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LEARNING TO INTERACT IN SPANISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE:
AN EXAMINATION OF MITIGATION AND PARTICIPATION
IN CONVERSATIONAL ARGUMENTS

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Learning to Interact in Spanish as a Second Language:

An Examination of Mitigation and Participation in Conversational Arguments

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Arguments arise in the course of everyday interactions when one speaker disagrees with something that another speaker has said. The argument discourse of native speakers of a language has been investigated extensively (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998; Pomerantz, 1984; Schiffrin, 1985). However, only a limited number of empirical studies have examined argument interactions produced by second language (L2) learners, and L2 Spanish in particular is under investigated (Beebe and Takahashi, 1989; Cordella, 1996; Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, 2001).

This dissertation addresses the extent to which L2 Spanish learners are able to approximate native speakers in their argument discourse. It focuses on practices that are integral to one's ability to successfully negotiate arguments: linguistic mitigation and participation behaviors. In order to address this problem, conversational data were collected from 46 participants who completed two quasi-experimental protocols that were designed to elicit arguments: a prompted ranking conversation and a cooperative film narration. The analysis of the conversational data employed a mixed methods approach. Qualitative and quantitative analyses were triangulated with data generated by a metalinguistic protocol.

The study revealed that L2 Spanish learners are able to fully participate in conversational arguments, employing a variety of mitigating devices, but that they are not entirely target-like. That is, the analyses revealed that the L2 learners are felicitous in their use of mitigation to downgrade negative statements, but they tend to use a single mitigating device redundantly, whereas the native speakers draw on a broad repertoire of linguistic forms to fulfill most mitigating functions.

The significance of the study lies in advancing our knowledge of interlanguage pragmatics research by examining argument discourse in L2 Spanish, a problem that is largely under investigated. It sheds light on the patterns and tendencies that emerge among distinct L2 learner and native speaker groups in the context of arguments produced in a university-institutional setting.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to
the life and memory of my mammaw,
Lena Mae Horn. Thank you.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
Abstract of the dissertation	ii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Chapter 1: Introduction	
1.1: Problem, rationale, and scope	1
1.2: Research questions	3
1.3: Outline of the dissertation	3
Chapter 2: Review of literature	
2.1: Introduction	5
2.2: Pragmatics, SLA, relational work, and conversation	5
2.3: Argument discourse and mitigation	11
2.4: Institutional talk	19
2.5: Review of empirical research on arguments	21
2.5.1: Arguments in L1	21
2.5.2: Arguments in L2	29
2.6: Research questions	41
Chapter 3: Methodology	
3.1: Introduction	43
3.2: Pilot study	43
3.3: Participants	46
3.4: Instruments and data collection	49
3.5: Data analysis	55
Chapter 4: Findings of qualitative analysis	
4.1: Introduction	62
4.2: Ranking conversation protocol	63
4.2.1: Mitigation attested in the ranking conversation protocol	63
4.2.1.1: Parenthetical verbs	65
4.2.1.1.1: Summary of findings- parenthetical verbs	72
4.2.1.2: Subjunctive mood and conditional aspect	74
4.2.1.2.1: Summary of findings- subjunctive and conditional	80
4.2.1.3: Discourse markers that function as mitigating devices	82
4.2.1.3.1: Summary of findings- discourse markers	93

Section	Page
4.2.1.4: Tag questions and challenge questions	94
4.2.1.4.1: Summary of findings- tag and challenge questions	101
4.2.1.5: Token agreements	102
4.2.1.5.1: Summary of findings- token agreements	109
4.2.1.6: Pauses	110
4.2.1.6.1: Summary of findings- pauses	114
4.2.1.7: Epistemic disclaimers	115
4.2.1.7.1: Summary of findings- epistemic disclaimers	118
4.2.1.8: Hedges, bushes, and shields	121
4.2.1.8.1: Summary of findings- hedges, bushes, and shields	124
4.2.2: Participation behaviors in the ranking conversation protocol	125
4.2.2.1: Summary of findings- participation behaviors in the ranking conversation protocol	137
4.3: Film narration protocol	139
4.3.1: Mitigating devices in the film narration protocol	140
4.3.1.1: Summary of findings- mitigation in the film narration protocol	149
4.3.2: Participation behaviors in the film narration protocol	150
4.3.2.1: Summary of findings- participation behaviors in the film narration protocol	158
4.4 Chapter summary	159
Chapter 5: Findings of quantitative analysis	
5.1: Introduction	162
5.2: Quantitative analysis of mitigating devices	162
5.2.1: Discursive variables that intersect with mitigation	171
5.2.2: Summary of quantitative analysis of mitigating devices	176
5.3: Quantitative analysis of behaviors of participation	177
5.3.1: Summary of quantitative analysis of behaviors of participation	183
5.4: Social variables that intersect with mitigation and behaviors of participation	184
5.5 Chapter summary	188
Chapter 6: Findings of metalinguistic protocol	
6.1: Introduction	189
6.2: Themes in the metalinguistic narratives	189
6.3: Triangulation	197

Section	Page
6.3.1: Mitigation, participation, and institutional roles in the ranking conversation protocol	198
6.3.2: Mitigation, participation, and institutional roles in the film narration protocol	204
6.4: Chapter summary	209
Chapter 7: Summary	
7.1: Summary of the study	211
7.2: Summary of the findings	213
7.2.1: Mitigation devices and participation behaviors	213
7.2.2: Variables that condition the presence and use of mitigation and participation behaviors	215
7.2.3: The role of the university-institutional context in shaping argument discourse	217
Chapter 8: Discussion	
8.1: Introduction	220
8.2: L2 argument discourse and SLA	220
8.3: Theoretical approaches to interlanguage pragmatics	225
8.4: Pedagogical implications	227
Chapter 9: Conclusion	
9.1: Introduction	232
9.2: Limitations of the study	232
9.3: Future research	234
9.4: Final remarks	237
Appendices	
Appendix A: Transcription conventions	239
Appendix B: Background questionnaire for L2 Spanish participants	240
Appendix C: Background questionnaire for native Spanish speaker participants	243
Appendix D: Conversational prompts for NS, INT, ADV participants	244
Appendix E: Conversational prompts for NINS participants	250
Appendix F: Metalinguistic interview questions for L2 Spanish participants	253
Appendix G: Metalinguistic interview questions for native NS participants	254
Appendix H: Translations of excerpts and examples produced in ranking conversation and film narration protocols	255
Appendix I: Translations of NS commentary produced in metalinguistic protocol	273
Bibliography	275

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
Table 1: The raw frequencies of mitigating devices in the corpus of two protocols according to participant group	163
Table 2: The distribution of parenthetical verbs as mitigating devices in two protocols according to participant group	165
Table 3: The distribution of the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect as mitigating devices in two protocols according to participant group	166
Table 4: The distribution of tag questions as mitigating devices in two protocols according to participant group	167
Table 5: The distribution of challenge questions as mitigating devices in two protocols according to participant group	168
Table 6: The distribution of challenge questions across protocols according to participant group	169
Table 7: The distribution of epistemic disclaimers as mitigating devices in two protocols according to participant group	170
Table 8: The distribution of mitigation in the conversational turn structure in two protocols according to participant group	172
Table 9: The distribution of redundant uses of a single mitigating device in a single turn in two protocols according to participant group	174
Table 10: The distribution of the co-occurrence of mitigating devices in a single turn in two protocols according to participant group	176
Table 11: The raw frequencies of behaviors of participation in two protocols according to participant group	178
Table 12: The distribution of participation behaviors in two protocols according to participant group	179
Table 13: The distribution of latches across the argument turn structure according to participant group	181
Table 14: The distribution of overlaps across the argument turn structure according to participant group	182
Table 15: The distribution of mitigation across protocols according to participant group	185
Table 16: The distribution of behaviors of participation across protocols according to participant group	186

LIST OF CHARTS

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
Chart 1: Participants and dyadic pairs in conversational protocols	55
Chart 2: Dyads in ranking conversation protocol	63
Chart 3: Types of mitigating devices employed by each speaker group in the film narration protocol	149
Chart 4: Differences observed between the INT and ADV group with regard to the use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors	222

LIST OF GRAPHS

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
Graph 1: Themes invoked by each participant group in metalinguistic narratives regarding the ranking conversation protocol	192
Graph 2: Themes invoked by each participant group in metalinguistic narratives regarding the film narration protocol	195

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents the problem, rationale, and scope of the study. The chapter concludes with an outline of the organization of the remaining sections of the dissertation.

1.1 Problem, rationale, and scope

The problem investigated in this dissertation is the extent to which the argument discourse of L2 Spanish learners can be said to approximate that of native speakers of the target language. The term *argument* refers to the series of communicative actions that occur when one speaker challenges a claim that another speaker has made (Toulmin, Rieke and Janik, 1979). Arguments are inherently negative and entail a variety of practices, including linguistic mitigation and behaviors of participation, which speakers employ to help achieve a smooth, successful interaction (Antaki, 1994; Pomerantz, 1984; Schifffrin, 1985). Thus, arguments depend upon both aspects of pragmatic ability identified by Leech (1983): *socio-pragmatic* and *pragma-linguistic*.

Communicative interactions index *relational work* (Watts, 2003), and the language and behavior that individuals utilize in their relational work is informed by prior knowledge and experience, and is negotiated *in situ*. However, theoretical accounts of arguments are based on an idealized scheme in which the participants are competent speakers of the same language (Antaki, 1994), giving rise to the question of how the discourse of L2 learners differs from that of native speakers. In the present study I address this lacuna by examining the linguistic mitigation devices and participation behaviors that are employed in conversational argument interactions.

Empirical research supports the theoretical orientation of relational work: that their social and cultural background as well as their ability to speak the language inform the choices a speaker makes in expressing an argument (Cordella, 1996; Dippold, 2007; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Kreutel, 2007; Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, 2001; Schiffrin, 1997; Tannen, 1993). The context or socio-pragmatic aspects (i.e., setting and interlocutor) of an interaction is known to influence speakers, given that they approach a communicative situation with a pre-existing notion of how they should interact. Since context plays a significant role in any interaction, and especially for L2 learners (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1993, 1996, 2005; Dings, 2012; Heritage and Clayman, 2010; Vickers, 2010; Williams, 2005), the present study examines the effects of institutional membership and setting in addition to focusing on how language use varies according to language status (i.e., L2 learner or native speaker). To that end, the study draws on data collected within the realm of an institution of higher education, as well as outside of this setting.

While a substantial and growing body of literature exists regarding the arguments of native speakers of a language, empirical studies of arguments in second languages are few, and these few report primarily on arguments between native English speakers and English language learners (e.g., Beebe and Takahashi, 1989; García, 1989; Rees-Miller, 2000; Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, 2001). The argument discourse of native Spanish speakers (i.e., Cordella, 1996; Edstrom, 2004), and particularly learners of Spanish as a second language, (i.e., Cordella, 1996) remains largely under investigated. With that in mind, this study advances the fields of second language acquisition (SLA)

and pragmatics by contributing new empirical findings and by employing a comparative, mixed-method design that focuses on argument discourse in L2 Spanish.

In order to advance our knowledge of argument discourse in L2 Spanish, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1.2 Research Questions

1. To what extent are L2 Spanish learners able to approximate native Spanish speakers in their use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors in the context of conversational arguments produced in two protocols (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration)?

- What mitigation devices and participation behaviors are characteristic of L2 Spanish learners (i.e., intermediates and advanced) and native Spanish speakers (i.e., institutional and non-institutional)?

2. What social or non-linguistic variables condition the presence and use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors in the argument interactions generated in two protocols (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration)?

- Language status (e.g., intermediate learner, advanced learner, native speaker, non-institutional native speaker)
- Protocol (e.g., film narration, ranking conversation)
- Interlocutor type (dyad) (e.g., learner to learner, learner to native, native to native)
- Number of years spent studying Spanish (learners' formal schooling)

3. In what ways are the participation behaviors and mitigating devices employed by L2 Spanish learners (i.e., intermediates and advanced) and native Spanish speakers (i.e., institutional and non-institutional) impacted by the university-institutional discursive setting?

1.3 Outline of the dissertation

This chapter has introduced the statement of the problem, scope, rationale, and research questions that served as infrastructure for the study. Next, chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, focusing on the main theoretical orientations and empirical research that inform the study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, i.e., the study design and procedures for collecting and analyzing data, while chapter 4 presents the

results of a qualitative analysis of mitigation and participation. Next, chapter 5 contains the findings of a quantitative analysis, which attends to the variables that condition the use and presence of mitigation and participation behaviors. Chapter 6 presents the analysis and triangulation of metalinguistic narratives collected in the study. Chapter 7 gives a summary of all of the findings yielded by the analyses in chapters 4, 5, and 6, and these results are discussed in chapter 8. Finally, chapter 9 concludes the dissertation with remarks on the study's limitations and suggestions for future research in this area of investigation.

Chapter 2: Review of the literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to reviewing the multiple strands of research that informed the present study. First, I situate the study in the fields of pragmatics and SLA, and introduce the theoretical model of *relational work* and the approach of Conversation Analysis. Next, I give an overview of approaches to argument discourse and discuss linguistic mitigation and behaviors of participation. A brief summary of the concept of institutional talk and its relevance to the investigation of L2 conversations follows this section. Next, I review the relevant empirical research on mitigation in arguments, and, finally, re-introduce the research questions that ground the study.

2.2 Pragmatics, SLA, relational work, and conversation

The present study focuses on the ability of language learners to understand and fully participate in argument interactions in their L2. As such, this research is concerned with interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), or the intersection of two lines of inquiry: pragmatics, and second language acquisition. Mey defines pragmatics succinctly as "the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society" (2001:6). Pragmatics includes both the social aspects that affect communication, or socio-pragmatics, and the linguistic means of expressing meaning, or pragma-linguistics (Leech, 1983). SLA focuses on the factors and process of developing knowledge and ability in a target, non-dominant language (Ellis, 1997; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991). These definitions are necessarily broad, with the goal of encompassing the many distinct areas of research encompassed by the terms *pragmatics* and *SLA*.

Early research in pragmatics was concerned with examining and understanding the linguistic behaviors of individuals in communication and the influences that shaped them. Much of this work was undertaken by philosophers, such as Austin (1962), Searle (1969), and Grice (1975), who theorized about the structure of utterances, implicatures, and rules of conversation and interaction. Grice's Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims, and Goffman's (1967) concept of face, in particular, served as two points of departure for a new line of inquiry as scholars reframed pragmatics in terms of politeness (Culpeper, 2011). In the 1980s, scholars such as Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1987) developed theoretical frameworks of linguistic politeness that served as models for a large body of empirical research that dominated the field of linguistic pragmatics until the mid 1990s (Culpeper, 2011; Watts, 2003).

Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987) has been the model most often employed in politeness studies (Culpeper, 2011). Central tenets of the theory include an iteration of Goffman's (1967) concept of *face* or self-image, and the claim that all individuals possess both positive and negative face, which motivate strategies of politeness. Politeness, in turn, is conceptualized as an effort to redress face threatening acts, which vary according to the variables of distance, power, and ranking or degree of imposition.

Although scholars continue to employ aspects of Brown and Levinson's model to conduct research in the field of pragmatics (e.g., Barros-García and Terkourafi, 2014; Czerwionka, 2012), their approach has been criticized for several reasons. A main area of critique is Brown and Levinson's claim that politeness is universal. Several scholars have argued against universality and demonstrated that politeness is culturally and locally

occasioned, positing that the theory is incapable of addressing key question of cross-cultural or interlinguistic empirical research, such as variation (e.g., Bravo, 1999; Eelen, 2001; Schneider, 2012).

A second critique of Brown and Levinson's model stems from the operationalizing of politeness as a binary- positive or negative- as opposed to a continuum (Culpeper, 2011; Watts, 2003). Culpeper (2010, 2011, 2012), in advancing the field of (im)politeness research, has argued that impoliteness and politeness should be interpreted as degrees of a single phenomenon.

Yet another approach is articulated by Watts (2003) and Locher and Watts (2005), which suggests that politeness is in fact a question of interpersonal relations and of appropriateness. In the present study, language and behavior are positioned in the context of their use by approaching them as artifacts that are borne out of social interaction. This perspective draws on the theoretical framework proffered by Watts (2003), and Locher and Watts (2005), who view interpersonal communication as *relational work*.

Relational work, as Locher and Watts define the idea, refers to "the work individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others" (2005:10). Watts further explains that relational work encompasses both verbal and non-verbal behavior and involves the social practice of achieving "comity, mutual concern for others, concern to uphold face needs", and importantly, social norms (2003: 202). This model incorporates, and in many ways is parallel to, Goffman's (1967) notion of face and facework. Goffman defined face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (1967: 5). Locher and Watts describe face as "rather like masks, on loan to us for the duration of different kinds of

performance" (2005:12). In other words, each individual performs a role, or relational work, based on the needs and expectations conferred by the specific interaction. The authors further explain that there exist different levels, or degrees, of relational work that participants invoke in social interaction, but that the majority of relational work is unmarked, or politic and appropriate.

The concept of *politic behavior* describes "linguistic behavior which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction" (Watts, 2003:19). Following Locher and Watts, much relational work in a given interaction will be unmarked and will go unnoticed (2005:11). It is the unmarked behavior that is politic. Thus, relational work is performed in the service of politic behavior.

Politic behavior is based on Bordieu's Theory of Practice (1990) and the idea of *habitus*, or "the set of dispositions to behave in a manner which is appropriate to the social structures objectified by an individual through her/his experience of social interaction" (Watts, 2003:161). Locher and Watts (2005) specify that habitus is parallel to the theoretical concept of frames or structures of expectation (e.g., Goffman, 1974; Escandell-Vidal, 1996; Tannen, 1993). More specifically, they argue that "appropriateness is determined by the frame or habitus of the participants within which face is attributed to each participant by others in accordance with the lines taken in the interaction" (2005:17).

A final, significant feature of politic behavior is that it "may or may not be strategic" (Locher and Watts, 2005:16). The question of strategic communication is especially relevant to the investigation and analysis of L2 discourse. Following Watts (2003), and Locher and Watts (2005), we would expect that the habitus invoked by L2

learners would be distinct from the habitus of native speakers, given that, as language learners they are drawing on a restricted quantity and type of experiential information related to their use of the language. Thus, the theoretical orientation of relational work informs the present study by foregrounding the social aspect of communication, and by illuminating several key factors that shape language and behavior, which can be summed up as follows: Keeping in mind that context is dynamic, relational work is performed in an effort to be appropriate (i.e., politic), which is in turn based on the communicative needs at hand and on speakers' background knowledge and experiences (i.e., their habitus).

The view that communicative interaction is fundamentally relational work supports a discourse analytic approach L2 conversation. Stubbs offers a concise, comprehensive definition, stating that discourse analysis "unites the study of language, action, knowledge and situation" (1983:1). In other words, the objective of discourse analysis is to consider language, or linguistic form, in the context in which it occurs, and according to the communicative functions it serves. The present research focuses particularly on conversation, as opposed to other types of discourse, such as written texts or monologues, because it is a type of social interaction. As Kasper and Rose argue, interaction is a process that *enables* learning (2002:65). Therefore, in the present study, L2 conversation is conceptualized as the means through which we can broaden our understanding of both pragmatics and SLA, by approaching conversation as the nexus where language acquisition and use converge.

The present work utilizes Conversation Analysis (CA) as an approach to L2 discourse. CA is concerned with "talk-in-interaction", which, following Heritage and

Atkinson, describes "the procedures by which conversationalists produce their own behavior and understand and deal with the behavior of others" (1984:1). CA is a method that allows the researcher to focus on both the interplay between speakers throughout an interaction, at the macro-level, and their linguistic behavior at the utterance-, or micro-level (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984; Schegloff, 2007). While CA originally emerged as a tool for sociological research, it has been established as an appropriate and productive method for linguistic inquiry because it allows us to examine language use through the lens of a particular context. As Wagner affirms, CA allows us to "zoom in on the interplay between participants in the social setting" (2004:614). Within this approach, the researcher can observe the linguistic forms as they are used by speakers to carry out different actions. The present study unites the theoretical model of relational work with application of CA in order to achieve the goal of examining pragmatics and SLA from a perspective that acknowledges the primacy of the interaction in shaping the discourse and behavior in a given context. CA is a useful model for SLA research in particular because it "enables researchers to specify exactly what participation means" by focusing on the details of the interaction itself (Kasper, 2009:31). In other words, the view that SLA is a process of social learning, or learning in context, demands that research account for social interaction.

The application of methods of discourse analysis and CA to learners and speakers of a second language raises issues regarding the extent to which existing theoretical frameworks can be extended to include non-fluent speakers and interactions across cultures. Antaki informs us that the idealized speaker in theoretical models of discourse is perfectly competent in the language he or she is using (1994:164). However, as Kasper

attests, speakers "do more than they can tell and what they tell may differ from what they do" (2006:305). Several scholars, (e.g., Dippold, 2007; Habib, 2008; Kasper, 2006, 2009; Vickers, 2010) have recently addressed the problem of how discourse varies across L1 and L2 speakers, and have examined several different discourse genres. The present study examines language acquisition and use in one type of L2 discourse, in particular: conversational arguments.

2.3 Argument discourse and mitigation

The object under consideration in the present investigation is the conversational argument, a focus that stands in contrast to the majority of empirical studies in ILP, which employ a speech act framework (e.g., Barron, 2007; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007, 2008; Glaser, 2009; Matsumura, 2007; Shively & Cohen, 2008). Research on speech acts tends to focus on individual, isolated acts, such as requests, refusals, or invitations. In contrast to that approach, the examination of arguments requires that the researcher consider that participants engage in a variety of activities. The term *argument* is used in the present study, following Toulmin, Rieke and Janik, who broadly define arguing as "the whole activity of making claims, challenging them, backing them up by producing reasons, criticizing those reasons, rebutting those criticisms, and so on" (1979:13). Arguments have been studied under various labels¹, such as "conflict talk" (e.g., Grimshaw, 1990), "disagreements" (e.g., Georgakopoulou, 2001; Habib, 2008), "opposition" (e.g., Kakavá, 2002), or "disputes" (e.g., Brenneis, 1988). Each of these terms encompasses the succession of interactions that ensue when a speaker refutes, challenges, or disagrees with a statement that another speaker has made. In other words, arguments include multiple

¹ In the present study, *argument* and *disagreement* are treated as synonyms and are used interchangeably to refer to the whole interaction that includes a claim, a disagreement, and a counterclaim.

speech acts, and emerge throughout a conversation and as a result of previous actions, or acts.

Schiffrin (1985) informs us that arguments are everyday interactions that rarely occur independently of social activities and that emerge naturally in many different situations and conversations. Given that arguments require at least two speakers, they reproduce the negotiation of referential, social and expressive meanings, and depend on speaker and hearer cooperation (Schiffrin, 1985). Arguments are an important discourse genre, particularly relevant to SLA, because they convey pragmatic knowledge – social and contextual understanding – as well as knowledge of the language that is appropriate in expressing and supporting opinions, claims, disagreements, and counter-claims.

Scholars have approached arguments from several different theoretical perspectives. The two most prominent approaches, which I briefly describe here, are politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and preference structure (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984; Schegloff, 2007). Brown and Levinson, in their theory of politeness, describe disagreements, or arguments, as verging on impoliteness by threatening a speaker's "face" or self-image (1987). Politeness theory presumes that three primary factors determine the language that is used in an interaction: the relative power of interlocutors, the social distance between them, and the degree or severity of the imposition. Brown and Levinson assert that politeness- a universal objective- requires that all speakers seek to avoid conflict while maximizing cooperation with each other.

Preference structure is a conversation analytic concept that also incorporates the need for speakers to cooperate in their interactions. "Preference" refers to the effect that a statement will have on a hearer. Pomerantz attests that disagreements are dispreferred

responses because disagreeing or arguing is "uncomfortable, unpleasant, difficult, risking threat, insult or offence" (1984:77). The opposite is also true: Agreements are preferred responses because they are comfortable and pleasant, among other things. Atkinson and Heritage further explain that "preference" is not an individual objective but has the broader goal of sociability, and speakers generally design their utterances so as to elicit agreement. The scholars state, "it is through this turn-by-turn character of talk that the participants display their understandings of the state of the talk for one another" (1984:11). The idea of preference structure is in this way also supportive of the view of relational work, and could be reframed, using Watts' (2003) terms, as having the goal of achieving politic behavior.

In a critical review of theoretical approaches to arguments, Sifianou (2012) argued that there is no single best theory that should be applied to their analysis. Frameworks of face and politeness she finds are particularly limiting because they presuppose that conflict and impoliteness should be avoided at all costs. She also contends that the framework of preference structure, and the notion that disagreements are dispreferred responses, is problematic in that it assumes that all disagreements are negative. In spite of this perspective, preference structure was selected as the theoretical and structural starting point for the present study because it is complimentary to a CA approach to argument discourse. As Sifianou notes, "what is face-threatening or impolite emerges in situated activities which are dependent on prior related ones and which inform those which may follow" (2012:1561). This evaluation in fact echoes the stated objectives of CA, and the orientation of relational work, as introduced in the previous sections.

CA research on arguments by Pomerantz (1984) and Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) further inform the present work. These scholars affirm that argument interactions develop when a claim is challenged; they also maintain that arguments conform to a basic three-turn structure, which can be expanded. The first turn (T1) occurs when a claim is made. The second turn (T2) contains either an expression of disagreement or a counterclaim, with reference to T1. The third turn (T3) requires a response to T2. This response can be either a retreat from the claim made in T1 or a reassertion or justification for the claim made in T1. The linguistic devices used in T2 and T3 are similar in that both often contain indicators of opposition or disagreement. Thus, all three turns must enter into an analysis in order for the researcher to consider both sides of the argument (Muntigl and Turnbull, 1998). T1 provides the impetus for the argument sequence, and therefore contextualizes the rest of the analysis. The following example of an argument, taken from Pomerantz (1984:72), reflects this structure:

- T1 C: ... you've really both basically honestly gone your own ways.
 T2 D: Essentially, except we've hadda good relationship at home.
 T3 C: ·hhhh Ye:s, but I mean it's a relationship where...

In the example, T1 is a statement of opinion in which the speaker is making a claim. T2 expresses disagreement by stating the opposite of what was asserted in T1 ("we've hadda a good relationship at home"). Two devices preface the disagreement in T2: first, "essentially" is a *token agreement*, and is followed by the contrastive marker "except". T3 is a reassertion given in response to T2. The statement in T3 is introduced by an audible aspiration or a delay "·hhhh" and another token agreement "Ye:s". The reassertion in T3 is further prefaced by hedging, "but I mean". The speakers in T2 and T3 each use two linguistic devices before giving their statements of disagreement. Thus,

Pomerantz's example demonstrates the basic three-turn structure of an argument and allows us to consider the strategies that the speakers use to help them in this interaction: mitigation.

Pomerantz's categorization of arguments as dispreferred actions is based not only on the need to minimize conflict, but on the observation that speakers tend to employ mitigating devices to preface and delay certain statements, thus helping to signal the types of utterances that they consider to be threatening. Thus following Pomerantz, mitigation is a critical aspect of argument discourse that is motivated by a speaker's need to remain on positive terms with their interlocutor.

Pomerantz's view is akin to the theoretical orientation of relational work. As Locher and Watts explain, conflictual behavior, such as arguments or disagreements, has its own set of politic, appropriate behaviors that are discursively negotiated. They view mitigation in particular as a set of strategies that individuals invoke to achieve "the appropriate level of relational work" required for "smooth interaction" (2005:23). Several other scholars have examined mitigation, describing it in slightly different ways. García (1989), for example, and with reference to arguments in particular, describes mitigation as encompassing words, phrases or devices that euphemize or make a statement more polite. Briz (2004), also taking a politeness approach, suggests that mitigation functions as a negotiating tool that speakers use to maintain equilibrium in an interaction. Fraser, on the topic of conversation in general, defines mitigation as "the reduction of certain unwelcome effects which a speech act has on the hearer" (1980:341). Caffi (2007) frames mitigation in terms of "modulation". She notes that speakers "modulate their communicative behavior by either strengthening or weakening... mitigation modulates in

a way that reduces the strength of what is said" (2007:2). Caffi further informs us that mitigation is "a trace of the speaker's ongoing process of adaptation to the hearer" (2007:5). From the work of these scholars we can gather that mitigation describes a set of linguistic practices that together function as a pragmatic apparatus, which allows a speaker to make adjustments with the context in mind.

Several studies have examined the mitigating devices that are employed in arguments in Spanish and/or English (e.g., Brown and Levinson, 1987; Cordella, 1996; Edstrom, 2004; Fraser, 1980; García, 1989; Kreutel, 2007; Lakoff, 1972; Pomerantz, 1984). These studies have pointed to the use of parenthetical verbs, syntactic constructions, discourse markers, token agreements, hedges, challenge questions, and tag questions, among others, with mitigating functions. For example, parenthetical verbs such as 'think', and 'feel', in utterances such as "I think that you are wrong", "I feel that you are not telling the truth", represent optional syntactic elements in utterances that weaken the strength of the statement by creating distance (Urmson, 1952, as cited in Fraser, 1980). With regard to verb aspect and mood, the conditional aspect or subjunctive mood make the actions that speakers describe imprecise and hypothetical and are therefore considered an indirect means of conveying a message as in "It would be great if that were the case" (Chodorowska-Pilch, 2004; Fraser, 1980; Haverkate, 1994). Another mitigating strategy, that of token agreements, represents statements in which an agreement prefaces a disagreement, as in "Of course, but..." or "That's true, but I still think we're going to be late." (Takahashi and Beebe 1993:144). In essence, these strategies represent ways in which speakers reduce the strength of their utterances.

Certain words and phrases that reduce the precision of an utterance, such as hedges (Fraser, 1980, 2010; Lakoff, 1972) as in “Maybe that would work”. Another mitigating strategy, the creation of a delay, can be performed by pausing or using discourse markers. Jefferson (1989) demonstrated how long pauses are understood by the hearer to have a negative connotation and are therefore an indirect means of indicating that a negative statement, such as a disagreement, is forthcoming. Discourse markers, such as *bueno* "well" and *o sea* "that is", mitigate a negative or conflict interaction by creating a delay or modifying the propositional content of an utterance (García Vizcaíno and Martínez Cabeza, 2005; Schwenter, 1996). Further, Fraser (1980), and Landone (2012), find that discourse markers are not used to create meaning but to orientate the hearer by clarifying the communicative intention of the speaker (Fraser, 1990).

Finally, speakers can employ two types of questions to mitigate, namely, tag questions and challenge questions. Following Pomerantz (1984), tag questions are defined as questions that are positioned at the end of a clause, thereby casting doubt on the preceding utterance and seemingly giving the hearer the option of disagreeing with the statement. However, as Pomerantz (1984) notes, the preferred response to a tag question is agreement. For example, questions ending with *¿no?* accomplish the function of masking the intention of the utterance. In contrast, as Chodorowska (1997) explains, challenge questions require a speaker to defend his or her claim, and thus mitigate by softening the force of the imposition by creating an interpersonal distance between the speaker and the hearer. For example, questions such as *¿tú crees?* "do you believe that?" or *¿me entiendes?* "do you understand me?" mitigate a disagreement.

While mitigation can be considered a type of pragma-linguistic tool that speakers employ to help them manage arguments, there are also non-linguistic practices that speakers can manifest, and these are known as *participation behaviors*. As Gumperz explains, each speaker's understanding of a conversation affects how they will attempt to communicate "where the conversation is going and how one needs to tie one's utterance to a previous speaker's moves so as to maintain thematic continuity" (1984:129). From this quote we can extrapolate that the management of interpersonal interactions is not only dependent on the words that are said, but also on *how* and *when* they are given voice. Tannen (1984) finds participation behaviors to be important because they encode rapport and considerateness, which are thought to be critical to the success of face-to-face communication.

Following the work of Cordella (1996), Dippold (2007), and Schiffrin (1990), behaviors of participation are defined as the non-linguistic actions of participants in a conversation. These scholars have identified three particular behaviors of participation that are important in the management of arguments: interruption, overlap, and latching. Interruption describes when a speaker loses the floor because they are interrupted before they have made their point (Jefferson, 2004; Schiffrin, 1990). Overlap refers to where a second speaker interrupts at a possible completion point, leaving no pause in between turns (Sacks, et al., 1974; Schegloff, 2000). As Jefferson (2004) explains, a speaker employs interruptions and overlaps to display their own knowledge of the topic, or to acknowledge what is in the course of being said, respectively. Latching, which also indicates acknowledgement, is defined as a transition from one turn to the next with no pause and no overlap (Jefferson, 2004; Sacks, et al., 1974). These behaviors of

participation are especially essential in argument interactions due to their negative, dispreferred status, and because they function as tools that speakers use in conjunction with mitigation in the context of conversational arguments.

2.4 Institutional talk

In order to situate arguments in the context in which they occur, and to better understand the communicative functions they serve, learner discourse in the present study is framed in terms of institutional talk. *Institutional talk* refers to the understanding that each social institution has its own "fingerprint" that makes the institution what it is (Heritage and Clayman, 2010:18). As Heritage and Clayman explain, interactions within a particular institution, such as a school, a courtroom, or a hospital, impact the language that is used by its members, but also effect the organization and structure of membership in the institution. The scholars assert that institutions "draw life from, and are reproduced by, the actions of the persons who participate in them" (2010:32). A central facet of institutions is that they ascribe power and status roles to their members, as is evident if we consider relationships such as doctor-patient, lawyer-defendant, and teacher-student, and these roles influence the language and behavior of the individuals in them.

Within the corpus of research in SLA and pragmatics, institutional talk is one of few strands of ILP that extends the research agenda beyond the scope of speech acts, which Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford succinctly define as "spontaneous authentic language use by speakers who are speaking as themselves, in genuine situations, with socio-affective consequences" (2005:13). In other words, this concept is complimentary to a discourse analytic approach to SLA because it urges the consideration of language in terms of the situation in which it occurs, by taking into consideration the individual

identities of the speakers as well as the influence of the context in which they interact. This paradigm is beneficial to the examination of language use by L2 learners in that it allows for an understanding of the discourse to be borne out of the interaction itself, rather than being imposed by the researcher.

With regard to institutional talk in an academic setting, this study draws on scholarship that has examined interactions between native (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS). Researchers have found that in NS-NNS interactions, the NSs often orient themselves toward an expert role, and the learners, or NNSs, to a novice role, based on their language status. Notably, these roles have been found to condition the use of mitigation (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1993, 1996; Dings, 2012; Vickers, 2010; Williams, 2005). For instance, Vickers' (2010) examination of conversations produced by English NS and NNS members of a team of engineering students revealed that language use depended on an individual's status as an expert on the topic and as an expert in the language. In the study, NNSs were able to share technical knowledge, but did not give as much explanatory information as the NSs did, and often agreed with the NSs in order to show linguistic understanding. Similarly, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993, 1996) found that in academic advising sessions between native English speaking professors and NNS graduate students, the language employed by the professor, the advisor, was highly mitigated while utterances produced by the students were not. The researchers suggested that the students in the advising sessions were more attuned to form than function when responding to the advice and suggestions given to them. This observation suggests that the expert role can be ascribed not only to those with institutionalized power, such as professors and advanced students, but also to those with

greater language skills. These studies point to the impact that power relationships have on the language that is used by learners, or NNSs: L2 learners may not attend to their use of mitigation as a negotiating tool when they are faced with a task that already places high demands on their language ability, such as working collaboratively on a project or planning which courses to take.

2.5 Review of empirical research on arguments

As mentioned previously, several related lines of inquiry inform the present study. In this section, I review empirical studies of argument discourse, focusing first on studies that examine the arguments of NSs of Spanish and other languages. Finally, I discuss research on the arguments of L2 learners or NNSs.

2.5.1 Arguments in L1

Several scholars have investigated conversational arguments produced by native speakers of different languages. There is a growing body of research on mitigation and arguments in Spanish that informs the present study. A majority of the research on Spanish pragmatics is comparative and cross-cultural, seeking to reveal similarities and differences across varieties of Spanish and between Spanish and other languages. Although scholars approach topics of Spanish pragmatics from a variety of perspectives, there is some consensus regarding a need to investigate the ways that interaction occurs and is conventionalized in distinct speech communities with various cultural practices. Placencia and García (2007) note that frequently this research is described as being concerned with politeness, or *cortesía*, but the title can in fact refer to research in several

areas of pragmatics; moreover, many different dimensions of *cortesía* have been investigated.

The work of Bravo (1999, 2004) has focused on developing a theoretical framework, *sociocultural pragmatics*, which can account for the social nature of pragmatics and variation across varieties of the same language, with a focus on Spanish. Bravo (1999) has articulated sociocultural pragmatics as an alternative to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, critiquing the contrast drawn by Brown and Levinson between positive and negative politeness cultures and arguing that their categorizations are not universally applicable. Thus, the central tenet of sociocultural pragmatics is that politeness, face, and facework must be approached as phenomena that vary according to the particular sociocultural setting that is under consideration. Drawing on observations of the oral discourse of Spaniards and Swedes, Bravo illustrates how pragmatic behavior is informed by cultural conceptions of how to interact in context and based on knowledge of appropriateness for different social roles. As an alternative to the factors of power, distance and imposition identified by Brown and Levinson, Bravo suggests that interlocutors orient towards needs of *autonomy* and *affiliation*, which are informed by "*premisas culturales*", or culturally-based expectations (1999:162). Bravo's sociocultural pragmatics is in many ways similar to the theoretical orientation conveyed by relational work (Watts, 2003), with the main difference being that Bravo foregrounds the cultural setting while Watts emphasizes interpersonal relationships.

The work of Briz (1998, 2004, 2009, 2012) provides a perspective that is complimentary to Bravo's (1999) approach to politeness as a culturally construed phenomenon. Briz (2004) focuses specifically on mitigation (*atenuación*) as indexical of

politeness, a phenomena that he describes as a pragma-linguistic category where social interaction intersects with language use. Briz defines mitigation as being essentially argumentative, conversational, and social. He finds that the overarching goal of mitigation is for an interlocutor to accept what is said, thereby achieving "a negotiation without tensions" (2004:69) [my translation]. Briz also identifies several different dimensions or "filters" that inform the use of polite language, and specifically, mitigation, in interactions among speakers of Peninsular Spanish. These include group identity, desire to build solidarity, interpersonal goal orientation, and the cultural context. Briz emphasizes that "it is the process of the interaction itself that gives sense to politeness and the expression of politeness" and the degree of activation of those filters can be expected to vary according to the "what, who, where, when, and how" surrounding an interaction (2004:90)[my translation].

In recent empirical work, Briz (2009, 2012) has examined different types of mitigating devices, such as Spanish discourse markers. He found that certain phrases, including *bueno*, *no sé*, and *o sea* have polite pragmatic functions in the context of opinion statements and reactions and are strongly associated with negative, argumentative communication. Briz (2009) identified three functions associated with discourse markers, to protect, to prevent, and to repair. It was posited that each function assists in maintaining equilibrium between the speaker's face needs and those of the hearer. In a related study, Briz (2012) also examined the "no use" or absence of linguistic mitigation. He observed that in casual conversations between friends and family, mitigation appeared to a greater extent when there was greater discursive distance, or when the tone of the interaction was more formal, when the discourse was more

regimented, and when the goal was transactional (as opposed to interpersonal). He concluded that formal genres, such as academic and professional interactions, in Peninsular Spanish, tended to feature more mitigation than informal settings.

Several empirical studies have focused on negotiation discourse, a genre that involves arguing and disagreement, drawing cross-cultural comparisons of Spaniards and Scandinavians in different types of interactions, such as simulated business negotiations, and in colloquial, spontaneous conversation amongst friends and relatives (Bravo, 1999; Fant 1989, 2006; Fant and Grindsted, 1995; Henning, 2012). There is consensus among the scholars that in their negotiations, Swedes orient towards building consensus, a characteristic that is distinct from Spaniards, who are described as being oriented towards self-affirmation and involvement with their interlocutor, and who are highly tolerant of opposition. For example, Fant and Grindsted (1995) found that in a simulated business negotiation exercise, Spaniards were direct in their negotiations; their discourse was unmitigated and focused on negotiating prices, which was described as behavior that oriented towards conflict. In contrast, Scandinavian (Swedish and Danish) negotiators were indirect in their interactions, relying on a variety of mitigating devices, such as discourse markers, hedges, and epistemic disclaimers, which allowed them to talk about value while avoiding the actual price, and thereby minimizing conflict.

In a related study, Henning (2012) examined the structure and form of preferred and dispreferred responses in spontaneous conversations among members of a Swedish family, and a Spanish family. Henning observed unexpected similarities in the structure of disagreements voiced by the two groups, which were attributed to the familiar context of the study. Both groups used repetition and challenge questions to indirectly voice

disagreement, and their dispreferred utterances lacked the prefaces and hesitations that have been observed by other scholars. Henning suggested that the manifestation of linguistic mitigation and the turn shape in the interactions was mediated by the context, overriding the cultural goals that are associated with these speakers.

Several cross-cultural studies of mitigation in Spanish have focused on language use in the university setting (Bravo, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2004). Bravo (2005) examined disagreement and opposition in a conversation, in Spanish, involving two Spanish university students and two Swedish university students. The analysis illustrated how the distinct socio-pragmatic norms of the Spaniards and Swedes gave rise to pragmatic failures or "*malos entendidos*" in a conversation on a familiar topic. In particular, the Swedish students misinterpreted the indirectness employed by the Spaniards, who utilized suggestions and tag questions to elicit a particular response related to cultural roles. Bravo suggested that the *malos entendidos* arose due to a mismatch between the cultural understanding that Swedes had and their knowledge of linguistic devices in Spanish.

Félix-Brasdefer (2004) investigated the mitigating devices employed in refusals, a speech act that entails negation. That study compared the mitigation produced in role plays completed in Spanish by native speakers from Mexico, advanced L2 learners from an American university, and were produced in English by a control group of native speakers. A quantitative analysis revealed that in each role-play scenario, the L2 Spanish learners employed mitigation at a rate that was significantly lower than both the L1 Spanish and the English control groups to which they were compared. Further, L2 learners employed each type of device examined, including hedges, tag questions, and

parenthetical verbs, significantly less frequently than the Mexican NSs. The differences observed were attributed partly to culture, namely, that Mexican cultural norms led to NSs employing a high frequency of mitigation as a means of demonstrating politeness and deference. The non-target like use of mitigation by L2 learners was explained as a lack of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic ability, and specifically, evidence that grammatical proficiency can outpace pragmatic ability.

The research on mitigation in Spanish in different types of interactions informs us about the language and behavior that we might observe in native speakers, and highlights some important mismatches between Spanish speakers and other cultural groups. However, the aforementioned research (e.g., Bravo, 1999; Briz, 2004) has also demonstrated that the factors that constrain communication in Spanish, particularly the use of mitigation and the setting where arguments occur, will change according to the context.

While the work of the aforementioned scholars has revealed several types of pragmatic variation across Spanish varieties, and between Spanish and other languages, other studies have revealed some similarities between speakers of distinct varieties of Spanish. With regard to the use of mitigation, Placencia (2005) and Félix-Brasdefer (2010b) documented how different Spanish speakers (e.g., Ecuadorians and Uruguayans) employed similar devices in service encounters, such as diminutives and interpersonal discourse markers, but with different functions. Thus, the culturally-informed language use and interactional goals that have been identified as characteristic of native speakers of a given variety of Spanish can be expected to shift when we examine their language and behavior in not only different cultural and linguistic contexts, but also in institutional

contexts with defined roles, such as a university or a service setting, which convey a set of standard expectations for native Spanish speakers.

Several scholars have examined the realization of mitigation and arguments by native speakers of other languages as well. One such study, that of Georgakopoulou (2001) examined naturally occurring arguments that were produced in conversations among four female Greek friends. Emphasizing that these arguments were of an intimate and informal nature, Georgakopoulou found through qualitative analysis that the women voiced their disagreements indirectly, encoding them in stories that were told as analogies, and which allowed them to present their opposing viewpoints as belonging to someone in the story. The devices that encoded these indirect disagreements included diminutives, discourse markers, and rhetorical questions that functioned as indirect challenges. The author argued that disagreements and indirectness in the context of conversations among friends were motivated by intimacy and rapport, rather than by the need to be polite. The findings of this study are significant in that they present evidence that arguments are not always motivated by conflict, and that mitigation is not always required to preface or delay disagreement statements. As Georgakopoulou explained, "rather than being delayed or down toned, disagreements are systematically implied and indirectly managed (2001:1896)".

Kotthoff (1993) examined disputes, or disagreements, that occurred between university students and professors who were meeting for the first time. The interactions involved Germans and Americans, speaking in their native languages. The data revealed that once a dispute had begun, speakers tended to orient to the dispute, or to expect that the dispute would continue. Kotthoff identified the operating of a dispute frame as

"opposition format", and found that speakers used repetitions and token agreements to keep the debate going. In particular, the author illustrated how repetition required active listening and therefore demonstrated interpersonal involvement. Regarding token agreements, Kotthoff posited that devices, such as 'yes but', required a response and helped develop the main point of the argument or dispute and thus functioned to keep the disagreement going. The inclusion of a token agreement was thought to signal disagreement, and the exact format, particularly of the 'yes' element, informed the hearer of what should be expected. Kotthoff's findings support Pomerantz's earlier claims regarding preference structure, particularly the position that certain devices, such as token agreements, encode disagreement.

Santamaría-García (2006), also studied preference structure, examining the use of prefaces, pauses, and overlaps in a quantitative comparison of disagreements produced in Peninsular Spanish and American English. Regarding the use of mitigation, the author found pauses and prefaces to disagreement statements to be more frequent in English than in Spanish. In contrast, overlap was less frequent in English than in Spanish. Santamaría-García discussed these results in terms of how they correspond to the degree of social distance between the interlocutors. The analysis revealed that, for disagreement statements in both English and Spanish, the appearance of pauses and prefaces increased, and the use of overlap decreased, with social distance. In other words, the closer the speakers or the more familiar they were with each other, the less they paused and prefaced their utterances and the more likely they were to speak at the same time. The author posited that culturally bound conversational norms might lead to a greater

consideration of face needs in English, thus prompting an increased use of mitigation in that language.

The work of Georgakopoulou (2001), Kotthoff (1993), and Santamaría-García (2006), point toward the variety of mitigating devices that are used in conversational arguments. These scholars also discuss the importance of contextual factors surrounding the communicative interaction, focusing on social distance in particular. Georgakopoulou found that intimacy prompted the use of mitigation and indirectness but rendered disagreements non-threatening, while both Kotthoff and Santamaría-García found that the use of prefaces or delays was motivated by asymmetrical, distant, relationships. These studies also shed light on the fact that disagreements may have slightly different formats depending on the culture of the speakers involved in them. While Kotthoff compared German and American arguments and found similarities, Santamaría-García compared American and Peninsular Spanish disagreements and uncovered some differences. The issue of how cultural norms affect the linguistic and behavioral aspects of conversational arguments is the main topic of the next section, which reviews empirical research on arguments produced by second language learners.

2.5.2 Arguments in L2

Several scholars have examined the arguments and disagreements of L2 learners. While the vast majority of these studies has focused on English language learners (ELLs) in a university-institutional context, a variety of approaches has been employed in the investigation of L2 argument discourse. These approaches include qualitative and quantitative methods, speech act and discourse analytic frameworks, and the collection of experimental and naturalistic data, among others. Despite the variety, taken together, this

corpus sheds light on the discursive and pragma-linguistic abilities of learners at different stages of L2 acquisition. These studies also contribute to our general understanding of argument discourse in English, and help us to identify differences between the discourse produced by L1 and L2 speakers of a language.

Beebe and Takahashi (1989) focused on disagreements by Japanese ELL university students who had varying levels of English proficiency, comparing them with American university students. The Japanese students were audio taped during interviews with academic advisors, and both groups completed a written discourse completion task (DCT) that prompted them to write what they would say in a variety of situations. The authors found that the Japanese ELLs used a questioning strategy to express disagreement, which they noted to be unlike any strategy documented by native English speakers. This action forced the native English-speaking interlocutor to rationalize their statement, causing frustration because it was not clear that the Japanese ELL was voicing disagreement. Additionally, in the written DCT, the Japanese students used criticism and direct negation in order to express disagreement, which were also interpreted as not target-like strategies. Beebe and Takahashi (1989) described Japanese responses in arguments overall as harsh and direct. In contrast, the arguments by American English speakers in the study started with a positive remark, a suggestion, or a criticism, and were prefaced by mitigation.

LoCastro (1997) also examined disagreements by Japanese ELLs. The study examined the extent to which a pedagogical intervention could facilitate pragmatic learning in a group of Japanese university students. In the study, intermediate-level learners participated in group discussions where they could practice what they had

learned about politeness in an English Speaking class. Group discussions were audiotaped at the beginning and end of a nine-week term. The pre-test findings revealed that, regarding agreement and disagreement in the course of leading a discussion, the learners' speech generally lacked complexity and mitigation. LoCastro found a few tokens of tag questions being used, which served to "address hearer's face needs" (1997:52). After the pedagogical intervention, learners demonstrated one noticeable change in their agreements/disagreements in the discussion format: They included challenge questions as a means of indirectly disagreeing. In sum, the author found limited evidence that students in the study learned that there was a need to mitigate in certain interactions (such as agreeing and disagreeing), but they were unable to demonstrate control over the linguistic forms needed to mitigate. LoCastro concluded that the group dynamic and Japanese interactional/politeness norms likely affected the discourse produced by students in the study.

The work of Beebe and Takahashi (1989), and LoCastro (1997), provides evidence in support of Pomerantz's earlier findings that the arguments of native English speakers are indirect, accompanied by a clear reliance on mitigation. It also suggests that the differences between an individual's L1 and L2 can lead to pragmatically problematic communication because of transfer.

Somewhat similar to the studies conducted by Beebe and Takahashi (1989), and LoCastro (1997), Bell (1998) examined the production of disagreements by novice level Korean ELLs, whose participation in their university's English grammar course was recorded during eight consecutive weekly meetings. Bell found that the vast majority of the students' disagreements were bald-on-record, or unmitigated, and contained negation

(e.g., 'no'), or statements of opposition (e.g., 'but...'). It was further noted that the learners tended to aggravate or intensify their disagreements by uttering them in a loud voice or repeating the negation used (i.e., 'no no no'). The author posited that unmitigated disagreements were the result of transfer from the students' L1, explaining that in Korean, disagreements among peers of similar ages are formulaic and do not require the use of mitigation.

Two studies by Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig (2000, 2001) considered how ELLs employ modals (e.g., *can*, *will*, *would*, *could*, *maybe*, *I think*) to mitigate arguments in English. Both studies analyzed audio taped conversations that occurred over one academic year between English instructors and ELLs from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. One of the findings of the study pointed to a tendency for the learners to argue in different ways, according to the linguistic resources available to them; in particular, grammatically less-developed learners were constrained in their expression of disagreements and their use of modal expression. The authors found evidence that the lexical modals *think* and *maybe* were learned early and used often, with the grammatical modals *could* and *would* being learned later. The results obtained by Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig indicate that the L2 learner's ability to argue depends on general grammatical proficiency, thus suggesting that the higher the ability in L2, the greater likelihood the learner has of being able to interact in a pragmatically appropriate way. These studies also reveal that there may be an order in which different types of mitigation in the L2 are acquired. Therefore, these studies highlight two concerns: First, grammatical proficiency constrains L2 argument discourse, and second, different forms of mitigation are used at different stages of L2 acquisition.

