming, qualifying the product according to its affordances, needs, user beneficiaries), price, offer and quality control (demonstrating it and inviting to (re) test). The pitches are characterised by having an extended middle where the AV is in motion. While moving along the coaches AVs engage in sales rounds with cycles of repetitions of product details. In the case of sales, this is followed by a verbalised closing. Otherwise, the closing is bodily marked (Broth and Mondada, 2013) by turning around and reorganising the merchandise before exiting the train as part of the *post sales stage*. This is illustrated in Fig. 2, below.

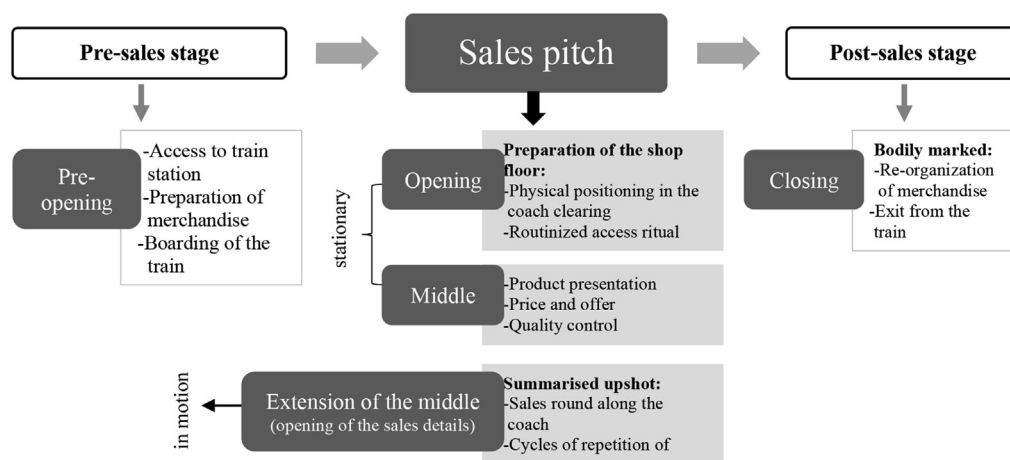


Fig. 2. Sales stages, structure and components. The highlighted sections of the sales pitch are the focus of this study. It includes the opening, middle and extension of the sales pitch. During the opening and middle of the sales pitch AVs introduce themselves and the product in a stationary position. Then, the extension of the sales pitch represents the opening of the sales space when AVs walk along the corridor and passengers can buy their products from their seats.

4.2. Orchestrating resources in the enactment of the sales pitch

The type of sales pitches examined here are akin to a “spiel” (Bauman, 2002) for they constitute extended chunks of talk where AVs introduce and describe a product and an offer in smaller incremental chunks of information. AVs and passengers orient to this as a full “big package” (Sacks, 1992, II: 345) by, for instance, not interrupting or requesting the products at this stage, irrespective of any prosodic finality markers or silence after each incremental part of the pitch.

4.2.1. From a stationary point to a state of motion (walking)

The threshold between an initial pre-sales stage and the sales pitch proper is marked by the physical positioning and organisation of the products in a stationary point (not walking) in the clearing of the coach. The sales pitch starts with the initiation of vocal activity that occupies the auditory space of the coach with greater loudness and resonance (Ergueta et al., 2002), and the visual space is managed with extended use of the arms from chest height and above, as captured in Ex.11.3, Images 13G and 13I) (McNeill, 1992). There is increased use of upper-body movement especially both arms and hands for demonstration and pointing and a decrease of lower-body movement (legs). The middle is marked by the beginning of motion (walking) forward in the coach towards the corridor. It is accompanied by the body rotation to both sides and (semi)extended arms to hold and show the products, making up a moving “window display”, and offering the products to the passengers sitting on both sides (Fig. 3). Conversely, the extension of the middle (summarised upshot) is done with an increase of lower-body movement and extension of the limbs depending on the product.

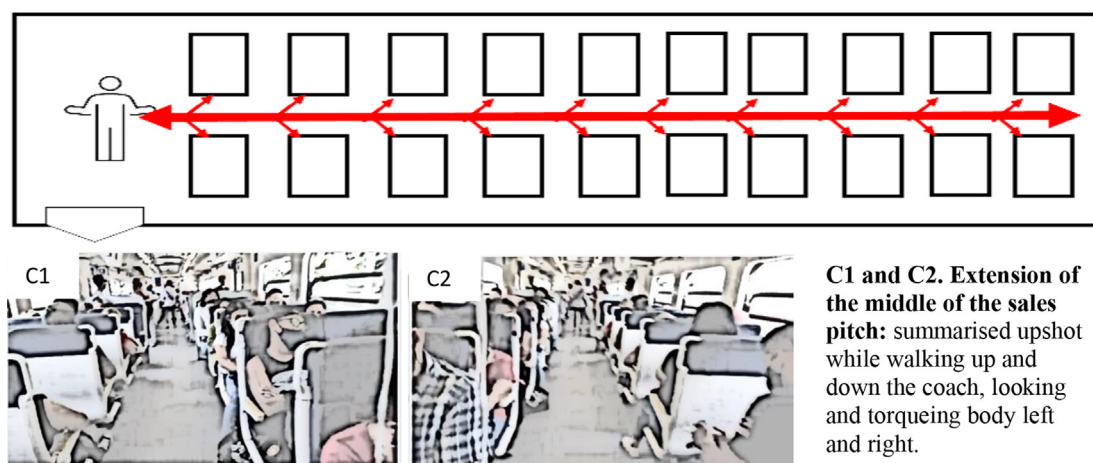


Fig. 3. Motion trajectories along the coach for the stages during the sales pitch: opening, middle, and extension of the middle.