Kreutel (2007) also examined the mitigation used in arguments by ELLs from a variety of backgrounds. In the study, native speakers of American English and ELLs of varying English proficiency levels completed a written DCT, which required them to respond to ten different situations. In contrast to the results of the investigations of Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig (2000, 2001), Kreutel (2007) found that the strategies used by ELLs to disagree did not vary according to English proficiency level. ELLs and native English speakers were observed to use similar mitigation devices, including hedges, explanations, and requests for clarification, but the ELLs used them with much less frequency than did native English speakers. Furthermore, the ELLs in Kreutel's study used devices that native speakers did not use, such as suggestions and exclamations. The author also noted that the ELL participants in the study placed mitigating devices at the end of sentences, whereas native speakers placed them at the beginning, so the disagreements of ELLs sounded harsh and direct. Thus, Kreutel's findings point toward two more ways in which L2 learners' use of mitigation is not entirely target-like: Both the linguistic form of the mitigating device and its location in the utterance, with respect to the expression of disagreement, may differ between NSs and L2 learners.

In another study in an academic context, Rees-Miller (2000) examined disagreements produced by students and professors, both native and non-native speakers of English, in university courses and academic talks. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, the analysis focused on the relative power of interlocutors in order to explicate the language that different speakers employed to express disagreement. The author expected that professors, based on the power conferred to them in the academic setting, would have little regard for face concerns and politeness, and therefore

would express disagreement directly, without relying on mitigation or politeness markers. Contrary to that hypothesis, the data revealed that the relative power of the interlocutors had an inverse relationship to their reliance on "politeness markers" in stating disagreements: Professors employed mitigation, such as hedges and token agreements, to soften their disagreements more frequently than did students. Further, regarding symmetrical power relationships, Rees-Miller observed that students interacting with other students softened their disagreements less often than professors interacting with other professors. With regard to asymmetrical power relationships, mitigation or politeness markers were used the least when the situation involved a student disagreeing with a professor. Regarding the role of power in conditioning the disagreements observed, the author commented that in the academic setting in particular, the face of higher status professors was not threatened by students challenging them because student disagreement indicated engagement and involvement in the learning process. Thus, professors used mitigation to encourage students to participate. Students, on the other hand, had little need to employ mitigation because of the expectation that they think critically and question the information being shared in the classes and academic talks.

Rees-Miller's work is significant because it points to the existence of a relationship between the power status of interlocutors and the degree to which they rely on mitigation. Specifically, arguments are shaped by the roles or attributes ascribed to individuals in the academic setting. We see that the expert, in this case the professor, mitigates as a means of encouraging the participation of others. A somewhat similar finding emerged from an unrelated study, that of Habib (2008). Habib examined natural conversations among a group of female friends who were all L2 English speakers and who meet to receive a

Greek lesson. A qualitative analysis of the conversations between these friends revealed that disagreement was used in conjunction with humor and teasing as a means of pragmatic teaching and learning. The author found that the women expressed opposing viewpoints in order to solicit cultural information from each other, explaining "disagreement emerges as a relational tool that binds the group by adding to their knowledge of other cultures and the world" (2008:1138). Their disagreement expressions involved overlapping and interruption, which served to demonstrate involvement in the group and in the conversation at hand. Thus, both Rees-Miller and Habib point to the fact that argument interactions can be used to facilitate learning, whether in a formal learning environment or a casual social setting. This suggests that the relationship between the use of mitigation and social distance is not exactly linear. Speakers in different contexts may have different goals in the argument interaction.

In a study that did not explicitly focus on the setting of the interaction, García (1989) investigated the arguments of Venezuelan women interacting in English, their L2, with native English speakers. In the study, García (1989) used a conversational analytic approach to focus on the use of mitigation in expressing disagreement. Venezuelan women and American women participated in a prompted role-play in English, in which they had to respond to a complaint from an apartment superintendent, played by an American male. After completing the task, the participants were interviewed in a playback session in which they gave their opinions of the interactions in the role-play. This study undertook a quantitative analysis of mitigation, which yielded a statistically significant difference between the participant groups. For instance, the Venezuelans used direct challenges and refusals to cooperate while the Americans used non-confrontational

and impersonal devices and relied heavily on mitigation. The playback sessions illustrated that the Venezuelans perceived the superintendent as offensive and disrespectful, while Americans perceived him as someone doing his job. García analyzed these perceptions as different frames for understanding the interaction: Venezuelans perceived the task as unfriendly, and Americans approached it as a business transaction. García suggests that additional variables, such as language ability and level of comfort with different interlocutors, shaped the arguments as well. This study supports the findings of other studies, namely, that learner language and the production of arguments are influenced by their L1, and that there are differences between how members of different cultures, such as Spanish and English, approach a particular communicative task.

Dippold (2007) investigated argument discourse in British learners of L2 German by employing a conversation analytic approach to focus on arguing styles and frames of employed in conversations. The study included twelve participants each of L2 German learners in their first year, third year, and fourth year studying the language at university. The learners conversed in dyads. They were given a conversation prompt that required them to rank statements on a controversial topic according to order of importance, and were instructed to explain and defend their opinions to their partner. This experimental protocol was followed up with a semi-structured interview in which the participants were asked to explain their choices relating to portions of the argument exchanges, which the researcher selected and played back to them. In the study, Dippold reported on the conversations of the first-year and fourth-year German L2 learners., wherein she found that first-year learners employed both a debate frame and a language task frame. These

frames, or orientations, were evident in both the language used and the flow of the interaction. First-year L2 German learners were sidetracked by their limited German ability, and their arguments did not fully develop and follow Pomerantz's (1984) three-turn model. Fourth-year German learners also had a debate frame, but invoked a cultural frame as well. They had well-developed arguments, were elaborate, and prefaced challenges with token agreements. Fourth-year students were still concerned about grammar, but did not stray from the topic of the conversation task to talk about their limited German ability. Regarding their participation, Dippold observed several instances of overlapping speech and interrupting in the conversations of the fourth-year German learners, but not in the conversations of first-year learners.

Dippold's (2007) study provides further support for the finding that L2 argument discourse varies according to proficiency level and time spent learning the language (e.g., Beebe and Takahashi, 1989; Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, 2001). In addition, it indicates that frames, or the way that the speaker approaches the interaction, impact the argument discourse at both the linguistic level and at the level of participation. This observation echoes that of other conversation- and discourse analytic research (e.g., Blackwell, 2009; Heritage and Clayman, 2010; Tannen, 1984), which has demonstrated the importance of a speaker's expectations in determining their approach to a given communicative interaction.

While there are numerous studies that have investigated argument discourse in different L2s, only a few scholars have examined arguments in L2 Spanish specifically. Three such studies directly inform this dissertation: Barros García and Terkourafi (2014), Cordella (1996), and Félix-Brasdefer (2008).

Barros García and Terkourafi (2014) applied a politeness theory framework to explore whether L2 Spanish learners had acquired and could display understanding of politeness norms in Spanish, as captured in written questionnaire responses. The study aimed to test the assumption that Peninsular Spanish and American English reflect different conceptualizations of politeness. The authors found support for the idea that, in comparison to Peninsular Spanish speakers, American English speakers place a higher value on the use of mitigation and indirect speech to downgrade or avoid face-threatening acts. With regard to the ability of L2 Spanish students to approximate Peninsular Spanish norms in their conversational interactions, Barros-García and Terkourafi reported that students at lower proficiency levels (i.e., novice and intermediate) were more concerned with their ability to communicate their ideas than to do so in a way that mirrored the speech of the native speakers, and were cognizant of the fact that they were non-native like. Thus, this work points to the effect that overall proficiency has on pragmatic production. It is important to note that the learners in Barros-García and Terkourafi's study realized they were not native like, which indicated that the novice and intermediate learners possessed pragmatic understanding that did not manifest as pragmatic ability.

Two other scholars have focused on L2 Spanish in an institutional university-related context: Cordella (1996) and Félix-Brasdefer (2008). Cordella's study reported on disagreements in conversations between university students who were native speakers of Chilean and Argentinean Spanish, and L2 Spanish learners. The study revealed that the native Spanish-speakers and the L2 learners who had been abroad (i.e., who had extensive contact with native speakers) used challenge questions to initiate their arguments. In contrast, the L2 Spanish learners who had not studied in a Spanish-

speaking country supplied opinions and evidence to support their arguments rather than employing challenge questions. Cordella (1996:151) considered challenge questions as mitigating because “they are employed to test the speakers’ knowledge, real involvement, and conviction with regard to what they are saying”. In general, Cordella concluded that the lack of contact with native speakers influenced L2 Spanish learners to behave linguistically different from native Spanish speakers.

Cordella’s (1996) research points to several variables which condition a learner’s linguistic behavior with regard to mitigation in arguments: the cultural background, topic, the degree of exposure to the target language and culture, and level of proficiency in Spanish. Further, Cordella maintains that learner language (i.e., absent of contact with native speakers) can miss the target norm, meaning that their arguments lack the mitigation characteristic of native Spanish speech.

Félix-Brasdefer (2008) exemplifies another study that investigated mitigation among L2 Spanish learners in a university setting. It examined mitigation among intermediate-level Spanish learners who were given explicit instruction in a college Spanish course regarding how to use mitigation in refusal situations, a speech act that is negative, somewhat similar to a disagreement. The study revealed that the intermediate learners showed a preference for several mitigating devices: parenthetical verbs, the expression of uncertainty with the phrase *no sé* “I don’t know”, and verbs in the conditional aspect. Nonetheless, it was reported that the Spanish learners did not employ the mitigating devices with the same range and frequency as the native Spanish speakers in the study. Félix-Brasdefer also documented the types of mitigation that intermediate-level learners of Spanish used in the context of refusal role-plays and, akin to Cordella’s

study, Félix-Brasdefer's findings revealed marked differences between L2 learners and native speakers. That is, NSs used a wider variety of mitigation and they employed mitigation with greater frequency than L2 speakers.

The goal of the present study is to examine the ability of L2 Spanish learners to understand and participate in argument interactions in their L2. As Wagner reminds us, "the noneducational reality is just outside the classroom, and the target of the participants is to participate in these activities" (2004:615). The studies cited here point to several different factors that impact pragmatic ability in a given context. Linguistic knowledge or global L2 proficiency appears to be a precursor to being able to interact in a target-like, pragmatically felicitous, and appropriate way. In other words, a learner must possess the lexical items that they will need to deploy in a given context. There are also several contextual variables that condition arguments, including the participants in the interaction, their statuses or roles relative to each other and the setting in which they interact, and their goals in communicating with each other. Learners can be more concerned about communicating an idea rather than on doing so in a way that is sensitive to the context, while native speakers are not constrained by communicative ability.

While the corpus of research on arguments has illuminated these factors, the research on arguments in L2 Spanish has yet to touch on questions of acquisition and target-like pragmatic ability, specifically, whether the acquisitional profiles documented in the discourse of learners of other L2s also exist in that of learners of Spanish, and the extent to which they can participate in a target-like manner.

2.6 Research questions

In light of the previous research, the acquisition and use of pragmatically appropriate mitigation and participation behaviors in Spanish as a second language demand further investigation. As noted previously, there is a substantial body of literature regarding the arguments produced by native speakers of a language, but empirical studies of mitigation and participation in arguments in L2 are few, and Spanish in particular remains largely under investigated. As identified in previously in chapter 1, the aim of this dissertation is to deepen our understanding of pragmatic ability in Spanish by addressing the following research questions:

1. To what extent are L2 Spanish learners able to approximate native Spanish speakers in their use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors in the context of conversational arguments produced in two protocols (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration)?
 - What mitigation devices and participation behaviors are characteristic of L2 Spanish learners (i.e., intermediates and advanced) and native Spanish speakers (i.e., institutional and non-institutional)?
2. What social or non-linguistic variables condition the presence and use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors in the argument interactions generated in two protocols (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration)?
 - Language status (e.g., intermediate learner, advanced learner, native speaker, non-institutional native speaker)
 - Protocol (e.g., film narration, ranking conversation)
 - Interlocutor type (dyad) (e.g., learner to learner, learner to native, native to native)
 - Number of years spent studying Spanish (learners' formal schooling)
3. In what ways are the participation behaviors and mitigating devices employed by L2 Spanish learners (i.e., intermediates and advanced) and native Spanish speakers (i.e., institutional and non-institutional) impacted by the university-institutional discursive setting?

The first research question, regarding target-like language and behavior, is addressed by three different protocols and multiple analytical approaches, the results of which are presented in chapters 4, 5, and 6. The second question is discussed in the quantitative

analysis in chapter 5, while the third research question is addressed by analysis of the metalinguistic protocol, presented in chapter 6. Before the results are presented, the next chapter outlines the methods employed to respond to these research questions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the design and methods of the present study. First, I briefly summarize the findings of a pilot study that I conducted, which served as preliminary work for the present study. Next, I give an overview of the participants in the study and then follow this information with a detailed description of the instruments and data collection procedures. Finally, I discuss the qualitative and quantitative methods that were used to analyze the data.

3.2 Pilot study

In order to address the gap in the literature regarding argument discourse in L2 Spanish, a pilot study was conducted that explored the use of mitigation and participation in advanced L2 Spanish learners in a university setting. The study responded to the following three research questions:

1. What characterizes the participation styles of advanced L2 Spanish learners in arguing?
 - Can the participation styles be accurately described according to the confrontational/non-confrontational dichotomy employed in previous research (i.e., Cordella, 1996; García, 1989)?
2. How do advanced L2 Spanish learners use mitigation to express disagreement?
 - What linguistic mitigation devices are employed?
 - Are the arguments of L2 Spanish learners direct or indirect?
3. What participation frames and identities do advanced L2 Spanish learners invoke in their arguments?
 - Is there linguistic evidence, metalinguistic evidence, or both, for these frames and identities?

The preceding questions were addressed by a qualitative analysis of data collected from three experimental protocols: A ranking conversation, a film narration, and a metalinguistic interview. Twenty-eight participants, 14 native Spanish speakers (NS) and 14 advanced L2 Spanish learners (L2), participated in the pilot study. Each participant completed two ranking conversations, a protocol adapted from Dippold (2007), one with a native speaker and one with an L2 learner. Participants then watched a short film and worked in mixed (NS-L2) dyads to cooperatively narrate it. Finally, each participant completed a semi-structured metalinguistic interview, which elicited commentary about their participation in the ranking conversation and film narration protocols. A qualitative analysis of data collected in these protocols yielded several notable findings.

While L2 Spanish learners exhibited behaviors of participation and linguistic mitigation that were similar to those employed by native speakers, the pilot study revealed that the L2 learners' repertoires were limited and that their argument discourse diverged in several ways from the target. The key findings obtained from the pilot study can be summarized as follows:

- In two protocols, a ranking conversation and a film narration, the participation behaviors of overlapping and latching were attested in the corpus of arguments produced by L2 Spanish learners and native Spanish speakers. However, in the film narration protocol, only native Spanish speakers exhibited the behavior of interrupting.
- In two protocols, a ranking conversation and a film narration, both L2 Spanish learners and native Spanish speakers employed the following linguistic mitigation devices: parenthetical verbs, subjunctive mood and conditional aspect, token agreements, pauses, hedges, and recasts. Absent from the discourse of the L2 learners was the use of tag questions and challenge questions in both protocols.
- The metalinguistic protocol produced different discourses with regard to participation in the ranking conversation and film narration interactions: The

native Spanish speakers oriented their talk toward a teacher/helper frame, while L2 Spanish learners oriented toward a student/learner frame.

The findings of the pilot study pointed toward three concerns, which required further research, with regard to L2 Spanish arguments, and which informed the present study. First, it identified a need to investigate the process of acquisition and the possibility of a pragmatic profile of learners at different stages of L2 Spanish development. Second, it pointed toward social and contextual variables that may condition linguistic and participatory behavior in the context of conversational arguments. Third, it revealed that speakers, and perhaps their discourse, were oriented to their roles as members of the educational institution where they were recruited and where the study was conducted.

In order to advance our knowledge and understanding of participation and mitigation in argument discourse, and to elaborate on the findings obtained from the pilot study, the present study expanded on the pilot in two ways. First, it incorporated an intermediate-level L2 Spanish participant group, and a native Spanish-speaking participant group recruited from outside of the university setting, in order to examine participation and mitigation across learners and from institutional and non-institutional settings. Second, it integrated a mixed-methods approach, namely, employing quantitative analysis in addition to qualitative methods in order to describe the patterns that emerge regarding the behaviors of participation and mitigation in the discourse. The details of the study are described in the following sections.

3.3 Participants

Since the research questions focus on the ability of L2 learners to approximate the native speaker target, a cross-sectional design was chosen for the study. While cross-sectional research does not allow for the direct observation of development or change within a single speaker, as a longitudinal design would, it potentially allows us to extrapolate from differences observed in various cross sections of the population under consideration. With this concept in mind, data for the study were collected from two L2 Spanish learner groups and two native Spanish speaker groups. The first participant group (henceforth NS group) comprised 21 native speakers of Spanish from a variety of Spanish dialects (i.e., Peninsular, Argentinean, Chilean, Colombian, Peruvian, Panamanian, Ecuadorian, Puerto Rican) who were recruited from the student body of a large, public research university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. The criterion for inclusion for this group was length of residence in the United States. Namely, only students who completed their primary and secondary schooling in their native countries were eligible to participate; heritage speakers of Spanish were excluded. At the time of data collection, NS participants had an average age of 28.1 years (median 28 years) and had lived in the U.S. for an average of 3.1 years (median 4 years). 19 of the NS participants were graduate students who had taught undergraduate courses, and two were undergraduates majoring in Spanish. Thus, participants in the NS group were operationalized as natives and as institutional speakers, for the purpose of analysis.

The inclusion of NS participants from a variety of dialects was not meant to obscure the differences that exist among the native speakers. Rather, given that the L2 Spanish learners were the focus of the study, the research questions emphasized

describing the two learner groups in comparison to the natives. This approach was informed by previous studies by Cordella (1996) and Koike (2012), who have compared L2 Spanish learners to mixed groups of native speakers within and across university-institutional settings, respectively. The objective of the research was to identify the range of devices and behaviors that were used at the group level, and so while there are certainly differences between individuals in each group, the analytical focus was on the groups as aggregates. Further, since the analytical focus was on mitigating devices and participation behaviors, the NSs were operationalized as a comparison group that represented the diversity of contact that students in the particular university had in instructional and social contexts.

The second group of participants (henceforth ADV group) comprised 10 advanced L2 Spanish learners. All ADV participants were Spanish majors or minors who had completed their language training, including at least one advanced grammar course, and were enrolled in upper-level (300 or 400 level) Spanish content courses in literature, linguistics or translation. The ADVs were all native speakers of American English who had only studied Spanish only in secondary school or university, and who were not heritage speakers of Spanish. At the time of data collection, ADV participants had an average age of 22 years (median 21 years) and had formally studied Spanish for an average of nine years (median 9 years). With regard to their exposure to Spanish outside of the language classroom, eight of the 10 ADV participants reported using Spanish on a regular basis either with friends or coworkers. Seven of the 10 ADVs also had spent time in a Spanish-speaking country: six had participated in study abroad programs and one had been on vacation.

The third group of participants (henceforth INT group) included 11 intermediate L2 Spanish learners. At the time of their participation, learners in this group had completed their language training and were enrolled in introductory (200 level) content courses in Spanish but had not taken advanced-level content courses. INT participants were subject to the same exclusion criteria as the ADV group described previously: They were native speakers of American English who had learned Spanish as a subject in school. At the time of data collection, INT participants had an average age of 20.3 years (median 20 years) and had formally studied Spanish for an average of nine years (median 9 years). Concerning their exposure to Spanish outside of the classroom, eight of the 11 INT participants indicated that they used Spanish on a regular basis either with friends, coworkers, or in volunteer activities. Nine of the 11 INTs had spent time in a Spanish-speaking country: Five had completed study abroad programs and four had vacationed abroad.

In order to address the question that focuses on institutional talk, the fourth participant group (henceforth NINS group) was constituted by four native Spanish speakers who were not affiliated with the university. These speakers were therefore considered to be non-institutional, in the sense that they were assumed to approach participation in the study without the constraints that impact university students (e.g., INT, ADV, NS groups). Individuals in the NINS group were recruited using a convenience sample, based on contacts with Spanish speakers from the local community. NINS participants were subject to the same inclusion criteria applied to the NS group described previously: Based on their status as native Spanish speakers and their length of residence in the U.S. At the time of data collection, the average age of the NINS

participants was 32.3 years (median 31.5 years), and they had lived in the US for an average of four years (median four years). NINS participants were also similar to individuals in the NS group in terms of their educational attainment: All had a bachelor's degree and three of four had completed a graduate or professional degree.

3.4 Instruments and data collection

Since the purpose of this study was to examine linguistic mitigation and behaviors of participation, as well as the factors that condition the deployment of these practices in conversational arguments, a variety of data sources were used. Data were collected from two quasi-experimental protocols (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration), a metalinguistic interview, and a biographical questionnaire². In order to address gaps in the literature regarding argument discourse in L2 Spanish, the study focused on naturalistic conversation, taking a cue from previous studies of the Spanish of native speakers (i.e., Cordella, 1996; Edstrom, 2004; García, 1989).

The first protocol was a ranking conversation, completed in Spanish, which was adapted from a prompted conversation used in Dippold (2007). Following that study, this protocol was designed to elicit naturalistic conversation that would yield arguments or disagreements in the ranking of the importance of statements on a chosen topic. In the ranking conversation protocol, pairs of participants were asked to choose one of the following six topics related to the university as the basis for a discussion: plagiarism, violence on campus, student protests, public transportation at the university, food control and obesity prevention, or advice for first-year students. After choosing a topic, the

² The instruments used for the protocols are provided at the end of the dissertation. Background questionnaires are located in Appendices B and C, ranking conversation prompts are in Appendices D and E, and the metalinguistic interview questions appear in Appendices F and G.

participants were given a printed prompt that asked them to consider four possible solutions to the topic, which was presented as a problem. Next, they were instructed to write a fifth solution of their own devising, and to rank all five solutions according to order of importance. Participants were instructed to compare their individual ranking with that of their partner and to explain and defend their own ranking. The conversations generated by this protocol were digitally audio recorded for transcription purposes.

The second conversational protocol employed in the study was a film narration. This protocol was informed by scholars such as Blackwell (2009, 2010), and Tannen (1993), who have examined the discourse produced in film narrations, and was used to elicit conversational narratives that contained arguments. As Tannen's (1993) study reported, individuals can be expected to remember different information according to their own interpretations and expectations of an event. Therefore, the participants in this protocol needed to negotiate which of their recollections of a film was most descriptive or most accurate. As noted by Brenneis (1988), a critical function of argumentative communication is the cooperative construction of accounts of past events, as each speaker must try to present a more coherent and compelling account.

In the film narration protocol, pairs of participants were shown a short silent film. In the film (*Gülümse*, Tolga Pulat, 2008), five characters each do a good deed for someone else, creating a chain of events that eventually comes full circle when the first character indirectly becomes the recipient of her own benevolence. The story presents the characters in the following order: a little girl who sells tissues, a crying woman, a man at a bar, a waiter, and an old woman. After viewing the film, the participants were instructed to provide as much detail as possible in describing what happened in the film,

as though narrating it to someone who had not seen it. The ensuing narrations were digitally audio recorded.

Two quasi-experimental protocols were employed in the study with the purpose of generating conversations produced by the same speakers interacting in different contexts, and therefore producing different types of discourse (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration). While both of these protocols were designed to elicit arguments, the ranking conversation asked participants to draw upon their own knowledge and to present personal opinions on topics that they were familiar with due to their status as members of the university community, or as recent immigrants to the United States and New Jersey. In contrast, the film narration presented speakers with a language task, that of re-telling a story that was unfamiliar to them. Thus, in the narration, the participants did not have the benefit of personal experience that could be utilized to help them present effective arguments. It was expected that including two different discourse genres would allow for a comparative analysis of the use of mitigation and behaviors of participation, which would further elucidate our understanding of these practices.

Meetings between the researcher and the NS, INT, and ADV participants took place at one of two offices on the university campus. Each meeting involved four participants, two NS and two learners, who completed the protocols as follows: First, they were asked to complete consent documents and a written biographical questionnaire, which focused on educational attainment and language background and use³. The questionnaire for the INT and ADV participants also required them to list and describe their coursework in Spanish, the amount of exposure they had had to different types of

³ Background questionnaires are located in Appendices B and C.

conversational discourse, and their level of comfort and confidence in having dyadic conversations in Spanish. Next, NS, INT, and ADV participants completed two ranking conversations, each with a different partner and on a different topic. The first ranking conversation featured mixed dyads (i.e., NS-L2) and the second featured matched dyads (i.e., NS-NS, L2-L2). Finally, for the film narration, participants were paired in the same NS-L2 dyads as for the ranking conversation.

This research design was informed by previous studies that analyzed conversations produced among L2 learners (e.g., Dippold, 2007) or in NS-L2 interactions (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2009). Félix-Brasdefer (2009), for example, called for research that examines learner discourse in other contexts and situations. In that study, which examined the variables of power and distance in relation to the production of refusals, it was noted that native speakers provided input that was critical to the L2 learners' ability to successfully negotiate a refusal interaction. This notion suggests that the pragmatic performance of language learners changes with different interlocutors, an issue that this study attempts to address by collecting data from both L2-L2 and NS-L2 dyads.

Meetings with the NINS participants took place at two different cafés that were convenient to the workplaces or residences of the individuals in this group. In each meeting, two NINS participants completed the protocols in the following order: After signing consent documents and responding to a written questionnaire, they completed one ranking conversation, on one of the following topics related to life in New Jersey: Improvements to New Jersey Transit service, healthy eating and obesity prevention, advice for recent arrivals/immigrants to New Jersey. Next, the NINS participants

completed the film narration protocol as described previously⁴. It should be recalled that NINS participants were included in the study in order to compare the discourse produced by different speakers of Spanish, including those who are not affiliated with the university. Therefore, NINS participants were paired with each other and were asked to complete only one ranking conversation.

The third protocol employed in this study was a metalinguistic interview, or playback session⁵. The data generated by this interview respond to the third research question guiding the study, which inquired about the impact of the institutional context on the language and behavior captured in the study. The metalinguistic protocol was informed by a number of scholars who have examined different pragmatic approaches to argument discourse, such as framing, politeness, and facework (i.e., Cordella, 1996; Dippold, 2007; Edstrom, 2004; García, 1989). Dippold (2007), in particular, remarks that a language task entails learners' subjective perceptions of the situation. She notes that the ways in which L2 learners perform actions need to be seen in relation to their perceptions of a task, to what they perceive their social roles to be, and to the qualities the task might require them to display. While Dippold approaches arguments with a focus on facework, this perspective is complimentary to the theoretical orientation of relational work described in the previous chapter (Locher and Watts, 2005; Watts, 2003).

In terms of relational work, the metalinguistic narratives can be understood to allow us to examine what Watts (2003) and Locher and Watts (2005) describe as the "lines" in the interaction. The lines are the roles or stances that are taken toward others, and align with strategic goals for the interaction. In the present study, the purpose of each

⁴ The prompts used for the NINS ranking conversations are located in Appendix E.

⁵ The interview questions are located in Appendices F and G.

interaction was defined as part of the protocol (i.e., ranking conversation or film narration), and was provided by the researcher to the participants. But, within the task frame individual speakers can be expected to adopt different strategic goals, or "lines" in the interaction.

In order to complete the metalinguistic interview, each participant was asked to meet with the researcher a few days after completing the quasi-experimental conversational protocols. During the interview, the researcher played back argument segments of the conversations that the participant had and asked them to give their interpretation of them. Each participant was also asked a series of questions related to their role and goals in the conversational interactions. The interviews were conducted in each participant's native language, with the goal of obtaining descriptive, spontaneous speech that was not constrained by their knowledge of the language. The metalinguistic interview was included in the study design in order to allow the researcher to consider each participant's *own* interpretation of how they behaved and spoke in their interactions. In other words, an *emic* approach was taken, in order to study the discourse from an insider's viewpoint (ten Have, 2007). This interview provided information that was critical to understanding the interactions generated in the two conversational protocols, especially on the part of L2 learners, who may approach a communicative situation in their L2 with expectations that differ from those of a native speaker (e.g., Dippold, 2007; Edstrom, 2004; García, 1989).

To summarize, the chart below depicts the different participants and dyads for the three protocols in the study:

Chart 1: Participants and dyadic pairs in conversational protocols

	Protocol	
	Ranking conversation	Film narration
Dyads	INT – NS ADV – NS NS – NS ADV – ADV INT – INT NINS – NINS	INT – NS ADV – NS NINS – NINS

As illustrated in chart 1, each participant in the NS, INT, and ADV groups completed two ranking conversations; each NS conversed with an L2 learner (INT or ADV) and then with another native speaker. Similarly, all learners, INT and ADV, completed a conversation with another L2 learner in addition to conversing with a NS. The NINS participants completed one ranking conversation, in which they were paired with another NINS. It should be recalled that the NINS group is considered non-institutional, and was included in order to explore how membership in the university institution constrains Spanish discourse. The film narration protocol paired each NS with the same L2 learner (INT or ADV) as for the ranking conversation. NINS dyads were also the same for both conversational protocols. Each participant in the study completed a metalinguistic interview with the researcher.

3.5 Data analysis

In order to respond to research questions that inquired about how mitigation and participation are employed, as well as the factors that condition these practices, this study employed a mixed methods design. Mixed methods, or the combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses, is understood to provide more comprehensive evidence by approaching the research problem from multiple perspectives. The mixed methods design, and particularly the inclusion of conversational and metalinguistic data, also

allowed for triangulation, which is critical to insuring the internal and external validity of the analysis. The inclusion of information gathered first hand from the participants was intended to decrease the subjectivity that went into interpreting the conversational data, assisting in developing an emic view of the argument discourse that was produced in the study. Further, triangulation was viewed as critical to the study design as a means of mitigating the observer's paradox, which Labov describes as follows: "the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation" (1972:209).

The mixed-methods design of the dissertation also aimed to address transferability, or the extent to which the results of the analyses can be extended to other contexts, and generalizability, or the extent to which gross tendencies within groups can be said to be characteristic of the use of mitigation and behaviors of participation. A critical aspect of this design was the selection of Conversation Analysis (henceforth, CA) as a method for analysis. As ten Have explains, CA assists the researcher in understanding the rules or principles which underlie interactions, and "the way to arrive at such results is to analyze singular instances, formulate rules, and 'test' these with comparable other instances (2007:150). In other words, CA supports analysis of both single occurrences, important in qualitative analysis, as well as a view of phenomena in the aggregate, as is necessary in a quantitative approach.

In the first phase of the data analysis process, the corpus of ranking conversations and film narrations were transcribed employing conversation analytic conventions (Jefferson, 2004; ten Have, 2007). Following scholars such as Heritage and Clayman

(2010), Kasper (2009) and ten Have (2007), CA methodology was utilized primarily because it allows for discourse to be considered at different levels: At the macro level we can observe the overall structural organization, at an intermediate level we can focus on the turn structure, and at the micro or utterance level we can examine the lexical choices that are made. Therefore, this method provided the resources needed to examine the facets of the argument discourse that are central to the present study: the linguistic forms that are used, as well as how those forms are deployed by speakers in the course of a particular interaction.

Once the ranking conversations and film narrations were transcribed, the second step in the analysis involved identifying the argument interactions. As described in the previous chapter, the term *argument* is employed in this study, following Toulmin, Rieke and Janik (1979:13), who broadly define arguing as “the whole activity of making claims, challenging them, backing them up by producing reasons, criticizing those reasons, rebutting those criticisms, and so on”. Argument segments of the ranking conversations and film narrations were identified by applying the aforementioned three-turn model put forth by Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) and Pomerantz (1984). Recall that the first turn (T1) occurs when a claim is made. The second turn (T2) contains either an expression of disagreement or a counterclaim, with reference to T1. The third turn (T3) requires a response to T2, either a retreat from the claim made in T1 or a reassertion or justification for the claim made in T1. Once the argument segments of the ranking conversations and film narrations had been extracted, they were imported into Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software and coded for several behaviors of participation and different types of mitigating devices.

Following the work of Cordella (1996), Dippold (2007), and Schiffrin (1990), behaviors of participation were defined as the extralinguistic actions of participants in a conversation. The analysis focused on three particular behaviors of participation that arise in arguments: interruption, overlap, and latching. These behaviors were operationalized as follows:

- Interruption: When a speaker loses the floor because they are interrupted before they have made their point (Jefferson, 2004; Schiffrin, 1990).
- Overlap: Where a second speaker interrupts at a possible completion point, leaving no pause in between turns (Sacks, et al., 1974; Schegloff, 2000).
- Latching: A transition from one turn to the next with no pause and no overlap (Jefferson, 2004; Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, et al., 1974).

Following Pomerantz (1984), Cordella (1996), Fraser (1980) and Caffi (1999, 2007), several different categories of mitigating devices that have been documented in arguments entered into the analysis, and were operationalized as follows:

- Parenthetical verbs: Optional elements in an utterance that create distance and weaken the strength of the statement of an idea or opinion that may be perceived as negative by the hearer (e.g., *creer* 'to believe', *parecer* 'to seem') (Fraser, 1980; Schneider, 2007; Urmson, 1952).
- Subjunctive mood and conditional aspect: Verbs in the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect frame actions as hypothetical and imprecise, respectively, allowing the speaker to indirectly convey the idea (e.g., *mi idea sería* 'my idea would be') (Fraser, 1980).
- Discourse markers: Devices that orientate the hearer by clarifying the communicative intention of the speaker and mitigate by creating a delay or modifying the propositional content of an utterance (e.g., *bueno* 'well', *o sea* 'that is') (Fraser, 1990; García Vizcaíno and Martínez Cabeza, 2005; Schwenter, 1996).
- Tag questions: Questions that are positioned at the end of a clause, casting doubt on the preceding utterance and seemingly giving the hearer the option of disagreeing with the statement (e.g., *¿no?* 'right?') (Pomerantz, 1984).
- Challenge questions: Interrogatives that require a speaker to defend their claim, and mitigate by softening the force of the imposition by creating an interpersonal distance between the speaker and the hearer (e.g., *¿me entiendes?* 'you understand?') (Chodorowska, 1997).

- Token agreements: The use of an agreement to preface a statement of disagreement; typically follows the sequential order: agreement + conjunction + disagreement (e.g., *sí pero no pienso...* 'yes, but I don't think...') (Pomerantz, 1984).
- Pauses: Delay devices that are typical of a disagreement, with "no immediately forthcoming talk" being understood by the hearer as signaling a negative response; generally between 0.9 and 1.2 seconds in length (Jefferson, 1989; Pomerantz, 1984).
- Epistemic disclaimers: Alerters or preparatory formulae that express a form of knowledge, opinion or attitude (e.g., *en realidad* 'in reality') (Caffi, 2007; Flores-Ferrán, 2012).
- Hedges: Devices that function to decrease the precision of an utterance (Caffi, 1999, 2007; Fraser, 2010). Three different subtypes of devices:
 - Hedges: Words or phrases that reduce the precision of an utterance by decreasing the speaker's commitment to the utterance (e.g., *casi* 'almost', *técnicamente* 'technically') (Caffi 1999, 2007).
 - Bushes: Approximators, or devices that function to decrease the certitude of an utterance (e.g., *quizás* 'maybe') (Caffi, 1999).
 - Shields: Impersonal mechanisms, or devices used to shift the responsibility of an utterance away from the speaker (e.g., *uno* 'one') (Caffi, 1999; Flores-Ferrán 2010, 2012).

Next, a qualitative microanalysis was conducted on each type of participation behavior and mitigating device defined above. All tokens of a behavior or device were extracted and compared. The analysis focused on identifying the functions of the behaviors and mitigating devices in relation to how they occurred in relation to the turn structure, at the discourse level, and at the utterance level. The analysis also compared the discourse across protocols and speaker groups.

Subsequently, a quantitative analysis of the participation behaviors and mitigating devices was conducted in order to examine the patterns and tendencies that emerged from the distinct participant groups, and to explore different variables that may condition the use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors. While CA methodology provides for a detailed, micro-level analysis of interactional phenomena, it is also useful to examine behaviors across populations, or within groups, in order to identify relationships

between variables. As Schegloff affirms, "in studying large amounts of data, we are studying *multiples* or *aggregates* of single instances. Quantitative analysis is, in this sense, not an alternative to single case analysis, but rather is built on its back (1993:102). After the aforementioned variables were coded in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, they were imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with the purpose of exploring descriptive statistic measures of the data. In addition to generating reports of the frequencies of the variables under consideration, SPSS was utilized to perform cross-tabulations, or Chi-square tests, which analyze the extent to which the observed counts, those captured in the corpus, compared to what would hypothetically be expected. The coding schema for the quantitative analysis started with the aforementioned participation behaviors and categories of mitigating devices. Each behavior and device was further coded for the following variables:

- Participant language status (i.e., NS, INT, ADV, NINS)
- Interlocutor language status (i.e., NS, INT, ADV, NINS)
- Protocol type (i.e., ranking conversation or film narration)
- Number of years of formal study of Spanish
- Length of residence in a Spanish-speaking country

Two additional variables emerged from the qualitative analysis, and were operationalized as follows:

- Co-occurrence: Multiple tokens of mitigating devices or participation behaviors are present in a single turn.
- Redundant uses of a mitigating device: The same device is used more than once in a single turn.

The final step of the analysis involved the metalinguistic interviews collected in the study, which were transcribed in their entirety, and were grouped according to participant

type for analysis: NS interviews, L2 interviews, and NINS interviews. Following the case study methodology employed in Kinginger (2008), each group of transcripts was reviewed closely, focusing on the descriptions that participants gave of their participation and how they explained their own linguistic behavior. After reviewing the interview transcripts for each group twice, the researcher was able to identify common threads or "key narratives" in the metalinguistic commentary of each group (Kinger, 2008:61). The patterns that emerged in this analysis were then compared with the findings yielded by the qualitative and quantitative analyses.

In summary, this chapter has provided a detailed description of the design and methods of the study, in light of the research questions. The cross-sectional, mixed methods design of this study responds to recent calls for methodological improvement in empirical investigations in the fields of pragmatics and SLA (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008, 2009, 2010a; Terkourafi, 2012). In order to address the three research questions that guided this study, the findings of these analyses are presented in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 4: Qualitative analysis of categories of mitigation and behaviors of participation in conversational arguments

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative analysis with regard to the mitigating devices and behaviors of participation evidenced in the study. Recall that this study set out to address three research questions, which had two foci: First, to examine the extent to which L2 learners approximate native speakers in their use of mitigation and behaviors of participation in the context of conversational arguments. Second, the study set out to identify how different linguistic and social variables condition the use of those interactional strategies. In order to address the research questions, data were collected from 46 participants who completed two conversational protocols and a metalinguistic interview, as detailed in the previous chapter. The data for the qualitative analysis were gathered from the two conversational protocols in the study, namely, a ranking conversation and a film narration. The analysis in this chapter responds to the first research question guiding the study: To what extent are INT and ADV learners able to approximate the target norm, with reference to the mitigating devices and participation behaviors employed in the context of conversational arguments?

This chapter is organized according to protocol; the findings that emerged from the argument segments of the ranking conversation protocol are presented in section 4.2, followed by the results of the film narration protocol in section 4.3. Within each of these sections I proffer a qualitative analysis of each type of mitigating device and participation behavior that was examined, focusing on the different speaker groups in the study (NINS,

NS, ADV, INT) as well as the dyads that completed each protocol (NINS-NINS, NS-NS, NS-L2, L2-L2). Section 4.4 provides a summary of the findings.

4.2 Ranking conversation protocol

For the ranking conversation protocol, participants were paired with the purpose of discussing one of the following three topics: public transportation at the university, food control and the prevention of obesity at the university, or advice for first year students. Each participant in the NS, ADV and INT groups completed two ranking conversations, with different partners. NINS participants completed only one ranking conversation, in which they were paired with another NINS. The reader will recall from Chapter 3 that the NINS group comprised only four participants, and that this smaller group was included in order to test the hypothesis that arguments in Spanish may be influenced by the institutional context of the university. Nevertheless, the NINS participants, while not the kernel of the study, are important in allowing us to draw comparisons. To summarize, the dyadic pairings for this protocol are depicted in Chart 2:

Chart 2: Dyads in ranking conversation protocol

	Ranking conversations	
	First conversation	Second conversation
Dyads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NS – NS • ADV – ADV • ADV – INT • INT – INT • NINS – NINS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NS – ADV • NS – INT

4.2.1 Mitigation attested in the ranking conversation protocol

As detailed previously, mitigation refers to words, phrases and linguistic devices that speakers use to attenuate, soften, or downgrade the strength of their utterances. The

ability to use linguistic mitigation is critical in managing an argument, an inherently negative or dispreferred type of interaction. Thus, in the following excerpts I aim to illustrate how mitigation was used in the context of the argument discourse produced in the ranking conversations collected in the study.

Following Pomerantz (1984), Cordella (1996), Fraser (1980) and Caffi (1999), I examined several different categories of mitigating devices that have been documented in arguments. The analysis will exemplify how the participant groups in the study employed each of the following different types of mitigation. Parenthetical verbs are presented first because they were the most pervasive category of mitigating devices. The devices are examined in order from greater to lesser prevalence in the corpus of ranking conversations, as follows:

- Parenthetical verbs
- Subjunctive mood and conditional aspect
- Discourse markers
- Tag questions
- Challenge questions
- Token agreements
- Epistemic disclaimers
- Pauses
- Hedges, bushes, and shields

Throughout the ensuing sections, each argument excerpt is introduced by giving the context in which it was produced. Excerpts are first divided into turns, labeled T1, T2 and T3, following the aforementioned framework in Pomerantz (1984) and Muntigl and Turnbull (1998). Recall that the first turn (T1) occurs when a claim is made. The second turn (T2) contains either an expression of disagreement or a counterclaim, with reference to T1. The third turn (T3) requires a response to T2. The devices under consideration are

underlined and are interpreted following each excerpt. The interpretations refer to turn number, line number, and speaker.

4.2.1.1 Parenthetical verbs

The category of parenthetical verbs, which includes *creer*, *parecer* and *pensar*, is known to mitigate by weakening the strength of a statement and by reducing the responsibility of the speaker (Schneider, 2007). These verbs are optional elements in the utterance that create distance by delaying the statement of an idea or opinion that may be perceived as negative by the hearer (Urmson, 1952, as cited in Fraser, 1980).

The analysis of parenthetical verbs produced in the corpus of ranking conversations revealed that all speakers in the study (e.g., natives and learners) employed this type of mitigating device throughout the argument interaction. In other words, parenthetical verbs were used to mitigate T1, or the statement of opinion, T2, the disagreement statement, and T3, the response to T2. However, two important differences emerged between the natives and learners: First, both NS and NINS groups tended to favor the parenthetical verb *me parece*, while learners preferred the verb *creo*. Second, redundant uses of a single parenthetical verb were characteristic of the learners, both ADV and INT, and of learners in L2-L2 dyads. In what follows, I have selected excerpts from ranking conversations in order to demonstrate how parenthetical verbs manifested by different speakers in this context⁶.

Excerpt 1 is exemplary of how NS participants used parenthetical verbs. The excerpt was produced in a conversation between two female NSs (NS17, NS18) as they

⁶ All conversational excerpts are presented and analyzed as they were originally produced, in Spanish. Translations of the excerpts are provided in Appendix H.

discussed their rankings on the topic of food control and obesity prevention at the university.

Excerpt 1

T1	1	NS17:	yo de cuatro puse ah la universidad debe cambiar los food trucks por
	2		otra opción menos grasosa=
T2	3	NS18:	=ajá=
T1	4	NS17:	=porque bueno tam[bién]
T2	5	NS18:	[o sea] no es una buena solución para ti.
T1	6	NS17:	no es una solución tampoco=
T2	7	NS18:	=ajá=
T1	8	NS17:	=porque (.) tampoco <u>me parece</u> que eso va a solucionar mucho.. en los
	9		food trucks no venden tampoco solamente comida grasosa porque
	10		bueno yo he comprado ahí no sé ensaladas y cosas (.) no sólo venden
	11		comida grasosa. no <u>me parece</u> una opción.

In Excerpt 1 we find the speaker NS17 explaining her position on the issue of food trucks, and employing the parenthetical verb *me parece* in multiple instances in T1. The verb *me parece* first appears at the beginning of the turn that spans lines 8 through 11, as NS17 provides evidence, an example, in support of the position stated in line 1. *Me parece* emerges again at the end of the turn, in line 11, as NS17 re-states her claim. Thus, in this excerpt, we see how a speaker employs the parenthetical verb in T1, before the interlocutor has even had a chance to disagree. Further, the double use can be said to escalate the indirectness of the statement, implying that the speaker was preemptively mitigating because she assumed that her partner may not have shared her perspective in ranking the solutions for the given topic.

NINS participants employed parenthetical verbs in a manner that was akin to NSs, as demonstrated by the following excerpt. Excerpt 2 was produced in a conversation between a female NINS speaker (NINS3) and a male NINS (NINS4) who discussed the topic of advice for recent immigrants to New Jersey.

Excerpt 2

T1	1	NINS3:	y:: tres tener un buen conocimiento del inglés.
T2	2	NINS4:	yo puse. eh mejor el vivir cerca de Nueva York=
T3	3	NINS3:	=ah! <u>te parece?</u> no <u>te parece?</u> yo estaba dudando <u>te parece</u> más
	4		importante vivir cerca a Nueva York?
T2	5	NINS4:	(0.7) realmente no <u>creo</u> que sea:=
T3	6	NINS3:	=es más [caro también]
T2	7	NINS4:	[ahora que lo leo] o sea no <u>creo</u> que sea que te vaya a hacer la
	8		vida más fácil (.) simplemente que te va a hacer la vida mej más
	9		interesante entonces ...

Excerpt 2 begins with the speaker NINS3 stating her ranking of the importance of knowing English, in line 1 (T1). NINS4 responds in line 2, announcing his disagreement. In response to this challenge, NINS3 employs a series of questions in her next turn, spanning lines 3 and 4, each of which is punctuated by the parenthetical verb *te parece*: *te parece? no te parece? te parece más importante vivir cerca a Nueva York?* Each of these questions, also known as challenge questions⁷ is mitigated by the parenthetical verb it contains. At the same time, the questions appear to force the interlocutor, NINS4, to defend his claim, as we can see in his two subsequent turns: In line 5 NINS4 backs away from his original position, attenuating his response with the parenthetical verb *creo*. Next, in the turn spanning lines 7 through 9, NINS4 goes on to modify his original position, and in doing so again employs *creo*. Hence, in this excerpt we find that NINS participants employed parenthetical verbs in both T2 and T3 of the argument interaction. The form *te parece* was used as part of a challenging strategy while *creo* functioned to assist a speaker back away from, and subsequently modify, their position.

The next pair of excerpts, produced in NS-L2 dyads, further illustrate how NSs used parenthetical verbs, and also allow us to observe the differences between natives and learners.

⁷ Challenge questions are examined in detail in section 4.2.1.4 of this chapter.

Excerpt 3 was generated by a NS-L2 dyad, in which a female NS participant (NS17) and a female INT participant (L217) discussed their rankings of different solutions on the topic of plagiarism at the university.

Excerpt 3

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------|---|
| T1 | 1 | NS17: | el número uno mío es la universidad debe enseñar a los estudiantes |
| | 2 | | cómo evitar el plagio (.) pero también en caso de que se cometa plagio |
| | 3 | | se debe eh castigar pero no tan severamente porque: digamos el número |
| | 4 | | cinco (.) es el primero que está el primero yo lo elegí como número |
| | 5 | | cinco porque el que dice que el plagio es ilegal y la universidad debe |
| | 6 | | echar al estudiante <u>me parece</u> como mu:y al extremo. |
| T2 | 7 | L217: | sí. pero a mí: <u>creo</u> que um que la universidad debe perdonar casos de |
| | 8 | | plagio porque no es una ofensa muy seria <u>creo</u> que es un poco sí la |
| | 9 | | primera es extremo ... |

In excerpt 3, NS17 employs the parenthetical verb *me parece* in line 6 after explaining her position and to preface her opinion. In response, in the next turn the INT speaker, L217, uses the parenthetical verb *creo* in two instances: In line 7 before L217 states the option that she chose to rank first, an option which is different from that of her partner, and again in line 8, before giving an opinion in support of her position. Thus, in this excerpt we see that the NS employed the parenthetical verb *me parece* in T1 as she stated her opinion, while the INT relied on *creo* to mitigate her opposing viewpoint in T2.

The next excerpt was extracted from another NS-L2 dyad, in which a female NS (NS13) and a male INT participant (L213) discussed the topic of public transportation at the university. The excerpt begins at a point where the participants have already discussed their different opinions, and are deciding which solution is the best option.

Excerpt 4

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------|--|
| T2 | 1 | NS13: | entonces <u>creo</u> que el autobús está muy bien= |
| T3 | 2 | L213: | =sí= |
| T2 | 3 | NS13: | =bastante bien pero estaría bien alternativas [diferentes] |
| T3 | 4 | L213: | [mjm] (.) <u>creo</u> que la |
| | 5 | | los autobuses son la más económica= |
| T2 | 6 | NS13: | =jmm= |

T3 7 L213: =para la universidad y para todos los estudiantes (.) pero creo que esta
8 el sistema de transporte no funciona bien ...

In excerpt 4, NS13 employs the parenthetical verb *creo* in line 1 as she describes her position. INT13 also elects to use *creo*, in line 4, as he provides an opposing viewpoint, and again in line 7 as he reformulates his position. Therefore, this excerpt demonstrates how both an NS and an INT employed the parenthetical verb *creo* to mitigate their statements even after their differences had been discussed. In this instance, the NS used the parenthetical verb to preface her opinion, in T2, and the INT repeated the same form as he restated his opposing position, in T3.

In brief, excerpts 1 through 4 are illustrative of how NSs in the study employed parenthetical verbs. In conversations with other NSs and with INTs, parenthetical verbs appeared as a device that softened a position by introducing evidence, opinions, or examples that were suggestive of opposition. We can also see how this type of mitigating device was realized before an argument developed (i.e., T1), as part of the statement of disagreement (i.e., T2), and as a strategy to downgrade or back away from an opposing viewpoint (i.e., T3). We should also note that in excerpt 4 the INT speaker chose to use the same parenthetical verb as the NS, *creo*. The next set of excerpts demonstrates the redundant use of a single parenthetical verb (i.e., *creo*) by both speakers in a dyad, a tendency that is most characteristic of learners, both ADV and INT, and particularly in L2-L2 conversations. The following excerpts were produced in learner-learner (L2-L2) dyads.

The first example from a L2-L2 dyad was generated in a conversation between a female INT (L215) participant and a male INT (L216) participant who discussed the topic of food control and obesity prevention at the university. The excerpt begins with

T2, wherein L216 is stating his position, which is different than what has been expressed by his partner.

Excerpt 5

- | | | | |
|----|----|-------|--|
| T2 | 1 | L216: | uh yo me gusta también yo yo puse por ah para número uno la |
| | 2 | | universidad debe mandar que cada restaurante venda frutas y verduras |
| | 3 | | frescas= |
| | 4 | L215: | =sí |
| T2 | 5 | L216: | uh yo <u>pienso</u> que es algo un poquito expensivo y no es algo que cada |
| | 6 | | venda cada tienda puede hacer pero yo <u>pienso</u> que um no es como un |
| | 7 | | ley= |
| | 8 | L215: | =mjm= |
| T2 | 9 | L216: | =es como si quieres ser parte de nuestra comunidad en la universidad |
| | 10 | | tienes que ser una tienda que ah haces a haces esto. |
| T3 | 11 | L215: | pues <u>piensas</u> que e:s la opinión suyo? |
| T2 | 12 | L216: | [mjm] |
| T3 | 13 | L215: | [de de]cidir? um lo que quiere comer? |
| T2 | 14 | L216: | qué? lo siento [(risas)] |
| T3 | 15 | L215: | [um] <u>piensas</u> que (.) <u>piensas</u> que es el derecho del |
| | 16 | | estudiante?=
=[de] |
| T2 | 17 | L216: | |
| T3 | 18 | L215: | [de] decidir lo que quiere comer o? |
| T2 | 19 | L216: | yeah yeah yo <u>pienso</u> que um (.) no puedes ah forzar ... |

In Excerpt 5 we find repeated instances of the parenthetical verb *pienso*, which is employed by both speakers. The male INT speaker (L216) utilizes *yo pienso* in several instances in his turn in lines 5 and 6 to mitigate a reason he provides for why he disagrees with his partner. The female INT speaker (L215) employs *piensas* in her next two turns, first to challenge in line 11, and then in two instances in line 15 to clarify what was stated by her interlocutor.

Once again, only one parenthetical verb is employed in the exchange in excerpt 5, and it is done so redundantly. In other words, while multiple parenthetical verbs were observed in NS-NS conversations, only a single discreet form of this mitigating devices appears in the L2-L2 interactions extracted here. This observation is somewhat akin to the findings reported by Félix-Brasdefer (2008) in a study that examined mitigation

among intermediate-level Spanish learners who were given explicit instruction in a college Spanish course regarding how to respond in refusal situations. Regarding the use of parenthetical verbs in particular, despite showing significant gains in their use of this mitigating device from the pretest to the posttest, the experimental learner group was described as "showing an approximation to NS Spanish behavior" (p. 488), but still did not employ mitigating devices with the same range and frequency as native Spanish speakers.

The next excerpt was produced in a conversation between two female ADV participants as they discussed the topic of advice for first year students.

Excerpt 6

- | | | | |
|----|----|------|---|
| T1 | 1 | L27: | Y yo <u>creo</u> que la la cosa más importante es conocer bien la universidad |
| | 2 | | y saber dónde están los lugares más importantes porque todos los días |
| | 3 | | alguien me pregunta dónde está este edificio o dónde está este um |
| | 4 | | centro de computadoras o otra cosa y cuando yo sé la respuesta me |
| | 5 | | hace sentir buena y pueden hacer amigos que hablas con una persona |
| | 6 | | nueva que necesita ayuda y es parte de la experiencia de la universidad. |
| T2 | 7 | L26: | Sí yo <u>creo</u> que esto es muy muy importante también pero <u>creo</u> que |
| | 8 | | también esto va con tiempo cuando vas a las clases y ah vas a hacer |
| | 9 | | cosas y vas a a aprender donde están las los labs de computadora y |
| | 10 | | donde están las los lugares donde se puede comer y yo <u>creo</u> que esto es |
| | 11 | | muy importante pero también va con el tiempo (.) um YO <u>CREO</u> que la |
| | 12 | | cosa más importante es estar muy muy cómodo con tu lugar hacer |
| | 13 | | amigos y establecer un balance entre los estudios y la vida social. |

Excerpt 6 begins with L27 stating which option she ranked first. She claims her position in line 1, prefacing the statement with the parenthetical verb *creo*. In T2, the speaker L26 states that she disagrees with the position just taken by her partner. This argument is punctuated by two instances of the parenthetical verb *creo*, in line 7. L26 subsequently employs *creo* in two more instances, in line 10, and at a louder volume in line 11, as she makes her counterclaim. At this point, the parenthetical form *creo* appears to be used by L26 as a formulaic expression or set phrase that functions to introduce a statement of

opinion. Even though the repeated uses of a single parenthetical verb in T2, *creo*, can be said to be mitigating, the softening effect of the verb seems to diminish with redundant uses. In other words, it is clear in line 7 that the speaker knows how to use the parenthetical verb to attenuate the force of a negative statement, but by line 11 the mitigating strategy has been over generalized and thus loses its effectiveness as a mitigating device. This redundant use of a single parenthetical verb stands in contrast to the way NSs employed this type of device, such as in excerpt 1, where *me parece* was repeated twice, and was observed to render the utterance increasingly indirect.

Excerpts 5 and 6 have illustrated how L2 learners in this study employed parenthetical verbs when conversing with each other. Both INT and ADV learners used parenthetical verbs to mitigate as they stated their positions, to voice disagreements, and to give opinions. In both excerpts 4 and 5, it was noted that only one parenthetical verb was issued; INT participants employed *pienso* while ADV participants elected to use *creo*. The realization of just one parenthetical verb form (e.g., *pienso* or *creo*) by both participants in a conversation resulted in redundancy or overuse of this mitigating strategy. Thus, I have noted that while the mitigating effect remains intact despite overuse, that effect becomes somewhat diminished after redundant use. It is also plausible that parenthetical verbs such as *pienso* and *creo* are set phrases or chunks of speech that learners employ as conversational routines (i.e., Barón and Celaya, 2010; Ellis, 2003; Kasper, 1995; Taguchi, 2007). This possibility will be examined further in the discussion chapter.

4.2.1.1.1 Summary of findings regarding parenthetical verbs as mitigating devices in the ranking conversation protocol

The excerpts in this section have demonstrated how the different speaker groups in the study employed parenthetical verbs in the context of the ranking conversation protocol. It was observed that the speakers in the study used this type of mitigating device throughout the argument interaction (i.e., in T1, T2, and T3) to downgrade or back away from opinions and statements of disagreement. However, it was revealed that the L2 learners differ from the NS and NINS speakers in that they exhibited a preference for the verb *creo* while natives tended to use *me parece*. With regard to learners, the analysis also pointed to a redundant use of this type of mitigating device, which suggests a somewhat simplified function associated with parenthetical verbs, in terms of the form of the verb, and in the pragmatic function it serves. In other words, while learners can and do employ parenthetical verbs to attenuate and downgrade utterances in the context of a conversational argument, they often rely on one discreet form which leads to its overuse. Thus, I find that the learners in the study can be said to be approximating the native speakers; they are not native like but they demonstrate the ability to use parenthetical verbs to mitigate their argument interactions.

Finally, it should be noted that while there were marked differences between learners and natives with regard to the use of parenthetical verbs, there was little difference between the two learner groups. That is, INT speakers employed parenthetical verbs in a way that was quite similar to ADV speakers. Use of those verbs would suggest not only that parenthetical verbs have been acquired by the time learners reach the intermediate level, but that there is little qualitative, pragmatic change in how learners use this mitigating device as they progress to the advanced level.

Next we focus on how the speakers in the study employed another type of mitigating strategy involving verb forms: the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect.

4.2.1.2 Subjunctive mood and conditional aspect

The next type of mitigating device examined is the use of the subjunctive mood and the conditional aspect. Researchers have noted that verbs in the subjunctive mood or conditional aspect make the actions described by speakers seem hypothetical and imprecise, respectively, and they are therefore an indirect means of conveying an idea (Fraser, 1980). Thus, in the context of a conflict or an argument, the expression of the subjunctive or conditional assists the speaker in reducing the force of a statement that could be perceived as negative, or an opinion that could provoke a disagreement.

The analysis of verbs in the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect in the corpus of ranking conversations revealed both similarities and differences regarding how these mitigating devices were employed by the learners and the native speakers in the study. Both L2 learners and natives employed these devices with similar functions. That is, the conditional was used to indirectly express opinions, and the subjunctive assisted speakers in describing hypothetical situations. However, two important differences emerged with regard to the discursive context surrounding the use of these mitigating devices: The native speaker groups (i.e., NS and NINS) employed the subjunctive and conditional in T2 of the argument interactions as a strategy for downgrading their disagreement statements. In contrast, the learner groups (i.e., ADV and INT) used the subjunctive and the conditional in T1, or to mitigate the potentially negative effects of opinions that were expressed before an argument had developed. Recall that mitigation is generally observed in T2 or T3, where it functions to soften or downgrade negative or threatening statements

(Pomerantz, 1984). The second difference that will be demonstrated by the analysis relates to how the use of the subjunctive as a mitigating device, most characteristic of natives, varies among speaker groups. When learners employed the subjunctive, it was always in an obligatory context. That is to say, tokens of the subjunctive appeared after a word or phrase that functioned as a "trigger," such as *para que* or *si*. Natives, on the other hand, used the subjunctive both in obligatory contexts and in creative expressions of uncertainty or conjecture.

In order to illustrate these patterns, the following excerpts from ranking conversations feature utterances that are mitigated by the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect. As in the previous section, the discourse produced by native speakers is presented first, followed by that of the learners.

The first excerpt is from a NS-NS dyad, and is exemplary of how the subjunctive and conditional were employed by native speakers as mitigating devices. The excerpt was generated by two male NS participants (NS19, NS20) as they conversed about the topic of food control and obesity prevention at the university. Specifically, they are discussing whether the university should impose restrictions on unhealthy food sold on campus.

Excerpt 7

T1	1	NS20:	mi tres es que la universidad no debe intervenir para prevenir la
	2		obesidad que cada estudiante tiene que decidir por sí mismo [qué]
T2	3	NS19:	[mjm]
T1	4	NS20:	quiere comer.
T2	5	NS19:	mjm.
T1	6	NS20:	no sé (.) creo que entra la libertad de todo mundo evidentemente (.) o
	7		sea yo pienso que es mejor y yo no estoy precisamente muy delgado
			[pero]
T2	8	NS19:	[(risas)]
T1	9	NS20:	pero creo que creo que lo mejor es dejar a que:=
T2	10	NS19:	=sí claro [sí sí sí]
T1	11	NS20:	[un poco] XXX.
T2	12	NS19:	sí sí sí (.) sí sí. e::h es mi cuatro eso=
T3	13	NS20:	=eso es tu cuatro=

- T2 14 NS19: sí (.) que la universidad no debe: eh no debe intervenir. ehm (.) sí bueno
 15 lo puse como más o menos tirando para una mala opción (.) casi: casi
 16 cinco=
 T3 17 NS20: =mm=
 T2 18 NS19: porque creo que (.) mm la universidad sí debe tomar parte pero en el
 19 fondo crear un programa obvio para que uno tome la decisión que uno
 20 quiera pero (0.7) que ellos me provean información que ellos me bajen
 21 los precios y yo en función de eso escojo bien. eh pero: creo yo yo creo
 22 que deberían tomar alguna: posición alguna: dentro de este como juego.

Excerpt 7 begins with the speaker NS20 sharing, in T1, his ranking of the option that the university should not intervene in food matters on campus. NS20 provides opinions in support of this position in several subsequent turns. In response, the disagreement (T2) begins in line 12 as NS19 indicates that he has a different ranking than his partner. In the turn spanning lines 18 through 22, NS19 goes on to support his position by stating that the university should take part in the food situation on campus. This opinion is elaborated and supported by the next several utterances, in which NS19 describes the ideal situation, which he frames as hypothetical by employing the subjunctive mood for the verbs in lines 19 and 20 (i.e., *tome*, *quiera*, *provean*, *bajen*). Interestingly, the speaker depersonalizes his statements in lines 19 and 20 by employing the pronoun *uno*⁸ in two instances: First in *uno tome* and second in *uno quiera*. In contrast, he then emphasizes his role by including the reflexive pronoun *me* in line 20 in stating *me provean* and *me bajen*. The speaker then restates his opinion about the university's involvement in lines 21 and 22, this time employing the conditional verb in stating *deberían tomar alguna: posición*. Thus, in this excerpt we see how a native speaker employed the subjunctive mood in T2 as an indirect means of disagreeing, by describing a hypothetical, idealized scenario. We also find that the conditional aspect was used to downgrade the strength of an opinion, also given in T2.

⁸ The mitigating functions associated with pronouns such as *uno* are examined in section 4.2.1.8 of this chapter.

The following excerpt illustrates how the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect were employed in the ranking conversations of NINS participants in a way that was similar to the NS speakers. The excerpt was generated in a conversation between a female NINS (NINS3) and a male NINS (NINS4) who discussed the advice they would give to recent immigrants to New Jersey. The excerpt begins at a point in the conversation where NINS4 has just stated that he would advise recent arrivals to live as close as possible to New York City.

Excerpt 8

- | | | | |
|----|----|--------|--|
| T3 | 1 | NINS3: | lo que pasa también es depende de condiciones emigres no? también |
| | 2 | | eso porque bueno si:: venís y tenés un trabajo que está bien y: podés |
| | 3 | | digamos pagar una renta .. cara no muy [barata] |
| T2 | 4 | NINS4: | [claro sí] |
| T3 | 5 | NINS3: | no voy a decir un lugar |
| | 6 | | mejor si XX con XX en adelante no sé si es mejor= |
| T2 | 7 | NINS4: | =claro sí las circunstancias son subjetivas totalmente o sea depende |
| | 8 | | lamentablemente lo vemos por todos el dinero es eh: |
| | 9 | | [es un aspecto clave] |
| T3 | 10 | NINS3: | [es lo más impor-] lo más clave= |
| T2 | 11 | NINS4: | =entonces el dinero hace que si: .. que si: no tienes suficiente no vas |
| | 12 | | a poder eh: bueno también el tiempo no? que <u>tengas</u> disponible para |
| | 13 | | viajar pero bueno en cualquier caso sí es una cosa muy subjetiva y no |
| | 14 | | hace la vida que <u>sea</u> no creo que <u>haga</u> la vida más fácil sino más |
| | 15 | | interesante ... |

Excerpt 8 begins with T3 and a challenge: NINS3 suggests in lines 1 through 3 that where recent arrivals to New Jersey live is dependent on their financial situation. In response, in T2 NINS4 agrees in line 4 and again in line 7, but goes on to clarify, employing the subjunctive in lines 12 and 14 to assist him in describing a hypothetical situation that he provides in support of his position. We note that in this excerpt, the first two instances of the subjunctive (*tengas* and *sea*) are used to express the uncertainty of the scenario, while the third (*haga*) is conditioned by the phrase *no creo que*. Thus, this

excerpt demonstrates how a NINS participant utilized the subjunctive in both creative and obligatory contexts.

The following excerpts allow us to focus on how the subjunctive and conditional were attested in the argument interactions of the learners in the study, both ADV and INT.

The next excerpt from an NS-L2 dyad, was generated by a male INT participant (L216) and a male NS (NS16) in discussing the topic of student protests. The interaction occurs at the very beginning of their conversation, when they are sharing their rankings of different possible solutions to the problem.

Excerpt 9

- | | | | |
|----|----|-------|--|
| T1 | 1 | L216: | yo: ah puse?=
=mjm= |
| | 2 | NS16: | |
| T1 | 3 | L216: | =por mi primera opción ah la universidad debe que promover una |
| | 4 | | cultura de activismo political. porque es muy esto es eso es algo que yo |
| | 5 | | no (.) um yo no veo como separado de la educación es parte de de ser |
| | 6 | | un adulto y un ciudadano y cosas así. um (.) yeah yo puedo entender |
| | 7 | | que la universidad no no quiere ah tener alguna ah alguna cosa que ver |
| | 8 | | con grupos ah cómo se dice? like ah acti: grupos que quieren protestar y |
| | 9 | | algo así= |
| | 10 | NS16: | =como activistas todo el tiempo= |
| T1 | 11 | L216: | =yeah yeah. pero: si la universidad ah (.) <u>tuviera</u> una ah un visto más |
| | 12 | | que ahm como (.) si <u>quisieran</u> trabajar con los estudiantes más (.) ah |
| | 13 | | <u>promovería</u> la cultura más fácilmente y también no: no <u>habría</u> muy |
| | 14 | | tensión entre los estudiantes y la administración. me entiendes? ... |

The exchange in excerpt 9 begins with the INT speaker, L216, describing in lines 3 through 9 the solution he has written for how the university should deal with student protests. In his next turn, L216 employs the subjunctive form of the verbs *tuviera*, in line 11, and *quisieran*, in line 12, as he describes a hypothetical situation. This clause is followed by the verbs *promovería* and *habría* in the conditional, which describe the outcome of the situation just put forth by the speaker. This combination of the subjunctive and conditional is triggered by *si* at the outset of the utterance in line 11.

Thus, in this excerpt we note that the INT participant employed both the subjunctive and conditional in a context that required their use, and in T1, before the argument had developed.

The next excerpt is from a L2-L2 dyad, and was produced by a male ADV participant (L28) in the course of discussing the university's public transportation system with another male ADV participant (L25). At this point in the conversation, L28 is describing the solution he has devised for how to improve public transportation.

Excerpt 10

T1	1	L28:	he puesto deben instituir otras opciones aparte de los autobuses como
	2		un tranvía o bicis públicas con carriles de bici para para que <u>exista</u> un
	3		una alter alternativa a los autobuses.
T2	4	L25:	esto es uno o cinco? para ti=
T1	5	L28:	=ah eso he puesto para número uno ...

In T1 of excerpt 10, the speaker L28 shares the solution that he has written on the topic of improving the public transportation system. This idea is punctuated by the verb *exista* in line 2, which appears in the subjunctive form. We can note that this token of the subjunctive was triggered by the phrase *para que*, and occurred even before the argument had developed. Hence, here again we see another example of how a learner employs the subjunctive in an obligatory context.

The final excerpt is from another L2-L2 dyad, and was generated by a female INT participant (L23) and a male ADV participant (L24) while discussing advice for first year students at the university. Specifically, they are discussing what students need to do to be successful at the university.

Excerpt 11

T1	1	L23:	y el último indiqué es importante estudiar mucho (.) no deben perder
	2		tiempo saliendo de noche la la la. um. eh qué dicen? es no deben

	3		estudiar mucho (.) deben estudiar uh eficientemente?= =sí=
T1	4	L24:	
	5	L23:	=tiene sentido?= =[sí]
T1	6	L24:	
	7	L23:	[so] study harder not smarter or not- [qué dice?] [study smart][er]
T1	8	L24:	
	9	L23:	[qué] dicen ellos? (risas)=
	10		
	11	L24:	=uh no sé
T1	12	L23:	algo así= =sí=
	13	L24:	
T1	14	L23:	=entonces para decir es importante estudiar mucho mm (.) no <u>diría</u> eso.

In excerpt 11 the speaker L23 begins by stating the option that she has ranked last. She tries to explain this opinion to her partner over the course of the interaction, finally summarizing with: *para decir es importante estudiar mucho mm (.) no diría eso*. In this instance, L23 employed the conditional form *diría* to reduce the force of the statement, and as an alternative means of saying that she disagreed with the option *es importante estudiar mucho*. Thus, in this example we see how an INT participant elected to use the conditional in order to indirectly state a negative opinion. Once again, this mitigating device emerged in T1, or before the interlocutor had stated his disagreement.

Now that we have examined tokens of the subjunctive and conditional in the context in which they were employed by the different speakers in the study, the following section summarizes what this analysis has revealed.

4.2.1.2.1 Summary of findings regarding the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect as mitigating devices in the ranking conversation protocol

The excerpts in this section have illustrated how the subjunctive mood and the conditional aspect were attested as mitigating devices in the discourse produced by the different speakers and dyads in the study. In brief, both L2 learners and natives employed these devices with similar functions. That is, the conditional assisted speakers in stating

their opinions indirectly, and the subjunctive was a strategy that assisted speakers in creating hypothetical situations.

Two notable differences were found between the L2 learner groups and the native speaker groups: Learners tended to employ the subjunctive and conditional in T1, or before the argument had developed, while natives used these strategies to mitigate T2, the actual statement of disagreement. This finding is interesting in that it suggests that learners, both ADV and INT, are sensitive to the need to mitigate utterances that could be perceived as negative or threatening, such as opinions. However, it would also seem to indicate that the learners, even those at the ADV level, do not entirely approximate native speakers in that they were not observed to employ the subjunctive and conditional to downgrade or weaken an actual disagreement (i.e., T2). Further, and with regard to the use of the subjunctive specifically, it was observed that learners *only* employed the subjunctive in obligatory contexts. That is, instances of the subjunctive always followed a trigger phrase, or were part of a set phrase. It is conceivable that learners have received explicit instruction regarding specific contexts that require the subjunctive mood. The following examples of tokens of the subjunctive produced by learners further illustrate the observation relating to obligatory use of the subjunctive:

Example 1: No es que no sepa que McDonald's es no es sano. (L22- ADV)

Example 2: No pienso que sea posible controlar cien por ciento las personas. (L23- INT)

Example 3: Los estudiantes tienen que estar en conflicto (.) sí (.) para que tenga éxito la marcha. (L22- ADV)

In examples 1 through 3, each instance of the subjunctive is triggered by a specific phrase: *no es que*, *no pienso que*, or *para que*, respectively. Thus, while L2 learners demonstrated that the subjunctive was a mitigating strategy that was available to them, it

appears as though they are not yet able to use it creatively, or in a target-like manner (e.g., excerpt 7 above). Finally, this simplified use of the subjunctive was characteristic of both ADV and INT speakers, meaning that no pattern emerged with regard to how the use of the subjunctive changed or improved from one learner group to the next.

4.2.1.3 Discourse markers that function as mitigating devices in argument interactions

Another mitigating device that was examined is the use of discourse markers. The term discourse markers refers to a broad category of words that are described by Schifffrin as "sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk" (1987:35). More specifically, Fraser (1990) details that discourse markers are not used to create meaning but to orientate the hearer by clarifying the communicative intention of the speaker. Thus, discourse markers have interpersonal and pragmatic functions. Scholars have identified and illustrated how discourse markers, such as *bueno* and *o sea*, mitigate a negative or conflict interaction by creating a delay or modifying the propositional content of an utterance (García Vizcaíno and Martínez Cabeza, 2005; Schwenter, 1996). Given that discourse markers can have multiple functions, the analysis focused on identifying those that appeared to mitigate the argument interaction. In the corpus of ranking conversations, discourse markers were found to have the following mitigating functions:

- 1) Create a delay before a negative statement or disagreement
- 2) Reformulate a position that could be perceived as negative
- 3) Soften, back away from, or downgrade a statement

The analysis of discourse markers revealed a distinct difference between how these mitigating devices were attested in the arguments of native speakers (i.e., NS and NINS) and L2 learners (i.e., ADV and INT). Namely, natives possessed a wide variety of lexical

items that fulfilled all of the aforementioned mitigating functions, while learners exhibited only two lexical items as discourse markers, which served two of the three mitigating functions. Thus, the following excerpts have been extracted from the corpus to illustrate how the three mitigating functions were realized by the inclusion of discourse markers in an utterance. First, we will examine extracts from native speakers, followed by discourse produced by the learners.

The following excerpts focus on the discourse generated by NS-NS dyads. The first excerpt demonstrates how discourse markers were attested in a conversation between two female NSs (NS17, NS18). In the excerpt, the speakers are discussing the topic of food control and obesity prevention at the university. The excerpt begins at a point where NS17 has just stated that a possible option is that the university requires all food vendors to provide the number of calories and amount of fats for the products they sell.

Excerpt 12

T2	1	NS18:	yo la había puesto uno que es una solución muy adecuada=
T1	2	NS17:	=mjm=
T2	3	NS18:	=aunque.. en mi caso personal nunca funciona.
T1	4	NS17:	[(risas)]
T2	5	NS18:	[porque] yo cuando voy al supermercado ni siquiera miro las
	6		calorías la grasa y además <u>o sea</u> que en mi caso personalmente no
	7		funcionaría no es una solución. creo que sí puede funcionar para
	8		otras personas y puede ser una solución adecuada pero en mi caso.
T3	9	NS17:	no=
T2	10	NS18:	=yo nunca lo miro la verdad nunca-
T3	11	NS17:	- <u>bueno</u> yo después de tomar unas clases de nutrición porque estoy
	12		ahorita estoy tomando una clase este semestre en nutrición=
T2	13	NS18:	=mjm=
T3	14	NS17:	=y: <u>no sé</u> (.) como que donde me cae el pensamiento para decir OK
	15		es importante saber cuantas grasas saturadas estoy comiendo al día
	16		(.) <u>no sé</u> (.) como tratar de buscar productos que no tengan tanta
	17		grasa y (.) <u>bueno</u> lo que más me preocupa es eso.

The exchange in excerpt 12 begins with NS18, who explains her ranking of the solution.

In her turn spanning lines 5 through 8, NS18 provides an example in support of her

position: *yo cuando voy al supermercado ni siquiera miro las calorías la grasa y además.*

This statement is followed by the discourse marker *o sea*, which precedes a reformulation of the speaker's idea. Following Blakemore (1993), reformulations are defined as re-elaborations of an idea in order to clarify its meaning for the hearer. Thus, in this excerpt *o sea* assisted the speaker in making her statement less direct by allowing her to re-elaborate and allude to the fact that by stating *ni siquiera miro las calorías* what she really means is *en mi caso personalmente no funcionaría*. Next, we see that NS17 disagrees with NS18's ranking. The argument develops in line 11 when NS17 clarifies her own position, which she initiates by using the discourse marker *bueno*, thereby delaying the utterance of disagreement. Next, NS17 continues her turn, providing a personal example in lines 14 through 17, which she brackets with two tokens of the discourse marker *no sé*. *No sé* has the effect of making the speaker seem less committed to what she is saying and thus functions to soften her claim. Finally, in line 17, NS17 concludes her turn by restating her opinion, which is prefaced by another instance of *bueno*, which again downgrades the statement by delaying it. Thus, in this excerpt we find that the NS participants employed three different discourse markers, each with a different mitigating function: *O sea* was used introduce a reformulation, *bueno* functioned as a delay, and *no sé* allowed the speaker to back away from her claim.

The next excerpt was generated by two male NSs (NS6, NS7) as they discussed the topic of public transportation at the university and how it could be improved.

Excerpt 13

T1	1	NS6:	en el tres puse puse lo que lo que yo personalmente pienso <u>o sea</u>
	2		que sería bueno que la universidad ofreciera más opciones a los
	3		commuters (.) <u>es decir</u> que de una manera la universidad trata
	4		hablando con New Jersey Transit o hablando con eh los sistemas
	5		de bus sistemas de tal Coach USA que ofrecieran más opciones a

	6		las personas que vienen de de otras partes en Nueva Jersey no?
	7		Edison etcétera porque es una universidad donde hay muchos
	8		commuters.
T2	9	NS7:	si sí bastantes (.)
T1	10	NS6:	realmente (0.7) y a veces <u>bueno</u> es un poco difícil cuestionar esto
	11		porque requiere que la universidad hable con otras instituciones y
	12		eso es muy difícil=
T2	13	NS7:	=sí de ahí (.) <u>o sea</u> (.) es una ciudad muy cómo se dice muy: <u>bueno</u>
	14		hay mucha gente y y sería imposible <u>o sea</u> como quiere cambiar
	15		como una ciudad funciona solamente para el bienestar de una
	16		escuela entonces aunque una escuela muy: [grande]
T1	17	NS6:	[inmensa]
T2	18	NS7:	entonces no
	19		creo que que funcionaría ésa que tratar de hablar con la [ciudad y]
T1	20	NS6:	[mm:]
T2	21	NS7:	otras instituciones para (.) poder cambiar la situación.
T3	22	NS6:	m.: <u>bueno bueno bueno</u> qué tienes por ahí en el tres?

In excerpt 13, NS6 begins by describing the option that he had written; this statement includes two mitigating discourse markers: *o sea* in line 1, and *es decir* in line 3. Each of these markers introduces a reformulation of the idea shared by NS6, allowing him to better explain his idea. However, *o sea*, in this case, also assists NS6 in backing away from the previous statement: *puse lo que lo que yo personalmente pienso*. NS6 continues his explanation in the turn spanning lines 10 through 12, further mitigating as he employs *bueno* to preface an opinion, in line 10. Overall, it is evident that these discourse markers assisted NS6, in T1, in retreating from a strong statement for which he took personal responsibility, and with which his conversational partner could disagree. Subsequently, NS7, in his turn spanning lines 13 through 16, does disagree with NS6. NS7 begins his response by first agreeing, and subsequently disagreeing, in line 13, employing *o sea* as he reformulates and restates his position. Next, in line 13, NS7 uses *bueno* to introduce an opinion given to contradict his partner's position. This discourse marker is followed by another instance of *o sea* in line 14 as NS7 once again reformulates his statement in order to provide further support for his point. This argument concludes abruptly when NS6

decides to change the topic, mitigating with *bueno bueno bueno* in line 22, clearly delaying an indirect means of disagreeing with his partner.

The next excerpt was produced in a conversation between a female NS (NS3) and a male NS (NS4) as they discussed the topic of advice for first year students. The excerpt begins after NS3 has stated that she thinks the best advice is for students to get to know where things are located on campus.

Excerpt 14

- | | | | |
|----|---|------|--|
| T2 | 1 | NS4: | yo <u>digamos</u> de todas estas opciones no me gusta mucho ninguna |
| | 2 | | <u>digamos</u> . |
| T3 | 3 | NS3: | mm ya= |
| T2 | 4 | NS4: | =y como pero metí una o para primer deben estudiar mucho porque |
| | 5 | | si no no van a tener éxito obviamente ya tienen actividades |
| | 6 | | recreativas en otros áreas también (.) <u>o sea</u> para compensar no? ... |

Excerpt 14 begins with T2, an argument statement, in which NS4 brackets the utterance with two tokens of *digamos*, a discourse marker that mitigates by casting doubt, making the utterance seem hypothetical and thereby reducing the force of the statement. Further, *digamos* involves both the speaker and the hearer, further softening the utterance. In his subsequent turn, NS4 continues to explain his position on the topic, mitigating with *o sea* in line 6, which introduces a reformulation.

Excerpts 12 through 14 demonstrate how native speakers in NS-NS dyads utilize a variety of discourse markers to mitigate their arguments in the ranking conversation protocol. NS speakers employ several different lexical items as mitigating discourse markers: *O sea* is used to reformulate a claim and to soften the strength of a statement. *Es decir* also functions to introduce a reformulation. *Bueno* is used to delay a negative statement or to preface an opinion. Finally, *no sé* and *digamos* downgrade by casting doubt or softening the strength of a statement, respectively.

The next set of excerpts allows us to focus on the contrasts between how discourse markers are employed by natives and learners. The following excerpt is from a NS-L2 dyad in which a male NS (NS8) and a male ADV speaker (L28) discussed the topic of violence on campus. In particular, they are debating whether alcohol should be banned on campus.

Excerpt 15

T1	1	L28:	dice aquí también consumo de alcohol (.)
T2	2	NS8:	mjm (.) ése lo puse como número cuatro (risas) [lo lo de]
	3	L28:	[()]
T2	4	NS8:	los eventos públicos puse como cinco y lo del alcohol como cuatro
	5		(.) pero yo no creo que eso <u>o sea</u> (.) estás este: no estás atacando al
	6		problema estás atacando cosas muy (.) muy ajustados (..) [<u>o sea</u>]
T3	7	L28	[pero]
T2	8	NS8:	si aún así prohíbas el consumo de alcohol en el campus (.) que
	9		dicho sea pasa legalmente muy bajo porque la mayoría de
	10		estudiantes son este: son: no no tienen nada para tomar=
T3	11	L28:	=sí pero van a tomar-
T2	12	NS8:	-exacto=
T3	13	L28:	=sin embargo-
T2	14	NS8:	-pero si prohibes igualito van a seguir tomando (.) <u>o sea</u> no les
	15		importa ni un pepino si es prohibido o no (.) de hecho ya está
	16		prohibido (.) cualquiera que es menor de veintiuno no puede tomar
	17		pero (.) pero igual toman (..) o sacas una nueva ley y van a hacer
	18		eso van a seguir tomando.
T3	19	L28:	(0.9) yo puse el del alcohol número dos.
T2	20	NS8:	mjm.
T3	21	L28:	pero (..) <u>no sé</u> (..) creo que la el alcohol es: un factor muy grande
	22		en el problema pero el prohibirlo (.) no necesariamente es es la
	23		manera de evitar la violencia.

Excerpt 15 begins when NS8 explains his ranking, which is different from that of his partner. Over the course of several turns, NS8 provides evidence and opinions in support of his ranking, and each subsequent statement is preceded and mitigated by the discourse marker *o sea*: in lines 5, 6, and 14. In line 19, L28 disagrees with NS8, stating *yo puse el del alcohol número dos*. In lines 21 through 23, L28 begins to back down from his previous statement, employing the discourse marker *no sé* to soften or downgrade the explanation of his position. Thus, in this excerpt we see two markedly different uses of

discourse markers to mitigate the argument interaction: *O sea* allows the native speaker to mitigate by reformulating and effectively bolstering his position in T2, while *no sé* assists the ADV speaker in retreating from a strong claim in T3.

The next excerpt was produced in a conversation between a female NS (NS21) and a female ADV speaker (L221) as they discussed the options they ranked on the topic of preventing violence at the university.

Excerpt 16

- | | | | |
|----|----|-------|---|
| T1 | 1 | L221: | bueno eh: para la primera puse una uno porque <u>bueno</u> me parece |
| | 2 | | una soluc una solución más adecuada pero no no tal vez (.) tal vez |
| | 3 | | no es la mejor= |
| | 4 | NS21: | =mjm= |
| T1 | 5 | L221: | =pero más adecuada que los demás (risas). |
| | 6 | NS21: | sí. |
| T1 | 7 | L221: | eh y también el otro uno eh tengo la universidad debe difundir |
| | 8 | | información sobre el alcoholismo y la violencia= |
| | 9 | NS21: | =OK= |
| T1 | 10 | L221: | =para edocar educar sí a los estudiantes. y los otros (.) <u>bueno</u> me |
| | 11 | | parecen que no iban a funcionar porque: <u>bueno</u> los estudiantes van |
| | 12 | | a tomar= |
| | 13 | NS21: | =mjm= |
| T1 | 14 | L221: | =van a tomar lo que sea (.) <u>bueno</u> y eh: u:n un papelito que tienen |
| | 15 | | que firmar al principio de del año no van a recordarlo= |
| | 16 | NS21: | =mjm= |
| T1 | 17 | L221: | = <u>bueno</u> no le va a tener <u>bueno</u> no le va a hacer caso eh (.) y |
| | 18 | | prohibir eventos públicos me parece que: <u>bueno</u> son divertidos (.) |
| | 19 | | por qué prohibirlos?=
[ex]acto= |
| | 20 | NS21: | =mjm |
| T1 | 21 | L221: | qué piensas? |
| T2 | 22 | NS21: | <u>bueno</u> yo puse de primero a que la universidad debe tratar de |
| | 23 | | prevenir la violencia educando los estudiantes al respe[to] |
| T3 | 24 | L221: | |
| T2 | 25 | NS21: | =como XXX con los problemas= |
| T3 | 26 | L221: | =mjm= |
| T2 | 27 | NS21: | =y con las diferencias que yo pienso que eso: es como en general |
| | 28 | | con la violencia como el hecho de que la gente no acepte las |
| | 29 | | diferencias (.) eso lo puse primero. |

In excerpt 16, L221 describes her ranking of possible solutions to the problem of violence. In her turn spanning lines 1 through 3, L221 uses *bueno* to mitigate an opinion statement, effectively delaying an utterance with which her partner might disagree. L221

continues explaining her position, and we see in lines 10 and 11 two more instances of *bueno* functioning to delay and downgrade negative opinion statements: *bueno me parecen que no iban a funcionar* and *bueno los estudiantes van a tomar*. In line 14 *bueno* appears again, prefacing another negative opinion given by L221 in support of her ranking. Finally, in her turn spanning lines 17 through 19, L221 finishes her explanation, employing *bueno* twice more to downgrade negative opinions (line 17), and to preface her final statement of opinion. In line 22, NS21 responds by stating her own ranking. This disagreement statement, or T2, is mitigated with *bueno*, which in this case functions to create a delay before the speaker explains that she has a different ranking.

The multiple uses of *bueno* as a mitigating device by L221 in this excerpt are noteworthy, for two reasons. First, given that *bueno* is used exclusively to mitigate opinion statements in T1, it appears that this ADV speaker is sensitive to the need to downgrade and soften such opinions for the hearer. Second, *bueno* is employed with such frequency by L221 that its use is redundant and not native like. There are no other instances in the corpus of ranking conversations in which a speaker uses a single discourse marker with such repetition or redundancy. Thus, it is plausible that L221 does not have other lexical items, such as *no sé*, in her repertoire of discourse markers than can be used with a downgrading or delaying function. It is also worth noting that in three of the four turns in which L221 employs *bueno*, the discourse marker is accompanied by the parenthetical verb *me parece*, which would suggest that this ADV speaker uses these mitigating devices together in a manner that is similar to a conversational routine or chunk of speech (i.e., Barón and Celaya, 2010; Ellis, 2003; Kasper, 1995; Taguchi, 2007). As explained by Barón and Celaya (2010) in their longitudinal study of pragmatic

development in English language learners, conversational routines are wholly memorized structures such as 'how are you' or 'I don't know'. As such, routines are linked to specific social situations and carry a strong pragmatic force. Following that definition, and based on her utterances in excerpt 16, it is possible that L221 associates *bueno* with the specific discourse-pragmatic function of softening an opinion statement.

The two previous excerpts featured ADV speakers, and the final two excerpts highlight discourse markers that were produced by INT speakers. This next excerpt was generated by a male Spaniard (NS20) and a male INT speaker (L220) as they discussed the topic of plagiarism, and how the university should respond to this problem.

Excerpt 17

- | | | | |
|----|----|-------|---|
| T1 | 1 | NS20: | yo he escrito que la universidad debe establecer un sistema de |
| | 2 | | multas para casos de plagio= |
| | 3 | L220: | =cómo se dice multas?=
[sí] |
| | 4 | NS20: | =u::m multas en inglés?=
[sí] |
| | 5 | L220: | =sí=
[sí] |
| | 6 | NS20: | =like fines=
[sí] |
| | 7 | L220: | =yeah OK sí |
| T1 | 8 | NS20: | uh <u>entonces</u> <u>pues</u> por ejemplo si tú cometes plagio e::h se: se reúne |
| | 9 | | uh una: una comisión de investigación y te dicen <u>pue:s</u> lo que has |
| | 10 | | hecho es plagio [y] |
| | 11 | L220: | [sí] |
| T1 | 12 | NS20: | el caso es muy malo es muy grave entonces |
| | 13 | | tienes que pagar mil quinientos dólares. |
| T2 | 14 | L220: | oh estoy de acuerdo [XXX] |
| T1 | 15 | NS20: | [algo] así no? |
| T2 | 16 | L220: | <u>bue: no</u> muchos estudiantes no tienen mucho dinero pero (.) es si |
| | 17 | | vas a=
[sí] |
| T3 | 18 | NS20: | =bueno=
[sí] |
| T2 | 19 | L220: | =plagiar entonces las consecuencias [si hay] |
| T3 | 20 | NS20: | [claro] precisamente |
| | 21 | | precisamente por eso: por eso pones una multa para evitar que la |
| | 22 | | gente=
[sí] |
| T2 | 23 | L220: | =sí sí ... |

Excerpt 17 begins with NS20 describing in T1 his solution to plagiarism, in lines 1 and 2, which is further elaborated in lines 8 through 10. In line 8, NS20 mitigates by prefacing

an example given in support of his position with *entonces pues*, two discourse markers which function to delay the negative statement. This example is further mitigated with *pue:s* in line 8, which delays the utterance of an accusation *lo que has hecho es plagio*, a negative or conflict-generating assertion. In line 16, L220 indirectly disagrees with the idea put forth by NS20 by providing a counterpoint in T2, employing *bue:no* to delay the statement: *muchos estudiantes no tienen mucho dinero*. Thus, in this excerpt we see how a native speaker and an INT use discourse markers to downgrade negative statements by creating a delay. However, the NS employs *entonces*, *pues* and *pue:s* to mitigate, while the INT speaker uses *bue:no*⁹.

In the final excerpt, produced by a female NS (NS3) and a female INT speaker (L23), the topic of violence at the university is being discussed. At this point in the conversation, NS3 is explaining why she thinks it would be a good idea to prohibit the consumption of alcohol on campus.

Excerpt 18

- | | | | |
|----|---|------|--|
| T1 | 1 | NS3: | cuando alguien que no es que tiene (.) está empezando a |
| | 2 | | tomar y no sabe como medirse= |
| | 3 | L23: | =mjm= |
| T1 | 4 | NS3: | =puede tener no? o sea black out no es cierto? |
| T2 | 5 | L23: | right. sí estoy de acuerdo pero no pienso que sea posible controlar |
| | 6 | | cien por ciento las personas. no sé si es muy (.) muy practical |
| | 7 | | [no sé] |
| T3 | 8 | NS3: | [tienes] razón de repente con las charlas con las charlas previas no |
| | 9 | | es cierto? ... |

Excerpt 18 begins with NS3 describing the consequences of drinking too much alcohol, in T1. In line 4, NS3 uses *o sea* to reformulate and restate her negative opinion on this issue. This utterance also features two tag questions¹⁰, which further mitigate by

⁹ The token of *bueno* in line 18 was interpreted as an affirmative response, 'OK', and therefore was not included in the analysis of mitigating discourse markers.

¹⁰ Tag questions are examined in detail in the next section of this chapter.

appealing the hearer and prompting a positive response. We see that in response to NS3's position, L23 does agree in line 5, but then goes on to disagree. L23's argument statement is downgraded or softened by the inclusion of *no sé* at the end of the utterance in line 7. This discourse marker assists the speaker in backing away from the argument by introducing a sense of doubt, a mitigating effect that is bolstered by the fact that L23 employs *no sé* in two instances in the same utterance (line 7).

Excerpts 15 through 18 are illustrative of how learners employed discourse markers to mitigate their arguments while interacting in NS-L2 dyads. The native speakers employed several different discourse markers to mitigate their interactions with L2 learners: *o sea* functioned to introduce reformulations, while a number of discourse markers (i.e., *bueno*, *entonces*, *pues*, *pue:s*) were employed to delay a negative statement. Two different discourse markers were used by ADV speakers to mitigate their arguments with NSs: *bueno* functioned to delay opinion statements, and *no sé* was used to soften or back down from negative claims. In these interactions, INT speakers also employed *bueno* and *no sé* to mitigate. In other words, the same mitigating discourse markers were employed by both learner groups, ADV and INT. It should be recalled that in one of the NS-L2 excerpts (excerpt 16), an ADV speaker employed *bueno* redundantly, which was thought to reflect an overgeneralization of the discourse marker or perhaps represent part of a chunk of speech.

It is important to note here that the qualitative analysis revealed that mitigating discourse markers were not produced in the arguments of L2-L2 dyads. In other words, while both INT and ADV speakers in this study employed discourse markers as mitigating devices in their conversations with NSs, this type of mitigating device was not

a strategy that learners used in their conversations with other learners. This finding is noteworthy in that it indicates that the use of mitigating discourse markers may be conditioned by the language status of the interlocutor (e.g., learner or native).

4.2.1.3.1 Summary of findings regarding the use of discourse markers as mitigating devices in the ranking conversation protocol

The excerpts in this section have illustrated how the speakers and dyads in the study employed discourse markers as mitigating devices in the ranking conversation protocol. At the outset, it was noted that the discourse markers in this corpus were found to have the following three mitigating functions: Creating a delay before a negative statement or disagreement, reformulating a position that could be perceived as negative, and softening, backing away from, or downgrading a statement.

With regard to the specific discourse markers used by different speakers in the study, the analysis revealed that native Spanish speakers (i.e., NS and NINS participants) employed a variety of discourse markers to fulfill the three mitigating functions noted above. For example, both *o sea* and *es decir* were attested as discourse markers that mitigated by introducing reformulations in the utterances of native speakers. Similarly, *bueno*, *entonces*, *pues* and *pue:s* assisted native speakers in delaying their negative statements. In contrast, the learners in the study (i.e., INT and ADV speakers) employed only two discourse markers as mitigating devices: *bueno* and *no sé*. These two discourse markers served the functions of creating delays and helping the learners back away from their statements, respectively. Thus, the learners do not approximate the NS target in their use of mitigating discourse markers. The learners employed *bueno* and *no sé* at both the

INT and ADV levels, but they did not demonstrate the kind of complexity that native speakers had in employing a variety of discourse markers with mitigating functions.

The learners' use of mitigating discourse markers was noteworthy in two respects: First, I noted that an ADV speaker employed a single discourse marker, *bueno*, redundantly. The overuse of a single discourse marker points to a limited repertoire of mitigating discourse markers. Second, the fact that mitigating discourse markers were absent in the arguments produced in L2-L2 dyads, thus suggesting that the interlocutor conditions the use of discourse markers. This observation suggests that the learners in this study, while able to use discourse markers to mitigate, do not have full command of how this strategy functions in the context of a conversational argument.

4.2.1.4 Tag questions and challenge questions as mitigating devices in the corpus of ranking conversations

The analysis also identified how two different types of questions were attested as mitigating devices in the corpus of ranking conversations, namely, tag questions and challenge questions. While these two types of devices have somewhat distinct mitigating functions, they are addressed together in this section in order to illustrate the difference between them. It should be recalled that tag questions are questions that are positioned at the end of a clause, and thereby cast doubt on the preceding utterance while appearing to give the hearer the option of disagreeing with the statement (Pomerantz, 1984). In contrast, challenge questions mitigate by softening the force of an imposition by creating an interpersonal distance between the speaker and the hearer, but require a speaker to defend his or her claim (Chodorowska, 1997).

The following excerpts illustrate how the different dyads in this study employed tag questions and challenge questions in the context of the ranking conversation protocol. First, and in order to establish a baseline for comparison, I present and discuss examples of questions produced by the natives in NS-NS dyads.

The first excerpt from a NS-NS dyad was generated in a conversation between a female speaker (NS3) and a male speaker (NS4) as they discussed the topic of advice for first year students at the university.

Excerpt 19

T1	1	NS3:	=ya en primer lugar (.) para mí=
T2	2	NS4:	=sí=
T1	3	NS3:	=deben conocer bien la universidad y saber dónde están los lugares más
	4		importantes como las bibliotecas los comedores y no sé si los salones
	5		de computadoras?= =jm=
T2	6	NS4:	
T1	7	NS3:	=pero::=
T2	8	NS4:	= <u>por qué los comedores?</u>
T3	9	NS3:	para que sepan dónde tienen que comer pues <u>no?</u> comida en
	10		[mente ()]
T2	11	NS4:	[no: sí sí sí sí] eso es fácil o sea o:=
T3	12	NS3:	=bueno igual dónde están los comedores son los student centers <u>[no?]</u>
T2	13	NS4:	<u>[pero]</u>
	14		<u>para tener éxito? vos buscás el comedor? pero podás tener éxito (.)</u>
	15		[pues]
T3	16	NS3:	[que] pero <u>al primer tener éxito en la universidad?</u>
T2	17	NS4:	<u>es comer?</u> =
T3	18	NS3:	=claro si no no piensas si no no:=
T2	19	NS4:	=bueno no [no ()]
T3	20	NS3:	<u>[me entiendes?]</u>
T2	21	NS4:	no estaría tan de acuerdo pero bueno ...

In excerpt 19, NS3 states that it is important for students to know where the dining halls are located, as she explains in her turn spanning lines 3 through 5. NS3 disagrees with this opinion, and a series of challenge questions emerges as his argument develops. In line 8, NS3 asks *por qué los comedores?*. This challenge question is the first sign of the ensuing argument, as it becomes evident that NS3 is not really interested in the response

that his question prompts. NS4 responds in line 9, and includes the tag question *no?*, indicating that she is aware that her partner disagrees with her position. Next, in line 11, NS4 gives the preferred response to the tag question, declaring *no: sí sí sí sí*. This prompts NS3 to further explanation in line 12, where she again uses the tag question *no?*. This time, NS4 does not give a positive response, instead choosing to challenge with two questions in succession, in line 14: *pero para tener éxito?* and *vos buscás el comedor?*. In response, and in her own defense, in line 16 NS3 repeats the question that sparked the debate: *al primer tener éxito en la universidad?*, to which NS4 counters in line 17 with *es comer?*. The exchange concludes as NS3 restates her position a third time in line 18, and when NS4 disagrees again, she interrupts and challenges with *me entiendes?* in line 20.

In excerpt 19 we find examples of the tag question *no?* and several different challenge questions. We see how the tag question prompts a yes/no response, and is used by NS3 in defense of the position she has taken. Also, we observe how the challenge questions seem to intensify the argument, as both speakers rely on challenges rather than giving explanations. It is worth noting that in this excerpt, neither speaker directly states their disagreement until the argument is concluding, in line 21, where NS4 finally says *no estaría tan de acuerdo pero bueno*. Thus, this excerpt is exemplary of how the tag and challenge questions assisted speakers in indirectly voicing disagreement among NSs. We can also note the differences between tag and challenge questions, based on how they were used and the distinct responses the questions elicited.

The next excerpt was produced by a female NS (NS10) and a male NS (NS11) as they discussed the topic of food control and obesity prevention at the university. At this

point in the conversation, they are discussing whether the university should require food vendors to indicate the amount of calories and fat in the products they sell.

Excerpt 20

- | | | | |
|----|----|-------|---|
| T1 | 1 | NS10: | tampoco me gusta mucho (.) que pongan el número de calorías y |
| | 2 | | grasas de cada uno de los ítemes en la carta (.) encuentro que: es super |
| | 3 | | falso eso porque tendrían [la comida] |
| T2 | 4 | NS11: | [ah sí:?] |
| T1 | 5 | NS10: | porque cuando lo veo la |
| | 6 | | comida no funciona así o sea: tú te estás comiendo: no sé (.) miles de |
| | 7 | | verduras (.) tampoco es tan bueno hay que mezclar cosas <u>no?</u> = |
| T2 | 8 | NS11: | = <u>mm::?</u> = |
| T1 | 9 | NS10: | =como en pocas grasas es menos bueno (0.6) a veces. |
| T2 | 10 | NS11: | claro. No yo no sabía yo pensé que yo lo puse yo puse que sí pero |
| | 11 | | bueno no no lo no tenía no sabía que pensaba este argumento (.) pero |
| | 12 | | bueno igual es que las calorías no son el único requisito nutricional= |
| T3 | 13 | NS10: | =no. |
| T2 | 14 | NS11: | las calorías es como requisito nutricional para metabol() <u>no?</u> (.) |
| | 15 | | pero= |
| T3 | 16 | NS10: | =pero [sí:] |
| T2 | 17 | NS11: | [pero] |
| T3 | 18 | NS10: | encuentro que es una opción la obsesión por las calorías es- |
| T2 | 19 | NS11: | -es como no quieren engordar es la obsesión por el cuerpo que está |
| | 20 | | detrás de todo <u>no?</u> |
| T3 | 21 | NS10: | claro. ... |

Excerpt 20 begins with NS10 explaining in lines 1 through 3 why she does not like the idea of vendors having to include the amount of calories and fat on their food products. In line 4, NS11 interrupts with a challenge question: *ah sí?*, which, rather than soliciting information, indicates that he is not in agreement with the opinion expressed by NS10. In her next turn, spanning lines 5 through 7, NS10 continues her explanation, ending with the tag question *no?*, which prompts a response from NS11. We see in line 8 that NS11 gives a weak affirmative response *mm::?* that is also framed as a question, indicating that he does not entirely agree with his partner's position. Next, in line 10, NS11 reveals that he does in fact disagree with NS10, and he begins to explain his reasoning, using the tag

question *no?* twice to mitigate this negative response. NS11 asks *no?* in line 14 and again in line 20, prompting a positive response from NS10 in both instances.