This shift from a stationary (not-walking) point in the coach (middle of the sales pitch, see image B in Figs. 2 and 3 above) to a state of motion, as AVs walk along the corridor (extension of the middle, see image C and Fig. 2), marks the availability of the products for passengers to see closely, inspect, and purchase. The relevance of walking to get closer to the passengers during the summarised upshot (extension of the middle) of the sales pitch is created by walking slowly and moving the body sideways towards the passengers. AVs walk along the coach looking from side to side, raising and extending their arms to offer the product. These practices are accompanied by continuation of the vocal activity, repeating chunks of information in previous stages within the sales encounter.

4.2.2. Turning the coach space into a shop floor

AVs physically carry the products with them. They position themselves in the clearing, setting up a “window display” to attend to the contingencies of managing a product while standing on a moving train and manipulating it so that it can be seen by the passengers.

The opening of the sales pitch is initiated by adopting an anchored position in the coach with limited or no movement of the feet or displacement. Mobile activity is concentrated around the movement of the arms and hands, which contributes to enhancing the AVs' visual and auditory presence and maximises their chances of converting passengers' unfocused to focused attention. To this end, they hold the products at chest-line level and above.

Once physically positioned, and with the product ready to be displayed, AVs broker access to the visual and auditory coach space by means of a routinised access ritual (Basso and Senft, 2009) which often comprises the expression of multiple greeting items (cf. Leisch and Murata Missagh, 2019). With this, they account for their (unsolicited) presence and draw attention to themselves before introducing the product. The greetings and vocatives differ in familiarity and formality and are idiosyncratic to each AV, as Excerpt 1 below show (see also Excerpt 11.2, section 6).

Excerpt 1. AV1L_1A

```

((straightens a bunch of headphones with his right-hand while
holding them with his left hand raised))
1 AV1L hola:: amigo::s::? (0.5)
hello friends

```

The sales pitch is prosodically characterised by features that make AV recognisable as a specific type of social activity. The prosodic features that characterise the rhythmic and incremental presentation of information in the sales pitch give a particular proclamatory quality to it and contribute to the delimitation of its core components. AVs make use of higher overall volume and a higher pitch range while interacting with customers, and a voice quality that is hearably tenser than their modal voice, which is also an effect of the vocal effort of voice projection. Intonation contours during the sales pitch are quite often stylised, made of long high- and low-level contours that resemble those found when “calling out” (Ladd Jr, 1978) and which contribute to its hearability.

The following practices are characteristic of the middle of the sales pitch. Each incremental contribution to the pitch is prosodically packaged in ways consistent with paratones (Yule, 1980). The incremental, list-like nature of these pitches is also organised through matching pitch contours for each incremental contribution. This perception of a slow-paced, clearly articulated speech is also supported by forms of hyperarticulation, for example, by considerable segmental lengthening at phrase boundaries on accented, but especially, also final unaccented syllables (e.g., in Excerpt 1, line 1, the length of the final [o] and [s] on the final unstressed syllable of “ami:go::s::”). Fig. 4 shows the organisation of different components in the sales pitch of one vendor (AV1L) that are produced in a series with matching contours, finishing in segmental lengthening, and separated by pitch resets and silence.

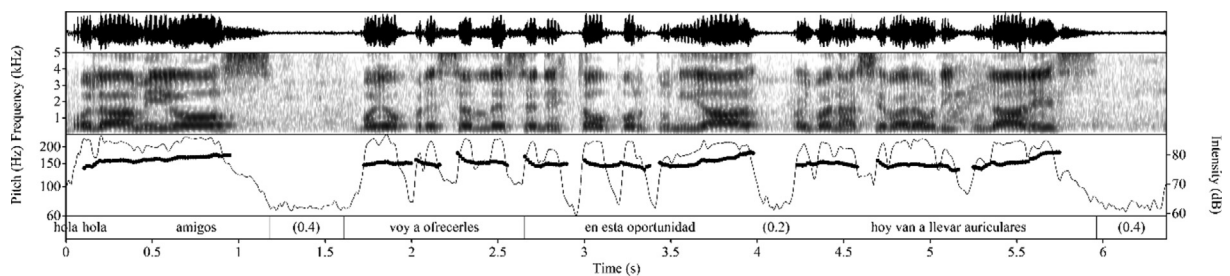


Fig. 4. Acoustic visualisation (waveform, spectrogram, f0 and intensity trace) of incremental contributions in the sales pitch of AV1L, each separated by silence and with an initial pitch reset on the first syllable, and with matching intonation contours. [Translated text: “Hello, friends” (0.4) “I’m going to offer in this opportunity” (0.2) “You’re going to get a pair of headphones” (0.4)]. The last two segments in “amigos” are highlighted for appreciation of length.

4.2.3. Product presentation and demonstration

Once the AVs have established their presence visually and auditorily, they introduce the product and the offer incrementally in the form of lists. Typically, the first action is the announcement of the imminent presentation of a product/offer. Instead of naming the product straightaway, the AVs create momentum by displaying it visually, and then they verbally build up interest by foregrounding a particular quality of the product through positive assessment terms (e.g., Excerpt 2, line 3) until it is named and topicalised (e.g., Excerpt 3, line 5). Hence, showing how visibly bodily actions (lifting the product) can precede, supplement and augment similar verbal actions.

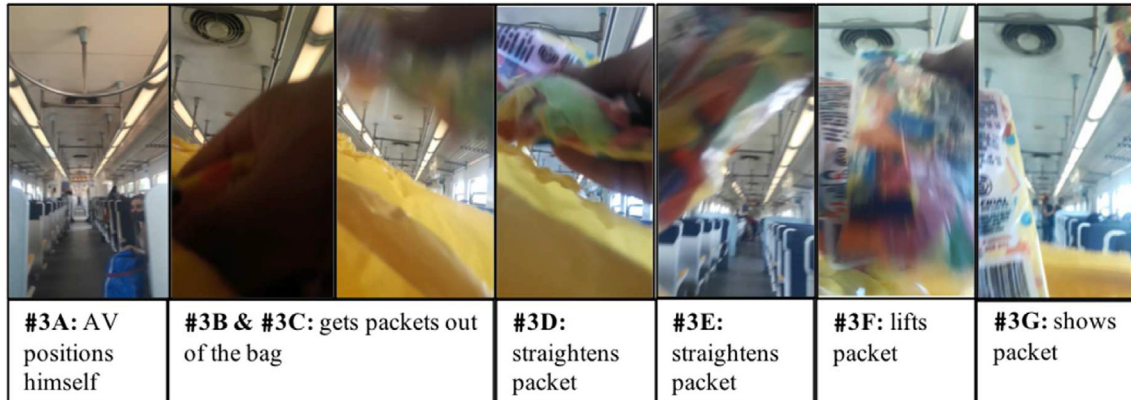
Excerpt 2. AV2N_6A

```

((positions himself in the clearing and takes two packets out
of the bag))
1 AV1N: #les #↑traigo señoreh. = >la alegría. = la #diver|sión<
I bring to you, Sirs, the joy, the fun
Img. #3A #3B #3C #3D
2 = para los máh ↑chico del ho↑ga:r? # (1.1)
for the little ones at home.
Img. #3E

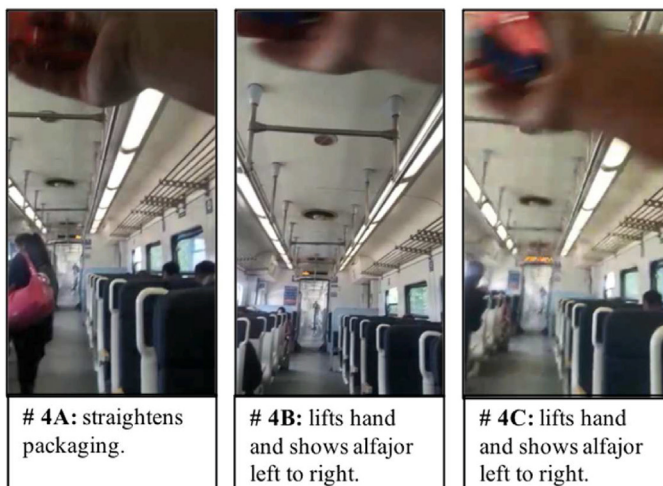
```


3 ↑la <#CLASICA:> = bombita de agua. = #bon**m**bucha. = señores.
 the classic water balloon, 'bombbucha', Sirs,
 Img. #3F #3G
 4 = o**↑ri**ginal. = e:h? (3.2)
 (the) original, huh?



Excerpt 3. AV2N_5D

2 AV2N: **les #traigo; para disfrutar durante el viaje = señores=**
 I bring to you, to enjoy during the journey, Sirs
 Img. #4A
 (*(lifts wagon wheel and shows from left to right->1.5)*)
 3 **= una verdadera ex#quisitez**
 A true delicacy
 Img. #4B
 4 **(0.9)**
 5 **el alfajor triple Fan#toche**
 the alfajor Fantoche
 Img. #4C
 6 **(0.7)**
 7 **riquísimo alfajor = señores =**
 super delicious alfajor Sirs
 8 **=conocido por su propaganda televisiva**
 well-known from its TV commercial



Together with the naming of the product, where appropriate, the brand is mentioned. AVs thus appeal to the reputation of the product they are selling, foregrounding its authenticity (“the original”, Excerpt 2, line 4) or its recognisability (“well-known for its TV commercial”, Excerpt 3, line 8). They also assess the product, employing intensified forms of positive assessments, from augmentatives (“super delicious”, Excerpt 3, line 7) to intensified positive adjectival phrases (“a true delicacy”, Excerpt 3 line 3) which convey a projected positive customer experience.

Another component of the product presentation stage involves the introduction of the personal affordances of the product in the form of projected uses and target users/beneficiaries. As seen in Excerpt 2 above, the water balloons are for the “youngest ones at home” and the *alfajores*⁴ “to enjoy during the journey”, hence making relevant cultural practices and the normativity associated with the product. Other AVs mention possible locations where the products can be placed or kept, as shown in Excerpt 4, below (“for your purse or bag”, line 48), and their practical affordances (“to do your calculations”, line 55).

The product presentation, part of the middle of the sales pitch, displays the AVs’ knowledge of the product and entails product placement. It creates a product need by orienting to their knowledge of the passenger collective, their possible routines and interests. The AVs thus adapt their pitch to the relevance of immediate or personal use of the product for passengers. While edible products can be consumed on the spot, other products may be more difficult to place and are treated as potential gifts or as useful items to have at hand (Excerpt 4, lines 60–62).