In sum, in this excerpt we see native speakers employing both tag questions and challenge questions to mitigate the argument interaction. We also see further evidence that tag questions prompt a yes/no response by a speaker as they give an opinion. Furthermore, in comparison to the previous excerpt, we find that the challenge questions posed here in excerpt 20 (i.e., *ah sí?* and *mm::?*) do not intensify the argument, but prompt further explanation, as the person being questioned attends to the defense of their position.

The final excerpt from a NS-NS dyad was generated in a conversation between two female NSs (NS5, NS9) who discussed the topic of advice for first year students. Specifically, NS5 is explaining her ranking of the option that students should participate in clubs and social activities.

Excerpt 21

- | | | | |
|----|----|------|---|
| T1 | 1 | NS5: | yo puse en número tres eh que es importante participar en los clubes y |
| | 2 | | deportes y actividades sociales porque es aburrido sólo estudiar que |
| | 3 | | también tiene como sentido por lo que estábamos eh hablando un poco |
| | 4 | | de la vida social de los estudiantes. |
| T2 | 5 | NS9: | yo ésa la tenía de número cuatro= |
| T3 | 6 | NS5: | = <u>mjm?</u> = |
| T2 | 7 | NS9: | =y la taché de número cinco. |
| T3 | 8 | NS5: | <u>sí?</u> |
| T2 | 9 | NS9: | sí. y y la coloqué en ese en ese orden porque por lo menos este es el |
| | 10 | | primer año universitario (.) |
| T3 | 11 | NS5: | mjm= |
| T2 | 12 | NS9: | =se supone que el estudiante va a tener más en su primer año |
| | 13 | | universitario (.) |
| T3 | 14 | NS5: | <u>sí?</u> = |
| | 15 | NS9: | =y de repente algunos vienen uh sin tener con expectativas de |
| | 16 | | conseguir algo al final su objetivo es graduarse pero siento que: que: es |
| | 17 | | importante como lo que colocabas antes de organizarse en sus clases ... |

In excerpt 21, NS5 explains that she has ranked the bit of advice in question as a number three, while NS9 states plainly in line 5 that she has a different ranking. This disagreement prompts a series of challenge questions from NS5, who seems increasingly incredulous as NS9 explains her position. First, NS5 asks *mjm?*, followed by *sí?* in line 8 and another *sí?* in line 14. Thus, in this excerpt we see how NS5 uses a series of challenge questions to indirectly indicate her disagreement with NS9, who very directly disagreed with her at the outset of the exchange. In other words, the challenge questions are used in defense of the position being disagreed with.

Excerpts 19 through 21 have illustrated how the speakers in NS-NS dyads employed tag questions and challenge questions to mitigate their argument interactions in the context of the ranking conversation protocol. The analysis of arguments generated in other dyads points to consistency among the participant groups with regard to the use of tag and challenge questions. That is, the mitigating functions associated with tag questions and challenge questions do not vary across dyads, or according to whether the speaker is a native (i.e., NS or NINS) or a learner (i.e., ADV or INT). To illustrate this point, what follows is a selection of question and answer pairs produced by other dyads in the context of arguments in the ranking conversation protocol. The examples are grouped by question type: tag questions are presented first, followed by challenge questions.

The first two example pairs contain tag questions that were employed by NSs in NS-L2 dyads.

Example 4: NS-L2 dyad discussing the topic violence at the university

- NS6: se nota claramente que hay compartimentos estancos o sea está todo separado no? (.) que todo mundo está en su grupo cerrado (.)
 L26: sí ...

Example 5: NS-L2 dyad discussing the topic violence at the university

- NS3: ah (.) porque eso de que los estudiantes deben firmar un contrato de buen comportamiento no garantiza que al final (.) verdad?=
L23: =mjm ...

Examples 4 and 5 further demonstrate how NSs use tag questions, in this case *no?* and *verdad?*, to prompt a positive response as they give statements of opinion. The function of these tag questions is the same when NSs are conversing with L2 participants as when they are addressing other NS participants, as we saw previously in excerpts 19 through 21.

The following examples contain challenge questions that were produced by L2 participants in the context of arguments in the ranking conversation protocol. The level of the learner who produced the questions, either INT or ADV, is indicated in parenthesis.

Example 6: NS-L2 dyad discussing the topic food control at the university (INT)

- L214: ah la primera cosa que yo tengo es ah la universidad debe mandar que cada vendedor en los centros estudiantiles ponga el número de calorías y grasas junto a los ítemes en la carta? (.) qué piensas?
NS14: sí yo creo que eso es importante pero yo lo tengo yo lo tengo como quinta opción.

Example 7: L2-L2 dyad discussing the topic food control at the university (INT)

- L216: es una: es una manera de de crear una cultura mejor y una un mente mejor sabes?
L215: pues la opción tercera?

Example 8: L2-L2 dyad discussing the topic food control at the university (ADV)

- L215: um piensas que (.) piensas que es el derecho del estudiante?=
L216: =[de]
L215: [de] decidir lo que quiere comer o?
L216: yeah yeah yo pienso que um (.) no puedes ah forzar ...

Example 9: NS-L2 dyad discussing the topic violence at the university (ADV)

- L215: pero los estudiantes que tienen más de veintiún años? sí o no?
 NS15: podrían atenerse a la ley sí que es la ley no? más de veintinueve sí ...

In examples 6 through 9 we find several different challenge questions posed by learners. In each case, we note that the challenge questions assist the speaker in defending their position, but elicit a negative response. Example 9 clearly illustrates the assertive nature of this type of question: L215 challenges her interlocutor very pointedly, asking *sí o no?*, as though daring NS15 to disagree. The response to this challenge is an indirect response, which features two mitigating devices: the conditional aspect, and a tag question *no?*.

The final forthcoming example features challenge questions that were generated in the conversation of a NINS-NINS dyad.

Example 10: NINS-NINS dyad discussing the topic advice for recent immigrants to New Jersey.

- NINS3: ah! te parece? no te parece? yo estaba dudando te parece más importante vivir cerca a Nueva York?
 NINS4: (0.7) realmente no creo que sea: ...

Again, in example 10 we see how a series of challenge questions assists the speaker in protecting, or preemptively defending, her position: *yo estaba dudando* is bracketed by questions that challenge the interlocutor, who responds with three mitigating devices: a pause, a hedge¹¹, and a statement expressed in the subjunctive mood.

4.2.1.4.1 Summary of findings regarding the use of tag questions and challenge questions as mitigating devices in the ranking conversation protocol

¹¹ The mitigating function of pauses and hedges are addressed in sections 4.2.1.7 and 4.2.1.8, respectively, of this chapter.

The excerpts and examples in this section have illustrated how the different speakers in the study employed tag and challenge questions to mitigate their arguments in the context of the ranking conversation protocol. In brief, it was noted that tag questions emerged as a strategy that speakers invoked to solicit a positive response when giving an opinion or taking a position. Challenge questions, in contrast, were more assertive and signaled that speakers were aware that they could be disagreed with, and thus functioned more as a defensive strategy. It was further noted that both types of questions mitigated the argument interactions by allowing speakers to pose their disagreements indirectly.

The analysis revealed that tag questions and challenge questions were attested by all speakers in the study (i.e., NS, ADV, INT, NINS). In other words, learners can be said to be native-like in their ability to employ tag questions and challenge questions as a means to mitigate argument interactions.

4.2.1.5 Token agreements as mitigating devices in the corpus of ranking conversations

In the preceding section I showed how the speakers in the study used questions to state their disagreements indirectly. Another strategy that speakers rely on when mitigating an argument interaction is the token agreement, defined by Pomerantz (1984) as the use of an agreement to preface a statement of disagreement. Importantly, disagreements containing token agreements are characterized by a standard sequential order: agreement + conjunction + disagreement, as in 'yes, but I don't think...'. A token agreement is thus a means of delaying an argument, and, following Pomerantz (1984:72), has the mitigating effect of weakening the strength of the disagreement statement.

The analysis revealed that, in the corpus of ranking conversations, token agreements occur most often in T2, the initial disagreement statement of the argument,

and that there are many different expressions that speakers can use. Perhaps the most prevalent combination is *sí pero...* and while the majority of token agreements in the corpus begin with the word *sí*, speakers also have the option of expressing their token agreement by saying *claro*, *por supuesto*, or *estoy de acuerdo*, among others.

An important difference was found between the native speaker and learner groups with regard to the use of this mitigating device: NS and NINS speakers tended to employ token agreements prior to a long, complex disagreement statement that featured multiple mitigating devices. Of the learner groups, ADV speakers were most likely to use multiple mitigating devices in an utterance that contained a token agreement, while INT speakers were more reliant on the basic agreement + *pero* format, and often did not otherwise mitigate their disagreements.

In what follows, I examine the token agreements that were produced in the corpus of ranking conversations by the different speakers in the study. In order to highlight the differences noted between the different speaker groups, first I will present and discuss excerpts that contain token agreements that were produced by native speakers in different dyads. Then, I will examine the token agreements produced by the learner groups. For each example, the token agreement under consideration is underlined for the reader, as are other mitigating devices that will be discussed¹².

The first excerpt was produced by two male NSs (NS19, NS20) who discussed their rankings of possible solutions on the topic of food control and obesity prevention at the university.

¹² Three dashes (---) in the transcript column indicate where lines of transcript have been omitted. The full list of transcription conventions is located in Appendix A.

Excerpt 22

T1	1	NS20:	mi tres es que la universidad no debe intervenir para prevenir la
	2		obesidad que cada estudiante tiene que decidir por sí mismo ...

T2	10	NS19:	<u>sí claro</u> [<u>sí sí sí</u>]
T1	11	NS20:	[un poco] XXX.
T2	12	NS19:	<u>sí sí sí</u> (.) <u>sí sí</u> . e::h es mi cuatro eso=
T3	13	NS20:	=eso es tu cuatro=
T2	14	NS19:	sí (.) que la universidad no debe: eh no debe intervenir. ehm (.) sí <u>bueno</u>
	15		lo puse como <u>más o menos</u> tirando para una mala opción (.) <u>casi: casi</u>
	16		cinco ...

Excerpt 22 begins with NS20 stating in lines 1 and 2 how he has ranked one of the solutions. In response to that statement, NS19 utters an extended token agreement, which begins with *sí claro* in line 10, and is followed by eight repetitions of *sí* that span his turn in line 10 and continue into his subsequent turn, in line 12. The delay function of this lengthy agreement becomes apparent in line 12, when NS19 states his disagreement: *e::hes mi cuatro eso*. NS19 goes on to explain his opposing position in lines 14 through 16, and this utterance is further mitigated by the inclusion of a discourse marker, *bueno*, and two hedges¹³, *más o menos* and *casi*, the latter being employed twice.

Excerpt 22 is exemplary of how native speakers use the token agreement as part of a complex strategy to make negative statements- disagreements- softer and less threatening through the use of multiple mitigating devices.

The following was extracted from an excerpt that initially appeared in the preceding analysis of tag questions. The exchange was generated in a conversation between a female NS (NS3) and a male NS (NS4) who discussed the topic advice for first year students. At this point in the conversation, they are talking about which places

¹³ Hedges are examined in detail in section 4.2.1.8 of this chapter.

students should know on campus, and NS3 has just stated that she believes the dining halls are one of the most important places.

Extract from excerpt 19

T2	8	NS4:	<u>por qué los comedores?</u>
T3	9	NS3:	para que sepan dónde tienen que comer pues no? comida en
	10		[mente ()]
T2	11	NS4:	[no: <u>sí sí sí sí</u>] eso es fácil <u>o sea</u> o:=
T3	12	NS3:	=bueno igual dónde están los comedores son los student centers [no?]
T2	13	NS4:	[pero]
	14		<u>para tener éxito? vos buscás el comedor?</u> pero podás tener éxito ...

The exchange in excerpt 19 begins with NS4 challenging his partner to defend her position, in line 1, which is the first indicator of a forthcoming disagreement. Next, after NS3 explains, NS4 responds by saying *no*, but then decides to agree, uttering the token *sí sí sí sí* in line 4. The token agreement is followed by a discourse marker, *o sea*, an indication that NS4 is reformulating his position, which becomes evident as his next turn, that spanning lines 6 and 7, features two more challenge questions. Thus, in this excerpt we find a second example of how the token agreement functions as part of a complex mitigating strategy.

With regard to the token agreements produced by NSs in the corpus of ranking conversations, excerpts 22 and 19 demonstrate how these speakers incorporate a variety of mitigating devices into their disagreement statements. The token agreements were used in statements that also featured hedges, discourse markers, and challenge questions. Next, we will examine how token agreements were attested in the disagreements of ADV speakers.

The next excerpt was produced by a female ADV speaker (L21) and a male INT speaker (L22) while discussing the topic of food control and obesity prevention at the

university. Specifically, they are debating whether food vendors should have to provide nutritional information for all the products they sell.

Excerpt 23

- | | | | |
|----|----|------|---|
| T1 | 1 | L22: | puse uno para la universidad debe mandar que cada vendedor en los |
| | 2 | | centros de estudiantes ponga el número (.) de calorías ... |
| | | | --- |
| T2 | 9 | L21: | <u>sí</u> yo puse ése como número dos u:m= |
| T1 | 10 | L22: | =sí= |
| T2 | 11 | L21: | =porque también yo <u>creo</u> que es una buena idea (.) u:h pero a la vez |
| | 12 | | también <u>creo</u> que: (0.8) no sé si a mucha gente le va a dar como: a:h (.) |
| T1 | 13 | L22: | los centros estudiantiles= |
| T2 | 14 | L21: | =ye:ah ah si les van a dar mucha importancia a eso ... |

Excerpt 23 begins with L22 stating how he has ranked a particular option. In response, L21 agrees with *sí* in line 9, and then states that her ranking is different. The disagreement develops in lines 11 through 13, where L21 agrees with her partner again, using the parenthetical verb *creo*, before explaining her opposing position. The disagreement statement features another instance of *creo* in line 12, as well as a pause, which functions to alert the hearer that the forthcoming statement is negative¹⁴.

Excerpt 23 is exemplary of how the ADV speaker uses token agreements in conjunction with other mitigating devices to reduce the force of the disagreement statement. The following examples show other mitigating strategies that were utilized with token agreements in the disagreement statements (T2) of ADV speakers.

Example 11: NS-L2 dyad discussing the topic student protests

- L216: yeah pero si:: como como dices que algo del estado año por año están cortando los fondos para la universidad yo pienso que eso es algo que la administración y los estudiantes deben que trabajar juntos sobre ...

Example 12: L2-L2 dyad discussing the topic advice for first year students

- L218: sí. estoy de acuerdo yo puse que es una solución posible porque yo conozco a gente que hace esas cosas (.) pero: (risas) yo diría porque

¹⁴ According to Jefferson (1989), a pause of approximately one second is a delay device that prefaces a negative statement. The mitigating function of pauses is explained in detail in the next section (4.2.1.6) of this chapter.

para mi respuesta yo puse que deben disfrutar su tiempo aquí porque pasan los años muy rápido

Example 13: L2-L2 dyad discussing topic advice for first year students

L24: sí eh estoy de acuerdo

u:hm yo podría poner dos allá también

yo he puesto dos en eh ahora mismo en es necesario aprender el horario de clases ...

In examples 11 through 13 we find two different agreement expressions: 'yeah' and *sí estoy de acuerdo*. It is worth pointing out that 'yeah' is an English lexical item. Further, the phrase *estoy de acuerdo* is noteworthy because, while it was a favored phrase of the learners in the study, both ADV and INT, it was employed only once by a native speaker. In addition to the token agreements in these examples, the ADV speakers each employ a second mitigating device in their disagreement statement: Example 11 features the parenthetical verb *pienso*, while in examples 12 and 13 the ADV speaker chose to mitigate with verbs in the conditional aspect (i.e., *diría*, *podría*).

The next set of examples focuses on the disagreement statements that were produced by INT learners in conversational arguments in the ranking conversation protocol.

Example 14: NS-L2 dyad discussing the topic violence at the university

L23: right. sí estoy de acuerdo pero no pienso que sea posible controlar cien por ciento las personas. no sé si es muy (.) muy practical [no sé]

Example 14 is notable in that it is as the most complex disagreement statement featuring a token agreement that was produced by an INT. It contains three agreement phrases, 'right', *sí*, and *estoy de acuerdo*, which are followed by an explanation that is mitigated by the inclusion of a parenthetical verb (*pienso*) and a hedge (*no sé*). In general, INT speakers were less likely than ADVs or NSs to include multiple mitigating devices in a

disagreement statement that contained a token agreement. In those utterances where INT speakers did include other mitigating devices, parenthetical verbs were relied upon the most. The remaining examples from INTs are illustrative of these observations.

Example 15: NS-L2 dyad discussing the topic student protests

L22: es un buen punto pero ...

Example 16: NS-L2 dyad discussing the topic violence at the university

L211: sí, pero: yo creo que ...

Example 17: NS-L2 dyad discussing the topic of plagiarism

L217: sí, pero a mí XX creo que ...

Example 18: L2-L2 dyad discussing the topic advice for first year students

L23: sí tiene sentido pero: ...

In examples 15 through 18 we see three different token phrases: *Es un buen punto*, *sí*, and *sí tiene sentido*. The token agreement was accompanied by another mitigating device, a parenthetical verb, in two of the four examples. These examples are illustrative of how INT speakers in the study used token agreements to mitigate their disagreement statements. However, in comparison to the variety of mitigating strategies that accompanied the token agreements of NSs, and to a lesser extent ADVs, the disagreements of INTs are not as complex, in that their utterances that contain token agreements do not tend to include many other mitigating strategies. Keeping in mind that mitigation can be thought of as a negotiating tool that indexes sociability, the linguistic behavior of INTs points toward a gap in their pragmatic ability. Specifically, the fact that INTs can and do employ token agreements indicates that they are aware of the need to mitigate. However, the INTs do not appear to realize that multiple mitigating devices may have increased mitigating effects. In other words, INTs are approximating the NS target in their use of token agreements, although they are not quite native like in that they

do not demonstrate the ability to employ multiple mitigating as the other speakers in the study do.

4.2.1.5.1 Summary of the findings regarding the use of token agreements as mitigating devices in the corpus of ranking conversations

In this section I have examined the ways in which the different speakers in the study employed token agreements to mitigate their disagreement statements in the argument interaction. In brief, it was noted that there are many phrases or lexical items that speakers can employ to show agreement. With regard to lexical formulae, I found that most agreements contained the term *sí*, but many other linguistic alternatives were attested: *claro, es un buen punto, estoy de acuerdo*.

With regard to how token agreements functioned to mitigate, it was evident that for native speakers in the study, this device was used as part of a complex strategy that involved employing other mitigating devices in an effort to downgrade or soften the disagreement statement. Thus, the token agreements that were attested by NSs were accompanied by hedges, discourse markers, and challenge questions, all of which functioned to soften the force of the negative statement that was signaled by the token agreement. The disagreements of ADVs also typically contained mitigating devices beyond the token agreement, such as pauses, parenthetical verbs, and the conditional aspect. Finally, in comparison to the native speakers and the ADVs, the disagreement statements of the INT group were noteworthy in that they did not rely as heavily on multiple mitigating devices. That is to say, while INTs did use a variety of token agreements, the utterances that followed the tokens were not likely to contain other mitigating devices.

Finally, several of the token agreements produced by the learners, both INT and ADV, indicated that interlanguage may be influencing the use of token agreements. The examples in this section contain two token agreements produced in English: 'yeah' and 'right' (i.e., examples 11, 14). Further, it could be suggested that the phrases *estoy de acuerdo* and *es un buen punto* are calques of English token agreements, given that these phrases are syntactically and semantically similar to their English equivalents. Thus, it is plausible to suggest that transfer from English is relevant and influencing the production of mitigating devices. This observation is important because it suggests that even though learners are engaged in conversation in Spanish, when the need to produce a spontaneous token agreement arises, they rely on L1.

4.2.1.6 Pauses as mitigating devices in the corpus of ranking conversations

Thus far, the analysis has focused on different lexical items and how they are employed by speakers as mitigating devices in the context of arguments produced in the ranking conversations. In this section I examine the use of silence, or pausing, and how it functions to delay and downgrade disagreement statements.

As defined in the previous chapter, pauses are a type of delay device that are typical of a disagreement, with "no immediately forthcoming talk" being understood by the hearer as signaling a negative response (Pomerantz, 1984:70). In the corpus of ranking conversations, pauses were found to have one of the following mitigating functions:

- To assist speakers in delaying negative, disagreement statements ("delay pauses")
- To allow speakers to end an argument interaction ("change of topic pauses")

I will present excerpts to illustrate each of these functions in the following two sections.

With regard to the first function of pauses, that of mitigating by delaying a disagreement, the analysis revealed that these pauses have three distinguishing characteristics. Delay pauses:

- always co-occur with other mitigating devices
- range in length from 0.7 to 1.5 seconds¹⁵
- are most likely to be employed in T2 of the argument interaction (as opposed to T1 or T3)

The analysis revealed that all speakers in the study used delay pauses similarly. In other words, there was no qualitative difference observed between how native speakers used pauses and how INTs or ADVs employed them. Further, while delay pauses always co-occurred with other mitigating devices, no pattern or formula emerged with regard to the type of mitigating device. The most common mitigator that followed a pause was a token agreement, but other devices were employed as well.

The following brief excerpts were selected to illustrate the variety of mitigating devices that accompany delay pauses. They are drawn from all speakers and dyads, in order to demonstrate the similarity in the function of the pauses across speaker groups. In each excerpt the pause under consideration is underlined for the reader, as are other mitigating devices to be discussed.

Excerpt 24: NS-NS dyad discussing the topic the university's public transportation system

T1	1	NS6:	yo para el número cuatro puse acá también esta es mi perspectiva
	2		personal (.) la universidad necesita más buses para llegar a diferentes
	3		campuses.
T2	4	NS7:	<u>(0.9)</u> <u>sí creo</u> que ya eso es <u>un poco</u> personas que no tienen clases en
	5		ninguna de esas dos <u>bueno</u> entonces no van a querer (.) necesitarla ...

¹⁵ The delay pauses in this corpus represent a larger range of duration than those analyzed by Jefferson (1989), while still conforming to the mitigating function described by Pomerantz (1984).

In excerpt 24, the speaker NS7 begins T2 with a 0.9 second pause, and his disagreement also features four other mitigating devices: the token agreement *sí*, the parenthetical verb *creo*, the hedge *un poco*, and the discourse marker *bueno*.

Excerpt 25: NS-L2 dyad discussing the topic of violence on campus, and whether to prohibit the consumption of alcohol

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------|--|
| T2 | 1 | NS15: | está prohibido? |
| T1 | 2 | L215: | no no= |
| T2 | 3 | NS15: | =no. oh OK. (0.8) <u>bueno</u> (.) si no está prohibido pues es que hay |
| | 4 | | depende de la edad cuando los estudiantes son jóvenes son chicos |
| | 5 | | tienen control y: cuando toman mucho alcohol pueden haber puede haber |
| | 6 | | violencia pero cuando salen. <u>quizás</u> en la universidad no: hay mucho |
| | 7 | | afuera puede que <u>vayan</u> a un lugar pero fuera de la universidad. |

In excerpt 25, the speaker NS15 begins his disagreement with a 0.8 second pause.

The speaker also employs four other mitigating devices as he states his position: the discourse marker *bueno*, two instances of the bush *quizás*, and a hypothetical situation marked by the subjunctive verb *vayan*.

Excerpt 26: NS-L2 dyad discussing the topic of violence at the university, and whether there should be more police

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------|--|
| T1 | 1 | NS11: | si se hace un evento público pues mi idea sería tener más policías y |
| | 2 | | que todas las personas que entran sean revisadas. como cuando entras |
| | 3 | | en un bar o una discoteca que hay te revisan a ver si traes armas o qué |
| | 4 | | es lo que estás llevando contigo no? |
| T2 | 5 | L211: | (0.7) <u>sí</u> . pero: yo <u>creo</u> que el problema siempre es es con gente que ahm |
| | 6 | | no son estudiantes ... |

In excerpt 26, the speaker L211 (INT) begins T2 with a 0.7 second pause, which is followed by a disagreement statement that is further mitigated by the token agreement *Sí* and the parenthetical verb *creo*.

Excerpt 23 (reproduced): L2-L2 dyad discussing the topic of food control and obesity prevention, and whether food vendors should have to provide nutritional information for all the products they sell

- | | | | |
|----|---|------|---|
| T1 | 1 | L22: | puse uno para la universidad debe mandar que cada vendedor en los |
| | 2 | | centros de estudiantes ponga el número (.) de calorías ... |
| | | | --- |

T2	9	L21:	sí yo puse ése como número dos u:m=
T1	10	L22:	=sí=
T2	11	L21:	=porque también yo <u>creo</u> que es una buena idea (.) u:h pero a la vez
	12		también <u>creo</u> que: (0.8) no sé si a mucha gente le va a dar como: a:h (.)
T1	13	L22:	los centros estudiantiles=
T2	14	L21:	=ye:ah ah si les van a dar mucha importancia a eso ...

In excerpt 23, the speaker L22 (INT) begins the turn spanning lines 11 and 12 by using the parenthetical verb *creo* in two instances, first to agree with her partner and then to disagree. The second instance of *creo* is followed by a 0.8 second pause. Thus, in this example we see that the delay pause does not have to serve as the first element in the sequence of mitigating devices that are used to downgrade T2, the disagreement statement.

With regard to change of topic pauses, the analysis pointed to three notable patterns regarding their use in the discourse. These pauses:

- co-occur with other mitigating devices only infrequently
- can be employed in T2 or T3 of the argument interaction
- attested only in the discourse of NSs

In the interactions where change of topic pauses were employed, NSs were most often ending the discussion because they were unwilling to agree with their partner, and therefore the pause mitigated by indicating that the forthcoming statement, while not necessarily negative, was worth downgrading.

The following three excerpts illustrate the function of the change of topic pause. As with the previous excerpts in this section, the pause under consideration is underlined for the reader. It should be recalled that this type of pause is used to end an interaction, and therefore, the end of each excerpt is also the end of the argument exchange.

Excerpt 27: NS-NS dyad that has discussed the topic of advice for first year students

T3	13	NS4:	a muchas fiestas una fiesta puede ser (.) o sea como está relatado esto
	14		está en segundo lugar(.) lo pondría así.

T2 15 NS3: (1.0) [bueno]
 T3 16 NS4: [qué más?]

Excerpt 28: NS-L2 dyad that has discussed the topic of violence on campus and whether to ban alcohol

T3 44 L215: =creo que es imposible prohibir alcohol de-
 T2 45 NS15: -bue[no]
 T3 46 L215: [los] estudiantes.
 T2 47 NS15: (0.7) sí:=
 T3 48 L215: =es un parte de:l colegio (risas) no de la universidad

Excerpt 29: NS-NS dyad that has discussed the topic of food control and obesity prevention at the university

T3 22 NS20: mmm pero entonce:s (.) o sea tu crees que la universidad debería
 23 posicionarse con respeto al tema=
 T2 24 NS19: =claro. debería decir que la comida sana es buena (.) yo los voy a
 25 ayudar. no voy a prohibir la mala no voy a subir los precios de la mala.
 26 voy a proveer información posiblemente ofertas (.) voy a bajar los precios.
 T3 27 NS20: (0.9) está bien. mu:y mu:y poli-sci=
 T2 28 NS19: =sí! [(risas)]
 T3 29 NS20: [(risas)]

In examples 27 through 29 we see how the pause is used to end the argument interaction by effectively changing the topic. In each example, the pause is followed by an utterance (i.e., *bueno*, *sí*, *está bien*) that expresses a sort of mild agreement which functions to end the discussion.

4.2.1.6.1 Summary of findings regarding the use of pauses as mitigating devices in the ranking conversation protocol

The excerpts in this section illustrate how pauses were found to mitigate arguments produced in the context of the ranking conversation protocol. In sum, the analysis revealed that pauses issued by the speakers in the study have two distinct mitigating functions: They can be used to delay a disagreement statement, or they can be used to preface an utterance that signals the end of the discussion or a change in topic. It was noted that all speakers in the study employed delay pauses in a similar manner. Further,

delay pauses were found to co-occur with a variety of other mitigating devices, such as token agreements, hedges, and parenthetical verbs. Change of topic pauses, in contrast, were found less likely to co-occur with other mitigating devices, as they typically preceded a statement that, while not explicitly negative, was deemed by the speaker to be worth stating indirectly. A notable finding that emerged was that change of topic pauses were only employed by NSs in this corpus. In other words, the learner groups, both ADV and INT, only exhibited one of two mitigating uses of pauses. A possible explanation for this observation is that learners were not often in the position to change the topic. Rather, NSs tended to be the ones ending argument interactions by changing the subject.

4.2.1.7 Epistemic disclaimers as mitigating devices in the corpus of ranking conversations

Another type of mitigating device that speakers employ in the context of conversational arguments is the epistemic disclaimer. Caffi (2007) defines this type of device as an alerter, or a preparatory formula, which expresses a form of knowledge, opinion or attitude. The analysis of epistemic disclaimers attested in the corpus of ranking conversations revealed that the native speaker groups (i.e., NS and NINS) used this type of device in a manner akin to that documented by Flores-Ferrán (2012). That is, the epistemic disclaimers functioned to mitigate by allowing them to renounce their responsibility for a forthcoming negative statement. Further, native speakers employed epistemic disclaimers almost exclusively in T2 as a preface to their disagreement statements. For learners (i.e., ADV and INT), this type of device generally included the phrase *no sé*, and therefore also mitigated by reducing their responsibility, but very specifically by introducing a sense of uncertainty. Also characteristic of learners was the

use of negation (e.g. 'no') in their disclaimers, which is a direct disagreement strategy. Somewhat surprisingly, learners employed epistemic disclaimers as a mitigating device throughout the argument interaction; they mitigated in T1 as a means of preemptively downgrading a statement or opinion that could invite disagreement, as well as in T2 and T3, to disagree with or defend a position, respectively. Native speakers, on the other hand, only issued epistemic disclaimers in T2 and T3.

In what follows, I have selected excerpts that illustrate the differences between how natives and learners used epistemic disclaimers to mitigate the argument segments of their ranking conversations. The first excerpt was generated by a male NS (NS4) and a male ADV speaker (L24) as they discussed the topic of plagiarism.

Excerpt 30

T1	1	L24:	<u>yo quiero meter como el aviso que</u> que si no es un caso serio=
T2	2	NS4:	=mm=
T1	3	L24:	=que no estás robando el el trabajo de alguien completa[mente]
T2	4	NS4:	[sí mm]
T1	5	L24:	y diciendo que oh esto es mi trabajo=
T2	6	NS4:	=mm=
T1	7	L24:	=esto es mi trabajo original y (.) mi obra=
T2	8	NS4:	=mm=
T1	9	L24:	=pero que has usado una cita de alguien más y sin darse cuenta estás
	10		usando sus palabras sí yo creo que eso es perdonable.

T3	35	L24:	=el el caso de que (.) no es mi idioma nativo=
T2	36	NS4:	=sí=
T3	37	L24:	=so mi cerebro no tiene la habilidad de jugar mu[cho con]
T2	38	NS4:	[sí sí sí sí]
T3	39	L24:	la estructura.
T2	40	NS4:	<u>sí no digamos</u> para vos haciendo una perifrasis en una lengua extranjera.
T3	41	L24:	[sí]
T2	42	NS4:	[es] <u>muy complejo</u> (.) en este caso estás dando e:l sentido genérico al
	43		plagio.

In excerpt 30 we find L24 giving his opinion on how plagiarism should be dealt with, starting in line 1. He begins the statement with the epistemic disclaimer *yo quiero meter*

como el aviso que, which clearly shifts the blame or responsibility for what is forthcoming by framing the statement as an advisory, a condition, rather than a personal opinion. Later in the excerpt, in lines 35 and 37, L24 is still defending his position, but by focusing on his status as a language learner. In response, in line 42, NS4 indirectly states his disagreement using the disclaimer *es muy complejo*. Looking at the utterances that precede this disclaimer, we see that NS4 mitigated with a token agreement, *sí sí sí sí*, in line 38, followed by another *sí* and the plural, inclusive discourse marker *digamos* in line 40. Thus, this excerpt demonstrates how an ADV uses a disclaimer to mitigate his initial opinion, and how a NS uses a disclaimer as part of a larger strategy that includes multiple devices to mitigate his disagreement statement.

The next excerpt also allows for a comparison of how epistemic disclaimers were employed by natives and learners. The excerpt was produced by a male NS (NS19) and a female INT (L219) who discussed their ranking of options on the topic of violence on campus.

Excerpt 31

T1	1	L219:	<u>creo</u> que la opción más realístico?= =mjm=
T2	2	NS19:	
T1	3	L219:	=más realística es que debemos tener más policías pero <u>no sé</u> 4 <u>exactamente</u> qué son las policías que necesitamos?
T2	5	NS19:	<u>sí sí. sí. [sí]</u>
T1	6	L219:	[u:h] <u>no sé exactamente</u> los cosas específicos= ---
T2	15	NS19:	u::hm si tú ves al policía dices me tengo que portar bien <u>qué sé yo?</u> ehm 16 (.) <u>yo lo encuentro bueno</u> (.) <u>yo lo encuentro bueno</u> pero. e:hm 17 imagínate el extremo...

Excerpt 31 begins with L219 explaining her ranking. This statement features the parenthetical verb *creo* in line 1, and the epistemic disclaimer *no sé exactamente*, which is uttered twice, in line 4 and again in line 6. As in the previous excerpt, we note that the

learner is mitigating T1, which is a statement of opinion. *No sé exactamente* explicitly introduces a sense of uncertainty on the part of the learner, thereby reducing her ownership of the opinion she is giving. NS19 responds to the first disclaimer by giving a token agreement, *sí sí sí sí*, in line 5. Later, to preface his disagreement, in his turn spanning lines 15 through 17, NS19 uses the disclaimer *qué sé yo*, which is followed by another token agreement, *yo lo encuentro bueno*, repeated twice.

While both of the disclaimers attested in excerpt 31 function to reduce the speaker's responsibility for a forthcoming statement, there is a striking qualitative difference between *no sé exactamente* and *qué sé yo*. *Qué sé yo* (e.g. 'what do I know?') does not have the effect of making the native speaker seem doubtful in the way that *no sé exactamente* does for the learner; *qué sé yo* is embedded in an utterance that otherwise indicates the speaker is thinking about the options, whereas *no sé* can be interpreted literally as the learner expressing uncertainty.

4.2.1.7.1 Summary of findings regarding the use of epistemic disclaimers as mitigating devices in the ranking conversation protocol

This section has examined how different speakers in the study employed epistemic disclaimers to mitigate their argument interactions. In brief, all speakers employed this type of device, but two important differences emerged between the natives and the learners with regard to the use of epistemic disclaimers: Native speakers tended to employ epistemic disclaimers in T2, where they functioned to mitigate by reducing the speaker's responsibility for a negative disagreement statement. For instance, the following examples are epistemic disclaimers that were employed by native speakers in T2 to renounce their responsibility for a negative statement:

Example 19: realmente (NINS4)

Example 20: es que ninguna me convencía (NS13)

Example 21: yo lo digo desde la perspectiva de (NS9)

Example 22: va a depender de (NS16)

Example 23: por ejemplo (NS21)

In contrast, learners employed epistemic disclaimers throughout the argument interaction (i.e., in T1, T2, and T3), and the expressions that they used for this purpose tended to include the phrase *no sé*, which had the effect of making the learner seem uncertain about their statement. The following examples are illustrative of this behavior:

Example 24: no sé cómo (L23-INT, T3)

Example 25: no sé si (L21-ADV, T2)

Example 26: no sé cuántos (L28-ADV, T2)

Example 27: lo que pasa es que (L23-INT, T1)

Example 28: no es algo específicamente así (L216-INT, T3)

Thus, it is evident that a wide variety of expressions can be used as epistemic disclaimers that have a mitigating function, but there are two notable differences between the types of expressions preferred by native speakers and those preferred by learners. In addition to conveying a sense of uncertainty, the disclaimers produced by learners are often syntactically less complex than those issued by native speakers. This contrast is evident if we compare any of the phrases with *no sé* (e.g., examples 24 through 26) and a statement such as *es que ninguna me convencía*, in example 20. It is important to note that the epistemic disclaimers attested in the arguments of learners do not qualitatively differ according to proficiency level. That is, both INTs and ADVs prefer expressions that convey uncertainty. Therefore, it is plausible that learners simply are not adept at using disclaimers to shift the focus from themselves, as native speakers typically do.

Specifically, at the micro level, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic knowledge are all required to make these mitigating devices successfully indirect, and the literal nature of the disclaimers produced by learners, as well as their use of negation, renders their utterances more direct than those produced by native speakers.

4.2.1.8 Hedges, bushes, and shields as mitigating devices in the corpus of ranking conversations

The last type of mitigating device examined in this study is that of hedges, a broad category that encompasses a variety of words, strategies and devices that function to decrease the precision of an utterance. As detailed in the previous chapter, this broad category was divided into three different subtypes of mitigating devices: hedges, bushes, and shields. The term hedge refers to words or phrases that reduce the precision of an utterance by decreasing the speaker's commitment to the utterance (Caffi, 2007). Bushes are defined as approximators, or devices that function to decrease the certitude of an utterance (Caffi, 1999). Shields are impersonal mechanisms, or devices used to shift the responsibility of an utterance away from the speaker (Caffi, 1999; Flores-Ferrán 2010, 2012).

The analysis of hedges, shields and bushes in the corpus of ranking conversations revealed that the use of these devices to mitigate the conversational arguments was most characteristic of the native speakers in the study. In other words, hedging was a strategy that was seldom utilized by ADV or INT speakers. In the following sections I provide examples that are illustrative of how hedges, bushes and shields were employed by the different speakers in the study.

Hedges

The following examples are exemplary of how hedges were used to mitigate by introducing a sense of 'fuzziness', or by making statements less precise. In both examples, we see that the hedges are attested in utterances in T2, the initial statement of disagreement, and appear in conjunction with other mitigating devices.

Example 29: NS-NS dyad that discussed the topic of food control and obesity prevention at the university

NS19: sí (.) que la universidad no debe: eh no debe intervenir. ehm (.) sí bueno lo puse como más o menos tirando para una mala opción (.) casi: casi cinco...

In example 29, the NS employs two different hedges, *más o menos* and *casi*, repeated twice, to preface two statements that would be perceived as negative by his partner, as they indicate his disagreement with a prior statement. We see that the utterance is also mitigated by the token agreement *sí* and the discourse marker *bueno*. The hedges in this example render the idea unclear, allowing the speaker to make the negative statement indirectly.

The next example demonstrates how a INT speaker used a hedge to mitigate the argument interaction.

Example 30: L2-L2 dyad that discussed the topic of advice for first year students

L23: sí tiene sentido pero: indiqué cuatro para esa sugerencia porque ese es un problema de cada semestre básicamente ...

The utterance in example 30 begins with two token agreements, *sí* and *tiene sentido*, followed by the hedge *básicamente* at the conclusion of the disagreement statement. The placement of the hedge has the effect of downgrading the opinion just given, and clearly reduces the INT speaker's commitment to the statement.

A noteworthy difference between how natives and learners employed hedges is evident if we compare examples 29 and 30: Syntactically, natives tended to use hedges to preface negative statements, while learners typically issued them after such statements. Given that NSs were much more likely than learners to employ hedges, this observation would seem to suggest that the learners in this study, both INT and ADV, have not fully acquired the knowledge of how to employ this mitigating device in a target-like manner. That is, hedges were attested by learners, but were employed in a syntactic position that was distinct from NSs.

The phrase *más o menos* emerged as the preferred hedge that NSs employed to mitigate, while no preference to employ a specific hedge emerged among the learners. The following are other hedges that were attested in the corpus of ranking conversations:

Example 31: en general (NS)

Example 32: en cierto sentido (NS)

Example 33: generalmente (NS)

Example 34: a veces (ADV)

Example 35: casi (ADV)

Example 36: tal como (ADV)

Example 37: y todo eso (INT)

Bushes

The following examples demonstrate how speakers employed bushes as approximators in the context of the conversational arguments produced in the ranking conversation protocol.

Example 38: NS-L2 dyad that discussed the topic of violence on campus

NS15: sí quizás ahí tienes razón. unos eventos públicos se pueden prohibir.

In example 38 the NS employed the bush *quizás* to downgrade a token agreement. The bush is one of several indications that the NS does not truly agree (e.g., token agreements, impersonal verb *se pueden*), and clearly functions to decrease the certainty of the statement.

Example 39: NS-L2 dyad that discussed the topic of plagiarism (ADV)

L24: pero como que has usado una cita de alguien más y sin darse cuenta estás usando sus palabras sí yo creo que eso es perdonable.

In example 39 the ADV speaker employed the phrase *como que* to preface a statement, framing it as an example rather than a personal opinion, thus making it indirect. The phrase *como que* emerged as the bush most relied upon by native speakers in the corpus of ranking conversations. Therefore, example 39 is illustrative of the few instances in which learners employed a bush to mitigate the argument interaction. Akin to the findings regarding hedges, there are few tokens of bushes being employed by learners, and thus, the use of this type of mitigating devices was found to be much more characteristic of the NSs in the study. Other words or phrases that functioned as bushes were the following:

Example 40: como (NS)

Example 41: quizá/quizás (NINS, NS)

Example 42: de repente (NS)

Example 43: tal vez (NS, ADV)

Example 44: como quieras (INT)

Example 45: como si (ADV)

Shields

The analysis revealed that two devices were used as shields, functioning to depersonalize the utterance by shifting the focus away from the speaker: the use of the

pronoun *uno* and of the first person plural form of verbs (*nosotros*). Shields were only attested by the NS group, and thus cannot be said to be characteristic of ADV or INT participants. The following examples demonstrate how *uno* and *nosotros* were employed as shields by native speakers.

Example 46: NS-NS dyad that discussed the topic of food control at the university

NS17: muchos estudiantes pues normalmente no tenemos mucho dinero ...

Example 47: NS-L2 dyad that discussed the topic of student protests

NS16: es la única forma en que uno puede optar posiciones y la única forma en que uno puede responsablemente empaparse de cosas ...

In examples 46 and 47 we find two clear instances in which the speakers used shields to depersonalize their opinion statements: In example 46, NS17 elected to say *no tenemos mucho dinero*, thereby including herself in the group referred to by the phrase *muchos estudiantes*. In this utterance she could have said *no tengo mucho dinero*, which would have made her the focus of the statement. However, talking about not having money is negative, making the *nosotros* form an obvious choice for shifting the agency away from the speaker. In example 47, NS16 chose to employ *uno puede* as he shared his opinions, which had the effect of making the statements less direct than if he had employed the first person (*yo*) form. It is important to note that both *nosotros* and *uno* can be understood as engaging the hearer, and while the former does so explicitly, the latter is a much more subtle tactic.

4.2.1.8.1 Summary of findings regarding the use of hedges, bushes and shields as mitigating devices in the corpus of ranking conversations

This section examined how the different speakers in the study employed hedges,

bushes and shields as mitigating devices in the context of the ranking conversation protocol. In brief, the analysis revealed a distinction with regard to these mitigating devices: they are not characteristic of the learner participants, neither the ADV nor the INT group.

A possible explanation for the lacunae observed with regard to the learners has to do with acquisition: Perhaps there is a threshold beyond which some mitigating devices, such as hedges, bushes, shields, and epistemic disclaimers (as examined in the previous section) entail a level of subtlety and indirectness that is too advanced, or too intangible, for the learners in this study. In particular, hedges, bushes and shields all mitigate by modifying the propositional content of an utterance, and are therefore extremely indirect, more so than parenthetical verbs or token agreements, for example.

4.2.2 Participation behaviors in the ranking conversation protocol

The preceding sections have described in detail how the different speakers in the study employ a variety of mitigating devices to assist them in negotiating their argument interactions. As outlined in chapter 2, scholars find it important not only to examine the lexical items and phrases that each speaker uses in conversation, but also to consider their participation in an interaction. Following the work of Cordella (1996), Dippold (2007), and Schiffrin (1990), behaviors of participation are defined as the extralinguistic actions of participants in a conversation. The analysis focused on three particular behaviors of participation that arise in arguments: interruption, overlap, and latching. Interruption occurs when a speaker loses the floor because they are interrupted before they have made their point (Jefferson, 2004; Schiffrin, 1990). Overlap describes where a second speaker interrupts at a possible completion point, leaving no pause in between turns (Sacks, et al.,

1974; Schegloff, 2000). Latching is defined as a transition from one turn to the next with no pause and no overlap (Sacks, et al., 1974).

The analysis of interruption, overlap, and latching in the corpus of ranking conversations in the study revealed that latching was the most prevalent participation behavior for all speaker groups in the study (i.e., NINS, NS, ADV, INT). Speakers latched throughout the argument interactions, and therefore this behavior accompanied all of the different phases of the arguments (i.e., T1, T2, T3). Overlaps were also employed by all speakers in the study, but occurred only in T2 and T3. Regarding their role in the interactions, overlaps were found to have two different functions: to indicate agreement and assist in moving the conversation forward, or to signal disagreement. Interruptions emerged in T2 and T3, and only in conjunction with a disagreement statement.

Two notable patterns emerged with regard to the learner groups and how they manifested overlap and interruption behaviors: Learners, both ADV and INT, were not as reliant on overlaps as native speakers were, and they did not interrupt. The following excerpts illustrate these observations.

Consistent with the preceding analysis of mitigating devices, each excerpt is introduced by giving the context in which it was produced. The excerpts are divided into turns (T1, T2, T3), and the behaviors under consideration¹⁶ are underlined and are interpreted following each excerpt. The interpretations refer to turn number, line number, and speaker. For this analysis, I revisit and refer to several excerpts that appeared in the preceding sections on mitigation in the ranking conversation protocol, in order to

¹⁶ In the excerpts, an interrupted utterance is indicated by a dash - , overlapped speech is located within brackets [], and latched turns are indicated by an equals sign =. The full list of transcription conventions is located in Appendix A.

highlight the intersection of the language and the behaviors that manifest throughout the argument interactions.

The first three excerpts examine how the participation behaviors were issued in the argument interactions between native speakers (i.e., NS-NS and NINS-NINS dyads) in the ranking conversation protocol.

The first excerpt appeared previously in the analysis of parenthetical verbs, and is reprinted here for the reader. This excerpt was produced in a conversation between a female NINS (NINS3) and a male NINS (NINS4) who discussed the topic of advice for recent immigrants to New Jersey.

Excerpt 2

- | | | | |
|----|---|--------|--|
| T1 | 1 | NINS3: | y:: tres tener un buen conocimiento del inglés. |
| T2 | 2 | NINS4: | yo puse. eh mejor el vivir cerca de Nueva York= |
| T3 | 3 | NINS3: | <u>≡</u> ah! te parece? no te parece? yo estaba dudando te parece más |
| | 4 | | importante vivir cerca a Nueva York? |
| T2 | 5 | NINS4: | (0.7) realmente no creo que sea:= |
| T3 | 6 | NINS3: | <u>≡</u> es más [caro también] |
| T2 | 7 | NINS4: | [<u>ahora que lo leo</u>] o sea no creo que sea que te vaya a hacer la |
| | 8 | | vida más fácil (.) simplemente que te va a hacer la vida mej más |
| | 9 | | interesante entonces ... |

In Excerpt 2 we see that NINS3 states her ranking of the importance of knowing English, in line 1 (T1). NINS4 responds in line 2, stating his disagreement. NINS3 subsequently produces a latched response, immediately beginning to utter a series of challenge questions (e.g., *te parece? no te parece?*). After NINS4 pauses and disagrees a second time, NINS3 again utters a latched response, in line 6, this time in agreement with what has been said. Finally, the turn spanning lines 7 through 9 begins with NINS4 overlapping, or beginning his turn while NINS3 is still speaking. His utterance, *ahora que lo leo*, a disclaimer, indicates that he is recapitulating in response to the opinion shared by NINS3. Thus, in this excerpt the speakers employed participation behaviors in

T2 and T3, as they exchanged arguments. NINS3 latched in lines 3 and 6 as she attempted to convince her interlocutor. NINS 4 overlapped as he backed down from the strong assertions made by NINS3. These behaviors occurred in conjunction with mitigation (e.g., challenge questions, an epistemic disclaimer, and a discourse marker). Hence, we can see the interrelatedness of mitigation and participation. That is, while the speakers in this excerpt are disagreeing with each other, they are engaged in the conversation. The latched and overlapped responses evoke what Tannen (1984) describes as considerateness, which subsumes cooperation and sociability, and these behaviors clearly assist the speakers in managing this negative, argumentative, interaction.

The following excerpt also appeared previously, in the analysis of tag questions and challenge questions. In excerpt 19, a female NS (NS3) and a male NS (NS4) are discussing the topic of advice for first year students at the university.

Excerpt 19

T1	1	NS3:	ya en primer lugar (.) para mí=
T2	2	NS4:	= <u>sí</u> =
T1	3	NS3:	= <u>deben</u> conocer bien la universidad y saber dónde están los lugares más
	4		importantes como las bibliotecas los comedores y no sé si los salones
	5		de computadoras?= T2 6 NS4: = <u>jm</u> =
T1	7	NS3:	= <u>pero</u> ::=
T2	8	NS4:	= <u>por</u> qué los comedores?.
T3	9	NS3:	para que sepan dónde tienen que comer pues no? comida en
	10		[mente ()]
T2	11	NS4:	[<u>no: sí sí sí sí</u>] eso es fácil o sea o:=
T3	12	NS3:	= <u>bueno</u> igual dónde están los comedores son los student centers [no?]
T2	13	NS4:	[<u>pero</u>]
	14		para tener éxito? vos buscás el comedor? pero podás tener éxito (.)
	15		[pues]
T3	16	NS3:	[<u>que</u>] pero al primer tener éxito en la universidad?
T2	17	NS4:	es comer?= T3 18 NS3: = <u>cla:ro</u> si no no piensas si no no:=
T2	19	NS4:	= <u>bueno</u> no [no ()]
T3	20	NS3:	[<u>me entiendes?</u>]
T2	21	NS4:	no estaría tan de acuerdo pero bueno ...

In excerpt 19, NS3 states that it is important for students to know where the dining halls are located, as she explains in her turn spanning lines 3 through 5. NS3 disagrees with this opinion, and as his argument develops the speakers begin to trade challenges.

Immediately notable in this exchange is that each utterance but one features a participation behavior, either a latch or an overlap. The first few turns, in lines 2 through 8, are latched as NS3 describes her position. In line 9, NS4 overlaps with a token agreement *no: sí sí sí sí*, and in line 13 he overlaps again to utter two challenge questions. NS3 subsequently produces two overlaps, each of which features a challenge. Thus, this excerpt is exemplary of how participation can be used to demonstrate engagement throughout an interaction in which each position is highly contested. It is plausible that the speakers are very involved because of the repeated challenges. That is to say, these behaviors, in conjunction with mitigation, such as the challenging evidenced in excerpt 19, may assist or bolster the effects of mitigation, allowing the speakers to negotiate by means of creating a sense of cooperation and considerateness.

The next excerpt, which originally appeared in the analysis of discourse markers as mitigating devices, was generated in a conversation between two female NSs (NS17, NS18). In the excerpt, the speakers are discussing the topic of food control and obesity prevention at the university. The excerpt begins at a point where NS17 has just stated that a possible option is for the university to require all food vendors to provide the number of calories and amount of fats for the products they sell.

Excerpt 12

T2	1	NS18:	yo la había puesto uno que es una solución muy adecuada=
T1	2	NS17:	<u>=mjm=</u>
T2	3	NS18:	<u>=aunque..</u> en mi caso personal nunca funciona.
T1	4	NS17:	[(risas)]

T2	5	NS18:	[<u>porque</u>] yo cuando voy al supermercado ni siquiera miro las
	6		calorías la grasa y además o sea que en mi caso personalmente no
	7		funcionaría no es una solución. creo que sí puede funcionar para
	8		otras personas y puede ser una solución adecuada pero en mi caso.
T3	9	NS17:	no=
T2	10	NS18:	=yo nunca lo miro la verdad nunca-
T3	11	NS17:	- <u>bueno</u> yo después de tomar unas clases de nutrición porque estoy
	12		ahorita estoy tomando una clase este semestre en nutrición=
T2	13	NS18:	= <u>mjm</u> =
T3	14	NS17:	=y: no sé (.) como que donde me cae el pensamiento para decir OK
	15		es importante saber cuantas grasas saturadas estoy comiendo al día
	16		(.) no sé (.) como tratar de buscar productos que no tengan tanta
	17		grasa y (.) bueno lo que más me preocupa es eso.

In excerpt 12 we see instances of latching, overlap, and interruption. The exchange begins with NS18 explaining her ranking of a solution, and each of the subsequent utterances features a behavior of participation. NS17's initial response is latched. Her next response is a laugh, which leads to an overlap being produced by NS18 as she attempts to explain her position. Later, in line 11, NS17 interrupts her interlocutor to provide evidence in support of her own position. Interestingly, the interruption is made by uttering *bueno*, a discourse marker which functions to delay the disagreement statement. As mentioned at the outset of this section, interruptions were infrequent in the corpus of ranking conversations, and this behavior was only characteristic of the native speakers in the study. In sum, in this excerpt we observe how latching and overlap accompany sociability and acknowledgement. In contrast, an interruption clearly signals a disagreement. As in the preceding excerpts, participation appears to support the speakers in their efforts to maintain a positive rapport and considerateness, despite the fact that they are arguing.

Excerpts 2, 19, and 12, reproduced above, demonstrated how participation was evidenced by native speakers in the study. I noted that native speakers often exhibited a high level of involvement in the argument interactions. Latches, overlaps and

interruptions appeared to work in concert with mitigating strategies, assisting the speakers in managing the interactions by establishing rapport and indicating engagement while in the process of disagreeing with each other. These interactions are similar to what several scholars have described as sociable arguments (e.g., Georgakopoulou, 2001; Habib, 2008; Schiffrin, 1985). The behaviors manifested by NSs in the study are similar to those of Georgakopoulou (2001), for example, who observed that, in the context of conversations among friends, arguing helped to establish intimacy and rapport, a finding that suggests that the acts of arguing or disagreeing are not necessarily threatening, but rather can help build interpersonal relationships.

The next excerpt allows us to examine how participation emerged in NS-L2 dyads. The speakers in these dyads, similar to those in the NS-NS dyads, can best be described as cooperative and involved, and there is generally equal participation on the part of the natives and the learners, as exemplified by the following excerpt. This excerpt, which appeared previously in the section focusing on discourse markers, was generated by a male NS (NS20) and a male INT (L220) as they discussed the topic of plagiarism and how the university should respond to this problem.

Excerpt 17

- | | | | |
|----|----|-------|---|
| T1 | 1 | NS20: | yo he escrito que la universidad debe establecer un sistema de |
| | 2 | | multas para casos de plagio= |
| T2 | 3 | L220: | = <u>cómo</u> se dice multas?=
<u>u::m</u> multas en inglés?=
<u>sí</u> = |
| T1 | 4 | NS20: | =like fines= |
| T2 | 5 | L220: | = <u>yeah</u> OK sí |
| T1 | 6 | NS20: | uh entonces pues por ejemplo si tú cometes plagio e::h se: se reúne |
| | 7 | | uh una: una comisión de investigación y te dicen pue:s lo que has |
| | 8 | | hecho es plagio [y] |
| T2 | 9 | L220: | [sí] |
| T1 | 10 | NS20: | el caso es muy malo es muy grave entonces |
| | 11 | | tienes que pagar mil quinientos dólares. |
| T2 | 12 | L220: | oh estoy de acuerdo [XXX] |

T1	15	NS20:	[<u>algo</u>] así no?
T2	16	L220:	bue:no muchos estudiantes no tienen mucho dinero pero (.) es si
	17		vas a=
T3	18	NS20:	= <u>bueno</u> =
T2	19	L220:	= <u>plagiar</u> entonces los consecuencias [si hay]
T3	20	NS20:	[<u>claro</u>] precisamente
	21		precisamente por eso: por eso pones una multa para evitar que la
	22		gente=
T2	23	L220:	= <u>sí</u> sí ...

Excerpt 17 begins with NS20 describing his solution to plagiarism in T1. We see that in the subsequent turns, in lines 3 through 7, both speakers produce latched responses as L220 asks for clarification on the meaning of a term, *multas* "fines", that is used by NS20. Once this issue is resolved, NS20 further elaborates on his position in lines 8 through 10, mitigating with *entonces pues*, and *pue:s*, discourse markers which function to delay the negative statement. The response generated by L220 is to overlap with a token agreement, *sí*, in line 11. This behavior also serves as acknowledgement of what NS20 is saying. In line 14 L220 produces another token agreement, which prompts an overlap from NS20 as he expands on his previous point, which is framed as a tag question. In line 16 L220 makes his argument, stating *bue:no muchos estudiantes no tienen mucho dinero*, to which NS20 responds in line 18 by latching with another discourse marker (*bueno*). In his next turn, L220 latches again as he continues to describe his opposing position, and NS20 overlaps again, this time producing *claro* in partial agreement or acknowledgement before returning to the defense of his original position. Thus, in this excerpt we see how the participation behaviors assist the speakers in engaging with each other in resolving a language issue, in lines 3 through 7, and how they assist in the management of the argument that develops subsequently. We also find that in several utterances these behaviors co-occur with mitigating strategies: In T2 L220

overlaps with a token agreement, while in T3 NS20 latches with a discourse marker and overlaps to provide a token agreement.

Next, we will focus on how learners in L2-L2 dyads manifested participation behaviors in the ranking conversation protocol. The analysis of argument exchanges produced by these dyads yielded two important observations: First, INTs behave similarly to ADVs. That is to say, learners' use of overlap and latching appears to remain constant from one proficiency level to the next. Second, learners as a whole are inconsistent in comparison to natives. In other words, in some L2-L2 arguments the learners are highly engaged and sociable in that they manifest frequent participation, while in many arguments learners do not rely on the behaviors to assist them in managing the interaction. In order to substantiate these observations, the following three excerpts from L2-L2 dyads are presented.

The first L2-L2 excerpt was generated by a female INT participant (L23) and a male ADV participant (L24) while discussing the topic of advice for first year students at the university. Specifically, they are describing their rankings of the option that students need to spend a lot of time studying.

Excerpt 32

T1	1	L23:	para decir es importante estudiar mucho mm (.) no diría eso.
T2	2	L24:	(0.9) sí. yo creo que sí es importante estudiar [mucho]
T3	3	L23:	[sí claro] es es importante
	4		estudiar es importante sacar buenas notas y un [buen]
T2	5	L24:	[sí:]
T3	6	L23:	promedio y todo
	7		eso=
T2	8	L24:	=sí=
T3	9	L23:	=u:hm=
T2	10	L24:	=pero no deben el segundo parte no deben perder tiempo saliendo de
	11		noche y yendo a muchas fiestas no:=
T3	12	L23:	=e:h la vida social es muy importante tam[bién]
T2	13	L24:	[sí]
T3	14	L23:	((risas)) y:: [sí yo]

T2	15	L24:	[bueno]
T3	16	L23:	diría que que um la vida: universitaria es más que estudiar=
T2	17	L24:	=sí=
T3	18	L23:	=mucho más que estudiar (.) por eso yo indiqué cinco.

Excerpt 32 begins with L23 asserting her opinion in T1. We see that in T2, beginning in line 2, L24 has an opposing position, which he delays by pausing but then produces directly. In line 3, L23 begins to defend her stance by producing an overlapped token agreement, *sí claro*, and an explanation. In line 5 L24 also produces an overlap, *sí*, which expresses acknowledgement or understanding of what L23 is describing. After L23 finishes making her point, L24 responds with a latched token agreement in line 8. The subsequent turns, in lines 9, 10, and 12 are all latched, as the learners trade opinions on the topic. In line 13 L24 produces a second overlap in acknowledgement of his partner's position, followed by a third overlap in line 15, this time uttering *bueno*, indicating that he has decided to agree with L23. The final two turns in the exchange are also latched, as L24 again agrees with L23, who in turn provides more evidence in support of her position. Thus, the learners in this excerpt exhibited latching and overlap behaviors throughout the argument. The interaction in this excerpt is similar to what Cordella (1996) described as target-like conversation in that it features latching and overlap, which are interpreted as evidence of a high level of involvement, or engagement, in the interaction. However, in excerpt 34 we can note that, while the speakers seem sociable and cooperative, they seldom rely on mitigation. For instance, L23 uses the conditional verb *diría* twice to mitigate the opinion that studying is not the most important part of a student's life, but neither instance co-occurs with a participation behavior. The majority of utterances in the excerpt are direct assertions, suggesting that the learners are more

adept at using their behavior, as opposed to including mitigation, to negotiate the argument interaction.

The next excerpt was produced in a conversation between two male ADV participants who discussed their rankings on options regarding how to improve the university's public transportation system.

Excerpt 33

- | | | | |
|----|----|------|--|
| T1 | 1 | L28: | he puesto deben instituir otras opciones aparte de los autobuses como |
| | 2 | | un tranvía o bicis públicas con carriles de bici para para que exista un |
| | 3 | | una alter alternativa a los autobuses. |
| T2 | 4 | L25: | esto es uno o cinco? para ti= |
| T1 | 5 | L28: | <u>=ah</u> eso he puesto para número uno= |
| T2 | 6 | L25: | <u>=ah</u> vale (0.7) y pues yo: puse: número uno con los buses deben ir con |
| | 7 | | más frecuencia durante los fines de semana y el verano. y por qué? mm |
| | 8 | | es que para mí no hay problemas con el sistema de los autobuses pero |
| | 9 | | yo sé que durante los fines de semana es un es muy pesado y difícil |
| | 10 | | para ah tomar el autobús a los otros campus. |
| T3 | 11 | L28: | sí. y en los veranos también |
| T2 | 12 | L25: | sí. |
| T3 | 13 | L28: | sí puse este en número dos. |

Excerpt 33 begins with L28 describing in T1 the option that he has written. T2 begins with L25 asking for clarification in line 4. The next two turns are latched as L28 first responds to the question and then as L25 acknowledges the explanation given by his interlocutor. T2 continues as L25 explains his own ranking, which is different from that of L28. What is striking about this excerpt is that, while it contains a disagreement, there is an absence of both participation and mitigation strategies, which contrasts starkly with the argument exchanges of other learners, presented previously in this section. In excerpt 33, latches emerge only as the learners attend to resolving a communicative problem that stems from a lack of information being provided by the first speaker. The disagreement statement, which begins in line 6, is unmitigated and actually prompts agreement in T3.

The speakers in this excerpt appear to have no difficulty stating their opinions and giving evidence in support of their ideas, but exhibit little involvement and cooperation.

The final excerpt from an L2-L2 dyad initially appeared in the analysis of parenthetical verbs. This exchange was produced in a conversation between two female ADV participants as they discussed the topic of advice for first year students.

Excerpt 6

- | | | | |
|----|----|------|---|
| T1 | 1 | L27: | y yo <u>creo</u> que la la cosa más importante es conocer bien la universidad |
| | 2 | | y saber dónde están los lugares más importantes porque todos los días |
| | 3 | | alguien me pregunta dónde está este edificio o dónde está este um |
| | 4 | | centro de computadoras o otra cosa y cuando yo sé la respuesta me |
| | 5 | | hace sentir buena y pueden hacer amigos que hablas con una persona |
| | 6 | | nueva que necesita ayuda y es parte de la experiencia de la universidad. |
| T2 | 7 | L26: | sí yo <u>creo</u> que esto es muy muy importante también pero <u>creo</u> que |
| | 8 | | también esto va con tiempo cuando vas a las clases y ah vas a hacer |
| | 9 | | cosas y vas a a aprender donde están las los labs de computadora y |
| | 10 | | donde están las los lugares donde se puede comer y yo <u>creo</u> que esto es |
| | 11 | | muy importante pero también va con el tiempo (.) um YO <u>CREO</u> que la |
| | 12 | | cosa más importante es estar muy muy cómodo con tu lugar hacer |
| | 13 | | amigos y establecer un balance entre los estudios y la vida social. |

Excerpt 6 begins with L27 describing which option she ranked first, a statement that is prefaced with the parenthetical verb *creo*. In T2, L26 disagrees with the position just taken by her partner, and her utterance is punctuated by four additional tokens of *creo*.

Akin to the argument examined in excerpt 33, in this exchange we can note the absence of participation behaviors and mitigating devices. The learners are able to clearly articulate their opinions, but do not engage each other. The result is that each utterance resembles a monologue as opposed to a conversational turn in an argument, or what Cordella (1996) described as non-target-like conversation. With regard to the multiple uses of the verb *creo* in excerpt 6, it was noted previously that this parenthetical verb no longer fulfills a mitigating function due to redundancy or overuse. I reiterate that assertion here, and argue that the mitigating function of *creo* is further minimized due to

the absence of any cooperation, as would be evidenced by participation behaviors, in the argument exchange.

Excerpts 32, 33 and 6, reproduced above, point toward inconsistency among the learners in their reliance on behaviors of participation, when arguing with other learners. In some instances, learners exhibited the ability to use latching and overlapping behaviors, which created a sense of cooperation and rapport similar to that observed in the interactions of native speakers. However, I have also provided examples that demonstrate how learners at times can have fully developed argument interactions that include little to no participation. Therefore, with regard to the intersection of participation and mitigation, it can be suggested that the learners substitute one set of negotiating strategies for the other. In other words, it is evident from these excerpts that the learners can employ mitigation, and they can manifest behaviors of participation. However, they do not always deploy both practices concurrently, and thus are inconsistent in the ways that they approximate the NS target.

4.2.2.1 Summary of findings regarding participation behaviors attested in the ranking conversation protocol

The excerpts in this section have illustrated the ways in which three participation behaviors (i.e., overlap, interruption, latching) were manifested by the different speakers in the study. The analysis revealed a striking difference between the native speakers and the learner groups: NSs consistently exhibited a high degree of participation in their interactions, regardless of the language status of their interlocutor, while learners were inconsistent. In particular, NSs employed overlaps and latching in a way that was suggestive of cooperation and engagement in the arguments. Thus, following

Georgakopoulou (2001) and Schiffrin (1985), I have characterized their participation as sociable, or as being oriented towards building interpersonal relationships. Sociability is further evidenced in the fact that NSs also usually employed participation behaviors in conjunction with mitigation, assisting the speakers in maintaining a positive rapport with their interlocutor despite the fact that they were disagreeing with them. In contrast, the learners were found to be inconsistent in their participation. That is, learners exhibited a high degree of participation behaviors in some interactions, and in other interactions they relied on participation only minimally or not at all. One factor that appeared to impact the learners' use of participation behaviors was their interlocutor: Learners demonstrated cooperation and sociability most often in their interactions with natives (i.e., NS-L2 dyads). Yet, learners were not adept at employing participation in conjunction with mitigation. That is, the utterances produced by the learners usually contained either participation or mitigation, whereas the native speakers overwhelmingly preferred a combination of the two types of strategies.

These findings are akin to those of Cordella (1996), who also examined behaviors of participation in NS and L2 Spanish. However, Cordella described her observations in terms of a confrontational/non-confrontational paradigm. Specifically, she examined interruption and overlaps in arguments by native Spanish speakers and described them as key characteristics of an involved, confrontational style of participation. She also described a lack of overlap and interruption, characteristic of the learners in her study, as non-confrontational, and non-target-like participation (Cordella, 1996). I would argue that the differences between natives and learners are best described in terms of sociability, as described by Georgakopoulou (2001) and Schiffrin (1985). I observed that

the arguments that were produced in the ranking conversations in this study do not seem confrontational, but cooperative. Native speakers in particular seem to be engaged in their arguments, and even though these are negative interactions, and potentially conflictful episodes, they are not aggravated. Further, the native speakers often employ mitigation in conjunction with the behaviors of participation, demonstrating that these two types of practices are complimentary, and can be used together as a means of effectively negotiating an argument while establishing a rapport or building a positive relationship with an interlocutor.

4.3 Film Narration Protocol

The second conversational protocol employed in the study was a film narration. This protocol was informed by scholars such as Blackwell (2009, 2010), and Tannen (1993) who have examined the discourse produced in cooperative film narrations, and was used to elicit conversational narratives that contained arguments. This protocol was included in the study design with the aim of capturing and comparing the mitigation and participation employed in arguments that arise in two distinct discursive contexts (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration).

As outlined in chapter 3, the film narration protocol was completed by the NINS dyads and NS-L2 dyads in the study, with the goal of examining institutional and non-institutional discourses. Recall that NINS participants are non-institutional speakers who are able to approach the task without the constraints that impact university students, since they are not part of this institution. The dyads for this protocol were the same as those who completed the ranking conversation protocol, discussed in the previous section of

this chapter. Each dyad was shown a short, silent film (*Gülimse*, Tolga Pulat, 2008) and was instructed to narrate the film in as much detail as possible. The narrations produced by the dyads contained arguments relating to parts of the film such as the order of events or details about different characters and settings. Both the mitigating devices and the behaviors of participation attested in the argument segments of the film narrations were analyzed. The findings regarding the use of mitigation are reported first, followed by the findings on behaviors of participation.

Throughout the ensuing sections, each excerpt is first introduced by giving the context in which it was produced. Similar to the presentation of results of the ranking conversation protocol, excerpts in this section are first divided into turns, labeled T1, T2 and T3, following the aforementioned framework employed by Pomerantz (1984) and Muntigl and Turnbull (1998). Key portions of utterances are underlined and are interpreted following each excerpt, giving reference to turn, line number, and speaker.

4.3.1 Findings on mitigating devices in the film narration protocol

First we will examine the argument interactions that were generated by NINS dyads in completing the film narration. The arguments produced by NINSs in this protocol were related to details about the characters, and how each speaker had a unique interpretation of what they had understood about the characters. These interactions are akin to what Georgakopoulou (2001) and Schiffrin (1985) describe as sociable arguments, in that the interlocutors seemed to genuinely consider each other's perspective through the course of the disagreements. The interactions are further characterized by a reliance on a variety of mitigating devices, which function to make the disagreements indirect. More specifically, all of the categories of mitigation that appeared in arguments

produced in the ranking conversation protocol were also attested in the arguments produced by the NINS participants in the film narration. These categories were the following:

- parenthetical verbs
- subjunctive mood and conditional aspect
- discourse markers
- tag questions and challenge questions
- token agreements
- epistemic disclaimers
- pauses
- hedges, shields, and bushes

The following excerpts illustrate how these devices were employed in the argument segments of the film narrations.

The first two excerpts are taken from NINS dyads and were generated as the speakers discussed the opening scene in the film, and details surrounding the first character, a little girl who sells tissues. Excerpt 37 is from a narration produced by a female NINS (NINS1) and a male NINS (NINS2).

Excerpt 34

- | | | | |
|----|----|--------|--|
| T1 | 1 | NINS1: | bueno primero <u>o sea</u> que <u>se ve claramente en la película</u> que la niña está |
| | 2 | | vendiendo los pañuelos= |
| T2 | 3 | NINS2: | =sí= |
| T1 | 4 | NINS1: | =no los da gratis. y:: la chica que está llorando le ofrece un pañuelo un |
| | 5 | | paquete de pañuelos sin cobrarla. <u>no?</u> (entonces). |
| T2 | 6 | NINS2: | <u>claro pero</u> de ahí la chica la ve llorando y va y le ofrece el pañuelo |
| | 7 | | pero: más como haciendo está llorando que como para que le <u>diera</u> el |
| | 8 | | dinero y la chica busca el dinero en la cartera= |
| T1 | 9 | NINS1: | =y- |
| T2 | 10 | NINS2: | -pero cuando lo encuentra la nena ya se fue= |
| T3 | 11 | NINS1: | = <u>sí pero</u> eso que ya <u>como que</u> no se lo no le da el pañuelo para vender |
| | 12 | | sino para: consolarla= |
| T2 | 13 | NINS2: | =para consolarla exacto ... |

Excerpt 34 begins with NINS 1 stating in T1 that the little girl was selling tissues. This statement is mitigated by a discourse marker *o sea*, and an epistemic disclaimer *se ve*

claramente en la película, which both appear in line 1. These mitigating devices, together, have the effect of delaying the statement about the tissues and reducing the speaker's ownership of the idea by attributing it to something that was obvious about the film. NINS1 goes on to reiterate in lines 4 and 5 that the girl did not charge money for the tissues. This utterance is followed by the tag question *no?*, which prompts an affirmative response from NINS2. However, we see in T2, in line 6, that the affirmative *claro* is a token agreement, as it is followed by NINS2's own interpretation of the scene. In lines 6 through 8 NINS2 describes the situation in more detail, employing the subjunctive form of the verb *diera* as he gives his description. Finally, T3 features another token agreement, *sí pero*, and a bush, *como que*, in line 11, which assist NINS1 in restating her position and clarifying that of her interlocutor.

The next excerpt is from a narration completed by a female NINS (NINS3) and a male NINS (NINS4).

Excerpt 35

- | | | | |
|----|----|--------|--|
| T1 | 1 | NINS3: | entonces la película empieza co:n una niña que eh niña de eh no una |
| | 2 | | niña de la calle (.) pero una niña que vende:- |
| T2 | 3 | NINS4: | - <u>bueno</u> <u>no</u> [sabemos <u>sí</u>] |
| T1 | 4 | NINS3: | [pañuelos] |
| T2 | 5 | NINS4: | era de la calle <u>realmente</u> pero <u>o sea</u> sí de la calle |
| | 6 | | <u>no?</u> porque si no no <u>vendría</u> pañuelos <u>o sea</u> una chica [humilde una niña] |
| T3 | 7 | NINS3: | [pero tenía casa] |
| T2 | 8 | NINS4: | humilde (.) ah bueno [ya sí] |
| T3 | 9 | NINS3: | [<u>tiene</u>] <u>casa?</u> . porque al principio podía ser alguna |
| | 10 | | homeless una [chica XX pero no] |
| T2 | 11 | NINS4: | [ah no <u>bueno</u> era] humilde- |
| T3 | 12 | NINS3: | -una humilde que está vestida:: está vestida limpia parece aun[que] |
| T2 | 13 | NINS4: | [sí] |
| T3 | 14 | NINS3: | estaba así pero estaba limpia... |

Excerpt 35 begins with NINS3 describing the little girl in T1, stating that although not homeless, the girl sells things on the street. In line 3 NINS2 begins to indicate his disagreement with his partner's statement, employing first the discourse marker *bueno* as

a delay, then the epistemic disclaimer *no sabemos si*. The disagreement continues in lines 5 and 6, and is further mitigated with the hedge *realmente*, and the discourse marker *o sea*, which introduces a reformulation of his opinion, stated more directly: *sí de la calle*. This statement is downgraded by the addition of the tag question *no?*, which is followed by an example featuring the conditional aspect, *si no no vendría pañuelos*. Finally, NINS4 decides to reformulate again, using *o sea* to introduce the idea that the girl is *humilde*. In line 9, NINS3 uses a challenge question, *tiene casa?*, to voice her disagreement. In response, in line 11, NINS4 maintains his position, again using the discourse marker *bueno* to delay the statement *era humilde*.

In excerpts 34 and 35 we see how native speakers from the NINS group use a variety of mitigating devices (i.e., discourse markers, epistemic disclaimers, subjunctive mood and conditional aspect, hedges, token agreements, tag questions, challenge questions) throughout the argument interactions. Mitigation is most prevalent in T2 and T3, where it assists the speakers in stating their disagreements indirectly. It is important to note that both of the arguments from NINS narrations centered on subtleties, or small details that varied according to the individual viewer's interpretation of the film. In other words, NINS participants expressed their unique, individual recollections about minor details in the film. In contrast, in NS-L2 dyads, as will be demonstrated next, the speakers spent their time correcting each other and were unable to focus on the small details. For instance, one prominent pattern in the NS-L2 narrations is the use of challenge questions by NS participants to correct or solicit more information from their L2 interlocutor. I find the use of challenge questions to be characteristic of NSs, based on the observation that learners do not use this mitigating strategy at all in the corpus of film narrations. Further,

the learner groups generally produce fewer types of mitigating devices in comparison to their NS interlocutors. Thus, the following excerpts are presented to highlight the differences that emerged between learners and natives with regard to their use of mitigation in the film narration protocol.

In the first NS-L2 excerpt, produced by a dyad featuring a male NS (NS2) and a male INT (L22), we see that the INT uses a variety of mitigating devices in the argument interaction. In the excerpt, the speakers are narrating the opening scene in the film.

Excerpt 36

T1	1	L22:	lo que pasa es que hay una chica () en la calle que. y le da a toda la
	2		gente en la calle (.) unos (.) papelitos-
T2	3	NS2:	-estaba vendiendo pañuelos=
T3	4	L22:	=sí pañuelos (.) pañuelos sí no está vendiendo <u>la verdad es que</u> está
	5		dando los pañuelos y da pañuelos a a una mujer que cree que la niña
	6		espera plata por los pañuelos.
T2	7	NS2:	yo yo <u>creo</u> que estaba vendiendo los pañuelos porque el caballero al
	8		principio la niña va y pasa los pañuelos a un hombre y entonces le [da]
T3	9	L22:	[ok]
T2	10	NS2:	dinero=
T3	11	L22:	=al hombre sí (.) <u>puede ser pero</u> (.) a:h cuando ella le da los pañuelos a
	12		a la mujer ehm la niña se [va]
T2	13	NS2:	[sí]
T3	14	L22:	<u>antes de que la mujer le pueda dar el la el</u>
	15		dinero=
T2	16	NS2:	=sí ...

Excerpt 36 begins with L22 stating in T1 that the girl is giving papers to all the people. In line 3, NS2 directly disagrees, stating: *estaba vendiendo pañuelos*. In response, L22 uses three strategies to mitigate the defense of his position over the next several turns, which constitute T3: In line 4 he agrees with the use of the term *pañuelos*, but then prefaces his next statement with an epistemic disclaimer, *la verdad es que*, before explaining with the subjunctive that the girl was giving them away for free, in line 14. In response, in line 7 NS2 reiterates that he believes the girl was selling the tissues, employing a parenthetical verb *creo* to downgrade the statement by creating distance. T3 continues in line 11, where

L22 agrees with his partner, then uses the token agreement *puede ser pero* to preface another disagreement, in which he uses the subjunctive mood of the verb *pueda* to describe his interpretation of the scene.

Thus, in excerpt 36 we see how an INT employs an epistemic disclaimer, a token agreement, and the subjunctive to assist in making his arguments indirectly. In contrast, the NS in the excerpt uses only one mitigating device, a parenthetical verb, and also utters a direct disagreement statement. The argument produced by the INT in excerpt 36 represents a high degree of reliance on mitigation in comparison to the discourse generated by other learners in NS-L2 dyads in this protocol, although it does not feature as many different mitigating devices as were typically employed by the NINS group.

Excerpt 37 was produced by a female NS (NS5) and a male ADV (L25) while narrating a scene in the film in which a man buys birdseed from an old woman.

Excerpt 37

- | | | | |
|----|----|------|--|
| T1 | 1 | L25: | y después se fue a la mujer pobre otra vez= |
| T2 | 2 | NS5: | =mjm= |
| T1 | 3 | L25: | =y él le dio un billete <u>creo</u> que veinte dólares veinte algo sí. |
| T2 | 4 | NS5: | <u>veinte?</u> Yo <u>creo</u> <u>pensé</u> que vi algo como diez o cien <u>no estoy segura</u> . |
| T3 | 5 | L25: | <u>creo</u> que es veinte- |
| T2 | 6 | NS5: | = <u>creo</u> que cien era mucho <u>sí</u> = |
| T3 | 7 | L25: | = <u>me parece</u> como es un. un. tipo de dinero más bajo de de [cincuenta] |
| T2 | 8 | NS5: | [de cincuenta] |
| | 9 | | sí eso es lo que hace sentido por eso no estaba segura si era veinte o? |
| T3 | 10 | L25: | sí ... |

Excerpt 37 begins with L25 giving his interpretation of the scene in which the woman is paid twenty dollars. This initial statement, or T1, is mitigated by the parenthetical verb *creo*. In the next turn, in line 4, NS5 uses a number of devices to mitigate her statement of disagreement: First is the challenge question *veinte?* which is followed by two parenthetical verbs, *creo* and *pensé*. The utterance ends with the disclaimer *no estoy*

segura, which functions to reduce the speaker's responsibility for the statement. In response, in line 5 L25 restates his original position, again employing the parenthetical verb *creo*. In line 6, NS5 responds in kind, employing *creo* as well. Finally, as he maintains his position, in line 7 L25 mitigates with *me parece*, another parenthetical verb. In this excerpt both speakers employ mitigation in the argument interaction. The native speaker uses parenthetical verbs, a challenge question, and an epistemic disclaimer to mitigate T2, while the L2 learner uses two parenthetical verbs (*creo*, *me parece*) to take, and then defend, a position.

In the next excerpt, generated by a female NS (NS21) and a female ADV (L221), the topic of the narration is the second to last scene in the film, wherein an old woman purchases meat.

Excerpt 38

T1	1	NS21:	y va después a una carnicería=
	2	L221:	=sí=
T1	3	NS21:	=compra algo de carne=
	4	L221:	=sí=
T1	5	NS21:	=llega a la casa=
T2	6	L221:	= <u>bueno</u> (.) le da: al al carnicero un veinte (.) de=
T3	7	NS21:	=ah sí . sí sí ...

In excerpt 38, NS21 recounts that the woman went to the butcher to purchase meat and then went home. In line 6 we see that L221 believes her interlocutor has neglected to include a detail, as she argues *bueno (.) le da al carnicero un veinte*. In this case, the discourse marker *bueno* serves as a delay device that softens the disagreement, or more specifically, the fact that she is correcting NS21.

While in excerpt 36 the learner employs three different mitigating devices, excerpts 37 and 38 illustrate how learners at times use only a single type of mitigating device (i.e., parenthetical verbs or discourse markers) to soften the disagreements that arise in the

course of narrating the film, demonstrating the inconsistency noted earlier. In excerpt 38 we also see an example of a learner correcting her NS interlocutor, an action that is accompanied by the inclusion of a discourse marker which functions as a delay device. The final two excerpts exemplify how the NS most often does the correcting, typically employing a questioning strategy.

The next excerpt is from a narration completed by a male NS (NS20) and a male INT (L220). At this point in the narration, the INT is transitioning from talking about the first scene in the film, which features a little girl selling tissues on a boardwalk, to describing the second, which occurs in a restaurant.

Excerpt 39

T1	1	L220:	entonces vemos un restaurante.
T2	2	NS20:	<u>sí pero bueno por qué un restaurante?</u>
T1	3	L220:	uh?
T2	4	NS20:	<u>por qué ves un restaurante?</u>
T3	5	L220:	no sé=
T2	6	NS20:	= <u>no te acuerdas?</u>
T3	7	L220:	no.
T2	8	NS20:	entonces la chica la niñita le da unos pañuelos a a la chica que está
	9		llorando ...

The exchange in excerpt 39 begins with L220 stating in line 1 that they see a restaurant. In response to this description, NS20 asks a series of challenge questions. First, in line 2, NS20 utters the token agreement *sí pero*, followed by the discourse marker *bueno*, and the challenge question *por qué un restaurante?*. When L220 indicates that he does not understand the question, NS20 repeats it, in line 4. In line 5 L220 again indicates that he does not know how to respond, prompting NS20 to ask a third question: *no te acuerdas?* In lines 8 and 9 we see that NS20 begins describing the first scene in the film and the actions of the little girl. Thus, through the series of challenge questions it becomes evident not only that NS20 was indirectly disagreeing with his partner, but was in fact

alluding to L220 having skipped an important detail in the film. In sum, in this excerpt we see how a native speaker relies on challenge questions to soften the argument while the learner does not employ mitigation at all.

Next, in excerpt 40, we observe this questioning behavior in an interaction between a male NS (NS8) and a male ADV (L28). In the excerpt, the speakers are narrating the opening scene in the film.

Excerpt 40

T1	1	L28:	pues empezó con la niña que estaba vendiendo pañuelos a: la gente en
	2		la en la playa=
T2	3	NS8:	= <u>la [playa?]</u>
T3	4	L28:	[no estaba] en la playa [(oh)]
T2	5	NS8:	[<u>pero playa?</u>] no: era una plaza
T3	6	L28:	había agua=
T2	7	NS8:	= <u>viste agua?</u> =
T3	8	L28:	=sí vi vi [el mar]
T2	9	NS8:	[no enton]ces era un: el malecón eso se llama malecón.
T3	10	L28:	malecón ...

Excerpt 40 begins with L28 stating in T1 that the little girl was selling tissues at the beach. In response to this statement, NS8 frames his disagreement as a challenge question in line 3: *la playa?* The challenge question can be seen as an alternative means of saying "no", which is evident in NS8's next turn, in line 5, where he restates the question, following it with a direct disagreement: *no: era una plaza*. This prompts T3, wherein L28 states in line 6 that he saw water, which leads to another challenge question by NS8 in line 7: *viste agua?* In this excerpt, as in excerpt 39, we note that the NS employs challenge questions as a means of indirectly disagreeing with their interlocutor while also attempting to elicit a particular response. Whereas in excerpt 39 the learner skipped over an important detail, in excerpt 40 we see that the learner is not familiar with the specific lexical item needed to describe what he saw (*malecón*). Also noteworthy is the

observation that the L2 participants in excerpts 39 and 40 do not use any mitigation at all.

This absence stands in contrast to the argument segments of other narrations, where learners employed limited mitigating devices.

4.3.1.1 Summary of findings regarding the use of mitigating devices in the film narration protocol

The preceding analysis has revealed two concerns with regard to how the different speakers in the study employed mitigation in the context of the film narration protocol. First, NINS participants overwhelmingly produced complex arguments that featured a variety of mitigating devices. Second, and in comparison to the native speakers in the study, the learners employed limited uses of mitigation. To further illustrate some of the differences that were observed between the speaker groups, the following chart is illustrative of the different types of mitigating devices that were attested in the film narrations:

Chart 3: Types of mitigating devices employed by each speaker group in the film narration protocol

	Participant group			
	NINS	NS	ADV	INT
Mitigation devices	parenthetical verbs	parenthetical verbs	parenthetical verbs	parenthetical verbs
	subj/cond	subj/cond		subj/cond
	token agreement	token agreement		token agreement
	discourse markers	discourse markers	discourse markers	
	epis. disclaimers		epis. disclaimers	epis. disclaimers
	tag questions	tag questions		
	challenge questions	challenge questions		
	hedges, bushes	hedges, bushes		

The chart depicts that native speakers generally employed a greater variety of types of mitigating devices than learners. This chart supports two important observations: That the

questioning strategy, or the use of tag questions and challenge questions, is only characteristic of NINS and NS speakers, and that learners use fewer types of mitigation than natives, in the context of the film narration. Thus the learners are not entirely target-like. From the excerpts we gather that the learners have the linguistic knowledge and productive capacity to construct utterances that are appropriate in the context of the arguments. Therefore, they have some degree of pragmatic awareness in this context. The analysis of mitigating devices employed in the ranking conversation protocol, presented previously, revealed that learners can and do utilize tag and challenge questions in a target-like manner. Thus, it is plausible that learner discourse in the film narration is constrained not only by their knowledge of mitigation and socio-pragmatic norms, but also by the protocol itself. Blackwell (2009, 2010) and Ordóñez (2004) both found that in narrations in particular, the discourse is constrained by lack of familiarity with the topic, as well as the narrator's understanding of what the researcher expects from the narration. In other words, the learners in the present study may be attending to the protocol at hand, to the need to recall the film and narrate it, more than the need to manage their interactions with an interlocutor.

4.3.2 Participation behaviors in the film narration protocol

Now that we have examined the use of mitigation in the film narration protocol, in this section I focus on how participation behaviors were manifested by the speakers in this protocol. As defined previously, behaviors of participation are the extralinguistic actions of participants in a conversation. Three discrete behaviors entered into this analysis: interruption, overlap, and latching. Scholars such as Georgakopoulou (2001) Tannen (1984), have posited that participation indexes rapport, and that these behaviors

are thought to be critical to the management of a negative interaction such as an argument. As demonstrated in previous research, speakers utilize participation in conjunction with mitigation to establish that they are involved and are considerate of their interlocutor, tempering the unwelcome effects of engaging in an argument or disagreement.

The three participation behaviors under consideration are those defined previously in the ranking conversation protocol: interruption, overlap, and latching.

The analysis of participation behaviors in the arguments produced in the film narration protocol revealed that speakers in the both the NINS-NINS and NS-L2 dyads rely often on behaviors of participation. That is to say, most of the argument exchanges feature numerous instances of speakers employing interruptions, overlaps, and latching. An important difference emerged with regard to the interdependence of participation and mitigation: NINS speakers engage in highly contested arguments which feature challenges and a wide variety of mitigating devices that assist them in providing evidence in support of their assertions. In contrast, NS and L2 speakers tend to correct each other, and are much more direct in their disagreements, which are characterized by less dependence on mitigation. The following excerpts are presented to demonstrate these observations.

As in the other analyses in this chapter, each excerpt is introduced by giving the context in which it was produced. The excerpts are divided into turns (T1, T2, T3), and the behaviors under consideration¹⁷ are underlined and are interpreted following each excerpt. The interpretations refer to turn number, line number, and speaker. For this

¹⁷ In the excerpts, an interrupted utterance is indicated by a dash - , overlapped speech is located within brackets [], and latched turns are indicated by an equals sign =. The full list of transcription conventions can be found in Appendix A

analysis, I revisit and refer to argument excerpts that appeared in the preceding section on mitigation in the film narration protocol, in order to highlight the interrelatedness of the language and the behaviors that manifest throughout the argument interactions.

The first two excerpts are from NINS dyads and were generated as the speakers discussed the opening scene in the film. Excerpt 34, reproduced here, is from a narration produced by a female NINS (NINS1) and a male NINS (NINS2).

Excerpt 34

- | | | | |
|----|----|--------|--|
| T1 | 1 | NINS1: | bueno primero o sea que se ve claramente en la película que la niña está |
| | 2 | | vendiendo los pañuelos= |
| T2 | 3 | NINS2: | <u>≡sí=</u> |
| T1 | 4 | NINS1: | <u>≡no</u> los da gratis. y:: la chica que está llorando le ofrece un pañuelo un |
| | 5 | | paquete de pañuelos sin cobrarla. no? (entonces). |
| T2 | 6 | NINS2: | claro pero de ahí la chica la ve llorando y va y le ofrece el pañuelo |
| | 7 | | pero: más como haciendo está llorando que como para que le diera el |
| | 8 | | dinero y la chica busca el dinero en la cartera= |
| T1 | 9 | NINS1: | <u>≡y-</u> |
| T2 | 10 | NINS2: | <u>-pero</u> cuando lo encuentra la nena ya se fue= |
| T3 | 11 | NINS1: | <u>≡sí</u> pero eso que ya como que no se lo no le da el pañuelo para vender |
| | 12 | | sino para: consolarla= |
| T2 | 13 | NINS2: | <u>≡para</u> consolarla exacto ... |

Excerpt 34 begins with NINS 1 stating in T1 that the little girl was selling tissues. This statement includes two mitigation devices: a discourse marker (*o sea*), and an epistemic disclaimer (*se ve claramente en la película*). This prompts a latched response in line 2, as NINS2 acknowledges the point being made. The next utterance by NINS1 is also latched, as she continues to state her interpretation of the scene, which includes a tag question, *no?*. In his next turn, beginning in line 6, NINS2 produces a disagreement statement that is punctuated by the token agreement *claro*, and the verb *diera* in the subjunctive mood. In response to this mitigated statement NINS1 begins another latched response in line 9 which NINS2 interrupts in order to state a direct disagreement. The final two turns, in lines 11 and 13, are also latched as NINS1 rephrases her position and clarifying that of

her interlocutor, who then agrees. Thus, in this excerpt we see how both speakers use latches throughout the argument, demonstrating involvement in the interaction. The utterances in T2 and T3 are feature several different mitigating devices, which contribute to the considerateness these speakers convey toward each other. One speaker, NINS2, also employs interruption, which accompanies a direct, unmitigated disagreement.

The next excerpt is from a narration completed by a female NINS (NINS3) and a male NINS (NINS4).

Excerpt 35

T1	1	NINS3:	entonces la película empieza co:n una niña que eh niña de eh no una
	2		niña de la calle (.) pero una niña que vende:-
T2	3	NINS4:	- <u>bueno</u> no [sabemos si]
T1	4	NINS3:	[pañuelos]
T2	5	NINS4:	era de la calle realmente pero o sea sí de la calle
	6		no? porque si no no vendría pañuelos o sea una chica [humilde una niña]
T3	7	NINS3:	[pero tenía casa]
T2	8	NINS4:	humilde (.) ah bueno [ya sí]
T3	9	NINS3:	[tiene] casa? . porque al principio podía ser alguna
	10		homeless una [chica XX pero no]
T2	11	NINS4:	[ah no bueno era] humilde-
T3	12	NINS3:	-una humilde que está vestida:: está vestida limpia parece aun[que]
T2	13	NINS4:	[sí]
T3	14	NINS3:	estaba así pero estaba limpia...

Excerpt 35 begins with NINS3 describing the little girl in T1. The disagreement begins to emerge in line 3 as NINS4 employs a discourse marker, *bueno*, followed by an epistemic disclaimer, *no sabemos si*. NINS3 overlaps in line 4, contributing the word *pañuelos*, and NINS4 continues his description in lines 5 and 6, which features several mitigating devices: a hedge, a discourse marker, a tag question and the use of the conditional aspect. NINS3 overlaps again in line 7 to voice her disagreement, and a third time in line 9 to ask a challenge question, *tiene casa?* NINS4 also produces an overlap, in line 11 as he maintains his position, again using the discourse marker *bueno*. This utterance is

interrupted by NINS4 in line 12 who contradicts her partner. Finally, in line 13 NINS4 overlaps again, this time acknowledging the point being made by NINS3 by stating *sí*.

In sum, the speakers in excerpts 34 and 35 exhibit engagement in their arguments, as evidenced by the frequent appearance of latches, overlaps, and interruptions. The utterances that begin with these behaviors generally contain several different mitigating devices, indicating a strong interdependence between these two sets of negotiating strategies: In both excerpts the interpretations of minutiae from the film are highly contested, challenged, but end with one speaker acknowledging the validity of the other speaker's perspective. Thus, we can see how the behaviors of participation assist in building a maintaining a sense of rapport and considerateness as the speakers try to reconcile their distinct points of view.

As mentioned at the outset of this section, the argument interactions generated by NS-L2 dyads in completing the film narration protocol also feature a high degree of sociability, or a positive rapport, as evidenced by their participation behaviors. However, as the following excerpts demonstrate, NS and L2 speakers tend to correct each other by stating their disagreements directly. In this way, they are less dependent on mitigation than the NINS speakers. Where mitigation is employed, it is often in the form of questions, which are utilized by NSs to challenge their L2 interlocutors. Thus it could be argued that there is a pragmatic breakdown, or that the speaker's sense of what is appropriate changes when faced with the need to correct their interlocutor. The following excerpts, drawn from the preceding analysis of mitigation in the film narration protocol, focus on how NS-L2 dyads utilize participation, often without the benefit of mitigation. It

should be recalled that this finding is similar to the behavior that was observed in the ranking conversation protocol.

Excerpt 37, reproduced here, was generated by a female NS (NS5) and a male ADV (L25) while narrating a scene in the film in which a man buys birdseed from an old woman.

Excerpt 37

T1	1	L25:	y después se fue a la mujer pobre otra vez=
T2	2	NS5:	<u>≡mjm=</u>
T1	3	L25:	y él le dio un billete creo que veinte dólares veinte algo sí.
T2	4	NS5:	veinte? Yo creo pensé que vi algo como diez o cien no estoy segura.
T3	5	L25:	creo que es veinte-
T2	6	NS5:	<u>≡creo</u> que cien era mucho sí=
T3	7	L25:	<u>≡me</u> parece como es un. un. tipo de dinero más bajo de de [cincuenta]
T2	8	NS5:	[de cincuenta]
	9		sí eso es lo que hace sentido por eso no estaba segura si era veinte o?
T3	10	L25:	sí ...

Excerpt 37 begins with L25 giving his interpretation of the scene, which prompts a latched acknowledgement by NS5 in line 2. In line 3 L25 also latches, continuing his description and including the parenthetical verb *creo*. In the next turn, in line 4, NS5 states her disagreement indirectly, uttering multiple mitigating devices: a challenge question, *veinte?*, two parenthetical verbs, *creo* and *pensé*, and a disclaimer, *no estoy segura*. In response, in line 5 L25 restates his original position, again employing the parenthetical verb *creo*. NS5 latches again in line 6, rephrasing her partner's statement, and again employing *creo*, to which L25 responds by producing another latch and another parenthetical verb. Finally, in line 8 NS5 overlaps, echoing and thereby acknowledging the point being made by her partner. Thus, in excerpt 37 we find that each speaker latched several responses, and the NS also produced an overlap. Therefore, these speakers are engaged and actively participating in the conversation. It is worth noting that

in this excerpt, the speakers use only a few different mitigating devices. The learner, in particular, relies solely on parenthetical verbs to assist him in managing the argument and stating his disagreement indirectly.

Next we revisit excerpt 38, which is reproduced here for the reader. This excerpt was generated by a female NS (NS21) and a female ADV (L221). At this point in the narration, the second to last scene in the film is being discussed, wherein an old woman purchases meat.

Excerpt 38

T1	1	NS21:	y va después a una carnicería=
	2	L221:	=sí=
T1	3	NS21:	= <u>compra</u> algo de carne=
	4	L221:	=sí=
T1	5	NS21:	= <u>llega</u> a la casa=
T2	6	L221:	= <u>bueno</u> (.) le da: al al carnicero un veinte (.) de=
T3	7	NS21:	= <u>ah</u> sí . sí sí ...

In excerpt 38 we see that all of the turns are latched. In the exchange, NS21 describes her recollection of the scene, and L221 latches onto each utterance with *sí*, agreeing with NS21 and moving the narration forward. However, in the latched response in line 6, L221 corrects NS21, uttering *bueno (.) le da al carnicero un veinte*. Thus, in this short exchange both speakers are involved in the narration of the scene, and when a disagreement arises, the L2 speaker only invokes a mitigating discourse marker to delay the statement in which she corrects her partner.

The final excerpt reproduced here was drawn from an interaction between a male NS (NS8) and a male ADV (L28). In the excerpt, the speakers are narrating the opening scene in the film.

Excerpt 40

T1	1	L28:	pues empezó con la niña que estaba vendiendo pañuelos a: la gente en
	2		la en la playa=
T2	3	NS8:	= <u>la</u> [playa?]
T3	4	L28:	[<u>no estaba</u>] en la playa [(oh)]
T2	5	NS8:	[<u>pero playa?</u>] no: era una plaza
T3	6	L28:	había agua=
T2	7	NS8:	= <u>viste</u> agua?= = <u>sí</u> vi vi [el mar]
T3	8	L28:	
T2	9	NS8:	[<u>no enton</u>]ces era un: el malecón eso se llama malecón.
T3	10	L28:	malecón ...

Excerpt 40 begins with L28 describing the opening scene. In response to the statement that it took place at the beach, NS8 latches in line 3 with a challenge question, *la playa?* L28 immediately overlaps in line 4, and begins to correct himself, when NS8 overlaps, producing another challenge question. NS8's next turn is also latched, as he utters a third challenge question. In response, L28 latches again, and is providing an explanation when NS8 interrupts again in line 9, this time to provide a more appropriate word. Thus, in this excerpt we see a high degree of involvement from both speakers, which is initiated and reinforced by the NS latching and interrupting in an effort to correct his L2 interlocutor. Even though this exchange features several challenges, the native speaker makes them indirectly. The learner, on the other hand, does not employ mitigation at all but is nevertheless engaged and participates fully in the argument.

Excerpts 37, 38, and 40, reproduced above, have demonstrated how speakers in the NS-L2 film narrations engage in arguments that feature a high degree of cooperativeness and participation. The speakers rely mostly on latching, and on overlap to a lesser extent. However, regarding the interdependence of participation behaviors and mitigation, the speakers in NS-L2 dyads deploy very few mitigating devices to assist them in managing

the interactions. The learners in particular use less mitigation throughout the argument interactions, but are cooperative all the same.

4.3.2.1 Summary of findings regarding participation behaviors in the film narration protocol

This section has examined the manifestation of behaviors of participation in the arguments produced in the film narration protocol. The protocol was completed by the NINS-NINS and NS-L2 dyads in the study, with the goal of comparing the discourse produced by different speakers and with interlocutors of distinct statuses with regard to the institutional setting. The analysis of the behaviors of participation yielded a notable difference between the dyads: NINS speakers engaged in arguments that were characterized by a high degree of participation that evoked cooperation and engagement, and which co-occurred with numerous mitigating devices. Speakers in NS-L2 dyads, in contrast, while demonstrating engagement and involvement through their participation, were less likely to rely on mitigation in their arguments. Instead, NSs and L2s corrected each other, at times employing little to no mitigation. NSs tended to use challenge questions to indicate disagreement, while learners uttered a discourse marker or parenthetical verbs to serve this purpose. In other words, the learners can be said to be target-like in their reliance on participation behaviors in the film narration protocol, but not in their use of mitigation.

These observations suggest that, while all speakers participate to a similar degree in the arguments that arise in the course of cooperatively narrating a film, the interdependence of participation and mitigation is impacted by the language status of the interlocutor. That is, in the NINS-NINS dyads, which paired speakers of similar

characteristics, there was a greater reliance on mitigation that was used in conjunction with the behaviors of participation. The NS-L2 dyads, which paired speakers of distinct language abilities but who were drawn from the same institutional setting, relied much less on mitigation to bolster their cooperative participation in the arguments.

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has responded to the first research question, which inquired about the extent to which the L2 Spanish learners in the study are pragmatically target-like, based on the ways they deploy the practices of mitigation and participation in their conversational arguments. The qualitative analysis presented in the preceding sections points toward patterns that are characteristic of the learners in the two conversational protocols (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration).

1. The learners are adept at utilizing several different types of mitigating devices to help them manage their argument interactions, such as parenthetical verbs, the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect, discourse markers, epistemic disclaimers, token agreements, pauses, tag questions, and challenge questions.
2. At times, the learners use a single mitigating device redundantly, such as the parenthetical verb *creo*, or the discourse marker *bueno*, which reduces the mitigating effect of that device.
3. The learners demonstrate an orientation toward sociability in their argument interactions only sometimes, as evidenced by their manifestation of behaviors of participation.