Excerpt 4. AV4R_12C

48 AV4R: **para la cartera = para el bolso =**
for the purse for the bag
 49 **=tengan ustedes muy buenos días (0.2)**
you all have a nice day
 50 **presento y entrego como siempre**
I present and deliver as usual
 51 **el anotador con la lapicera**
the notepad with the pen
 52 **(0.2)**
(lines 53–54 omitted)
 55 **para las cuentas (.) para llevarle a los chicos**
For your calculations, to take to the kids
 56 **y tenerloh entretenidoh (0.2)**
And keep them entertained
(lines 57–59 omitted)
 60 **también es cierto(.)que al momento de querer anotar algo**
It’s also true that in those moments you want to take
something down
 61 **(.) no encontramos ninguna de las doh cosah (.)**
we can’t find either of them
 62 **ni papel ni lapicera**
neither paper nor pen

In addition to mentioning the product’s uses and beneficiaries, the AVs devote a part of their pitch to listing the technical affordances of the product, where relevant. The specifications, such as their compatibility, flavour, colour, or weight, are presented in ways that display product knowledge and audience orientation (i.e., ensuring these are understandable to the passengers). Technical or complex vocabulary is first mentioned and then reformulated as an appositional to offer a lay version of the product’s general value, as show in Excerpt 5 (see also Excerpt 11.6, line 31).

Excerpt 5. AV1L_1^a

1 AV1L: **la ficha es universal. (0.3)**
the plug is universal
 2. **↑sirve para cualquier marca.**
It works with all brands

As with many parentheticals (Dehé, 2009), the reformulations are produced with matching intonation contours to those of their referents (Fig. 5):

⁴ Alfajor is a typical type of confectionary. It consists of soft, cornstarch cookies that are filled with goeey dulce de leche (a caramel-like spread).

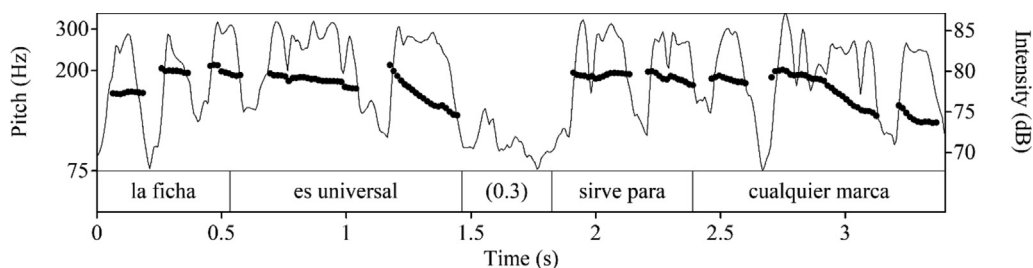
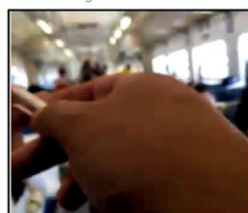


Fig. 5. Acoustic visualisation (f0 and intensity trace) showing the intonational configuration of the appositional reformulation (Excerpt 8, lines 1–2).

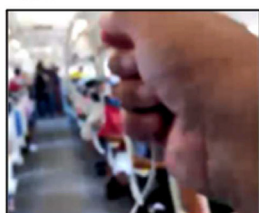
Normally, the description of the products' technical features tends to be accompanied with visible bodily demonstrations including deictic gestures, in the form of a composite utterance (Enfield, 2009) where the verbal and gestural are presented together as one. In Excerpt 6, Images 9A-D, AV1L's description of the product's affordances is simultaneously accomplished across modalities allowing thus for its concurrent description and demonstration.

Excerpt 6: AV1L₁^a

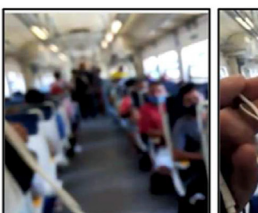
4 AV1L: hoy van a llevar auricula:res:,
 Today you are going to take (with you) headphones
 5 universales, = estereofó:nicos:, (0.5)
 (they are) universal = stereophonic (sound)
 6 con: manos ↑li:bre:s::, (0.5)
 hands free
 7 para:: celu:lares:. -= audios. = tablet. (0.5)
 for mobile phones, audios, tablets
 8 ↓co:mpu:ta↓do:ras:, (1.6)
 computers
 ((raises left arm holding the bunch of headphones and
 extends one of them with right hand))
 9 para con↑solas de ↓ju:go:h.=
 for (video) game consoles
 ((points at in-line volume control and uses the
 controls with his right hand))
 10 =.h tie:nen #micró:fono, = tie:nen
 (They) have (a) microphone (they) have
 Img. #9A
 11 control: (.) de vo#lumen en el ca:ble, (0.2)
 control volume control in the cable
 Img. #9B
 12 de #↑largo miden un metro ve:inte:, (0.3)
 (they are) one metre twenty long
 Img. #9C
 13 viene con #↑ficha universa:l. (.)
 (it) comes with (a) universal plug
 Img. #9D



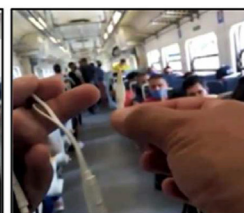
#9A: touches and holds volume control



#9B: holds volume control and shows cable



#9C: stretches the cable



#9D: points at the plug

4.2.4. Product demonstration and quality control

Another way in which AVs reveal their professionalism and build their legitimacy during their pitch is by publicly demonstrating that the items on sale are in perfect order and by inviting passengers to inspect them and ascertain their quality (e.g., Excerpt 7 below). By providing openness and an opportunity for inspection and testing (see Mondada, 2022), AVs build trust in what could otherwise be seen as a fleeting encounter with no guarantees for the customer. They also specify the no-purchase-obligation commitment of handling the product for inspection (Excerpt 8, line 9), therefore, providing an opportunity to allure unsure prospects to take the plunge. Technical descriptions and product demonstrations indicate what AVs understand is expected in terms of service and how they rise to this challenge despite having no sales support.