The following tendencies were evident from the analysis of the native speakers, the target, in the study:

1. The NSs demonstrate a broad repertoire of mitigating devices that they deploy to assist them in negotiating argument interactions, which includes: parenthetical verbs, the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect, discourse markers, epistemic disclaimers, token agreements, pauses, tag questions, and challenge questions, and hedges.

2. The NSs frequently utilize multiple mitigating devices in combination with each other, or in co-occurrence, resulting in utterances that are subtle and indirect.
3. The NSs are sociable in their interactions in that they exhibit frequent participation behaviors, the effects of which are bolstered by the presence, or concurrent use, of mitigating devices.

Based on these observations, the learners in the study demonstrate that they are approaching, or approximating, the native speaker target in several respects:

1. Keeping in mind that mitigation and participation are understood to be motivated by the argument context, the learners can be said to exhibit pragmatic understanding of the interactions in which they are engaged.
2. The learners demonstrate some degree of pragmatic ability in that they are active participants in their conversational interactions, and are able to employ several different types of mitigating devices and participation behaviors which assist them carrying out the various acts entailed by an argument (i.e., stating ideas and opinions, challenging the position of an interlocutor, rebutting or refuting challenges).

Thus, the pragmatic awareness and ability of the learners points toward two distinct acquisitional profiles, based on the observation that they are at times inconsistent in their use of linguistic mitigation and participation behaviors. This finding is supported by several observations, such as the contrast between the learners' discourse in the ranking conversation protocol and film narration protocol, for example. In other words, the learners possess the socio-pragmatic understanding of the context and the linguistic and nonlinguistic practices that they need to be able to successfully, felicitously engage in an argument. However, they are not quite native like, or target-like, in the way that they deploy those practices.

This chapter has approached the mitigation and behaviors of participation generated in the study from a qualitative perspective. In the next chapter, I examine these data from

a quantitative perspective, in order to examine the variables that condition the use and presence of mitigation and participation behaviors in the discourse.

Chapter 5: Quantitative analysis of categories of mitigation and behaviors of participation

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the quantitative analysis with regard to the mitigating devices and behaviors of participation evidenced in the study. Recall that this dissertation was guided by research questions that inquired how mitigation and participation are utilized by L2 learners and native speakers of Spanish in the context of conversational arguments, and the extent to which the learners are target-like in their use of these practices. In order to address those questions, data were collected from 46 participants who completed two conversational protocols (i.e., ranking conversation, film narration) and a metalinguistic interview, as described previously. This chapter presents a quantitative analysis, which is organized as follows: The data regarding mitigating devices are presented first. This section is followed by the data relating to behaviors of participation attested in the two protocols. Next is the analysis of social variables related to the use of mitigation and behaviors of participation. These three sections are followed by a chapter summary.

5.2 Quantitative analysis of mitigating devices

As detailed previously, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed for this analysis. This program generates Chi-square tests, which were performed to analyze the extent to which the observed counts, those captured in the corpus, compared to what would hypothetically be expected. Each Chi-square test yields a *p value*, which is reported here. We can interpret the *p value* as the probability that any deviation from the expected results is due to chance only. In other words, a Chi-square with a *p value* of .001 ($p = .001$) would mean that there is only a .1% chance that the

observed findings are due to chance. It should be noted that the result of a Chi-square test is considered statistically significant if it yields a *p value* of .05 or less.

Several different types of mitigating devices have been documented in arguments.

The mitigating devices that entered into this analysis were the following:

- Parenthetical verbs
- Subjunctive mood and conditional aspect
- Discourse markers
- Tag questions and challenge questions
- Token agreements
- Pauses
- Epistemic disclaimers
- Hedges

First, and in order to introduce the quantitative analysis regarding mitigation, table 1 presents the raw frequencies of all of the mitigating devices that were produced in the corpus of two conversational protocols, the ranking conversation and film narration, according to participant group (i.e., INT, ADV, or NS), the primary variable that was examined. For the purpose of the quantitative analysis, the two native speaker groups in the study (i.e., NS and NINS) were collapsed into a single group, because the NINS group was initially found to be quantitatively similar to the NS group. Thus, amalgamating the two groups allowed the analysis to consider the language and behavior of the learner groups in comparison to the natives, the target group, as a whole.

Table 1: The raw frequencies of mitigating devices in the corpus of two protocols according to participant group (N=851)

	Participant group			Total
	INT	ADV	NS	
Tokens of mitigation	6.9% (59)	20.8% (177)	72.3% (615)	100% (851)

In table 1 we find that the participants produced a total of 851 mitigating devices in the corpus of two conversational protocols. Two general observations can be made based on this table: First, the learners contributed a lower frequency of mitigating devices than the native speakers, and second, there is an increasing progression from the INT to the ADV to the NS group. Specifically, we find that the INT group produced only 6.9% of the tokens of mitigation while the ADV group contributed a much larger proportion, 20.8%. Further, the NS group produced the majority of the mitigating devices in the corpus, 72.3%. In other words, this table is suggestive of a correlation between the frequency at which mitigation is employed and the language status of the speaker.

The analysis further isolated each category of mitigating device examined in the study in order to see how the different participant groups favored or disfavored the use of particular devices. The results of Chi-square tests yielded a statistically significant difference between groups for the following types of mitigation: parenthetical verbs ($p=.000$), the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect ($p=.011$), tag questions ($p=.001$), challenge questions ($p=.016$), and epistemic disclaimers ($p=.029$). These results indicate that the presence and use of each of these types of mitigating devices is conditioned by the speaker type. The following tables present the analysis of these categories of mitigation.

First, we examine the use of parenthetical verbs. For this analysis, all tokens of parenthetical verbs were extracted from the argument segments generated by the two

conversational protocols. In the table, the category of "other mitigating devices"¹⁸ refers to all the mitigating devices in the corpus that were not parenthetical verbs.

Table 2: The distribution of parenthetical verbs as mitigating devices in two protocols according to participant group (N=851)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
Parenthetical verbs	40.7% (24)	28.8% (51)	20.2% (124)
Other mitigating devices	59.3% (35)	71.2% (126)	79.8% (491)
Total	100% (59)	100% (177)	100% (615)

p = .000

In table 2 we see that the INT group had a tendency to use parenthetical verbs more than the other groups. In other words, of all of the mitigating devices produced by the INT group (100%), 40.7% were parenthetical verbs. In comparison, the ADV group produced parenthetical verbs less, as 28.8% of all their mitigating devices. Further, the NS group relied on parenthetical verbs the least, producing them as 20.2% of all of their mitigating devices. Thus, although all groups in the study used parenthetical verbs, this distribution suggests that learners were more reliant on this type of device than native speakers. This finding corroborates the qualitative analysis of parenthetical verbs in the previous chapter, where learners were observed at times to employ them redundantly and at other times to utilize them in isolation, or as the only device employed in an argument. Table 2 also points toward a downward progression in the use of parenthetical verbs that corresponds to the language status of the speaker group. This progression is suggestive of

¹⁸ The category "other mitigating devices" appears in this and subsequent tables with the purpose of illustrating the proportions in which specific mitigating devices were used in the context of all of the mitigating devices attested in the corpus of two conversational protocols.

distinct acquisitional profiles. Specifically, we can note that the ADV group appears to be more target-like than the INT group.

Next, the use of the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect as mitigating devices in the corpus is presented in table 3.

Table 3: The distribution of the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect as mitigating devices in two protocols according to participant group (N=851)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
Subjunctive/conditional	8.5% (5)	14.7% (26)	21.6% (133)
Other mitigating devices	91.5% (54)	85.3% (151)	78.4% (482)
Total	100% (59)	100% (177)	100% (615)

p=.011

In table 3 we find that all participant groups employed the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect as mitigating devices, although with varying frequencies. That is, the INT and ADV group produced the subjunctive and conditional as 8.5% and 14.7% of their mitigating devices, respectively. In comparison, the NS group exhibited a greater reliance on the subjunctive and conditional, employing them as 21.6% of their mitigating devices. The distribution depicted in table 3 again points toward a progression in acquisition in the use of these devices. That is, of the two learner groups, the ADV group uses the subjunctive and conditional at a higher frequency, which better approximates the native speaker target.

Next, table 4 depicts the tag questions that were produced in the corpus of two conversational protocols.

Table 4: The distribution of tag questions as mitigating devices in two protocols according to participant group (N=851)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
Tag questions	6.8% (4)	1.1% (2)	9.8% (60)
Other mitigating devices	93.2% (55)	98.9% (175)	90.2% (555)
Total	100% (59)	100% (177)	100% (615)

p = .001

In table 4 we note that while all the groups employed tag questions in their argument discourse, the distribution does not point to a clear pattern or progression regarding the use of tag questions in the argument interactions. For instance, we find that both learner groups employed tag questions at a low frequency: The INT group employed tag questions in 6.8% of their mitigating devices, and the ADV group in only 1.1%. In comparison, the NS group exhibited a greater reliance on tag questions, producing them as 9.8% of all their mitigating devices. We should recall that the qualitative analysis revealed that all speakers employed tag questions in a similar manner in their argument discourse. This table, however, points toward a difference between the learners and the native speakers.

Next, table 5 depicts the challenge questions that were produced in the corpus of two conversational protocols.

Table 5: The distribution of challenge questions as mitigating devices in two protocols according to participant group (N=851)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
Challenge questions	16.9% (10)	5.1% (9)	10.7% (66)
Other mitigating devices	83.1% (49)	94.9% (168)	89.3% (549)
Total	100% (59)	100% (177)	100% (615)

p=.016

In table 5 we find that all groups employed challenge questions in their argument discourse, but once again there is not a clear pattern regarding the use of this type of device. In the table, we note that the INT group employed challenge questions more than any other group, 16.9%, while the ADV group produced them the least, 5.1%. Finally the NS group produced challenge questions as 10.7% of their mitigating devices. This distribution seems to suggest that the learner groups are inconsistent in their use of challenge questions. However, this result is somewhat distinct from the findings yielded in the qualitative analysis regarding challenge questions. It was noted in the qualitative analysis that challenge questions were employed differently across the two protocols, such that the use of this type of device was most characteristic of native speakers in the film narration protocol. Further, the distribution in table 5 gives rise to an important question: If learners are over- or under-using challenge questions, when or in what context are they doing so? Therefore, in order to explore the in greater detail how the different participant groups utilized challenge questions, the analysis investigated how this type of device was deployed between the two conversational protocols by the different participant groups. The result of this inquiry is presented in the following table.

Table 6: The distribution of challenge questions across protocols according to participant group (N=85)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
Challenge questions in ranking conversation	100% (10)	100% (9)	78.9% (52)
Challenge questions in film narration	0% (0)	0% (0)	21.1% (14)
Total	100% (10)	100% (9)	100% (66)

p=.016

The distribution in table 6 indicates that the use of challenge questions is mediated by the protocol type. For example, we see that both learner groups employed 100% of their challenge questions in the ranking conversation protocol. This pattern stands in contrast to the NS group, who employed challenge questions somewhat less in the ranking conversation, 78.9%. Table 6 sheds some light on the way that learners use this type of mitigating device: They employ challenge questions at a higher rate than natives in the ranking conversation protocol, but at a lower rate (not at all) in the film narration. Thus, the results in table 6 lend support to the observation generated in the qualitative analysis regarding challenge questions being a strategy that was most characteristic of the NS group in the film narration protocol. Based on these findings, it can be suggested that the discursive context (i.e., ranking conversation or film narration) conditions the devices that speakers choose to employ to mitigate or manage their argument interactions. This observation is explored further in section 5.4 of this chapter.

The next variable that we examine is the use of epistemic disclaimers as mitigating devices, in table 7.

Table 7: The distribution of epistemic disclaimers as mitigating devices in two protocols according to participant group (N=851)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
Epistemic disclaimers	5.1% (3)	11.3% (20)	5.7% (35)
Other mitigating devices	94.9% (56)	88.7% (157)	94.3% (580)
Total	100% (59)	100% (177)	100% (615)

p = .029

In table 7 we find that all groups employed epistemic disclaimers in their argument discourse, although with varying frequencies. We see that the INT group produced epistemic disclaimers as 5.1% of the mitigating devices they used. In contrast, the ADV group used epistemic disclaimers at a higher frequency, as 11.3% of the mitigating devices they produced. For the NS group, 5.7% of their mitigating devices were epistemic disclaimers. While in table 7 there is no clear progression in the distribution of epistemic disclaimers across the participant groups, there is a noteworthy difference between the two learner groups: The INT group very closely approximates the NS group (5.1% compared to 5.7%), in terms of their reliance on this type of mitigating device, while the ADV group appears to favor epistemic disclaimers more than the other speakers.

To summarize the results thus far, the presence and use of several different categories of mitigating devices were found to be conditioned by the speaker type: The use of parenthetical verbs, the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect, tag questions, challenge questions, and epistemic disclaimers. Additionally, a pattern emerged with regard to the two learner groups and their ability to approximate the native speakers in the study: A progression was noted from the INT to the ADV to the NS level for the use

of mitigation overall, and regarding parenthetical verbs, and the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect. The distribution of these mitigating devices across the speaker groups points toward INT learners having a greater reliance on parenthetical verbs than the other groups, and at the same time disfavoring the use of the subjunctive and conditional and discourse markers. In other words, the ADV group better approximates the NS target in their use of these types of mitigating devices. This result seems to support to several findings that emerged in the qualitative analysis of mitigating devices, such as the observation that learners at times overused certain mitigating devices (e.g., the parenthetical verb *creo*).

Some of the categories of mitigation that entered into the analysis did not yield significant results. For example, when analyzing the production of hedges in the corpus of ranking conversations and film narrations, the statistical model yielded a Pearson Chi-square value of $p = .526$. This means that the presence and use of this type of mitigation does not correlate with the speaker type. The other categories of mitigation that did not yield statistically significant correlations were the use of discourse markers, pauses, and token agreements.

5.2.1 Discursive variables that intersect with mitigation

In response to the second research question in the study, which inquired about the variables that condition the presence and use of mitigation and participation, the analysis also examined three discursive variables. The first variable was the distribution of mitigating devices across the argument turn structure (i.e., T1, T2, T3), and the other two were variables that emerged in the qualitative analysis of mitigation: redundant uses of a

single mitigating device, and the co-occurrence of mitigating devices. The findings regarding these variables are presented next.

In table 8, the tokens of mitigation in the corpus have been extracted according to the conversational turn in which they were employed. Recall that a statement of position or opinion is given in T1, while T2 includes the statement of disagreement or opposition to T1. T3 requires a response to T2, wherein the speaker may either defend or abandon the position originally taken in T1.

Table 8: The distribution of mitigation in the conversational turn structure in two protocols according to participant group (N=851)

Turn Location	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
T1	25.4% (15)	19.2% (34)	16.4% (101)
T2	40.7% (24)	54.8% (97)	60.7% (373)
T3	33.9% (20)	26.0% (46)	22.9% (141)
Total	100% (59)	100% (177)	100% (615)

p=.044

Table 8 reveals that the speakers in the study all favored the use of mitigating devices in T2 as we see increases in the frequencies from T1 to T2. That is, the INT group increases from 25.4% in T1 to 40.7% in T2. The ADV increase from 19.2% in T1 to 54.8% in T2. The NS groups increase from 16.4% in T1 to 60.7% in T2. Regarding the use of mitigation in the turn structure, this result is consistent with Pomerantz (1984) and Muntigl and Turnbull (1998), who identified that mitigating devices should appear most often in T2, the statement of disagreement. In this table we again see a progression from the INT to the ADV group, wherein ADV learners better approximate the NS target. However, the distribution of the INT group is not target-like. In terms of the pragmatic

functions of mitigation within the argument interaction, the INT group is overusing it in T1 and T3. Overall, table 8 points toward acquisitional profiles, and supports the observation that the INT group is not as target-like as the ADV group, who better resemble the NSs in the study.

Next, we examine redundant uses of mitigation. This variable emerged as a result of the qualitative analysis of mitigation, as presented previously. With regard to parenthetical verbs and discourse markers in particular, I noted that learners tended to employ a single form of these mitigating devices redundantly, as in the following utterance, which has been extracted from excerpt 6 in the previous chapter. In the utterance, a female ADV speaker states in T2 that she disagrees with her interlocutor and provides reasons in support of her position taken on the topic of advice for first year students at the university:

Extract from excerpt 6

L26: Sí yo creo que esto es muy muy importante también pero creo que también esto va con tiempo cuando vas a las clases y ah vas a hacer cosas y vas a a aprender donde están las los labs de computadora y donde están las los lugares donde se puede comer y yo creo que esto es muy importante pero también va con el tiempo (.) um YO CREO que la cosa más importante es estar muy muy cómodo con tu lugar hacer amigos y establecer un balance entre los estudios y la vida social.

In this utterance, we note that the speaker employs the parenthetical verb *creo* four times in the course of explaining her position. The multiple, redundant uses of *creo* can be said to diminish the mitigating function of the verb, in that it appears as though the learner employs it in a formulaic manner to introduce opinion statements. This overuse of a single mitigating device was observed in the arguments produced by the learners, but was

not characteristic of the native speakers in the study. Thus, for this analysis, mitigating devices that appeared twice or more in the same turn were coded as "redundant". This variable allowed us to capture instances in which the speakers used the same device repeatedly, and to determine whether differences exist among the speaker groups with regard to how they employ mitigation. In table 8, the redundant uses of a single mitigating device in a single turn have been extracted, and are presented according to participant type.

Table 9: The distribution of redundant uses of a single mitigating device in a single turn in two protocols according to participant group (N=851)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
Redundant uses of a single mitigating device	18.6% (11)	10.2% (18)	9.4% (58)
Other mitigating devices	81.4% (48)	89.8% (159)	90.6% (557)
Total	100% (59)	100% (177)	100% (615)

p=.083

In table 9 we find that all speakers employed redundant uses of a single mitigating device. For example, we see that the INT group produced 18.6% of their mitigating devices redundantly in a single turn. That is, they had a tendency to repeat the same form in a single turn, as in the example extract provided before table 9. The percentage of redundant uses is much lower for the ADV group (10.2%), and it further decreases in the NS group (9.4%). While the level of significance for this distribution is low ($p=.083$), the table was included because here again we see a progression from the INT to the ADV to the NS group. In other words, even though these variables are not yielding a strong correlation, the distribution provides further evidence of the ways in which the ADV learners are more target-like than the INT group.

Next, we focus on the co-occurrence of mitigating devices. This variable also emerged from the qualitative analysis of mitigation presented in the previous chapter. For this variable, any mitigating device that appeared in the same turn with another mitigating device was coded as "co-occurring". For instance, the following utterance was produced by a male NS as part of his disagreement statement (T2) in discussion of the topic food control and obesity prevention at the university:

Extract from excerpt 22

NS19: sí (.) que la universidad no debe: eh no debe intervenir. ehm (.) sí bueno
 lo puse como más o menos tirando para una mala opción (.) casi: casi cinco

In the extract, we see that the speaker, in explaining his position, relies on multiple mitigating devices: the discourse marker *bueno*, and two hedges, *más o menos* and *casi*, the latter being repeated twice. This extract is exemplary of how speakers can make negative statements, such as disagreements, softer and less threatening through the inclusion of multiple mitigating devices. The qualitative analysis of mitigation pointed toward the use of multiple mitigating devices being more characteristic of the native speakers than of the learners in the study.

Therefore, this variable named 'co-occurrence' captures multiple uses of mitigation, allowing us to examine whether there are also quantitative differences between participant groups with regard to how mitigation is employed within a single turn.

Table 10: The distribution of the co-occurrence of mitigating devices in a single turn in two protocols according to participant group (N=851)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
Co-occurring mitigating devices	59.3% (35)	62.1% (110)	68.9% (424)
Other mitigating devices	40.7% (24)	37.9% (67)	31.1% (191)
Total	100% (59)	100% (177)	100% (615)

p=.106

In table 10 we find that all the speakers in the study employed co-occurring mitigating devices in their argument discourse. While the variable "co-occurrence" did not yield a statistically significant difference between the participant groups ($p=.106$), the result does indicate an increasing progression from the INT to the ADV to the NS group. Thus, this is another way in which the ADV group can be said to be approximating the NS target.

5.2.2 Summary of the quantitative analysis of mitigating devices

This section has presented the results of the quantitative analysis of linguistic variables that condition the use of mitigation in the corpus of two conversational protocols. In sum, a pattern emerged with regard to the two learner groups and their ability to approximate the native speakers in the study: A progression was noted from the INT to the ADV to the NS level for the use of mitigation overall, and specifically regarding parenthetical verbs, and the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect. The distribution of these mitigating devices across the speaker groups points toward INT learners having a greater reliance on parenthetical verbs than the other groups, and at the same time disfavoring the use of the subjunctive and conditional. In other words, the

ADV group better approximates the NS target in their use of these types of mitigating devices. This observation supports several findings that emerged in the qualitative analysis of mitigating devices, such as the observation that learners at times overused certain devices, such as the parenthetical verb *creo*.

The analysis also revealed that the ADV learners are approximating the NS target in the way that they deploy mitigation throughout the turn structure and in that they exhibit less reliance on redundant uses of a single mitigating device, instead tending to incorporate multiple mitigating devices in their utterances.

In the next section, we focus on examining the behaviors of participation that were evidenced in the study.

5.3 Quantitative analysis of behaviors of participation

This section discusses the quantitative analysis conducted with regard to the behaviors of participation captured in two conversational protocols, namely, a ranking conversation and a film narration. This analysis responds to the second research question guiding the study, which inquired about the variables that condition the use of mitigation and participation in argument discourse. Recall that the successful management of an argument, a negative situation, is dependent not only on the linguistic choices a speaker makes (e.g., mitigation), but also on their ability to appropriately interact with their interlocutor. As described previously, the study examined three non-linguistic behaviors of participation that scholars have identified as critical in managing an argument: overlapping, interruption, and latching. These variables were analyzed using the Chi-square test, described at the outset of this chapter.

First, we examine the raw frequencies of all instances of the three aforementioned behaviors of participation that were employed by each speaker type. Table 11 presents these frequencies.

Table 11: The raw frequencies of behaviors of participation in two protocols according to participant group (N=1299)

	Participant group			Total
	INT	ADV	NS	
Behaviors of participation	8.1% (106)	26.1% (339)	65.8% (854)	100% (1299)

Table 11 reveals that the speakers employed a total of 1,299 behaviors of participation in the corpus of arguments generated in two conversational protocols. In general, we find that the learners contributed a smaller proportion of participation behaviors than the NS group. In particular, an increasing progression is evident, wherein the INT group produced the smallest proportion of participation behaviors, or 8.1%, while the ADV group contributed 26.1%, and the NS group produced 65.8%. In other words, with regards to the use of behaviors of participation, the ADV group can be said to be closer to approximating the NS target than the INT group. However, it should be noted that there is a large gap between the ADV (26.1%) and the NS group (65.8%).

In addition to considering the frequency of participation behaviors, the analysis also examined the distribution of the three discreet behaviors of participation (i.e., latches, overlaps, and interruptions) across the speaker groups and within the turn structure in order to see how the behaviors were employed. The Chi-square tests for the variables of participation behaviors yielded a statistically significant difference between groups for behaviors overall ($p = .008$), for latches within the turn structure ($p = .000$),

and for overlaps within the turn structure ($p = .000$). The third behavior examined, interruption, did not yield a statistically significant result in the Chi-square test, suggesting that the behavior of interruption was not conditioned by the speaker type.

Table 12 presents the distribution of the three participation behaviors across the groups in the study.

Table 12: The distribution of participation behaviors in two protocols according to participant group (N=1299)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
Latch	86.8% (92)	76.4% (259)	72.6% (620)
Overlap	13.2% (14)	20.4% (69)	22.1% (189)
Interruption	0% (0)	3.2% (11)	5.3% (45)
Total	100% (106)	100% (339)	100% (854)

$p = .008$

Following Cordella (1996) and Tannen (1984), we would expect latches and overlaps to be the most prevalent participation behaviors because their use is motivated by a speaker's need to exhibit engagement with the interlocutor and considerateness during an argument interaction. The results depicted in table 12 are akin to the findings of those scholars in suggesting that latching is the most characteristic participation behavior in the context of the conversational arguments produced in the study. The INT group relied on latches the most (86.8%), followed by the ADV group (76.4%), and the NS group (72.6%). It should be noted that the INT group employed latching more than the NS group. It is plausible that the INT learners latch more than other speakers because they have not yet incorporated the other behaviors of participation into their conversational repertoire, a tendency that the table also points to.

The distribution in table 12 also suggests that overlapping is the second most prevalent behavior, which further supports the empirical literature. Regarding overlapping in the study, we find that the INT group utilized this behavior less than the other groups (13.2%), and the NS group employed it more than the other groups (22.1%).

Interruptions were evidenced at a lower frequency than latches or overlaps. The distribution of interruptions in the corpus is noteworthy because scholars (e.g., Cordella, 1996; Santamaría-García, 2006) have described this behavior as being more characteristic of native Spanish speakers than of native English speakers. Santamaría-García (2006), for example, found that the use of interruptions in her study was mediated by social distance between speakers as well as culturally determined face needs, such that native English speakers were uncomfortable interrupting and preferred to utilize mitigation instead. The progression that is observed in table 12 with regard to the use of interruptions seems to support Santamaría-García's findings, which would predict that L2 Spanish learners would disprefer this behavior. In fact, we see that the INT group did not attest this behavior at all (0%), while the ADV group interrupted infrequently (3.2%) and the NS group exhibited this behavior at a slightly higher frequency (5.2%).

It is noteworthy that for each of the three behaviors of participation that were considered in the study we find a progression from the INT to the ADV to the NS group. Specifically, the ADV group appears to be approximating the NS target in the frequency with which they exhibit the behaviors of participation.

The progression depicted in table 12 also sheds light on an observation made in the qualitative analysis presented in the previous chapter. In that analysis, it was noted that learners sometimes participated often, or in a native like way, and sometimes the learners

relied very little on behaviors of participation to help them negotiate their argument interactions. From table 12 we can gather that the greatest gap exists between INT learners and native speakers, suggesting that while they are adept at employing latches and overlaps, the INT group is not yet approaching target-like use of all of the behaviors of participation.

Next, the analysis focused on how the discreet behaviors of participation were exhibited by speakers within the turn structure of their argument discourse. As indicated previously, the intersection of these variables yielded statistically significant results for two of the three behaviors examined: latches and overlaps. These data are presented in tables 13 and 14.

In table 13, the appearance of latches is presented.

Table 13: The distribution of latches across the argument turn structure according to participant group (N=971)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
T1	34.8% (32)	18.5% (48)	13.5% (84)
T2	29.3% (27)	51.4% (133)	61.3% (380)
T3	35.9% (33)	30.1% (78)	25.2% (156)
Total	100% (92)	100% (259)	100% (620)

p= .000

Table 13 reveals that, generally, latches are deployed over the course of an argument. Nonetheless, the INT group behaved differently than the other groups in the study, and the ADV group tended to behave most similarly to the NS group. Specifically, speakers in the INT group exhibited latches fairly consistently throughout the turn structure of their arguments. That is, 34.8% of their latches were used in T1, 29.3% were

produced in T2, and 35.9% occurred in T3. In contrast, the ADV group latched less in T1 (18.5%), much more in T2 (51.4%), and somewhat less in T3 (30.1%). We see that the NS group also latched less in T1 and more in T2. In other words, among the learners, it is the ADV group that exhibits the most target-like behavior in their use of latches.

Regarding the INT group, it is important to recall that latches index involvement and considerateness in a conversation (Cordella, 1996), but also require the speaker to take the floor without allowing for a pause between turns. Thus, this behavior has both a pragmatic and a processing component, and it is plausible that the INT group in the study is affected by both. The distribution in table 13 also suggests that the INT learners have incorporated latching into their repertoire of participation behaviors, although they are not yet able to deploy them in a completely target-like manner.

Next, in table 14, we examine how different speakers exhibited overlaps across the argument turns.

Table 14: The distribution of overlaps across the argument turn structure according to participant group (N=272)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
T1	28.6% (4)	4.3% (3)	9.5% (18)
T2	7.1% (1)	46.4% (32)	58.7% (111)
T3	64.3% (9)	49.3% (34)	31.7% (60)
Total	100% (14)	100% (69)	100% (189)

p = .000

Table 14 reveals that both learner groups employ overlaps in a way that is distinct from the NS group. The INT group is the least target-like, as we see in the changes in frequency between T1 and T2. That is, the INT group decreases from 28.6% in T1 to

7.1% in T2. In contrast, the ADV group *increases* from 4.3% in T1 to 46.4% in T2, frequencies that closely approximate the NS group. Recalling that overlaps characteristically signal disagreement, but show that the interrupting speaker is engaged and actively listening, this distribution suggests that the INT group is not pragmatically target-like in their use of this particular behavior. Overlap in T1 would suggest engagement, but in T2 it would have a positive benefit, similar to mitigation, by accompanying the actual disagreement statement.

5.3.1 Summary of the quantitative analysis of participation behaviors

The analysis presented in this section has focused on the ways in which the speakers in the study employed three different behaviors of participation: latches, overlaps, and interruptions. In brief, the appearance and use of these behaviors generally can be understood to be conditioned by the speaker type. An increasing progression was noted again in the distribution of both latches and overlaps across the speaker groups, such that the behaviors of the ADV group can be said to be approximating the behaviors of the NS group. Regarding the way that the speakers manifest the behaviors across the argument turn structure, it was revealed that the ADV group exhibited more target-like behavior in the use of latches and overlaps. At the same time, the behavior of the INT group was noteworthy in that it showed that these learners are still acquiring the pragmatic ability to participate in a native like way and that their use of behaviors, such as latches and overlaps, is mediated not only by pragmatic factors but possibly by the need to produce speech spontaneously and quickly during their conversational interactions.

5.4 Social variables that intersect with mitigation and behaviors of participation

In responding to the second research question, which inquired about the different variables that condition the presence and use of mitigation and participation among the participant groups, the analysis also examined factors that were external to mitigation and participation, or social variables. Four variables were examined: the language status of the interlocutor (i.e., INT, ADV, NS), the protocol type (i.e., ranking conversation or film narration), the length of time spent studying Spanish, and the length of residence in a Spanish-speaking country. Of these four variables, only the variable 'protocol type' yielded a statistically significant result. That is, the language status of the interlocutor, the length of time spent studying Spanish, and the length of residence in a Spanish-speaking country were not found to correlate with the use of mitigation or participation. The Chi-square that examined the intersection of mitigation and the protocol type yielded a result of $p = .045$, while the intersection of participation behaviors with protocol type yielded a result of $p = .000$. In other words, the use and presence of mitigation and participation is conditioned by the activity the speaker was engaged in. These data are presented in tables 15 and 16.

Table 15 depicts how mitigation was deployed between the two conversational protocols (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration) by the different participant groups.

Table 15: The distribution of mitigation across protocols according to participant group (N=851)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
Mitigation in ranking conversation	100% (59)	89.8% (159)	91.2% (561)
Mitigation in film narration	0% (0)	10.2% (18)	8.8% (54)
Total	100% (59)	100% (177)	100% (615)

$p=.045$

Table 15 reveals that all speakers in the study tended to rely on mitigation more in the ranking conversation protocol than in the film narration protocol. For instance, the INT group issued 100% of their mitigating devices in the ranking conversations. With respect to the ADV group, their frequency was somewhat lower, 89.8%. The NS group produced 91.2% of their mitigating devices in the ranking conversation protocol.

The distribution depicted in table 15 is noteworthy for two reasons: First, the data indicate that the INT group did not employ mitigation at all in the film narration protocol. This finding is surprising if we recall that mitigation broadly functions to assist speakers in negotiating or managing the interpersonal relationships that are relevant in different interactions, and the ability to mitigate is considered critical in arguments in particular (Antaki, 1994; Caffi, 2007; Pomerantz, 1984). In other words, the INT group was able to engage in arguments in one of the protocols without relying on mitigation. Second, the distribution indicates that the presence of mitigation is conditioned by the protocol or the type of discourse that speakers were producing. To further substantiate the *protocol effect*, the following table is presented. The table depicts the distribution of behaviors of participation across the two protocols by the participants in the study.

Table 16: The distribution of behaviors of participation across protocols according to participant group (N=1299)

	Participant group		
	INT	ADV	NS
Participation in ranking conversation	99.1% (105)	81.4% (276)	88.3% (754)
Participation in film narration	0.9% (1)	18.6% (63)	11.7% (100)
Total	100% (106)	100% (339)	100% (854)

p = .000

In table 16 we see that each group in the study also produced the majority of their behaviors of participation in the ranking conversations. For example, the INT group produced 99.1% of their behaviors in the ranking conversations. The ADV group contributed a slightly lower frequency of their behaviors in the ranking conversations, 81.4%. In this distribution we again find that the ADV group better approximates the NS group.

There are two important differences between the protocols employed in the study that may contribute to a protocol effect: The type of conversational interaction (i.e., opinion-based ranking or fact-based narration), and the topics invoked by the protocols (i.e., university-institutional topics or events in an unfamiliar film). The empirical research suggests that mitigation and participation are both prompted by the need for speakers to maintain positive relations with each other (e.g., Caffi, 2007; Cordella, 1996; Fraser, 1980; Georgakopoulou, 2001, Pomerantz, 1984). Keeping in mind that the native speakers in the study are the target or baseline group, the data in tables 15 and 16 seem to suggest that the argument interactions in the film narration did not require that mitigation and participation be used to the extent that was required in the arguments generated by

the ranking conversations. The question that remains is: Why is the protocol effect so pronounced for the INT group?

The INT group exhibits a near null use of mitigation and participation in the film narration protocol, where they employ 0% of their mitigating devices and only 0.9% of their participation behaviors. Cordella (1996) found that native like language and behavior were conditioned by exposure to the target culture through study abroad experience, a variable that was not found statistically significant in the present study. Another possible explanation relates to acquisition, and comes from Ordóñez (2004), who examined frog story narrations produced by Colombian (L1 Spanish) L2 English learners. Ordóñez's analysis revealed that, in comparison to monolingual control groups, L2 English learners were less proficient narrators overall; their narrations were short and lacking "richness" (2004:472). In particular, the stories they told featured either a bare sequence of events or general descriptions of events. It is plausible that in the present study, the narrations produced by the learners were mediated by the very act of narrating, such that the learners were focused on completing a language task as opposed to managing an interpersonal interaction. This possibility will be explored further by examining the reflections of the speakers that were captured by the metalinguistic interview protocol in the study.

This section has presented the results of the quantitative analysis of social variables that condition the use of mitigation and participation in the corpus of two conversational protocols. The next section summarizes the findings presented in this chapter.

5.5 Chapter Summary

The quantitative analysis has yielded several notable findings regarding the ways in which the different groups (i.e., INT, ADV, NS) employ mitigating devices and participation behaviors in their argument discourse, as captured in the study.

1. There are statistically significant differences between the INT, ADV, and NS groups with respect to their use of several types of mitigating devices (i.e., parenthetical verbs, the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect, tag questions and challenge questions), and in the way they employ two behaviors of mitigation (i.e., latching and overlapping).
2. The analysis of multiple variables points to a progression among the learners, from the INT to the ADV group, such that the ADV learners seem to be the more target-like group.
3. There is evidence of a protocol or task effect that mediates the use of mitigation and participation in the ranking conversation protocol and in the film narration protocol, and the effect is more apparent in the INT learner group.

Overall, the examination of variables that condition the use of mitigation and participation and the distribution of these variables across the speaker groups seems to be suggestive of an acquisitional profile. In other words, the patterns that were noted in the previous chapter are more evident in light of these results, and we can see the differences that exist not only between learners and natives, but also between the two learner groups. While the qualitative analysis in the previous chapter identified the ways in which the different speakers deployed the practices of mitigation and participation, the quantitative analysis presented here supports and expands upon those findings by revealing the extent to which those observations translate into patterns of use. In order to further explore and better understand the language and behaviors captured in the study, the next chapter presents findings from the third protocol, a metalinguistic interview, which allows us to approach the data from the perspective of the participants themselves.

Chapter 6: Findings of the metalinguistic protocol

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings regarding the metalinguistic interviews that were conducted with the participants in the study. Recall that this investigation responds to research questions that inquire how mitigation and participation are utilized by L2 learners and native speakers of Spanish in the context of conversational arguments. The analysis in this chapter partially responds to the first research question, which asks to what extent learners approximate native speakers in their use of mitigation and behaviors of participation. Additionally, it addresses the third research question guiding the study in focusing on the role of the institutional context in shaping the language and behavior produced by the participants in the conversational protocols.

This chapter is organized as follows: First, the key themes that emerged in the metalinguistic narratives of each participant group are introduced. Second, a triangulated analysis is presented, in which I reconsider the arguments produced in the study in light of the themes revealed by the metalinguistic narratives. These two sections are followed by a chapter summary.

6.2 Themes in the metalinguistic narratives

As detailed in the methodology chapter, the metalinguistic interview protocol prompted each participant to reflect on the interactions in which they participated in the course of completing the conversational protocols in the study (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration). Participants were asked to evaluate, in general terms, the interactions and their communication, and to comment, specifically, on the topics and any aspects of

the protocols that they found difficult¹⁹. Following the methodology employed by Kinginger (2008), all of the narratives produced in the metalinguistic interview were analyzed in order to identify themes, common threads, or "key narratives" among them (p. 61).

Six themes emerged from this analysis, and are defined below. Extracts of the metalinguistic narratives are included in order to illustrate the explanations provided by the participants²⁰.

1. Task: This theme captures instances where participants described what they were *doing* in a specific protocol. They described their own actions in terms of goals, focus, approach, or intentions. Several examples of narrative on the theme of task follow. An NS commented about the ranking conversation:

"Quise explicar mi posición. De repente iba convenciéndolo, pero mi intención era simplemente como explicarle por qué prohibir el alcohol no era buena idea" (NS8).

Similarly, an INT explained:

"They were all very collaborative. We took turns speaking and tried to build upon what the other person had said, and tried to come to a consensus" (L220).

2. Role of NS: This theme includes commentary produced by NSs or L2 learners relating to activities or abilities that were attributed only to native speakers, which were typically juxtaposed against the activities carried out by L2 learners. This category involved two closely related types of narrative: talk of a "professor role", and talk of the native speaker as a helper or provider of assistance and/or information. The professor role is exemplified by the following description, provided by an NS:

"El hecho de que yo sea la mejor, hablante nativa, parece que por eso sientes la necesidad de llevar un poco el control, el mando, aunque ya tenga un muy buen nivel de español, que lo tiene, pero el hecho de ser nativa parece que te da más como responsabilidad" (NS18).

An ADV participant described the helper role in the following way:

"When we were narrating the movie, he would let me describe and then he would go over it again, describe it again more elaborately and provide more details" (L215).

¹⁹ The questions employed in the metalinguistic interviews are located in Appendices F and G.

²⁰ The metalinguistic protocol was completed in each participant's native language, and extracts of metalinguistic commentary provided by participants are presented in the language in which they were originally produced. Translations of metalinguistic commentary provided in Spanish by NS and NINS participants are provided in Appendix I.

3. Evaluation of L2: This theme encompasses narratives that conveyed assessments of language ability or linguistic behavior that were attributed to L2 participants explicitly due to their status as L2 learners. This category includes metalinguistic commentary by the learners themselves, such as:

"I'm definitely more passive in Spanish because I'm thinking more about what I want to say and how I have to combine everything to make sense" (L212).

However, evaluations of L2 ability were also prominent in the NS narrative, as in the following:

"Creo que ella no entendía mucho, lo que le decía. No entendía muy bien español, no estaba acostumbrada tal vez a otro tipo de español porque le hablé como naturalmente" (NS10).

It should be noted that, although the participants were asked to evaluate the conversational interactions overall, the NS, ADV, and INT participants focused almost exclusively on describing their conversation in the mixed dyad (NS-L2). NSs in particular glossed over their interactions with other NSs, making brief comments like *"estuvo bien"* 'it went well' before proceeding to evaluate the L2 learner or their L2 ability. In other words, reflections on the experience within the matched dyad (NS-NS or L2-L2) were rarely included in the metalinguistic narratives.

4. Conversational topic: This category includes narrative related to the topic chosen by the participants for the ranking conversations. For example, an NS reflected:

"Elegí los temas que me parecían como más corrientes, que habían parecidos en las noticias, por ejemplo, como la violencia y la comida. Me parecían que estos son temas que ya existen" (NS19).

5. Culture and/or cultural differences: Narratives related to the culture of participants, or how culture played a role in the interaction, are included in this category. One INT participant explained, regarding her NS interlocutor:

"...this guy had a different cultural background so obviously a different experience to bring to the table" (L22).

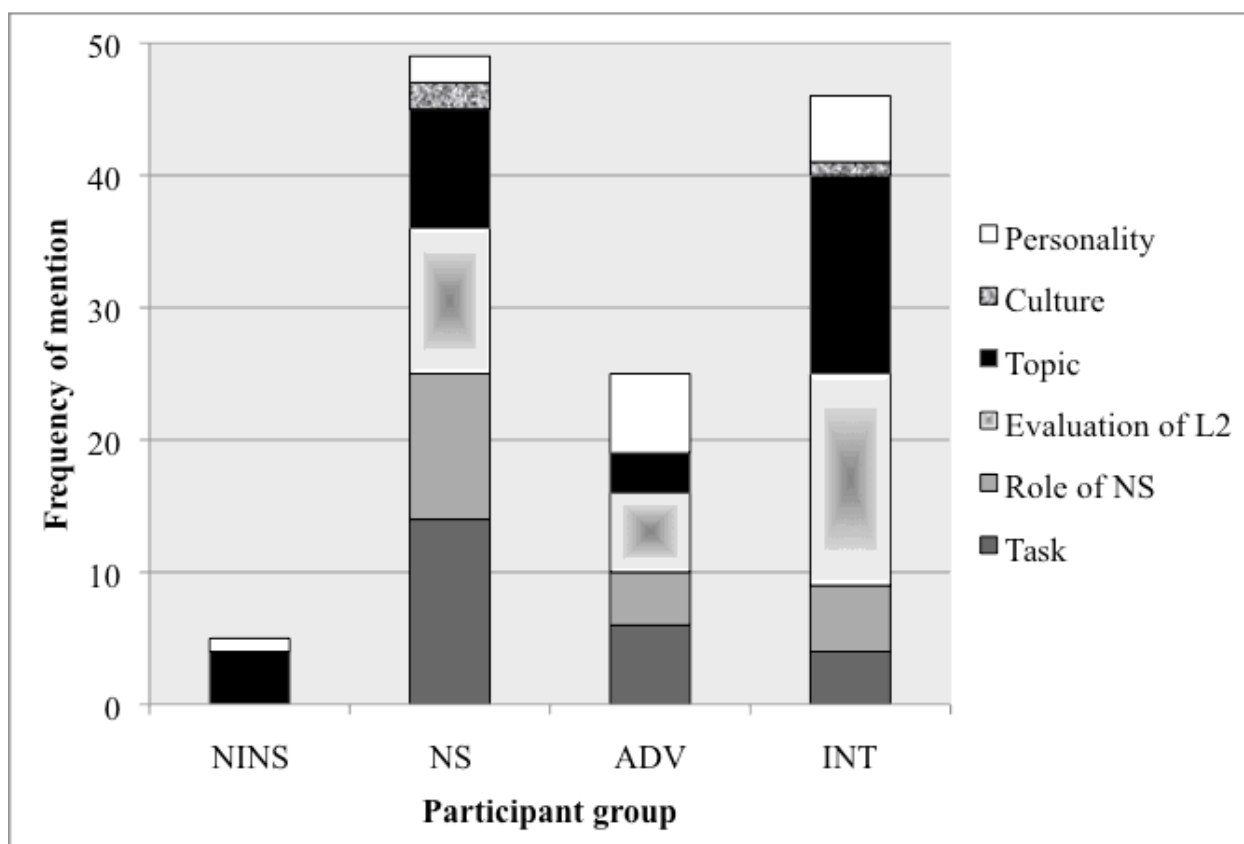
6. Personality: This category captures commentary related to how an individual's personality or personal characteristics impacted the interactions, as in the following observation made by an ADV:

"I felt like I talked a lot and the other person didn't talk as much. I kind of overruled the conversation, being the talkative person that I am" (L218).

After the themes were identified, their mention was examined within each participant group (i.e., NS, ADV, INT, NINS), and according to the conversational protocol to which they related (i.e., ranking conversation or film narration). In order to compare the themes invoked by the participant groups, and to consider any differences

between them, the graphs below depict the themes that emerged in the narrative of each participant group, according to conversational protocol. The themes related to the ranking conversations are presented first, in graph 1, followed by the themes of the film narration, which are depicted in graph 2.

Graph 1: Themes invoked by each participant group in metalinguistic narratives regarding the ranking conversation protocol



Graph 1 reveals several noteworthy differences between the participant groups with regard to the themes that emerged in their narratives about the ranking conversation protocol. First, we find that the NINS group did not invoke the same variety of themes as the other groups. That is, NINS participants reflected only on the themes of personality and topic, but not on the themes that were most prevalent in the narratives of the other participant groups: task, role of NS, evaluation of L2 learner. This basic difference

supports an important observation regarding the institutional context: Based on the narratives of the NINS speakers, they appear to have been engaged with a topic rather than a task, and they did not identify themselves as having been constrained by language status or ability. This approach was succinctly described by one NINS who stated:

"Me parecía interesante el tema de vivir en Nueva Jersey porque recién me mudé aquí para trabajar. Entonces es como muy corriente para mí, y fácil de hablar sobre este tema" (NINS2).

This position is what we would expect from a non-institutional narrative.

Second, the themes in the metalinguistic narratives of the NS, ADV, and INT groups can be said to illuminate different ways in which the institutional context shaped the communicative interactions of the participants who were operating within the university-institutional setting. The graph depicts several important differences between these groups (i.e., NS, ADV, INT), in terms of the frequency or prevalence of the discreet themes within the narrative of the group. For example, the theme of task prevailed in the metalinguistic narrative of the NS group, and was one of the most prevalent in the ADV group. In contrast, for the INT group, task was invoked much less frequently than other themes (e.g., L2 ability, topic, personality). In other words, speakers in the INT group were more focused on their ability to communicate in L2 than on the task itself.

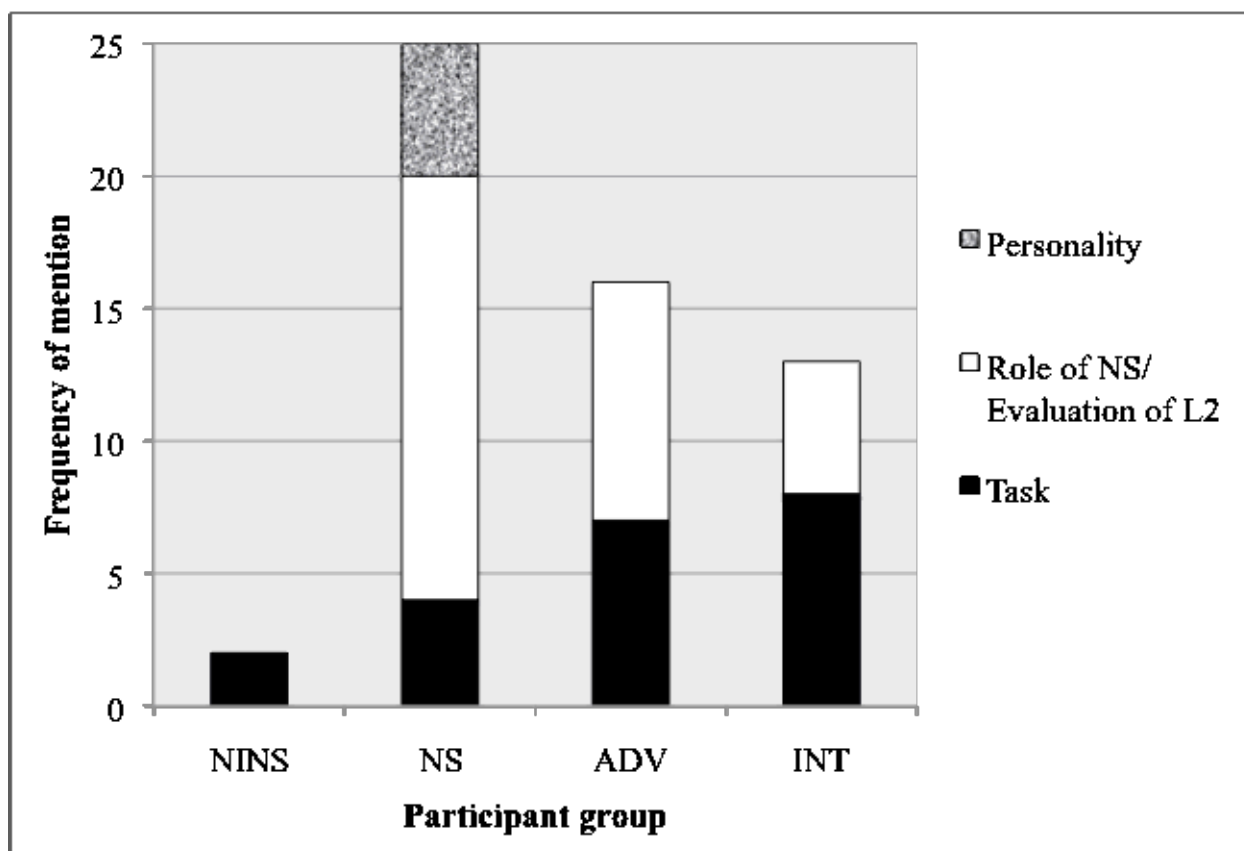
Another example of the prominence of the institutional context is evident in the theme of evaluation of L2, as depicted in graph 1: This theme was one of the most prevalent in the narratives of all three institutional groups (i.e., NS, ADV, INT), but more so in the narrative of the INT group. Thus, in graph 1 we see not only differences according to the institutional status of the participant groups, but also according to the level of the learners (i.e., ADV and INT). These findings, regarding the theme of

evaluation of L2, and the differences between the ADV and INT group, are akin to the results reported in Dippold (2007). In that study, which also employed a ranking conversation protocol, Dippold found that first-year L2 German learners were focused on their language ability, or lack thereof, rather than on completing the task, while third and fourth year learners were more focused on the task, and on positioning themselves in other ways (i.e., as university students, as British).

The themes depicted in graph 1 contrast somewhat with the observations reported by Edstrom (2004), who, based on metalinguistic narratives, attributed the differences between NSs and L2 learners of Spanish to cultural differences and to individual factors, such as professional training and personality. While themes related to culture and personality did emerge in the metalinguistic narrative in the present study, they were not as prevalent as others. In sum, the themes of the NS, ADV, and INT groups suggest that, in the context of the ranking conversation, the dominant narratives were related to the institutional setting.

Next, graph 2 depicts the themes that emerged in the metalinguistic narratives relating to the film narration protocol.

Graph 2: Themes invoked by each participant group in metalinguistic narratives regarding the film narration protocol



In graph 2 we find that, in general, the participants invoked only a few themes in their metalinguistic narratives related to the film narration protocol. For example, the NINS group again mentioned the fewest number of themes. In particular, they invoked only one theme in their narratives on the film narration protocol, that of the task itself. To illustrate this type of commentary, one NINS participant described the task as follows:

"Contamos toda la película porque el ejercicio, tenía que hacerlo así" (NINS3).