Excerpt 7. AV4R_16b

22 AV4R: **para llevarlo con total confianza(.)**
 to acquire them in complete confidence
 23 **tenemos para probarla (.)**
 we have means to test them
 24 **igualmente están probadas y revisadas**
 in any case they have been tested and checked

Excerpt 8. AV1L_1^a

7 AV1L: **si querés verlo mejor.**
 if you want to see it better
 8 **o lo querés probar, = con tu celula::r? =**
 or you want to test it with your own mobile
 9 **sin compromiso.**
 no commitment/no strings attached

4.2.5. Price and offer

AVs typically end their pitch with a description of the price and the offer, which they verbally design as a good value for money, as an offer that cannot be found elsewhere and is exclusive to the day or week (e.g., Excerpt 9, line 16 and Excerpt 10, line 8 below). Some vendors offer bulk buys, while others a single product at a reduced price. The offer is contrasted to the opportunities that may be found at retailers (e.g., Excerpt 9, line 14, Excerpt 10, lines 6–8). Its temporary nature is highlighted with adverbs and adjectives that present the offer as exceptional, exclusive, and timely, as an opportunity to be grasped from the comfort of the passengers' seats during the temporality of the sales encounter. Normally, the offer and the price tend to be grammatically topicalised via processes of direct object fronting (e.g., Excerpt 9, lines 17–18 and Excerpt 10, line 10).

Excerpt 9. AV2N_5D

14 AV2N: **este alfajor se abona en kiosco (.)**
 this wagon wheel costs in kiosks
 15 **cuarenta y cinco cincuenta pesos la unidad: (0.8)**
 forty-five, fifty pesos per unit
 16 **hoy le voy hacer entrega = señores =**
 today I will deliver it to you, Sirs
 17 **la oferta se van a llevar (0.5)**
 the offer, you'll take it
 18 **tres unidades cien pesos les cobro**
 Three units, a hundred pesos I charge you

Excerpt 10. AV2N_6A

6 AV2N: **>este paquete,< = se abona en kioscos,**
 This package costs in kiosks
 7 **ciento o↑chenta, = dos↓cientos pesos. (2.2)**
 one hundred eighty, two hundred pesos.
 8 **les ↑traigo la oferta. = se↓ñores.**
 I bring an offer to you, Sirs.
 9 **= el pa↑quete contiene. = ↑cien unida:des, (0.9)**
 The package contains one hundred units.
 10 **↑CIEN pesos. = les cobro, (0.8)**
 One hundred pesos, (I) charge (you).

So far, it has been shown how body motion—from a stationary (not walking) point to a state in motion—marks the major stages of the sales pitch (pre-sales stage, middle and extended sales pitch, and post-sales), and how its components are constituted by the interdependent articulation of verbal and visible actions. It has been observed how visible actions can advance product topicalisation and complement its verbal presentation (e.g., Excerpts 2 and 3), and that visible actions (touching, holding and showing) are simultaneously accompanied by similar verbal actions (description of affordances) and presented as one (Excerpt 6).

The coordination of multimodal resources displays AVs' abilities and experience in managing the deficient conditions of working on trains (e.g., passengers' visual field during the middle of the pitch, manipulating products on a moving train). Next, the paper concentrates on one full sales pitch from one of the AVs to further illustrate the assemblages of multimodal practices to present the product, resolve technical problems *in situ*, and offer a competitive price according to the stages of pitch described.

5. The distribution of multimodal resources to deal with product challenges: the case of LED lamps

AV4R is of particular interest because she faces multiple challenges in relation to product versatility, in addition to those regularly posed by the conditions of informal work on trains. The focus in this section is on how AV4R uses different multimodal resources to gain passengers' attention, generate interest and deal with product challenges: how different modes are simultaneously coordinated or alternated, hence giving prominence to verbal or visible actions together to maximise time-management and selling opportunities across their pitch.

In Excerpt 11 below, AVR4 is offering LED light bulbs. Among all the products offered by AVs in our corpus, LED bulbs can present a higher number of disadvantages, especially as far as their manipulation and demonstration are concerned (cf. headphones and water balloons), as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Advantages (+) and disadvantages (–) of the selling LED lights.

General characteristics	LED lights
Brand	Generic (–)
Size	Big (–)
Material	Fragile (glass) (–)
Consumption	Home – not immediate (–)
Test product	Difficult (–)
Price	Offer (+)
Refund	No return/no refund policy (–)

Once AV4R has positioned herself in a central location in the coach (see section 4.1) without obstructing passengers' movement, she prepares the LED lights to sell. She carries a small trolley to store the rest of the bulbs (image 13C below); hence, embodying the storage room of a shop. It takes her almost 19 s to get the product ready (images 13D, 13E) before starting the sales pitch and presenting the product (Excerpt 11.1, line 2 below). She first gets a light bulb out of the trolley for display and then a portable power source that she places by her side within easy reach (image 13C-E).

Excerpt 11.1: AV4R

1 AV4R ((walks and stands in the clearing of the coach))
2 # (18.8)
Img. #13A–F



5.1. Opening the sales pitch from a stationary point

After positioning herself and starting the sales pitch, AV4R deals with the difficulty of being interrupted by another vendor offering products in the same coach (Excerpt 11.2, lines 3–14 below). Excerpt 11.2 captures how space is negotiated among co-workers before AV4R re-starts the pitch with a verbatim repetition of her previous attempt (lines 13–14).

Excerpt 11.2: AV4R

```

3 AV4R      hola qué ta:l =
             hello how are you
4           =cómo les va. = >tengan ustedes bue:nah tardeh.<
             how are you doing? = have a good afternoon
5           ↑voy a prese:ntar, = algo [útil= necesas]rio
             I'm going to present something useful and necessary
6 AVX              [las bebidas fri:as,]
                   cool drinks
7           (0.8)
8           agua saboriza:da:, = a:gua minera:l,
             flavoured water mineral water
             ((to fellow AV))
9 AV4R      da:le bolú?
             go on mate
10          (2.3)
11          hace:lo.
             do it
             ((takes a light bulb out of a box, puts another one in,
             rummages about in her trolley))
12          (42.2)
13          hola qué ta:l (0.6)
             hello how are you
             ((holds a light bulb up with one hand))
14          cómo les va. = >tengan ustedes bue:nas tardes.<
             how are you doing? = have a good afternoon
             ((holds a light bulb up with one hand))

```


In both the initiation and re-initiation of the opening the vendor performs an extended “how-are-you”, formatted in a generic form first (“hola ¿qué tal?”, line 3) and then in a more personalised extended greeting (lines 4 and 14). She inserts the formal 2nd person plural (“ustedes:les”) with which she addresses the passengers as a collective and conveys respectful distance (Author 1) by recognising the passengers’ rights to unobtrusive journeys and the relational asymmetries between them.

5.2. Product presentation and demonstration

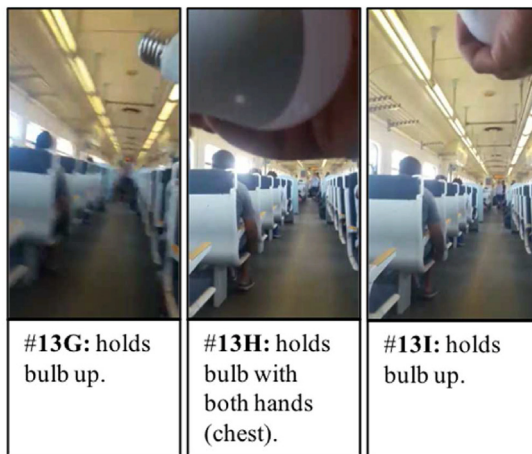
Next, the vendor announces the imminent introduction of the product. She does this by raising her hand with the light bulb towards the collective of the passengers while incrementally unpacking the general benefits of the product (“something useful, necessary”, Excerpt 11.3, line 16) without yet naming the product. In deploying this cataphoric reference (Leisch and Missagh, 2019) and “forward-gesturing” with her right hand (Streck, 2009), she indicates that the product will soon be revealed and creates an expectation for it, increasing the potential for attention and visibility of the product before it is named. In holding the bulb with one hand first, then with both hands and then raising one hand holding the bulb towards the visible upper periphery (Image 13G–I), she acts as a “rack” for the items on sale. This indicates the skilful manoeuvring of the some of the working conditions she faces while the train is on the move, and the sequential complementarity between modalities to grab the passengers’ attention in a time-sensitive manner.

Excerpt 11.3: AV4R

```

15          ↑voy a prese:ntar, (1.7) algo útil=
             I'm going to present something useful
16          = #necesario = #para el ho#gar. (0.7)
             necessary for your home


```



After this, AV4R presents the product verbally while simultaneously holding the light bulb for display (Excerpt 11.4, lines 17–21 below), combining technical and lay information for better product recognisability (lines 19–20). Concurrently to asserting one of its benefits (i.e., its energy-efficiency), she demonstrates how the product works using a power source (see also Excerpt 13.5, line 28), thus showing the confluence of modalities. Enhancement of product visibility is done through the subsequent lifting of the product and the light emanating from it (see Excerpt 14.5, line 24).

Excerpt 11.4: AV4R

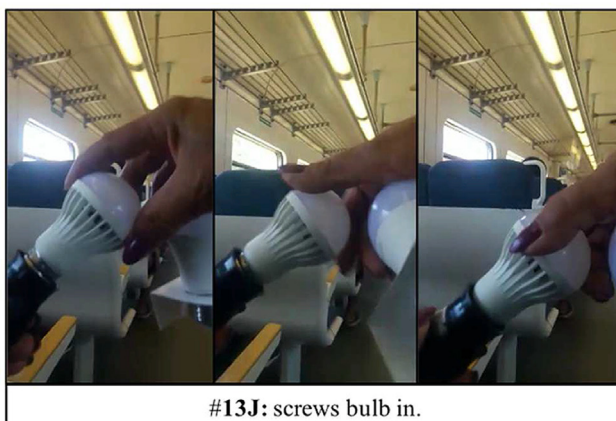
```

((holds bulb with right hand->1.21))
17  ↑↑DO:S medidas de lámpara. (0.22)
    Two bulb sizes
18  lámpara led, (0.14)
    LED bulb
19  para algunos la lámpara de luz día:,
    known to some as daylight lamp
20  = para otros la lámpara blanca. (0.45)
    to others as white lamp
    ((from 1.16-> ))((screws bulb in power source->1.22))
21  la luz blanca, (.) ↑obvio, (.) #las dos de bajo consumo. (0.45)
    white light lamp (.) obviously (.) both energy-
    efficient

```

Img.

#13J



AV4R later verbally unpacks the technical and personal affordances of the product in the form of a list, and divides the description into two, orienting to each lamp size in turn. She presents the features of the product displaying her professional knowledge of it, ensuring they are understandable to passengers by providing practical examples and using reformulations (e.g., Excerpt 11.5, lines 25–26 below) of the technical information presented.

At this point, AV4R tackles a further disadvantage of the product and the conditions under which it is being sold; it cannot be refunded or exchanged post-sale. By physically demonstrating its use live and early in the pitch, any potential passenger misgivings as to its proper functioning are pre-empted.