Reflections on the task were present in the narratives of the other groups (i.e., NS, ADV, INT) as well. This pattern supports a key finding yielded in the quantitative analysis presented previously- that of a protocol effect. The possibility that the act of narrating a film has pragmatic consequences is discussed in previous studies by Blackwell (2009,

2010) and Ordóñez (2004). The themes revealed by the present analysis corroborate their observations, namely, that Spanish speakers focus primarily on the act of narrating, which may be due to lack of familiarity with the topic or content of the film and to the goal of meeting the researcher's expectations for the narration, in terms of completion or attention to detail.

Graph 2 again points toward differences among the participant groups that may be attributable to the institutional context. Specifically, the dominant narrative for the institutional groups (i.e., NS, ADV, INT) was the role of the NS/evaluation of the L2 learner. With regards to the theme role of NS/evaluation of L2, it should be noted that these were two discreet themes in the narratives related to the ranking conversation, but they were found to converge in the narratives of the film narration protocol. In other words, in their meta-pragmatic commentary on the film narration, NS, ADV, and INT participants consistently mentioned the role of the NS, which was that of a helper, or a leader, in conjunction with statements regarding L2 ability. For example, one NS commented:

"Me parecía que yo era la que estaba dando los detalles. Yo no sé si no entendió o no se acordaba o no tenía la capacidad para decir o para dar detalles" (NS11).

Regarding personality, this theme only emerged in the narratives of the NS group, and included metalinguistic commentary on ways that a personal characteristic of the individual impacted the narration, such as: having a good memory, being decisive, and letting a woman go first. Thus, this type of narrative tended to appear in conjunction with reflections about the task, such as:

"Ella siempre le dejé hablar, las mujeres siempre primero. Entonces yo la dejé hablar a ver lo que decía y después yo decía lo que yo me acordaba" (NS7).

Overall, the themes depicted in graph 2 suggest that the task was the main focus of the NINS participants, while an institutionally-based NS-L2 dynamic was the dominant narrative of the NS, ADV, and INT groups.

The metalinguistic narratives also provide some insight into the language and behavior that was manifested in specific interactions, as identified in the qualitative and quantitative analyses presented previously. In the next section I provide examples of metalinguistic narratives that explicitly address the use of mitigation and participation.

6.3 Triangulation

This section revisits the findings presented in previous chapters in order to triangulate the different sources of data and their analysis. The metalinguistic narratives are presented in conjunction with specific argument excerpts in order to shed new light on a few specific findings yielded by the qualitative and quantitative analyses presented in previous chapters, and to examine further the variable of the institutional context. In particular, I will reexamine the following main findings:

- That there are differences in the mitigating devices employed by learners and NSs, as revealed by the qualitative and quantitative analyses (i.e., restricted forms/lack or repertoire on the part of learners, use of questioning strategy by NSs).
- That there is a protocol or task effect that shapes the interaction and discourse produced in the film narration protocol (i.e., speakers are not as reliant on mitigation to manage arguments in the film narration).

The excerpts in this section appeared previously, and are reproduced here in order to demonstrate instances where the participant's own metalinguistic narrative can better inform the researcher's interpretation of the discourse generated in a particular instance. Interactions yielded in the ranking conversation protocol are reexamined first, followed by interactions generated in the film narration protocol.

6.3.1 Mitigation, participation, and institutional roles in the ranking conversation protocol

The first excerpt allows us to better understand what the NINS participants perceived themselves to be *doing* in the ranking conversation protocol. This excerpt, which appeared originally in the qualitative analysis of parenthetical verbs, was produced in a conversation between a female speaker (NINS3) and a male speaker (NINS4) who discussed the topic of advice for recent immigrants to New Jersey.

Excerpt 2

- | | | | |
|----|---|--------|---|
| T1 | 1 | NINS3: | y:: tres tener un buen conocimiento del inglés. |
| T2 | 2 | NINS4: | yo puse. eh mejor el vivir cerca de Nueva York= |
| T3 | 3 | NINS3: | =ah! te parece? no te parece? yo estaba dudando te parece más |
| | 4 | | <u>importante vivir cerca a Nueva York?</u> |
| T2 | 5 | NINS4: | (0.7) realmente no creo que sea:= |
| T3 | 6 | NINS3: | =es más [caro también] |
| T2 | 7 | NINS4: | <u>[ahora que lo leo] o sea no creo que sea que te vaya a hacer la</u> |
| | 8 | | <u>vida más fácil (.) simplemente que te va a hacer la vida mej más</u> |
| | 9 | | <u>interesante entonces ...</u> |

In Excerpt 2 we see that both speakers are engaged and sociable, as evidenced by their latching and overlapping behaviors, despite the fact that they are disagreeing. In the turns beginning in lines 3 and 7, we find that a variety of mitigating devices are employed in the service of negotiating the argument interaction (i.e., challenge questions, a parenthetical disclaimer, a discourse marker, parenthetical verbs and the subjunctive mood). The language and behavior in excerpt 2 were initially described as evoking considerateness, an interactional orientation that involves cooperation and sociability (Tannen, 1984). In light of the metalinguistic narrative provided by the NINS speakers, all of whom indicated that their focus in conversing was on the topic itself, it could be argued that this considerateness emerged due to the topic of the conversation. The speakers in excerpt 2 commented, regarding this interaction:

"Me parecía que el tema de la inmigración daba mucho para conversar. Aparte de eso tuvimos la experiencia y me parecía que había más que decir que para las otras" (NINS3).

"Supongo que por interés en el tema, fue como una conversación normal, no tuvimos que decidir OK quién va a empezar, nada así" (NINS4).

The insights provided by NINS participants contrast sharply with the descriptions given by the NS participants in the study, highlighting the import of the institutional context, and how completion of the ranking conversation protocol was mediated by the language status of the speakers. In order to illustrate these differences, excerpt 32 is provided.

This excerpt, which initially appeared in the qualitative analysis of epistemic disclaimers, was generated by a male NS (NS4) and a male ADV speaker (L24) as they discussed the topic of plagiarism.

Excerpt 30

T1	1	L24:	<u>yo quiero meter como el aviso que</u> que si no es un caso serio=
T2	2	NS4:	=mm=
T1	3	L24:	=que no estás robando el el trabajo de alguien completa[mente]
T2	4	NS4:	[sí mm]
T1	5	L24:	y diciendo que oh esto es mi trabajo=
T2	6	NS4:	=mm=
T1	7	L24:	=esto es mi trabajo original y (.) mi obra=
T2	8	NS4:	=mm=
T1	9	L24:	=pero que has usado una cita de alguien más y sin darse cuenta estás usando sus palabras sí yo creo que eso es perdonable.
	10		

T3	35	L24:	= <u>el el caso de que (.) no es mi idioma nativo</u> =
T2	36	NS4:	=sí=
T3	37	L24:	= <u>so mi cerebro no tiene la habilidad de jugar mu[cho con]</u>
T2	38	NS4:	[sí sí sí sí]
T3	39	L24:	la estructura.
T2	40	NS4:	<u>sí no digamos</u> para vos haciendo una perifrasis en una lengua extranjera.
T3	41	L24:	[sí]
T2	42	NS4:	[es] muy complejo (.) en este caso estás dando e:l sentido genérico al plagio.
	43		

Excerpt 30 contains an argument stemming from the speakers' distinct viewpoints on the topic of plagiarism. Both speakers are clearly engaged in the interaction, based on their latched and overlapped utterances. We also see that both speakers employ mitigation to help them manage this interaction, including the epistemic disclaimer *yo quiero meter como el aviso que* in line 1, the token agreement, *sí sí sí sí*, in line 38, another *sí* and the plural, inclusive discourse marker *digamos* in line 40. The learner in this interaction also explicitly invokes his status as a language learner, in lines 35 and 37. We can assume that the topic of plagiarism was personally relevant to both speakers in their roles as students (graduate or undergraduate). However, their metalinguistic commentary indicates that their language status was foregrounded in this interaction, temporarily obscuring their experience with the topic.

We can see that the speakers were cognizant of the institutional aspects of language status and expert role, as both reflected upon how they shaped the discourse. The ADV participant provided the following insights:

"Basically to speak and be understood and communicate well, that was my first thing, and then the actual process of hashing out the topic was actually ancillary to that. He was obviously more passionate about the subject, whereas I don't think plagiarism is terrible and will ruin your career, as a student. Whereas if you were a professor, a doctor in some sort of important academic study, that would be a different level. So I definitely backed down a bit...OK, from your point of view then, yes, your opinion makes sense" (L24).

The NS participant explained:

"Como yo estoy viniendo de, supuestamente, de profesores, y él era obviamente un estudiante, tuvimos una conversación que tendía que ser más dominada por la persona con más energía, por otra parte, siendo estudiante de segunda lengua, quien no se siente muy, digamos, muy fuerte o muy seguro con su español, tiende a dar las concesiones" (NS4).

The narratives provided by L24 and NS4 speak to two distinct, but complimentary roles in the interaction. Based on the metalinguistic commentary, we now can affirm that both speakers perceived their language status to have been of primary importance in shaping their interaction, which led to a professor/learner dynamic in which the learner "backed down" and the NS dominated and gave concessions. In the words of L24, discussing the topic, despite its personal relevance, was an "ancillary" concern. In light of these commentaries, it is plausible that the use of mitigation was mediated by the professor/learner dynamic. In other words, L24 backing down and not being concerned about the discussion did not necessitate mitigation, since he was focused on talking about his ability as an L2 learner (e.g., in lines 35 and 37). Oppositely, NS4 giving concessions appears to have required the use of a variety of mitigating devices (i.e., in lines 38, 42, and 42).

The next excerpt, also from an NS-L2 dyad, is provided to further substantiate the observation that the institutional factor of language status mediates the use of mitigation.

Excerpt 9, which initially appeared in the qualitative analysis of the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect in chapter 4, was generated by a male INT participant (L216) and a male NS (NS16) who discussed the topic of student protests. At the very beginning of their conversation, they are sharing their rankings of different possible solutions to the problem.

Excerpt 9

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------|--|
| T1 | 1 | L216: | <u>yo: ah puse?=</u> |
| | 2 | NS16: | =mjm= |
| T1 | 3 | L216: | =por mi primera opción ah la universidad debe que promover una |
| | 4 | | cultura de activismo political. porque es muy esto es eso es algo que yo |
| | 5 | | no (.) um yo no veo como separado de la educación es parte de de ser |
| | 6 | | un adulto y un ciudadano y cosas así. um (.) <u>yeah</u> yo puedo entender |
| | 7 | | que la universidad no no quiere ah tener alguna ah alguna cosa que ver |

- 8 con grupos ah cómo se dice? like ah acti: grupo:s que: quieren protestar
 9 y algo así=
 10 NS16: =como activistas todo el tiempo=
 T1 11 L216: =yeah yeah. pero: si la universidad ah (.) tuviera una ah un visto más
 12 que ahm como (.) si quisieran trabajar con los estudiantes más (.) ah
 13 promovería la cultura más fácilmente y también no: no habría muy
 14 tensión entre los estudiantes y la administración. me entiendes? ...

In excerpt 9, the INT participant is explaining his ranking and his position on the topic of student protests. This exchange features latched turns, but minimal mitigation. In particular, the subjunctive and conditional are employed by the INT participant in a syntactic context that requires their use (i.e., in the turn beginning in line 11), which occurs in T1, before the argument has developed. This exchange is noteworthy for two reasons: First, it demonstrates the ability of the INT to engage in conversation with an NS, and to take a position, albeit without relying on mitigation. Second, we can observe the different roles adopted by the participants and how these roles shape the discourse. In particular, there are two instances where the INT expresses doubt in the form of a question, in lines 1 and 8, prompting assistance or confirmation from his NS interlocutor. We also see that the INT uttered the English lexical item 'yeah' several times as he developed his thoughts (i.e., in lines 6 and 11).

The learner explained his behavior in this interaction as the following:

"I guess just sort of my vocab can always be expanded. He [NS] helped me out with whatever, and there was nothing difficult about talking with him. I wanted to talk about the marches because I am involved in student government, and I'm involved in another group that tries to organize students and the community" (L216).

In this narrative the learner mentioned three distinct themes: his L2 ability, or vocabulary, the NS's ability to provide help and thus facilitate communication, and his personal interest in the conversational topic. This commentary is indicative of the learner's language in this conversation, despite his personal interest and engagement with the

topic, being impacted by his lexical ability, prompting him to ask for help and to use English.

The NS in this interaction provided the following insights:

"Es un poco más sencillo con una persona que no habla la lengua y siempre le vas a entender la otra persona pero vas a poner atención a que va a decir cosas que no son correctamente formadas...uno entiende lo que quiere decir pero no está correctamente pronunciada o le falta algo o puede haber un poco de error de sintaxis. Pero en general sí, yo diría que sin mayor problema, no tuve que repetir las cosas. No hubo barreras de comunicación" (NS16).

This narrative indicates that the NS in the interaction was not only aware of his interlocutor's status as a learner, but that he had specific expectations for how that might impact their communication. NS16 evaluates the L2 learner and their communication positively, as successful overall, because he did not have to repeat anything he said. Here again we find that the NS is focused on evaluating the learner and describing his own role in relation to the learner's ability.

The previous excerpts, when reexamined in conjunction with the metalinguistic narratives provided by the speakers in the interactions, are illustrative of the changes that occur in the interactional dynamic when the factor of language status is introduced. If we compare the argument discourse in excerpt 2 to the exchanges in excerpts 32 and 9, it becomes evident that being language equals, or interacting with a person of the same language ability, facilitates communication in the sense that it allows the conversation itself to be the goal of the interaction. In contrast, unequal language status, as perceived by the participants, gives the language itself a position of greater prominence, to the extent that the emergent professor/learner dynamic is foregrounded against other themes, such as interest in the topic or status as a university student. Next I revisit excerpts of

disagreements generated in the film narration protocol, in order to further consider the participants' perspectives on their discourse.

6.3.2 Mitigation, participation, and institutional roles in the film narration protocol

It should be recalled that only a few themes were evoked in the metapragmatic narratives of the film narration protocol (i.e., task, role of NS/evaluation of L2, personality). Most importantly, the themes of role of the NS and L2 ability converged, pointing toward a focus on language ability and a reliance on the NS to help the L2 interlocutor by providing lexical items, details, and structure for the narration. In other words, the metalinguistic narratives provide further support not only for the notion of an institutional effect that impacts the interactions of the NS, ADV, and INT learners, but also a protocol or task effect that constrains the discourse of the film narration protocol in particular. In order to substantiate these claims, the first excerpt in this section derives from an NINS-NINS dyad, and allows us to examine the discourse produced in the film narration protocol in conjunction with the metalinguistic narratives.

Excerpt 34, which originally appeared in the qualitative analysis of mitigation in the film narration protocol, is from a narration produced by a female (NINS1) and a male participant (NINS2).

Excerpt 34

- | | | | |
|----|----|--------|---|
| T1 | 1 | NINS1: | bueno primero o sea que se ve claramente en la película que la niña está |
| | 2 | | vendiendo los pañuelos= |
| T2 | 3 | NINS2: | =sí= |
| T1 | 4 | NINS1: | = <u>no los da gratis. y:: la chica que está llorando le ofrece un pañuelo un</u> |
| | 5 | | <u>paquete de pañuelos sin cobrarla. no? (entonces).</u> |
| T2 | 6 | NINS2: | <u>claro pero de ahí la chica la ve llorando y va y le ofrece el pañuelo</u> |
| | 7 | | <u>pero: más como haciendo está llorando que como para que le diera el</u> |
| | 8 | | <u>dinero y la chica busca el dinero en la cartera=</u> |
| T1 | 9 | NINS1: | =y- |
| T2 | 10 | NINS2: | -pero cuando lo encuentra la nena ya se fue= |

- T3 11 NINS1: =sí pero eso que ya como que no se lo no le da el pañuelo para vender
 12 sino para: consolarla=
 T2 13 NINS2: =para consolarla exacto ...

In excerpt 34 the speakers are describing the opening scene in the film. This interaction features participation in the form of latched responses and an interruption (i.e., in line 10), and a variety of mitigating devices (i.e., a discourse marker, an epistemic disclaimer, a tag question, a token agreement, the subjunctive mood) that are employed as the speakers attempt to reconcile their slightly distinct recollections of the film. For example, NINS1 states in lines 4 and 5 that the girl in the film did not charge money for the tissues. This utterance is mitigated by the tag question *no?*, which prompts an affirmative response from NINS2, a token agreement that is followed by NINS2's own interpretation of the scene.

Regarding the experience of cooperatively narrating the film, the NINS participants in this interaction commented:

"El hecho de que tienes que ir paso por paso da una forma específica a la narración. Es como así, en un orden prefijo" (NINS1).

"Como los dos vimos lo mismo, por ahí lo de la descripción de la película, era completar el ejercicio. Si no, hubiéramos hablado directamente de eso del rollo, habríamos sometido a la descripción tipo de secuencia. Pero hicimos, contamos toda la película porque el ejercicio tenía que hacerlo así" (NINS2).

Thus, the metalinguistic narratives suggest that the primary concern of the participants was to complete the narration. They appear to be focused on the task and are not sidetracked by language issues, which seem to dominate the mixed dyad interactions. To illustrate this difference, and the way that language status mediates the film narration protocol, the next excerpt is presented.

Excerpt 40 was generated by a NS-L2 dyad, and initially appeared in the qualitative analysis of the film narration. In the excerpt, a male NS (NS8) and a male ADV participant (L28) are narrating the opening scene in the film.

Excerpt 40

T1	1	L28:	pues empezó con la niña que estaba vendiendo pañuelos a: la gente en
	2		la en la playa=
T2	3	NS8:	= <u>la [playa?]</u>
T3	4	L28:	[no estaba] en la playa [(oh)]
T2	5	NS8:	[<u>pero playa?</u>] no: era una plaza
T3	6	L28:	había agua=
T2	7	NS8:	= <u>viste agua?</u> =
T3	8	L28:	=sí vi vi [el mar]
T2	9	NS8:	[no enton]ces era un: el malecón eso se llama malecón.
T3	10	L28:	malecón ...

In excerpt 40 the speakers are disagreeing about where the scene in the film takes place.

This argument interaction features NS8 stating his disagreement with L28 as a series of challenge questions (i.e., in lines 3, 5, and 7). In the original analysis of this interaction it was posited that

the NS employed the challenge questions as a means not only of indirectly disagreeing with his interlocutor, but also of attempting to elicit a particular response (*malecón*). The learner in this interaction does not employ any mitigation, but he does contribute latched and overlapped responses, indicting his engagement in the conversation.

The metalinguistic narratives provided by the participants help to illuminate their language and behavior. Regarding this interaction in particular, NS8 commented:

"Yo contribuí unas cosas que estaba dejando. Yo dejé que contara todo lo que tenía y yo agregué algunas cosas".

Similarly, L28 reflected:

"I was thinking about providing enough detail, but that was good because I guess he sort of filled it in. Although I do remember the one with the beach. I was pretty

sure it was on the water and he said it was like in a plaza and I guess we just kind of let that one, we just let it go".

These narratives indicate that NS8 was in fact trying to fill in information that he thought his interlocutor was leaving out. L28 perceived NS8's behavior as "helping" to fill in. Thus both participants were aware of the task, and of the need to narrate in detail, which prompted the NS to act as the helper and the L2 to rely on him. This helper role explains the questioning strategy employed by the NS, whose metalinguistic commentary reveals that he was attempting to coax certain information out of the L2 interlocutor. In other words, we could say that the use of challenge questions functions as a subtle pragmatic strategy that satisfies needs related to both the task and the language dynamic between the interlocutors.

Excerpt 40 above is exemplary of the competing concerns that were described by the institutional participants (NS, ADV, and INT) in their narratives regarding the film narration protocol. Participants in this protocol were attending to the task of narrating, which appears to be mediated by their language ability and an NS/L2 or helper/learner dynamic. The following excerpt was also drawn from the qualitative analysis of mitigation in the film narration protocol, and reflects how this dynamic appeared in the narrations of NS-INT dyads.

Excerpt 36 was produced by a dyad featuring a male NS (NS2) and a male INT (L22) as they narrated the opening scene in the film.

Excerpt 36

T1	1	L22:	<u>lo que pasa es que hay una chica () en la calle que. y le da a toda la</u>
	2		<u>gente en la calle (.) unos (.) papelitos-</u>
T2	3	NS2:	<u>-estaba vendiendo pañuelos=</u>
T3	4	L22:	<u>=sí pañuelos (.) pañuelos sí no está vendiendo la verdad es que está</u>
	5		<u>dando los pañuelos y da pañuelos a a una mujer que cree que la niña</u>
	6		<u>espera plata por los pañuelos.</u>

T2	7	NS2:	yo yo creo que estaba vendiendo los pañuelos porque el caballero al
	8		principio la niña va y pasa los pañuelos a un hombre y entonces le [da]
T3	9	L22:	[ok]
T2	10	NS2:	dinero=
T3	11	L22:	=al hombre sí (.) puede ser pero (.) a:h cuando ella le da los pañuelos a
a	12		la mujer ehm la niña se [va]
T2	13	NS2:	[sí]
T3	14	L22:	antes de que la mujer le pueda dar el la el
	15		dinero=
T2	16	NS2:	=sí ...

In excerpt 36 L22 states in lines 1 and 2 that the girl is giving papers to all the people. In line 3, NS2 directly disagrees, stating: *estaba vendiendo pañuelos*. In this exchange we see that NS2 is also providing a lexical item, *pañuelos*, to his interlocutor. Regarding this interaction, NS2 stated:

"Creo que lo que hice fue poner más una posición de profesor y estudiante, probablemente por el, por un aspecto de, no sé, preparación profesional o práctica profesional. Él ya sabía que yo era profesor y me imagino que lo estaba tomando de esta manera".

The INT participant described:

"While we were watching the film, I was thinking about how to narrate it, then it became like a language thing because if I had to narrate it in English, I would have had no problem, no doubt about myself. I realized as I was saying it that I forgot the word for napkin and so I was like explaining it and he gave me the word so I kept going. I don't know how it happened but it was kind of obvious that I was going to explain it and he was going to give the details" (L22).

Similar to the metalinguistic narratives about the interaction in excerpt 40 above, here in regards to excerpt 36 the speakers indicate a mutually-perceived helper/learner dynamic, or as NS2 describes it, a professor/student dynamic. Interestingly, the interaction involved not only the L2 learner needing a lexical item, but an argument- a disagreement about whether the girl was selling the tissues or giving them away. In their metalinguistic commentary, the participants commented on the language dynamic between them, but not on the disagreement. Thus here again we see that language

concerns are predominant, obscuring other aspects of the interaction, such as the task and the disagreement related to details of the film itself.

The excerpts and metalinguistic narratives examined in this section have illustrated the observation that there is a protocol or task effect that shaped the discourse of the film narrations, in addition to the language status of participants within the institutional setting mediating their interactions. The following section summarizes the key findings from this chapter.

6.4 Summary of analysis of metalinguistic analysis and triangulation

The analysis presented in this chapter has responded to two of the research questions in the study, focusing on the mitigation and participation that is manifested by the different speaker groups, and on the role of the institutional context in shaping the participants' argument discourse.

Regarding the first research question, which focused on the use of mitigation and participation and the extent to which the learners in the study are target-like, several key findings emerged that are related specifically to language status and the protocol: First, there is evidence that the appearance and use of mitigation in both protocols is mediated by the speaker's language status. For example, a NS giving concessions to an L2 or soliciting a particular response required the use of mitigation, but an L2 backing down, asking for help or for a word, did not. Second, learners were able to be engaged and participate in a conversational interaction without relying on mitigation, and this separation of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviors was most pronounced in the discourse generated in the film narration protocol. These findings, based on analysis and

triangulation of the metalinguistic narratives, support the results obtained in both the qualitative and quantitative analyses presented in previous chapters.

Regarding the role of the institutional context in shaping the interactions, the following key finding emerged: There was an observable difference between the NINS and the other participant groups, which supports the notion of an institutional effect. Namely, the NINS speakers focused on task and topic while the communication of the NS, ADV, and INT participants was mediated by their language status, which translates into institutionally-shaped roles. In the ranking conversation protocol there was a professor/learner dynamic, while in the film narration protocol a helper/learner dynamic emerged.

In sum, while the qualitative and quantitative analyses pointed to ways that learners were and were not target-like, the metalinguistic narratives helped explicate their language and behavior. Based on the emic, or the participants' own perspectives, we can see that learners had different needs and goals than native speakers, and their language use was shaped not only by their language ability but also by contextual factors surrounding their communication.

Chapter 7: Summary

This chapter summarizes the findings of the qualitative analysis presented in chapter 4, the quantitative analysis presented in chapter 5, and the triangulation presented in chapter 6.

7.1 Summary of the study

This dissertation set out to address the question: to what extent are language learners able to approximate native speakers in their argument discourse? Specifically, it focused on practices that are integral to a speaker's ability to negotiate argument interactions: linguistic mitigation and participation behaviors. Thus, the scope of the study was to examine how L2 Spanish learners and native Spanish speakers employed mitigation and participation in the context of spontaneous conversational arguments.

In order to address this question, conversational data were collected from 46 participants who represented four different language groups: intermediate-level (INT) and advanced-level L2 Spanish learners (ADV) who were enrolled in language courses at the university, native Spanish speaking students or teaching assistants who were also enrolled at the university (NS), and native Spanish speaking professionals from the local community (NINS). The INT, ADV, and NS participants were operationalized as institutional speakers, namely, they were recruited based on their membership in the university-institutional community, while the NINS participants were understood to be non-institutional speakers.

The participants worked in pairs to complete two quasi-experimental conversational protocols that were designed to elicit arguments: a prompted ranking

conversation (Dippold, 2007), and a cooperative film narration. The design featured different dyadic combinations, yielding conversations between L2 learners, between native speakers, and between natives and learners. Each participant in the study also completed a background questionnaire and a metalinguistic interview upon completion of the conversational protocols. This design allowed for the comparison of Spanish across speakers and conversational contexts.

The analysis of the data collected in the study was three-fold, and involved mixed methods. First, a conversation analytic approach was employed to analyze the mitigating devices and participation behaviors evidenced in the study was conducted, in order to investigate the ways that the different speakers deployed these practices in context (chapter 4, 5, and 6). Second, a statistical analysis was conducted of the tokens of mitigation and participation that were employed in the conversations produced in the study (chapter 5). This step allowed for the examination of variables that conditioned the presence and use of mitigation and participation in the argument interactions, and to capture tendencies that emerged between the different speaker groups. Finally, a qualitative analysis of the metalinguistic narratives produced in the interviews revealed several key themes, and these were triangulated with the results obtained in the qualitative and quantitative analyses of mitigation and participation (chapter 6). Distinct analytical approaches were employed with the goal of constructing a descriptive, comprehensive profile of L2 Spanish argument discourse that took into consideration the participants' perspectives as well as the researcher's interpretation of the data.

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent are L2 Spanish learners able to approximate native Spanish speakers in their use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors in the

context of conversational arguments produced in two protocols (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration)?

A. What mitigation devices and participation behaviors are characteristic of L2 Spanish learners (i.e., intermediates and advanced) and native Spanish speakers (i.e., institutional and non-institutional)?

2. What social or non-linguistic variables condition the presence and use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors in the argument interactions generated in two protocols (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration)?

- Language status (e.g., intermediate learner, advanced learner, native speaker, non-institutional native speaker)
- Protocol (e.g., film narration, ranking conversation)
- Interlocutor type (dyad) (e.g., learner to learner, learner to native, native to native)
- Number of years spent studying Spanish (learners' formal schooling)

3. In what ways are the participation behaviors and mitigating devices employed by L2 Spanish learners (i.e., intermediates and advanced) and native Spanish speakers (i.e., institutional and non-institutional) impacted by the university-institutional discursive setting?

Next, the findings of the study are summarized with regard to the research questions.

7.2 Summary of the findings

7.2.1 Mitigation devices and participation behaviors

In response to the first research question, which asked to what extent L2 Spanish learners are target-like, or native like, in their use of mitigation and participation, the results were mixed. The qualitative analysis in chapter 4 revealed that learners overall (i.e., both INT and ADV groups) were adept at employing several different types of mitigating devices to manage their argument interactions, and in that sense, they were said to approximate the native speaker target (i.e., NS and NINS participants). This finding emerged with regard to the use of parenthetical verbs, the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect, discourse markers, epistemic disclaimers, and token agreements. However, despite the learners' ability to approximate the target in the use of those

devices, the qualitative analysis also illuminated several important ways in which the mitigation manifested in learner arguments was distinct from that employed by NSs in the study. In particular, learners tended to rely heavily on several specific lexical items, such as the parenthetical verb *creo* and the discourse marker *bueno*, which resulted in an overuse of those devices. I described this phenomenon as redundant use. The redundant use of mitigating devices observed in the discourse produced by the learners was contrasted with a tendency by the NSs to employ a wide variety of mitigating devices, and to combine multiple mitigating devices, a pattern that was described as co-occurring mitigation.

With regard to the participation behaviors examined in the study, the qualitative analysis again yielded mixed results. The learners were found to be inconsistent in their manifestation of participation in argument interactions produced in both conversational protocols (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration). Specifically, in some argument interactions, learners exhibited frequent participation- latching and overlapping their turns- but in other interactions, there was an absence of participation. This behavior stood in contrast to that of the NSs in the study, who were found to employ participation behaviors consistently and frequently in all of their argument interactions.

It was noted throughout the qualitative analysis that, despite not always employing mitigation and participation with the same frequency and in the same way as the native speakers in the study, the learners, both INT and ADV, were able to engage in fully developed argument interactions. Learners demonstrated pragmatic awareness and understanding of this type of discourse and interaction by appropriately giving opinions, making claims and counter claims, and providing evidence and reasons. In other words,

non-target-like mitigation and participation did not result in communication breakdowns but rather demonstrated that learners were able to negotiate argument interactions without relying on mitigation and participation to the extent that native speakers did.

While the qualitative analysis of mitigation and participation identified broad similarities and differences between the learners and the native speakers in the study, the quantitative analysis presented in chapter 5 also addressed this question by revealing tendencies among the participant groups. Most notably, the quantitative analysis revealed a pattern or progression among the learners in their use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors overall, and with regard to certain types of mitigating devices, such as parenthetical verbs and the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect. In other words, the results of the quantitative analysis pointed toward distinct acquisitional profiles for the learner groups, and highlighted several areas in which there are differences between the INT and the ADV learners, where the latter group best approximates the NS target.

7.2.2 Variables that condition the presence and use of mitigation and participation behaviors

The second research question in the study was addressed by the quantitative analysis presented in chapter 5. In that analysis, the examination of raw frequencies and Chi-square tests yielded several noteworthy findings. First, regarding the use of mitigating devices, a statistically significant difference was revealed among the participant groups in their use of several different types of mitigating devices (i.e., parenthetical verbs, subjunctive mood and conditional aspect, tag questions, challenge questions). The results indicated that the use of these particular devices was conditioned

by the participant's language status (i.e., INT, ADV, or NS), such that the ADV group better approximated the NS target in most cases.

Further, and as mentioned previously in this section, the results of several Chi-square tests pointed toward a progression from the INT to the ADV to the NS level in the use of both mitigating devices and participation behaviors. In other words, ADV speakers resembled or approximated the NS group in the frequency of use of several devices. This progression emerged in the distribution of parenthetical verbs, the subjunctive mood and conditional aspect, in the redundant uses of a single mitigating device, in the co-occurring uses of mitigation, and in the way mitigation was deployed throughout the argument turn structure. With regard to participation behaviors, the progression was observed in the use of all three behaviors examined: latching, overlapping, and interruption, and in the way the behaviors were exhibited in the turn structure of the argument interactions.

The quantitative analysis also yielded evidence of a protocol or task effect. Namely, the use of mitigation and participation was conditioned by the protocol in which the discourse was produced, with all participants producing a majority of their mitigating devices and participation behaviors in the ranking conversation protocol, and disfavoring mitigation. That is, the film narration did not generate the same frequency of arguments, mitigation, or participation as the ranking conversation protocol.

Overall, in terms of target-like language use and behavior, the quantitative analysis expanded on the findings of the qualitative analysis by illuminating several specific ways in which learners could be said to approximate the native speaker target. It informed us that there are subtle differences between learners in the INT and ADV groups, and that the presence and use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors is conditioned by

the speaker's language status as well as the context or protocol in which that discourse is produced.

7.2.3 The role of the university-institutional context in shaping argument discourse

The third research question, which focused on the impact of the institutional context of the study, was addressed by the analysis of the narratives generated in the metalinguistic protocol. This analysis, presented in chapter 6, yielded several noteworthy findings. First, it revealed six key themes in the narratives, as the participants described what they were *doing* and how they approached the ranking conversations and film narrations. The themes were: the task, the role of the NS, evaluation of L2, the conversational topic, culture, and personality. A comparison of the prevalence of these themes in the narratives produced by each participant group pointed toward what I described as an institutional dynamic. The themes role of NS and evaluation of L2 were foregrounded in the narratives of the NS, INT, and ADV participants, and this foregrounding was thought to be informed by the participants' status as members of the university-institutional community. This institutional dynamic (e.g., Vickers, 2010) gave rise to different roles for NSs and learners in each of the protocols. In the ranking conversation protocol there were complimentary professor/learner roles, while in the film narration protocol there emerged somewhat distinct helper/learner roles. The NINS participants, in contrast, did not invoke language-based dynamics in their interactions, focusing instead on the topic of their conversation or the task at hand.

The analysis of the metalinguistic narratives also allowed for triangulation of the results of the different analytical approaches employed in the study. Regarding the learners and whether or not they were able to approximate native speakers in their use of

mitigation and participation in the context of argument interactions, based on the findings of the metalinguistic protocol, questions of pragmatic awareness and pragmatic ability appeared to be of secondary importance to the learners, who were focused on language tasks. In other words, their needs as learners outweighed their pragmatic concerns as participants in a communicative interaction. There was evidence that the learners were cognizant of the relational work that their interactions required- they desired to speak well, get their ideas across, and complete the tasks they were given- but their ability to translate socio-pragmatic awareness into pragma-linguistic ability was tempered by other factors (i.e., task, topic, institutional roles or dynamics). Learners in both the INT and ADV groups were constrained by these factors, with the pragmatic effect being most pronounced in the INT group. In other words, there was further evidence of distinct acquisitional profiles underlying how the learner groups use language and participate in conversational argument interactions.

Regarding the NSs, they were also impacted by the institutional dynamic. NSs had preconceived expectations of learners that they brought to the interactions, and it appeared to be effortless and natural for them to provide assistance. Thus, there was something of a pragmatic shift, or realignment, among native speakers that occurred in the institutionally based context where they interacted with learners. This shift was evident in comparing the interactions between NSs or NINSs (i.e., matched dyads) with that of interactions that involved learners (i.e. mixed dyads); in their interactions with learners, NSs became aware of the unequal language status and focused on how they could support the needs of the L2 learners.

This chapter has summarized the results of the study. The next chapter discusses several key implications of these findings in light of the literature.

Chapter 8: Discussion

8.1 Introduction

The objective of the present study was to examine the way that L2 Spanish learners employ mitigation and participation as they negotiate conversational arguments in the university-institutional setting. The study was guided by three research questions. The first research question focused on identifying the forms and functions of mitigating devices and participation behaviors in the study in order to determine the extent to which the L2 Spanish learners approximated the NS target. The second research question inquired about the social and linguistic variables that conditioned the presence and use of mitigation and participation in the study. The third research question explored the ways in which the institutional setting of the study shaped the use of these features in the argument interactions.

The discussion is organized as follows: First, key findings regarding the use of mitigation and participation are discussed in light of the literature on L2 argument discourse and developmental theories of SLA. Next, theoretical approaches to research on L2 pragmatics are discussed. The chapter concludes by briefly discussing implications for L2 teaching and learning.

8.2 Mitigation and participation in SLA

Within the field of L2 pragmatics, scholars have examined different types of discourse that require the use of mitigation and participation, similar to arguments, such as oppositions, rejections, and refusals (Beebe and Takahashi, 1989; Cordella, 1996; Dippold, 2007; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig 2000, 2001). These

studies have documented the types of mitigating devices and participation behaviors that emerge at different stages of L2 acquisition, such as parenthetical verbs and token agreements at the beginner level (e.g., Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig 2000, 2001), verbs in the conditional at the intermediate level (e.g., Beebe and Takahashi, 1989; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008), and challenge questions and behaviors of latching and overlapping at the advanced level (e.g., Cordella, 1996; Dippold, 2007). In responding to the first two research questions, the present study lends support for the findings obtained by previous research that has reported on the appearance of particular mitigating devices at different stages of L2 acquisition (i.e., intermediate and advanced). Findings in the present study generated by the qualitative and quantitative analyses confirm these stages of acquisition. Moreover, the study contributes a greater level of detail with regard to *how* the different mitigating devices were employed, and how their use varied between learner groups. The following chart illustrates these findings by depicting the key areas in which differences were observed between the INT group and the ADV group.

Chart 4: Differences observed between the INT and ADV group with regard to the use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors

	INT group	ADV group
Mitigating devices		
parenthetical verbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high frequency • limited use of forms: <i>creo</i>, <i>pienso</i> • inconsistent use of subject personal pronoun <i>yo</i> • redundant use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lower frequency that approximated NS target • variety of forms similarly employed by NS: <i>creo</i>, <i>pienso</i>, <i>parece</i>, <i>supongo</i>
subjunctive mood and conditional aspect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low frequency • subjunctive use triggered by syntax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher frequency that approximated NS target • subjunctive use triggered by syntax
epistemic disclaimers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high frequency that approximated NS target • included negation, uncertainty (e.g., <i>no sé</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low frequency • included negation, uncertainty (e.g., <i>no sé</i>)
hedges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • near null use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low frequency
Participation behaviors		
latches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high frequency • deployed throughout argument turn structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lower frequency that approximated NS target • deployed mostly in T2 of argument structure; distribution approximated NS target
overlapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low frequency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher frequency that approximated NS target

Overall, chart 4 depicts different patterns of use between the INT and the ADV group, with regard to mitigation and participation. The INT group can be characterized as relying on a restricted number of forms of mitigation, which tend to be employed at lower frequencies. The differences observed between the INT and the ADV group can be explained in two ways: One, by considering the types of devices that are employed and their equivalent structures in English, and two, by considering the possibility that high frequency mitigating devices function as developmental formulas (Bardovi-Harlig, 2006) that support the process of SLA.

The observation that can best characterize learners in the INT group pertains to their reliance on devices that are high frequency and have similar forms in both Spanish and English. For instance, English and Spanish share similar syntax with regard to the high frequency forms expressed in *creo*, *yo creo*, *no sé*, and *yo no sé*. Regarding these particular devices, Schneider (2007) and Urmson (1952) note that parenthetical verbs such as 'think'/'*pienso*' and 'believe'/'*creo*' are so frequent that they have been grammaticalized in many languages. In addition, Schneider (2007) posits that parenthetical verbs operate as *formulas* that encode similar pragmatic and discourse functions in several Romance languages as well as in English. He includes 'to know' and the construction 'I don't know' (i.e., *no sé*) in the group of verbs that fulfill the function of marking a statement of belief or opinion. Thus, it is plausible that these well-known, high frequency mitigating devices that were produced by the INT learners, especially parenthetical verbs and the phrase *no sé*, are the result of influence from English. Furthermore, these forms are not only high frequency in use but have similar functions in both the learners' L1 and L2, an observation which points to interlanguage.

Parenthetical verbs have been described as formulaic not only in L1 research (e.g., Schneider, 2007), but also in recent L2 pragmatics research, where they have been approached as chunks or developmental formulas that are part of the process of SLA (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2006, 2009; Taguchi, 2007). Bardovi-Harlig (2006, 2009) has described chunks as target-like formulas, and illustrated how the use of even simple constructions (e.g., 'yeah but') becomes more complex over time as learners develop greater grammatical and pragmatic proficiency. Following this line of reasoning, the INT and ADV learners of the present study can also be considered as evidencing grammatical

and pragmatic development. For instance, the qualitative and quantitative analyses yielded data that pointed to a reliance on parenthetical verbs in the INT group that decreased in the ADV group. Conversely, the use of the subjunctive and conditional increased at the ADV stage. More specifically, the learners were found to move from giving personal opinions, to having the ability to describe hypothetical situations, which are unknown and uncertain. Also at the ADV level, devices that can take a variety of lexical forms, such as hedges, began to emerge. In other words, and following Bardovi-Harlig (2006, 2009), the arguments of the ADV learners can be said to feature more exemplars of productive and creative language use, thereby indicating different profiles of not only grammatical, but also pragmatic acquisition.

Although the present work is cross-sectional and, as such, cannot directly account for the process of acquisition, it is plausible to suggest that socio-pragmatic knowledge also underlies the manifestation of participation behaviors that were observed in the study. As was noted in the qualitative and quantitative analyses and reflected in chart 4 above, the INT learners did employ latching and overlapping behaviors, although not in a target-like manner or at target-like frequencies. With regard to participation behaviors, the ADV learners better approximated the NSs in the study. Tannen (1984), and Watts (2003), posit that non-linguistic behaviors have the important socio-pragmatic function of assisting speakers in establishing a rapport and conveying considerateness of the interlocutor. Thus, the data suggest that the ADV learners possessed not only a more developed pragma-linguistic ability to mitigate, but also exhibited a socio-pragmatic understanding that allowed them to engage their interlocutor in a target-like manner.

8.3 Theoretical approaches to interlanguage pragmatics

The present study approached interlanguage pragmatics from the theoretical perspective of relational work (Locher and Watts, 2005; Watts, 2003), in order to focus on explicating how the context of interaction shapes communication. The study examined arguments in the very specific context of discourse produced in a university-institutional setting, which was the focus of the third research question. In response to the question, the analysis of metalinguistic narratives and the triangulation of data collected in the study revealed that the learners (i.e., INT and ADV) and NSs approached their participation in different ways, orienting toward the institutional roles ascribed to NSs and NNSs, or experts and novices, and these roles shaped their discourse.

Regarding the university-institutional setting, Vickers has found that NS-NNS and expert-novice dynamics emerge from differential *access* to forms of talk [original emphasis] (2010:136). In particular, she has noted that NSs have opportunities to "participate in the real world," whereas NNSs participate only as students. While the present study supports Vickers' findings, there is also evidence to suggest that the roles ascribed to speakers by the institutional context were more nuanced than expert-novice, and further, that expert-novice dynamics emerged differently according to the specific context and type of interaction.

There are several different paradigms that can be used to approach institutional talk and expert-novice roles with a greater degree of detail. One such paradigm is *status congruence*. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990, 1993) have proffered *status congruence* as a means of addressing the match between a speaker's status and the appropriateness of their communication given that status. For example, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993)

illustrate how in academic advising sessions, congruent acts for advisers include giving suggestions and recommendations, while for students they include giving history, requesting advice and further information. In the context of the present study, status congruence would suggest that mitigation is conditioned primarily by status issues and the power that is associated with different roles, which does indeed seem to be the case. However, given that mitigation is a negotiating tool that is used to smooth the interaction or achieve politic behavior (Briz, 2004; Watts, 2003), we would expect it to be employed similarly by all participants in arguments, but in the present study it was not. Thus, there appears to be a limit to the applicability of status congruence; it accurately describes the roles of different speakers in the university-institutional setting, but cannot account for how the use of mitigation in arguments correlates to those speaker roles.

An alternative paradigm that can be used to examine the discourse and roles in a particular institutional context is *problem solving talk* (abbreviated as PbS), articulated by Angouri (2012). Following Angouri, PbS describes a type of interaction in which arguments are not perceived as aggravated, unpleasant interactions, because they occur in the context of resolution-oriented, workplace communication. While PbS is a lens that has been used to view workplace interactions, it is plausible to suggest that it is an appropriate framework for reinterpreting the university-institutional argument discourse in the present study. In PbS, arguments are unmarked, or unremarkable, because they are a necessary part of a functional workplace environment. PbS is approached from the perspective of relational work and thus, following Angouri, the status of disagreements is entirely dependent on "whether participants will see an 'issue' as a problem and the way they tackle it" (2012:1569). Similar to the coworkers whose PbS was examined by

Angouri, the participants in the present study showed a preference for task rather than person-oriented argumentation. Disagreement was viewed as a normal part of the relational work demanded by the ranking conversations and film narrations completed in the university setting. Thus, when arguments arose in the study they did not escalate, and they did not require the all speakers to employ the same high frequency of mitigation. The learners in particular can be viewed as drawing on "local knowledge" of the context of interacting in Spanish in that setting (Angouri, 2012:1576). In broader terms, PbS would seem to suggest that L2 learners and native speakers have distinct approaches to their relational work, and thus their communication is informed by the task as well as questions of status congruence.

8.4 Pedagogical implications

The goal of this dissertation was to examine the use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors in order to determine the extent to which the argument discourse of L2 Spanish learners can be said to approximate that of native speakers of the target language. This is a question of interlanguage pragmatic development, an aspect of SLA that scholars have noted is frequently overlooked in formal L2 curricula (i.e., Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2006, 2008; Glaser, 2009; Rose, 1994). In response, researchers have experimented with explicit instruction of pragmatics at different stages of L2 learning, with mixed results (i.e., Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin, 2005; Cohen, 2008; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008). Pragmatics remains a challenge for L2 learners, not only because of a lack of explicit instruction, but also due to the complexity that is entailed by the numerous contextual factors that shape communication (e.g., setting, speaker roles and relationships, culture, language ability).

The findings of the present study regarding L2 argument discourse support the observations of other scholars, namely, that there are stages in the development of pragmatic ability, and that grammatical proficiency often outpaces pragmatic development (e.g., Kasper and Rose, 2002). These findings have implications for how instructors should approach and integrate explicit pragmatic instruction in the L2 classroom, especially in the area of argument discourse, and regarding the practices of mitigation and participation. Before discussing pedagogical implications, it should be recalled that the learner groups in the present study (i.e., INT and ADV) may not correspond to proficiency levels employed in other settings. Therefore, caution is advised in interpreting the findings with regard to proficiency levels.

The study was able to attest that the frequency of the use of mitigating devices and participation behaviors increases from the INT to the ADV learner level, and that learners move from dependence on formulaic, L1-influenced devices to more productive L2 use. This perspective points toward a need for pragmatic instruction that takes into account the grammatical and lexical ability of learners at different stages of acquisition. For learners at earlier stages of L2 learning, or at lower proficiency levels, instructors can encourage the development of a variety of communication strategies (e.g., Cohen, 1998; Dörnyei and Scott, 1997) that maximize the learners' ability to utilize their limited L2 knowledge in an appropriate manner.

A goal for instructors of learners at low to intermediate L2 proficiency should be the development of something akin to an *oral communication strategy inventory* (Nakatani, 2006). Following Nakatani (2006), such an inventory includes a variety of meaning-negotiation strategies, such as circumlocution, message reduction and alteration,

and supplementing talk with gestures and body language. The inventory can also feature pragmatic behaviors of participation that are important for learners to acquire, such as avoiding silence, signaling understanding with assent (e.g., 'yes' or 'OK') and asking questions for clarification. While the *oral communication strategy inventory* was developed for instruction of English as a second language, Nakatani's findings regarding the inventory are akin to those of the present study in revealing that behaviors of participation can and do facilitate communication, and therefore should be taught to learners in earlier phases of acquisition.

An oral communication strategy inventory for L2 Spanish should include behaviors of latching and overlapping as well as showing assent or acknowledgement with phrases like *sí* or *claro*. It should also emphasize tag questions (e.g., *no?*) as a turn-taking mechanism, and the uses of pauses as a preface. Altogether, these are relational strategies that support conversational interaction but do not require a high level of lexical development or grammatical proficiency. Pragmatic behaviors in Spanish can easily be incorporated into the L2 classroom by the instructor, who can and should model target-like interaction, and by providing materials that include conversational or dialogical interaction in Spanish.

For learners at intermediate to advanced stages of L2 learning, instructors should emphasize the development of a broad lexical repertoire that will facilitate communication in general, and particularly the expression of ideas, opinions, and the negotiation of disagreement. Félix-Brasdefer (2006) outlines a method for teaching refusals, a speech act that involves negation and mitigation, similar to arguments. Félix-Brasdefer suggests employing methods of CA to lead learners through activities that raise

awareness and encourage understanding of the different actions involved at both the discourse and the speech act level or utterance level. Given the focus of the present study on a type of discourse, arguments, which involves a variety of acts, the method articulated in Félix-Brasdefer (2006) could be adapted for instruction on argument discourse in the L2 Spanish classroom.

Several modifications can be suggested to adapt Félix-Brasdefer's (2006) method to instruction on arguments: First, the cross-cultural awareness segment can be expanded to include not only side-by-side comparison of arguments produced in both Spanish and English, but also a module that targets lexical development. As the present study has revealed, the ADV group was target-like not only in the frequency with which they employed mitigation and participation behaviors, but also in their demonstration of productive, creative language use. In pedagogical terms, this finding suggests that learners would benefit from explicit instruction on the *variety* of words and devices that they can employ to mitigate the argument interaction. Devices such as epistemic disclaimers and hedges are two examples where a larger lexical inventory would allow L2 Spanish learners to better approximate the NS target.

A second modification to the method articulated by Félix-Brasdefer (2006) is informed by Cohen (2008), who calls for not only making pragmatic instruction explicit, but accessible for learners. Instructors can make arguments more accessible by providing exemplars of argument discourse produced in Spanish. Keeping in mind that learners need to develop awareness of the lexical variety of mitigating devices that are employed in Spanish, instructors can utilize the internet as a resource to identify arguments that occur in a variety of situations, both real and spontaneous, as well as scripted. For

example, many news services offer programming online, providing access to political debates and local footage that contain arguments. Videos of all types of television programming are widely available, and talk shows, reality shows and dramas frequently contain argument interactions.

Finally, in addition to identifying resources that are highly accessible to students, instructors can develop their own materials for pragmatic instruction. For instance, before students are asked to do a role play or debate activity, they can be given examples of native speakers completing the same activity. The ranking conversation protocol employed in the present study, for example, can be used in this way as a tool for instruction. NSs of the target language can complete the protocol, and the ensuing conversation can be audio- or video-recorded and presented as an exemplar for L2 students who are preparing to complete the same activity. Instructors can develop a corpus of arguments in NS Spanish by asking a variety of speakers to complete the same protocol. Keeping in mind that the goal of pragmatic instruction is not just learning to emulate native speakers but achieving successful communication in L2 in general (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006), explicit instruction of arguments should emphasize the variety of ways that these interactions can be managed in the target language, and support the development of a broad repertoire or inventory of practices that learners can deploy in their interactions.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

As outlined in chapter 1, the present study aimed to examine the way that L2 Spanish learners employ mitigating devices and participation behaviors in the management of conversational arguments. In the study, argument discourse was collected using two quasi-experimental conversational protocols (i.e., ranking conversation and film narration), and was analyzed using a mixed methods approach. The study revealed several noteworthy patterns regarding the argument discourse produced by two different L2 learner groups (i.e., INT and ADV). For instance, learners in the INT group were able to engage in felicitous arguments despite employing a low frequency of mitigating devices and participation behaviors. The study also illustrated several ways in which learners in the ADV group approximated the NS target in their use of mitigation and participation. In light of the findings, this chapter presents limitations of the present study and directions for future research.

9.2 Limitations of the study

In this section several limitations related to the study design are briefly discussed.

The first limitation is concerned with the design of the film narration protocol. In the present study, the co-constructed film narration proved to be a productive means of eliciting arguments, supporting the findings of other scholars who have drawn on film narrations in the examination of pragmatic aspects of language use (e.g., Blackwell 2009, 2010; Tannen, 1984). However, given that the study design required participants to complete two ranking conversations but only one film narration, a much smaller

proportion of the argument discourse generated in the study came from the film narration. It would have been more compelling to incorporate a second film narration into the study design in order to contribute to the qualitative and quantitative analyses, which in turn would have bolstered the number of argument interactions and tokens of mitigation and participation available for analysis.