Excerpt 11.5: AV4R

```

((from 1.21))          ((unscrews bulb))
22  la lámpara de cinco ↑watts, (.) viene ideal,
    The five watts bulb (.) is ideal
    ((opens bag > rummages through bag))
23  #↑para::, (0.6) el velador.
    for the bedside lamp
Img.  #13K
24  #(5.5) + #(2.5) #
Img.  #13L  #13M  #13N
    ((holds bulb with LH)) ((unscrews it > puts 5w bulb in the bag))
25  >para el velador,< = >o algún espacio< redu#cido,
    For the bedside lamp or some reduced space
Img.  #13O
26  = un espacio chico.
    a small space
    ((holds 10w bulb in RH))
27  la de diez #↑watts, (0.7)
    The ten watts one
Img.  #13P
28  para el #comedor:: = la cocina. = el porch,
    For the dining room the kitchen or the porch
Img.  #13Q ->1.29
29  #dor::mitorio, (0.76)
    Bedroom
Img.  #13R

```



The verbal product presentation and bodily demonstration of its functioning are two separate actions of the pitch which, in this case, are done in parallel. Each bodily demonstration happens alongside the verbal introduction of the potential uses of each kind of lamp (5 W lamp in lines 22–26, 10 W lamp in lines 27–29), and provides visual evidence of their lighting power by testing each lamp with a power source.

However, while testing the first bulb, AV4R encounters a problem with the power source: it does not turn on. This is an unexpected issue that she handles promptly by unscrewing the lamp and trying again, verbally lengthening the word “para::/fo::r” and then momentarily suspending the verbal part of the pitch (lines 23–24). Once the problem is solved, she resumes

the pitch by repeating verbatim what was said prior to the interruption and continues her pitch (line 25) while simultaneously holding the now lit bulb.

Further technical features of the product are presented and accompanied with prosodically-matched reformulations using lay terms (Excerpt 11.6, lines 30–32 below, also Fig. 6).

Excerpt 11.6: AV4R

```

((points at the bulb))
30      tiene más watts, = ↓más potencia. (0.4) *
      it's got more watts more power
31      #*↑son: *inrrom*pibleh. (.) #r:existe:ncia a la lluvia. =
      They are unbreakable ("inbreakable") (.) resistant to the rain
Img.    #13S                                #13T
32      = >no se queman.< (0.6)
      they don't burn out

```

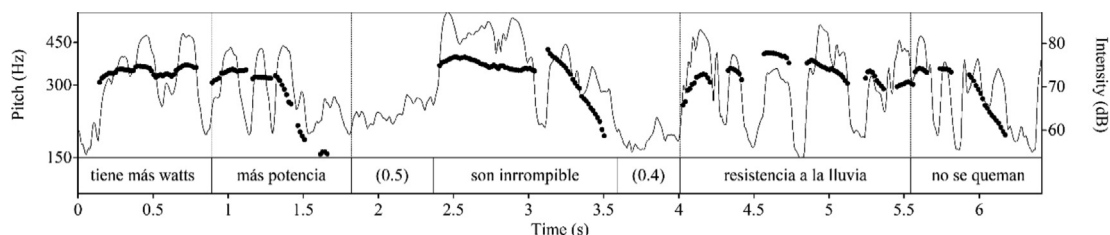
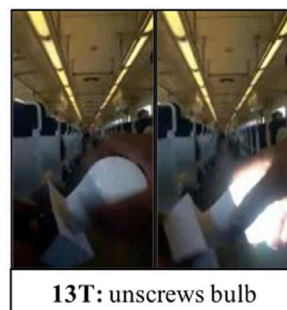
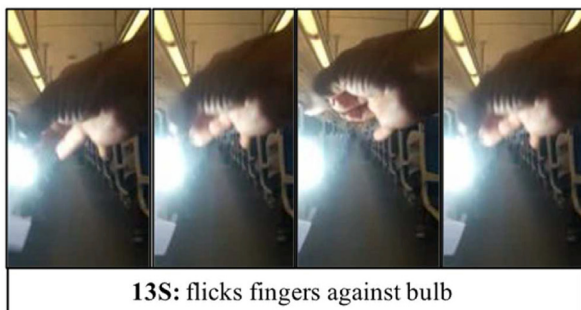


Fig. 6. Acoustic visualisation (f0 and intensity trace) of intonational configuration of the reformulating parentheticals.

The flicking allows once again to simultaneously describe and visually demonstrate the product. The durability features of the product are illustrated visually, making another form of “forward-gesturing”: the lamp’s sturdiness is demonstrated with four strong and noisy flicks of the finger against the bulb (marked with * in lines 30–31, see also images 14S–14T) before the shatterproof feature is presented verbally. The body of the vendor again works like a rack: with one hand as a ‘buoy’ (see Liddell et al., 2007 for the use of holds in sign language) holding the product, and the other one in motion pointing at its affordances (e.g., power, durability and resistance).

5.3. Offer and quality control

At the end of the *middle of the sales pitch*, the vendor announces the price and offer in preparation to the opening of the sales space, a new interactional space where the next relevant action would be a product inspection or purchase by the passengers. AV4R formulates the presentation of the offer in ways that are syntactically common to most AV sales pitches: through topicalisation as fronted direct objects (Excerpt 11.7- “this lamp ...”, line 33, “the offer”, line 36) and the use of periphrastic future tense - things that are “going to” happen - to refer to the price of the lamps (“per unit you will be paying”) with which she articulates a future passengers’ action in a non-imposing way. Likewise, the recommendation to take the offer is done in the passive voice (“they are offers to be taken”, line 38). Part of this stage also involves a proposal to re-test the product. Having

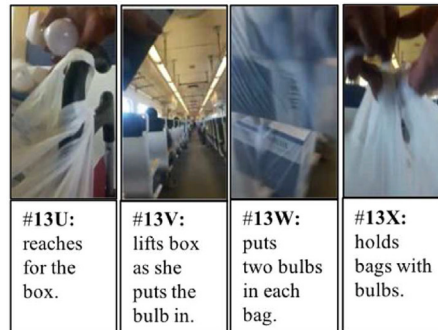
demonstrated its proper functioning earlier in the sales pitch, AV4R reassures passengers that all products have been tested (line 41) but that the invitation is open for passengers to check for themselves (line 43). This allows the AV to identify prospects.

Excerpt 11.7: AV4R

```

33      ((starts putting bulb in box ->1.37))
      #esta lámpara, (.) por unidad la van a estar abonando::,(.)
      This bulb (.) per unit you will be paying (.)
      Img.#13U
34      en el #valor: de
      the amount of
      Img. #13V ->1.37
35      cie:nto: veinte: la unidah. (0.7)
      of one hundred and twenty per unit
36      la oferta::, (.) lah dos por doscientoh.
      The offer (.) both for two hundred
37      = >la van a estar abonando.< = e:h?
      you will be paying = okay?
      ((puts box inside bag))
38      son ofer:tas para aprovechar. (0.5)
      They are offers to be taken
      ((puts bulbs in plastic bags))
39      #más >para este día.<
      especially on a day like today
      Img.#13W
40      doscie::ntoh pesos lah doh #lámpara = e:h?
      Two hundred pesos the two bulbs = okay?
      Img. #13X ->1.43
41      están probadah. = r:e:visada:, (.) pero si quigren,=
      They have been tested checked (.) but if you want
42      = las volvemos a probar >sin
      we can test them again
      ->1.41))
43      ningún compromiso.< = eh?
      No strings attached = huh?

```



While the special offer is presented verbally (lines 33–36), the visible bodily action is once again one step ahead of the sequence of the sales activity, hence carried out as a relatively separate action displayed in parallel. AV4R is preparing a set of bags with two boxes of lamps each (images 13U–13X), which she will eventually use during the coach round to offer the products to the passengers individually. The verbal pitch is, therefore, constructed in the present with projections into immediate future actions, while visible bodily actions prepare the merchandise for next actions (i.e., setting herself as the shop rack and window display) before approaching the passengers' seats and initiating the opening of the sales floor.

5.4. Summarised upshot of sales pitch

AV4R opens the sales floor by beginning her forward motion, walking along the coach and moving her torso slightly from left to right. She shows the product by holding it with her arm raised for the passengers to see (Excerpt 11.8, images 13Y–13Z) while providing a verbal summarised upshot of its technical affordances, as well as the price and offer, creating thus an extended middle of the pitch. The bags with the products are carried up and down the coach hanging from her wrists, while holding one box with a lamp in her hand (Excerpt 11.8, image 13AA).

Excerpt 11.8: AV4R

```

      ((walks along the coach > 1.46))
44      lámpara #led. (.) para la iluminación del hogar. = eh?
      LED lamp (.) to light up your home = huh?
      Img. #13Y
45      ↑do::s por dosc:ientos pesos. (0.6)
      Two for two hundred pesos
46      para el comedor. = el baño. = la cocina. (0.2)
      For the dining room the bathroom the kitchen
      ((turns around and walks in the opposite direction > 1.50))
47      también tenemos para el velador. = eh? (0.8)
      We also have some for the bedside lamp, huh?

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This study outlined some the multiple lexical, grammatical, and prosodic practices AVs draw on to increase passengers' attention. The sales pitch was performed with a higher volume and pitch range and a voice quality that is tenser than when they interact with co-workers, including stylised contours and sound lengthening reminiscent of proclamatory speech. Other elements which were geared to reeling in potential prospects included the use of cataphoric references to the product to build up interest and direct object fronting, product descriptions in the periphrastic future to introduce a unique buying opportunity, and the use of reformulations while listing the technical affordances of the product. They were presented in ways that displayed AVs' knowledge of the products and audience orientation, as evidenced by the way technical vocabulary was presented as an appositional with a view to simplifying complex information.

This article provided the first multimodal pragmatic analysis of the verbal and visible bodily practices that a group of AVs recur to in pursuit of their daily sustenance against some of the structural dimensions they inhabit as workers of the popular economy. These include their constrained agency relative to the products available for sale on any given day, and the unregulated nature of their work (lack of workers' rights and protection), as witnessed by their orientation to the legitimate position that passengers occupy on trains *vis à vis* their own. This was also observed by bodily practices oriented to passengers' right of way, the initiation of the sales encounters by accounting for their own presence, and the verbal practices in the sales pitch, constructed as a unique opportunity to bring instantaneous delivery of products to passengers' seats.

The practices reported in this paper were found to be product- and space-contingent. Future studies of products which, according to our corpus, require less extended pitches, such as beverages, will allow us to gain a more encompassing picture of the diversity of communicative practices that AVs draw on, and how these practices are assembled relative to the products on sale and levels of congestion on train coaches.

Within the ecology of a space where passengers and AVs are together, but also independent as the objective of their presence on the train is not coterminous with one another's, creating and sustaining passengers' interest in mundane products represents yet another challenge in their lives; one that these AVs skilfully manage as part of working on the trains.

Professionalism is not usually associated with workers of the popular economy such as AVs. However, this first real-time live conduct analysis of this group of AVs demonstrates the normative coordination of well-organised working practices that are conducted in a planful and orderly way.

Declaration of competing interest

I declare that the manuscript is not being considered by any other journal and that I have not used AI for writing it.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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