The second limitation is in regards to the categorization of learners in the study. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, two learner groups participated in the study with the goal of examining variation between the learner groups. Following Rothman (2009), and Montrul and Slabakova (2003), the INT and ADV categorizations were applied based on the participants' cumulative university coursework and length of time studying Spanish, in an effort to qualitatively describe their Spanish attainment. Those categories were not independently quantified and may not correspond to other labels, such as Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or Diplomas del Español como Lengua Extranjera (DELE) proficiency levels, or to categories applied in other studies. As Montrul and Slabakova (2003) illustrated with regard to L2 syntax, standardized proficiency levels often obscure important variations among learners. Nevertheless, the employment of a standardized proficiency measure would have allowed for greater generalizability across learner groups in different contexts.

Another type of variation, pragmatic variation, is the concern of the third limitation of the study. As noted in the review of literature, scholars have documented both inter- and intra-lingual variation in Spanish in both L1 and L2 contexts (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2010b). While the setting and the language status of the participants in the present work are examples of the macro-social variables identified by Schneider and Barron (2008),

their variational pragmatic approach was not the focus of the study. The present work, in focusing on generating a thorough description of mitigation and participation in L2 Spanish, did reveal situational pragmatic variation between the learner groups and between the learners and NSs. That variation, however, was framed in terms of institutional talk. The application of Schneider and Barron's (2008) model would provide for an alternate framework and would allow for further examination of situational variables at the micro-social level, such as power and distance.

The fourth limitation relates to the focus of the study on L1 and L2 Spanish. The present study, in focusing on argument discourse in L2 Spanish, did not include a protocol to elicit arguments produced in L1 English. Thus, the study compared the use of mitigation and participation in Spanish across L1 and L2 contexts, but it did not examine the way those practices were deployed in English, thus making it difficult to correlate or draw comparisons between mitigation produced in English and in Spanish. The inclusion of a protocol to generate an L1 English baseline would have provided data that could directly respond to concerns regarding the role that English (i.e., interlanguage) plays in influencing the argument discourse of the L2 Spanish learners in the study.

9.3 Future research

Two main directions for future research are discussed here, both of which stem from the findings as well as the limitations of the present study: Further examination of narrative ability in L2 Spanish, and L2 Spanish outside of the university-institutional context.

Regarding narrative ability, the present study can be a point of departure for future research with respect to the development of narrative discourse in L2. Research can

examine narrative ability in L2 Spanish in greater detail by varying the protocol type or examining data collected from more than one protocol. For example, and as mentioned in the previous section, the participants in the present study completed one film narration in which NSs were paired with L2 learners (i.e., mixed dyads). However, a future study can prompt participants to complete narrations in different dyadic pairings (i.e., similar to the design of the ranking conversation protocol), in order to explore differences that emerge due to a change in interlocutor.

Another direction for future research on narrative ability in L2 is to examine narratives elicited by different stimuli, in order to examine the relationship between the topic of discourse and the task in which it is produced. The analysis of metalinguistic narratives collected in the present study, presented in chapter six, revealed that L2 learners found the film narration protocol to be challenging in part because it required them to narrate on an unfamiliar topic, whereas the ranking conversation was perceived to be less difficult because it allowed participants to draw on their expert knowledge as students. From the participants' perspectives we can gather that the topic of the discourse shapes their perception of a task, and it is therefore plausible that the difference in perception also mediates the discourse they produce in the quasi-experimental setting. Thus, a future study can prompt participants to tell an authentic narrative, such as a recent or controversial event that took place in the university or the surrounding community (e.g., the outcome of the homecoming football game, the results of student elections, what happened during rush week or finals week), which would allow them to draw on their expert status as members of the community and familiarity with the events. The discourse generated by such a protocol, in conjunction with narratives produced in a film

narration, would allow for a comparative analysis that would increase our knowledge and understanding of the impact that different pragmatic variables have on co-constructed narrative discourse in L2.

A second trajectory for future research relates to pragmatic variation and the context of L2 use. The present study revealed several ways in which the setting shaped the discourse and the interactions of the participants who were members of the university-institutional community (i.e., INT, ADV, NS), and can be a point of departure for further research on Spanish use in institutional contexts. A future study can address whether arguments in Spanish exhibit similar characteristics when they occur in different professional, service-oriented settings such as a health clinic, a public library, or a community center. Learner language can be documented outside of the university setting when learners participate in service learning, community service, study abroad, or other pre-professional programs.

While the present work focused on differences between learner groups, and between learners and native speakers at the macro-social level, this approach can be modified in order to capture a greater degree of detail related to situational variation. Following Koike (2012), another trajectory for future research is to incorporate the notions of *frames* (cf., Tannen, 1993) and *schemata* (cf. Caffi and Janney, 1994) in addition to the framework of institutional talk. As Koike's study illustrated, variation can occur at multiple levels, and interlocutors can invoke a variety of pragmatic strategies within each frame and as an interaction progresses. Therefore, future research should undertake an analysis that captures subtle forms of pragmatic variation.

While variation across speaker types merits further attention, future research should also consider the possibility that different speakers in a particular context modify their language and behavior in order to accommodate each other (e.g., Beebe and Giles, 1984; Giles and Coupland, 1991). It is plausible that features of different varieties of Spanish (i.e., regional varieties and L2), such as pragmatic routines or politeness formulae, converge, creating something akin to dialect levelling (Hinskens, 1998). There have also been calls for researchers to operationalize features of U.S. Spanish in order to explore their diffusion in different bilingual and L2 populations (e.g., Beaudrie and Fairclough, 2012). Thus, future studies should not only consider the ways in which speakers differ from each other, but also the ways in which they modify their language and interactions in order to accommodate other speakers.

Keeping in mind that the goal of L2 learning is to actually participate in meaningful, real world interactions (Wagner, 2004), future research that focuses on L2 Spanish in context will not only contribute to our understanding of SLA, but will allow us to position learners as emergent bilinguals and participants in the real-life relational work that takes place in all communities.

9.4 Final remarks

Recent research has brought increased attention to the importance of argument discourse in different settings (e.g., Angouri, 2012; Czerwionka 2012, 2014), yet the number of empirical studies that examine this type of interaction in the context of second language learning remains limited (e.g., Dippold, 2007; Glaser, 2009; Flores-Ferrán and Lovejoy, 2015). This study advances our knowledge of interlanguage pragmatics research by examining argument discourse in L2 Spanish. By employing a mixed-methods

approach, the study shed light on the patterns and tendencies that emerged among two groups of L2 learners and native Spanish speakers, and as a result, has offered a contextualized analysis of argument discourse in learner language that illuminates important areas for future research in both the fields of SLA and pragmatics.

Appendix A: Transcription Conventions²¹

Sequencing

[Single left bracket indicates the point of overlap onset.
]	Single right bracket indicates the point of overlap completion.
=	Equal signs at the end of an utterance and beginning of another indicate latching, or no gap between utterances.
-	A dash indicates a cut-off.

Timed intervals

(0.0)	Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence by tenth of seconds, so (1.1) is a pause of one second and one-tenth of a second.
(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a tiny gap. More dots indicate a longer gap.

Speech

:	A colon indicates prolongation of the immediately prior sound.
?	A question mark indicates a rising intonation.
.	A period indicates a stopping fall in tone.
WORD	Upper case indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.

Transcriber's doubts and comments

()	Empty parentheses indicate the transcriber's inability to hear what was said. The length of the parenthesized space indicates the length of the untranscribed speech.
(())	Double parentheses contain transcriber's descriptions of non-speech sounds.

²¹ Cf. Jefferson (2004), ten Have (2007)

Appendix B: Background Questionnaire for L2 Spanish learners (INT and ADV)

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA QUESTIONNAIRE

Please take a moment to provide some background information about yourself. Please answer as completely as possible. Thanks again!!

1. How old are you? _____
2. What is your sex? male female
3. Where were you born? (city, state, country) _____
4. If you are not originally from the United States, how long have you lived here? _____
5. Where were your parents born? (city, state, country) _____
6. What is your native language? _____
7. If your native language is not English, how long have you studied or spoken English? _____
8. What language(s) do you speak at home, or with your friends and family?

9. What year are you in your studies at the university? (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) _____
10. What is your major and/or minor? _____
11. What Spanish class are you in now? _____
12. Did you study Spanish before taking it at this university? yes no
 - a. If yes, at what level? (middle/ high school/ other college, etc.)

 - b. For how many semesters or years? _____
13. Have you studied any foreign language(s) other than Spanish? yes no
 - a. If yes, what language(s)? _____
 - b. At what level? (middle/ high school/ college, etc.) _____
 - c. For how many semesters or years? _____

14. Do you currently have opportunities to use or practice Spanish outside of class?

Yes No

a. If yes, please describe how you use Spanish and with whom: _____

15. Have you spent any time in a Spanish-speaking country? Yes No

a. If yes, please indicate where, when, for how long, and what you did there (study, visit family, vacation, etc.): _____

16. Have you taken classes with instructors who were native Spanish speakers? Yes No

a. If yes, please indicate where the instructors were originally from (City and country of origin, or as much as you remember) _____

17. Have you taken the Spanish OPI? Yes No

a. If yes, what rating did you receive on the OPI? _____

18. Please indicate which Spanish courses you have taken at the university by circling the number of the course(s) below:

Language courses: 101 102 121 131 132 139 201

Culture and composition / conversation courses: 202 203 204 313

Introduction to literature and linguistics courses: 215 261

Advanced grammar courses: 325 326

Literature courses: 331 332 333 334

335 336 other _____

Linguistics courses: 362 363 364 365 366 367

Lab courses: 298 299 388 389

Other advanced courses (400 level):

19. How much practice have you had conversing in Spanish, in class or otherwise? Please briefly describe the practice that you have had, where you have practiced, and with whom.

20. For the next questions, please indicate an answer in one of the columns to the right:

	Not at all	A little	Fairly	Extremely
a. How comfortable do you feel conversing in Spanish?				
b. How comfortable do you feel conversing in Spanish with native Spanish speakers?				
c. How confident are you in your ability to make a point or state your opinion in Spanish?				
d. How comfortable do you feel disagreeing or arguing with someone in Spanish?				

Appendix C: Background questionnaire for native Spanish speaker participants (NS, NINS)

CUESTIONARIO BIOGRÁFICO

INSTRUCCIONES:

Por favor conteste las siguientes preguntas lo más sinceramente posible. En algún caso se le pide hacer un círculo en la respuesta apropiada, en otros, contestar con una breve respuesta.

INFORMACIÓN DEMOGRÁFICA

1. Edad _____ 2. Sexo _____
3. País y ciudad de nacimiento: _____
4. ¿Cuánto tiempo lleva viviendo en los Estados Unidos? _____
5. ¿A qué se dedica usted ahora? _____

ESTUDIOS

6. Primarios ____ Secundarios ____ Universitarios ____
7. ¿En qué país y ciudad realizó los estudios primarios y secundarios? _____
8. Años de estudios universitarios
(por favor haga un círculo: 1^{ro} 2do 3ro 4to 5to 6to Postgrado)
9. Especialidad: _____
10. ¿En qué país y ciudad realizó los estudios universitarios? _____

IDIOMAS

10. ¿Cuál considera su lengua materna (la que habla desde los 0-3 años de edad)?

11. ¿Qué lengua considera su segunda lengua? ¿Cuántos años lleva estudiando o hablando esta lengua? Si no tiene una segunda lengua, escriba: Ninguna.

12. Indique las lenguas que habla en las siguientes situaciones:

- a. En casa _____
- b. En el trabajo _____
- c. Con su familia y amigos _____

Appendix D: Prompts for Ranking Conversation Protocol (NS, INT, ADV participants)

Tema: La violencia en la universidad

¿Cómo puede la universidad evitar problemas de violencia?

- _____ La universidad debe tener más policías.
- _____ La universidad debe prohibir eventos públicos.
- _____ La universidad debe prohibir el consumo de alcohol en el campus universitario.
- _____ Los estudiantes deben firmar un contrato de buen comportamiento.
- _____

Instrucciones

- Por favor, escribe tu propia sugerencia en la línea provista arriba.
- Enumera las sugerencias de 1 a 5 indicando el orden de prioridad:
 - 1 es la solución más adecuada.
 - 2 es una solución buena, pero no la más adecuada.
 - 3 es una solución posible.
 - 4 no es una buena solución.
 - 5 es imposible. No es una solución adecuada para resolver el problema.
- Discute con tu compañero por qué organizaste las soluciones en esa orden de prioridades. Presenta tu opinión de cada solución y las razones por las cuales te parece que una opción es mejor que otra. Asegúrate de que tu punto de vista se haya presentado y esté claro. El propósito de esta discusión es decidir, entre los dos, cuál es el mejor plan de acción. Tienen que llegar a un acuerdo y determinar cómo debe la universidad responder al problema.

Tema: Las marchas estudiantiles

¿Debe la administración de la universidad prestar atención a las marchas estudiantiles?

_____ Las marchas no son importantes y no tienen ningún impacto; la universidad debe ignorarlas.

_____ Las marchas constituyen un disturbio y la universidad debe prohibirlas.

_____ La universidad debe excusar a los estudiantes que no asisten sus clases porque quieren marchar.

_____ La universidad debe cancelar clases para que todo el mundo participe en las marchas.

Instrucciones

- Por favor, escribe tu propia sugerencia en la línea provista arriba.

- Enumera las sugerencias de 1 a 5 indicando el orden de prioridad:

1 es la solución más adecuada.

2 es una solución buena, pero no la más adecuada.

3 es una solución posible.

4 no es una buena solución.

5 es imposible. No es una solución adecuada para resolver el problema.

- Discute con tu compañero por qué organizaste las soluciones en ese orden de prioridades. Presenta tu opinión de cada solución y las razones por las cuales te parece que una opción es mejor que otra. Asegúrate de que tu punto de vista se haya presentado y esté claro. El propósito de esta discusión es decidir, entre los dos, cuál es el mejor plan de acción. Tienen que llegar a un acuerdo y determinar cómo debe la universidad responder al problema.

Tema: El plagio

¿Cómo debe la administración de la universidad responder en casos de plagio?

- _____ El plagio es ilegal y la universidad debe echar al estudiante que lo haga.
 - _____ La administración tiene que entender que el plagio es casi inevitable debido a la disponibilidad de información en internet y debe considerar la severidad de cada caso antes de castigar al estudiante.
 - _____ La universidad debe perdonar casos de plagio porque no es una ofensa muy seria.
 - _____ La universidad debe organizar un curso que enseñe a los estudiantes estrategias para evitar el plagio en sus trabajos.
-

Instrucciones

- Por favor, escribe tu propia sugerencia en la línea provista arriba.
- Enumera las sugerencias de 1 a 5 indicando el orden de prioridad:
 - 1 es la solución más adecuada.
 - 2 es una solución buena, pero no la más adecuada.
 - 3 es una solución posible.
 - 4 no es una buena solución.
 - 5 es imposible. No es una solución adecuada para resolver el problema.
- Discute con tu compañero por qué organizaste las soluciones en esa orden de prioridades. Presenta tu opinión de cada solución y las razones por las cuales te parece que una opción es mejor que otra. Asegúrate de que tu punto de vista se haya presentado y esté claro. El propósito de esta discusión es decidir, entre los dos, cuál es el mejor plan de acción. Tienen que llegar a un acuerdo y determinar cómo debe la universidad responder al problema.

Tema: El control de la comida y la prevención de obesidad en la universidad

¿Cómo puede la universidad prevenir la obesidad y ayudar a los estudiantes a comer en forma sana y saludable?

- _____ La universidad debe cambiar los "Grease Trucks" por otra opción menos grasosa.
 - _____ La universidad debe mandar que cada vendedor en los centros estudiantiles ponga el número de calorías y grasas junto a los ítemes en la carta.
 - _____ La universidad debe mandar que cada tienda y restaurante venda frutas y verduras frescas.
 - _____ La universidad no debe intervenir para prevenir la obesidad. Cada estudiante tiene que decidir por sí mismo lo que quiere comer.
-

Instrucciones

- Por favor, escribe tu propia sugerencia en la línea provista arriba.
- Enumera las sugerencias de 1 a 5 indicando el orden de prioridad:
 - 1 es la solución más adecuada.
 - 2 es una solución buena, pero no la más adecuada.
 - 3 es una solución posible.
 - 4 no es una buena solución.
 - 5 es imposible. No es una solución adecuada para resolver el problema.
- Discute con tu compañero por qué organizaste las soluciones en esa orden de prioridades. Presenta tu opinión de cada solución y las razones por las cuales te parece que una opción es mejor que otra. Asegúrate de que tu punto de vista se haya presentado y esté claro. El propósito de esta discusión es decidir, entre los dos, cuál es el mejor plan de acción. Tienen que llegar a un acuerdo y determinar cómo debe la universidad responder al problema.

Tema: El transporte público en la universidad

¿Cómo puede la universidad mejorar el sistema de transporte público?

- _____ La universidad debe reinstituir la línea de bus entre College Ave. y Highland Park.
 - _____ La universidad necesita más buses para llegar a Livingston y Busch.
 - _____ Los buses deben ir con más frecuencia durante los fines de semana y el verano.
 - _____ El sistema de transporte público de la universidad funciona bien ahora. No hace falta mejorarlo.
-

Instrucciones

- Por favor, escribe tu propia sugerencia en la línea provista arriba.
- Enumera las sugerencias de 1 a 5 indicando el orden de prioridad:
 - 1 es la solución más adecuada.
 - 2 es una solución buena, pero no la más adecuada.
 - 3 es una solución posible.
 - 4 no es una buena solución.
 - 5 es imposible. No es una solución adecuada para resolver el problema.
- Discute con tu compañero por qué organizaste las soluciones en esa orden de prioridades. Presenta tu opinión de cada solución y las razones por las cuales te parece que una opción es mejor que otra. Asegúrate de que tu punto de vista se haya presentado y esté claro. El propósito de esta discusión es decidir, entre los dos, cuál es el mejor plan de acción. Tienen que llegar a un acuerdo y determinar cómo debe la universidad responder al problema.

Tema: Consejos para estudiantes en su primer año universitario

¿Qué necesitan hacer los estudiantes de primer año para tener éxito en la universidad?

_____ Es importante estudiar mucho. No deben perder tiempo saliendo de noche e yendo a muchas fiestas.

_____ Deben conocer bien la universidad y saber dónde están los lugares más importantes como las bibliotecas, los comedores y los salones de computadoras.

_____ Es importante participar en clubes, deportes y actividades sociales, por que es aburrido sólo estudiar.

_____ Es necesario aprender el horario de clases y de los buses para poder llegar a tiempo.

Instrucciones

- Por favor, escribe tu propia sugerencia en la línea provista arriba.

- Enumera las sugerencias de 1 a 5 indicando el orden de prioridad:

1 es la solución más adecuada.

2 es una solución buena, pero no la más adecuada.

3 es una solución posible.

4 no es una buena solución.

5 es imposible. No es una solución adecuada para resolver el problema.

- Discute con tu compañero por qué organizaste las soluciones en esa orden de prioridades. Presenta tu opinión de cada solución y las razones por las cuales te parece que una opción es mejor que otra. Asegúrate de que tu punto de vista se haya presentado y esté claro. El propósito de esta discusión es decidir, entre los dos, cuál es el mejor plan de acción. Tienen que llegar a un acuerdo y determinar cómo debe la universidad responder al problema.

Appendix E: Prompts for Ranking Conversation Protocol (NINS participants)

Tema: La disponibilidad de comida saludable y la prevención de obesidad

¿Cómo se puede ayudar a la gente de Nueva Jersey a comer en forma sana y saludable y así prevenir la obesidad?

_____ Debe haber una ley que restrinja el número de restaurantes que venden comida chatarra o "fast food" en cada comunidad.

_____ Se debe mandar que cada vendedor de comidas ponga el número de calorías y grasas junto a las comidas en la carta.

_____ Se debe mandar que cada tienda y restaurante venda frutas y verduras frescas además de los productos que representan su entrada principal.

_____ No debe haber ninguna intervención para prevenir la obesidad. Cada individuo tiene la responsabilidad de decidir qué quiere comer.

Instrucciones

- Por favor, escriba su propia sugerencia en la línea provista arriba.

- Enumere las sugerencias de 1 a 5, indicando el orden de prioridad:

1 es la solución más adecuada.

2 es una solución buena, pero no la más adecuada.

3 es una solución posible.

4 no es una buena solución.

5 es imposible. No es una solución adecuada para resolver el problema.

- Discuta con el compañero por qué usted organizó las soluciones en esa orden de prioridades. Presente su opinión de cada solución y las razones por las cuales le parece que una opción es mejor que otra. Asegúrese de que su punto de vista se haya presentado y esté claro. El propósito de esta discusión es decidir, entre los dos, cuál es el mejor plan de acción.

Tema: El transporte público en Nueva Jersey

¿Cómo se puede mejorar el sistema de transporte público de New Jersey Transit?

_____ Se debe expandir la red de líneas de trenes para incluir paradas en nuevos lugares como Piscataway o East Brunswick.

_____ Se debe instituir una línea de tren circular que conecte otras líneas para que se pueda ir directamente a destinos que no sean Newark o Nueva York. Por ejemplo, para ir a la playa sin conectar en Newark.

_____ Los buses deben ir con más frecuencia durante los fines de semana.

_____ No hace falta mejorar el servicio de New Jersey Transit.

Instrucciones

- Por favor, escriba su propia sugerencia en la línea provista arriba.

- Enumere las sugerencias de 1 a 5, indicando el orden de prioridad:

1 es la solución más adecuada.

2 es una solución buena, pero no la más adecuada.

3 es una solución posible.

4 no es una buena solución.

5 es imposible. No es una solución adecuada para resolver el problema.

- Discuta con el compañero por qué usted organizó las soluciones en esa orden de prioridades. Presente su opinión de cada solución y las razones por las cuales le parece que una opción es mejor que otra. Asegúrese de que su punto de vista se haya presentado y esté claro. El propósito de esta discusión es decidir, entre los dos, cuál es el mejor plan de acción.

Tema: Consejos para inmigrantes recién llegados a Nueva Jersey

¿Qué es lo que necesita saber la gente recién llegada a Nueva Jersey para que tenga la transición más fácil posible?

_____ Es importante tener contactos aquí (o amigos o familiares) para que puedan ayudar en el proceso de buscar una casa o un trabajo.

_____ Hay que venir con mucho dinero porque la vida en NJ es costoso (la renta, el transporte y la comida).

_____ Es importante tener un buen conocimiento del inglés antes de llegar porque no se ofrecen todos los servicios a la gente que no hable este idioma.

_____ Es mejor intentar vivir cerca de Nueva York porque allí hay más gente, más trabajo, mejor servicio de transporte, etcétera.

Instrucciones

- Por favor, escriba su propia sugerencia en la línea provista arriba.

- Enumere las sugerencias de 1 a 5, indicando el orden de prioridad:

1 es la solución más adecuada.

2 es una solución buena, pero no la más adecuada.

3 es una solución posible.

4 no es una buena solución.

5 es imposible. No es una solución adecuada para resolver el problema.

- Discuta con el compañero por qué usted organizó las soluciones en esa orden de prioridades. Presente su opinión de cada solución y las razones por las cuales le parece que una opción es mejor que otra. Asegúrese de que su punto de vista se haya presentado y esté claro. El propósito de esta discusión es decidir, entre los dos, cuál es el mejor plan de acción.

Appendix F: Post-protocol metalinguistic interview questions for L2 Spanish learners (INT, ADV participants)

You just completed two different conversations about (topic) and (topic) . You also watched a short film and worked cooperatively with another person to narrate it.

1. How would you describe the interactions you just had (ranking conversations and film narration)?
2. Why did you choose (topics) for the ranking conversations?
3. Who started each conversation and the narration and why that person?
4. How would you describe the way your partners interacted with you?
5. What was the most difficult aspect of completing the protocols?
6. In what ways would you have spoken or acted differently if you had completed the protocols with people that you already knew?
7. In what ways would you have spoken or acted differently if you had completed the protocols in English?

Appendix G: Post-protocol metalinguistic interview questions for native Spanish-speakers (NS, NINS participants)

Usted acaba de tener una conversación en la cual discutió con otra persona el tema de _____. También vio un corto y lo narró cooperativamente con la misma persona.

1. ¿Cómo evaluaría usted las interacciones que tuvo con la persona con quien habló ahora mismo (la conversación y la narración cooperativa)?
2. ¿Por qué eligieron (tema) (para hacer el ranking)?
3. ¿Quién inició la conversación y la narración y por qué cree que fue esta persona?
4. ¿Cómo describiría la manera en que la otra persona interactuó con usted?
5. ¿Cuál fue el reto más grande durante las interacciones que acaba de tener?
6. ¿Cómo cree que hubieran sucedido las interacciones si hubiera conocido la persona?
7. ¿Cree que hablaría de una manera diferente si la persona fuera de (país) como usted?

Appendix H: Translations of excerpts and examples generated in ranking conversation and film narration protocols

Excerpt 1 (p.66)

T1 1 NS17: for four I put ah the university should change the food trucks for
2 another less fatty option=
T2 3 NS18: =aha=
T1 4 NS17: =because well al[so]
T2 5 NS18: [that is] it's not a good solution for you.
T1 6 NS17: it's not a solution either=
T2 7 NS18: =aha=
T1 8 NS17: =because (.) nor does it seem to me that that's going to solve much.. in
9 the food trucks they don't sell either only fatty food because
10 well I have bought there I don't know salads and things (.) they don't
11 only sell fatty food. it doesn't seem to me to be an option.

Excerpt 2 (p.67, p.127)

T1 1 NINS3: a::nd three to have a good knowledge of English.
T2 2 NINS4: I put. eh better to live close to New York=
T1 3 NINS3: =ah! does it seem like that to you? doesn't it seem like that to you? I
4 was unsure does it seem to you more
important to live close to New York?
T2 5 NINS4: (0.7) really I don't believe that it i:s=
T3 6 NINS3: =it's more [expensive too]
T2 7 NINS4: [now that I read it] that is I don't believe that it is that it will
make
8 life easier (.) simply that it will make life bet more
9 interesting then ...

Excerpt 3 (p.68)

T1 1 NS17: my number one is the university should teach the students
2 how to avoid plagiarism (.) but also in the case that plagiarism is
committed
3 they should punish but not so severely becau:se let's say the number
4 five (.) is the first there is the first I chose it as number five
5 because the one that says that plagiarism is illegal and the university
should expel the
6 student seems to me like ve:ry extreme.
T2 7 L217: yes. but to me I believe that um that the university should excuse cases
of
8 plagiarism because it's not a very serious offense I believe it's a little
yes the
9 first is extreme ...

Excerpt 4 (p.69)

T2 1 NS13: so I believe that the bus is very good=

T3 2 L213: =yes=
 T2 3 NS13: =really good but it would be good different [alternatives]
 T3 4 L213: [mhm] (.) I believe
 5 that the the
 buses are the most economical=
 T2 6 NS13: =hmm=
 T3 7 L213: =for the university and for all the students (.) but I believe that this the
 8 transportation system doesn't work well ...

Excerpt 5 (p.70)

T2 1 L216: uh I I like also I I put for ah for number one the
 2 university should demand that every restaurant sell fresh fruits and
 3 vegetables=
 T1 4 L215: =yes
 T2 5 L216: uh I think that it's something a little bit expensive and it's not something
 that every
 6 vend every store can do but I think that um it's not like a
 7 law=
 T1 8 L215: =mhm=
 T2 9 L216: =it's like if you want to be part of our community in the university
 10 you have to be a store that ah does a does this.
 T3 11 L215: so you think that i:s your opinion?
 T2 12 L216: [mhm]
 T3 13 L215: [to de]cide? um what they want to eat?
 T2 14 L216: what? I'm sorry [(laughs)]
 T3 15 L215: [um] you think that (.) you think that it's the right of
 16 the student?=
 T2 17 L216: =[to]
 T3 18 L215: [to] decide what they want to eat or?
 T2 19 L216: yeah yeah I think that um (.) you can't ah force ...

Excerpt 6 (p.71, p.136)

T1 1 L7: I believe that the the most important thing is to know the university
 2 well and where are the most important places because every day
 someone
 3 asks me where is this building or where is this computer center or other
 4 thing and when I know the answer it makes me feel good and (you) can
 5 make friends when you talk to a new person who needs help and it's
 6 part of the university experience.
 T2 7 L6: yes I believe that this is very very important also but (I) believe also
 8 that this goes with time when you go to classes and you go to do things
 9 and you're going to learn where the computer labs are and where the
 10 most important places are where one can eat and I believe that this is
 11 very important but it also goes with time (.) um I BELIEVE the most
 12 important thing is to be very very comfortable with your place make
 friends and
 13 establish a balance between studies and social life.

Excerpt 7 (p.76)

- T1 1 NS20: my three is that the university should not intervene to prevent obesity
2 that every student has to decide for himself [what]
T2 3 NS19: [mhm]
T1 4 NS20: he wants to eat.
T2 5 NS19: mhm.
T1 6 NS20: I don't know (.) I believe that everyone's freedom enters evidently (.)
that is
7 I think that it's better and I'm not exactly very thin [but]
T2 8 NS19: [(laughs)]
T1 9 NS20: but I believe that I believe that it's best to allow that=
T2 10 NS19: =yes of course [yes yes yes]
T1 11 NS20: [a little] XXX.
T2 12 NS19: yes yes yes (.) yes yes e::h that's my four=
T3 13 NS20: =that's your four=
T2 14 NS19: =yes (.) that the university shou:ldn't eh shouldn't intervene. ehm (.) yes
well
15 I put it as more or less leaning toward a bad option (.) almost almost
16 five=
T3 17 NS20: =mm=
T2 18 NS19: =because I believe that (.) mm yes the university should take part but in
19 the background create an obvious program so that one can make the
decision that one
20 NS20: wants but (0.7) that they provide me information that they lower the
21 prices and in function of that I choose well. eh bu:t I believe I I believe
22 that they should take so:me position some within this like game.

Excerpt 8 (p.77)

- T3 1 NINS3: what happens is that it also depends on the conditions of emigration
right? also
2 that because well i::f you come and you have a job that is good a:nd
you can
3 let's say pay a rent .. expensive not too [cheap]
T2 4 NINS4: [of course yes]
T3 5 NINS3: I'm not going to
say a place
6 better if XX with XX in front I don't know if it's better=
T2 7 NINS4: =of course yes the circumstances are totally subjective that is it
8 depends lamentably we see it all of us the money is e:h
9 [it's a key aspect]
T3 10 NINS3: [it's the most impor-] the most key=
T2 11 NINS4: =so the money makes it that i:f .. that i:f you don't have enough you're
not going
12 to be able to e:h well also the time right? that you have available to
13 travel but well in any case yes it's something very subjective and
doesn't
14 make life be I don't think it makes life easier but more
15 interesting ...

Excerpt 9 (p.78)

- T1 1 L216: I: ah put?=
 T2 2 NS16: =mhm=
 T1 3 L216: =for my first option ah the university should that promote a culture
 4 of political activism. because it's very this is that is something that I
 don't 5 (.) um I don't see as separate from education it's part of of being an
 adult 6 and a citizen and things like that. um (.) yeah I can understand that the
 7 university doesn't want ah to have some ah some thing to do with
 8 groups that ah how do you say? like ah acti: grou:ps tha:t want to
 9 protest and
 something like that=
 T2 10 NS16: =like activists all the time=
 T1 11 L216: =yeah yeah. bu:t if the university ah had a ah a view more than
 12 ahm like (.) if they wanted to work with the students more (.) ah
 13 it would promote the culture more easily and also there wouldn't be
 very
 14 tension between the students and the administration. you understand
 me?

Excerpt 10 (p.79)

- T1 1 L28: I put they should institute other options aside from the buses like a
 2 tram or public bikes with bike lanes so so that there exists a
 3 alter alternative to the buses.
 T2 4 L25: this is one or five? for you=
 T1 5 L28: =ah I put that as number one ...

Excerpt 11 (p.79)

- T1 1 L23: and the last I indicated it's important to study a lot (.) they shouldn't
 waste
 2 time going out at night the the the. um. eh what do they say? it's they
 shouldn't
 3 study a lot (.) they should study uh efficiently?=
 T2 4 L24: =yes=
 T1 5 L23: =does that make sense?=
 T2 6 L24: =[yes]
 T1 7 L23: [so] study harder not smarter or not- [what does it say?]
 T2 8 L24: [study smart][er]
 T1 9 L23: [what] do they
 say?
 10 (laughs)
 T2 11 L24: =uh I don't know
 T1 12 L23: something like that=
 T2 13 L24: =yes=
 T1 14 L23: =so for to say it's important to study a lot mm (.) I wouldn't say that.

Example 1 (p. 81): It's not that they don't know McDonald's isn't healthy.

Example 2 (p. 81): I don't think it is possible to control the people one hundred percent.

Example 3 (p. 81): The students have to be in conflict (.) yes (.) in order for the march to be successful.

Excerpt 12 (p.863 p.129)

T2	1	NS18:	I had put it that it's a very adequate solution=
T1	2	NS17:	=mhm=
T2	3	NS18:	=although.. in my personal case it never works.
T1	4	NS17:	[(laughs)]
T2	5	NS18:	[because] when I go to the supermarket I don't even look at the
	6		calories the fat and also <u>that is</u> in my case personally it wouldn't
	7		work it's not a solution. I believe that yes it could work for
	8		other people and it can be an adequate solution but in my case.
T3	9	NS17:	no=
T2	10	NS18:	=I never look at it that's the truth-
T3	11	NS17:-	<u>well</u> I after taking some nutrition classes because I am
	12		right now I am taking a class this semester in nutrition=
T2	13	NS18:	=mhm=
T3	14	NS17:	=a:nd <u>I don't know</u> (.) like where the thought strikes me to say OK
	15		it's important to know how many saturated fats I'm eating daily
	16		(.) <u>I don't know</u> (.) like try to find products that don't have so much
	17		fat and (.) <u>well</u> that's what worries me the most.

Excerpt 13 (p.84)

T1	1	NS6:	on the three I put what I personally think <u>that is</u>
	2		that it would be good that the university offer more options to the
	3		commuters (.) <u>that is to say</u> that in some way the university try
	4		talking with New Jersey Transit or talking with uh the bus systems
	5		systems like Coach USA that offer more options to
	6		people who come from other parts of New Jersey right?
	7		Edison etcetera because it's a university where there are a lot of
	8		commuters.
T2	9	NS7:	yes yes quite (.)
T1	10	NS6:	really (0.7) and sometimes <u>well</u> it's a little difficult to question this
	11		because it requires that the university talk with other institutions and
	12		that is very difficult=
T2	13	NS7:	=yes and from there (.) <u>that is</u> (.) it's a city very how do you say ve:ry
	14		<u>well</u>
	15		there are a lot of people and it would be impossible <u>that is</u> like they
	16		want to change
	17		how a city functions just for the well being of a
	18		school so even though a very [big school]
T1	17	NS6:	[immense]
T2	18	NS7:	so I don't
	19		believe that that would function that trying to speak with the [city and]
T1	20	NS6:	[mm:]

T2 21 NS7: other institutions to (.) be able to change the situation.
 T3 22 NS6: m.: well well well what do you have there for three?

Excerpt 14 (p.86)

T2 1 NS4: I let's say of all of these options I don't like any of them much
 2 let's say.
 T3 3 NS3: mm and=
 T2 4 NS4: =and like but I included one or for first they should study a lot because
 5 if not they're not going to have success obviously they already have
 6 recreational activities in other areas also (.) that is to compensate right?

Excerpt 15 (p.87)

T1 1 L28: it says here also alcohol consumption (.)
 T2 2 NS8: mhm (.) I put that as number four (laughs) [the one the one of]
 T1 3 L28: [()]
 T2 4 NS8: public events I put as five and the one about alcohol as four
 5 (.) but I don't believe that that that is (.) you're este: you're not attacking
 the
 6 problem you're attacking very established things (.) [that is]
 T3 7 L28: [but]
 T2 8 NS8: even still if you prohibit the consumption of alcohol on campus (.) that
 9 by the way happens legally very little but because the majority of
 10 students are este: they a:re don't don't have anything to drink=
 T3 11 L28: =yes but they're going to drink-
 T2 12 NS8: -exactly=
 T3 13 L28: =nevertheless-
 T2 14 NS8: -but if you prohibit still they're going to continue to drink (.) that is
 it doesn't
 15 matter to them one bit if it's prohibited or not (.) in fact it's already
 16 prohibited (.) whoever is younger than twenty one can't drink
 17 but (.) but still they drink (.) either you make a new law and they're
 going to do
 18 that they're going to keep drinking.
 T3 19 L28: (0.9) I put the one about alcohol as number two.
 T2 20 NS8: mhm.
 T3 21 L28: but (..) I don't know (..) I believe that the the alcohol is a very big factor
 22 in the problem but to prohibit it (.) is not necessarily the
 23 way to prevent violence.

Excerpt 16 (p.88)

T1 1 L221: well e:h for the first I put a one because well it seems to me
 2 a solu a more adequate solution but not not maybe (.) maybe
 3 it's not the best=
 4 NS21: =mhm=
 T1 5 L221: =but more adequate than the others (laughs).
 6 NS21: yes.
 T1 7 L221: eh and also the other one eh I have the university should disseminate
 8 information about alcoholism and violence=

- 9 NS21: =OK=
 T1 10 L221: =to edu educate yes the students. and others (.) well to me
 11 it seems that they weren't going to function becau:se well the students
 are going
 12 to drink=
 13 NS21: =mhm=
 T1 14 L221: =they're going to drink whatever (.) well and eh a: a paper that they
 have
 15 to sign at the beginning of the year they're not going to remember it=
 16 NS21: =mhm=
 T1 17 L221: =well it's not going to have well they're not going to pay attention eh (.)
 and
 18 prohibiting public events it seems to me tha:t well they're fun (.)
 19 why prohibit them?=
 20 NS21: =mhm=
 T1 21 L221: what do you think?
 T2 22 NS21: well I put for the first one that the university should try to
 23 prevent violence by educating the students about the mat[ter]
 T3 24 L221: [ex]actly=
 T2 25 NS21: =like XXX with the problems=
 T3 26 L221: =mhm=
 T2 27 NS21: =and with the differences that I think that tha:t it's like in general
 28 with violence like the fact that people don't accept
 29 differences (.) that's what I put first.

Excerpt 17 (p.90, p.131)

- T1 1 NS20: I wrote that the university should establish a system of
 2 fines for cases of plagiarism=
 3 L220: =how do you say fines?=
 4 NS20: =u:m fines in English?=
 5 L220: =yes=
 6 NS20: =like fines=
 7 L220: =yeah OK yes
 T1 8 NS20: uh well then for example if you commit plagiarism e::h they meet
 9 uh a:n an investigative board and they tell you we:ll what you have
 10 done is plagiarism [and]
 11 L220: [yes]
 T1 12 NS20: the case is very bad it's very serious so
 13 you have to pay fifteen hundred dollars.
 T2 14 L220: oh I agree [XXX]
 T1 15 NS20: [something] like that right?
 T2 16 L220: we:ll a lot of students don't have much money but (.) it's if
 17 you're going to=
 T3 18 NS20: =OK=
 T2 19 L220: =plagiarize then the consequences if there [are any]
 T3 20 NS20: [of course] precisely
 21 precisely because of tha:t because of that you have a fine to dissuade
 22 people=
 T2 23 L220: =yes yes ...

Excerpt 18 (p.91)

- T1 1 NS3: when someone who isn't who has (.) is beginning to
2 drink and doesn't know how to pace themselves=
T2 3 L23: =mhm=
T1 4 NS3: =they can have right? that is black out isn't that right?
T2 5 L23: right. yes I agree but I don't think it is possible to control people
6 one hundred percent. I don't know if it's very (.) very practical
7 [I don't know]
T3 8 NS3: [that makes sense] maybe with the talks with the talks before
9 isn't that right?=
T2 10 L23: =mhm=

Excerpt 19 (p.95, p.105, p.128)

- T1 1 NS3: Ok in the first place (.) for me=
T2 2 NS4: =yes=
T1 3 NS3: =they should know the university well and know where are the most
4 important places like the libraries the dining halls and I don't know
if the computer
5 labs?=
T2 6 NS4: =hm=
T1 7 NS3: =bu::t=
T2 8 NS4: =why the dining halls?.
T3 9 NS3: so that they know where they have to eat right? food in
10 [mind ()]
T2 11 NS4: [no: yes yes yes yes] that's easy that is o:r=
T3 12 NS3: =well still where the dining halls are is the student centers [right?]
T2 13 NS4: [but]
14 to be successful? you're looking for the dining hall? but you could be
successful (.)
15 [well]
T3 16 NS3: [that] but first thing to be successful in the university?
T2 17 NS4: is eating?=
T3 18 NS3: =of cou:se if not you don't don't think if not you don't do:n't=
T2 19 NS4: =well no [no ()]
T3 20 NS3: [you understand?]
T2 21 NS4: I wouldn't agree so much but OK ...

Excerpt 20 (p.97)

- T1 1 NS10: I also don't like it (.) that they put the amount of calories and
2 fat in each one of the items on the menu (.) I think that it is really
3 misleading because they would [the food]
T2 4 NS11: [oh ye:s?]
T1 5 NS10: because the way I see it
6 food doesn't work like that that is you're eating: I don't know (.)
lots of
7 vegetables (.) that isn't great either you have to mix things right?=
T2 8 NS11: =mm::?=
T1 9 NS10: =as in less fat is not as good (0.6) sometimes.

- T2 10 NS11: of course. no I didn't know I thought that I put I put that yes but well
 11 no I didn't have it I didn't know what I thought this argument (.) but
 12 well anyways it's just that calories aren't the only nutritional
 requirement=
 T3 13 NS10: =no.
 T2 14 NS11: calories are like a nutritional requirement for metabol() right? (.)
 15 but=
 T3 16 NS10: =but [ye:s]
 T2 17 NS11: [but]
 T3 18 NS10: I think that it's an option the obsession about calories is-
 T2 19 NS11: -it's like they don't want to get fat it's the obsession about the body that
 20 is behind everything right?
 T3 21 NS10: of course. ...

Excerpt 21 (p.98)

- T1 1 NS5: I put in number three um that it's important to participate in clubs and
 2 sports and social activities because it's boring to only study that
 3 also it makes sense because of what we were um talking about a little
 4 about the social life of students.
 T2 5 NS9: that one I had as number four=
 T3 6 NS5: =mhm?=
 T2 7 NS9: =and I put it as number five.
 T3 8 NS5: yes?
 T2 9 NS9: yes. and and I put it in that order because at least this is the
 10 first year in college (.)
 T3 11 NS5: mhm=
 T2 12 NS9: =I suppose that the student is going to have more in their first year
 13 of college (.)
 T3 14 NS5: yes?=
 15 NS9: =and maybe some come uh without having with expectations of
 getting
 16 something at the end their goal is to graduate but I feel li:ke li:ke it's
 important
 17 like what you put before getting organized in their classes

Example 4 (p.99)

- NS6: you notice clearly that there are sealed compartments that is everything is
 separated right? (.) that everybody is in their closed group (.)
 L26: yes ...

Example 5 (p.100)

- NS3: uh (.) because all that about the students having to sign a contract of
 good behavior doesn't guarantee that in the end (.) right?=
 L23: =mhm ...

Example 6 (p.100)

- L214: uh the first thing that I have is uh Rutgers should require that each

NS14: vendor in the student centers puts the amount of calories and fats next to the items on the menu? (.) what do you think?
yes I believe that that's important but I have it I have it as the fifth option.

Example 7 (p.100)

L216: it's a: it's a way of of creating a better culture and a a better mind
you know?
L215: so the third option?

Example 8 (p.100)

L215: um do you think (.) that it is the right of the student?=
L216: =[to]
L215: [to] decide what they want to eat or?
L216: yes yes I think that um (.) you can't force ...

Example 9 (p.101)

L215: but the students that are older than twenty-one? yes or no?
NS15: they could abide by the law it is the law right? over twenty-one yes ...

Example 10 (p.101)

NINS3: ah! does it seem like that to you? doesn't it seem like that to you? I was unsure
does it seem to you more important to live close to New York?
NINS4: (0.7) really I don't believe that it i:s ...

Excerpt 22 (p.104)

T1	1	NS20:	my three was that the university shouldn't intervene to prevent obesity
	2		that each student should have to decide for himself ...

T2	10	NS19:	<u>yes of course [yes yes yes]</u>
T1	11	NS20:	[a little] XXX.
T2	12	NS19:	<u>yes yes yes</u> (.) <u>yes yes</u> . u::m that's my four=
T3	13	NS20:	=that's my four=
T2	14	NS19:	yes (.) that the university shouldn't: um shouldn't intervene. um (.) yes
			<u>well</u>
	15		I put it as <u>more or less</u> as leaning towards a bad option (.) <u>almo:st</u>
			<u>almost</u>
	16		five ...

Excerpt 23 (p.106, p.112)

T1	1	L22:	I put one for the university should require that each vendor in the
	2		student centers put the amount (.) of calories ...

T2	9	L21:	<u>yes</u> I put that as number two u:m=

- T1 10 L22: =yes=
 T2 11 L21: =because also I believe that it's a good idea (.) u:h but at the same time
 12 also I believe tha:t (0.8) I don't know if many are going to give li:ke
 a:h (.)
 T1 13 L22: the student centers=
 T2 14 L21: =ye:ah ah if they are going to give much importance to that ...

Example 11 (p.106)

- L216: yes but ye::s like like you say that something about the state year after year
 they're cutting the funds for the university I think that that's something that the
 administration and the students should work together over ...

Example 12 (p.106)

- L218: yes. I agree I put that it's a possible solution because I know people who do
 those things (.) bu:t (laughs) I would say because for my answer I put they
 should enjoy their time here because the years go by very quickly.

Example 13 (p.107)

- L24: yes eh I agree

 u:hm I could put two there also

 I've put two in eh right now in it's necessary to learn the schedule of
 classes ...

Example 14 (p.107)

- L23: right. yes I agree but I don't think it would be possible to control one hundred
 percent of people. I don't know if it is very (.) very practical [I don't know]

Example 15 (p.108)

- L22: that is a good point but ...

Example 16 (p.108)

- L211: yes. bu:t I believe that ...

Example 17 (p.108)

- L217:
 L217: yes. but to me XX I think that ...

Example 18 (p.108)

- L23: yes that makes sense but: ...

Excerpt 24 (p.111)

- T1 1 NS6: I for number four I put here also this is my personal perspective
 2 (.) the university needs more buses to go to different
 3 campuses.
 T2 4 NS7: (0.9) yes I believe that that already is a little people who don't have
 classes

5 in either of those two well then they are not going to want (.) need it ...

Excerpt 25 (p.112)

T2 1 NS15: it's prohibited?
 T1 2 L215: no no=
 T2 3 NS15: =no. oh OK. (0.8) well (.) if it's not prohibited then it's that it depends
 4 on age when students are young are little maybe they don't
 5 have control and: when they drink too much alcohol they could have
 there could be
 6 violence but when they leave. maybe in the university no: there is a lot
 outside
 7 it could be that they might go to a place but outside of the university.

Excerpt 26 (p.112)

T1 1 NS11: if there's a public event well then my idea would be to have more police
 2 and that all the people that enter are searched. like when you enter
 3 a bar or a club that there's they search you to see if you're bringing
 weapons or what it is
 4 that you're carrying with you right?
 T2 5 L211: (0.7) yes. but I believe that the problem always is is with people who
 ahm
 6 not with students ...

Excerpt 27 (p.113)

T3 13 NS4: to many parties a party could be (.) or that is as this is told
 14 it's in second place(.) I'd put it like that.
 T2 15 NS3: (1.0) [well]
 T3 16 NS4: [what else?]

Excerpt 28 (p.114)

T3 44 L215: =I think that it is impossible to prohibit alcohol of-
 T2 45 NS15: -[well]
 T3 46 L215: [the] students.
 T2 47 NS15: (0.7) ye:s=
 T3 48 L215: =it's part o:f high school (laughs) not of college

Excerpt 29 (p.114)

T3 22 NS20: mmm but the:n (.) or that is you think that the university should
 23 take a stance on the subject=
 T2 24 NS19: =of course. I should say that healthy food is good (.) I am going to help
 25 them. I'm not going to prohibit the bad I'm not going to raise prices of
 the bad. I am going to
 26 provide information possibly offers (.) I am going to lower prices.
 T3 27 NS20 : (0.9) that's okay. ve:ry ve:ry poli-sci=
 T2 28 NS19: =yes! [(laughs)]

T3 29 NS20: [(laughs)]

Excerpt 30 (p.116)

T1 1 L24: I want put like the warning that that if it is not a serious case=
 T2 2 NS4: =mm=
 T1 3 L24: =that you aren't robbing anyone of their their work complete[ly]
 T2 4 NS4: [yes mm]
 T1 5 L24: and saying that oh this is my work=
 T2 6 NS4: =mm=
 T1 7 L24: =this is my original work and (.) my writing=
 T2 8 NS4: =mm=
 T1 9 L24: =but as if you've used a quote from someone else and without realizing
 10 it you're using their words yes I think that this is forgivable.

 T3 35 L24: =the the case in which (.) it is not my native language=
 T2 36 NS4: =yes=
 T3 37 L24: =so my brain doesn't have the ability to play mu[ch with]
 T2 38 NS4: [yes yes yes yes]
 T3 39 L24: the
 structure.
 T2 40 NS4: yes no let's say for you making a paraphrase in a foreign language.
 T3 41 L24: [yes]
 T2 42 NS4: [it's] very complicated (.) in this case you are giving the: generic
 43 meaning to plagiarism.

Excerpt 31 (p.117)

T1 1 L219: I think that the mo:st realistic option?=
 T2 2 NS19: =mhm=
 T1 3 L219: =more realistic is that we should have more police but I don't know
 4 exactly that police are what we need?
 T2 5 NS19: yes yes. yes. [yes]
 T1 6 L219: [u:h] I don't know exactly the specific things=

 T2 15 NS19: u::hm if you see the police you say I have to behave what do I know?
 um=
 16 (.) I find that alright (.) I find that alright but. u:hm imagine
 17 the extreme.

Example 19 (p.119): really (NINS4)

Example 20 (p.119): it's that neither convinced me (NS13)

Example 21 (p.119): I say it from the perspective of (NS9)

Example 22 (p.119): it will depend on (NS16)

Example 23 (p.119): for example (NS21)

Example 24 (p.119): I don't know how (L23-INT, T3)

Example 25 (p.119): I don't know if (L21-ADV, T2)

Example 26 (p.119): I don't know how many (L28-ADV, T2)

Example 27 (p.119): what's happening is that (L23-INT, T1)

Example 28 (p.119): it is not anything specifically like that (L216-INT, T3)

Example 29 (p.121):

NS19 yes (.) that the university should no:t uh should not intervene. uhm (.) yes well
I put it more or less as leaning toward a bad option (.) almo:st almost
five ...

Example 30 (p.121):

L23 if it makes sense bu:t I marked four for that suggestion because that is a
problem each semester basically ...

Example 31 (p.122): in general (NS)

Example 32 (p.122): in a certain sense (NS)

Example 33 (p.122): generally (NS)

Example 34 (p.122): sometimes (ADV)

Example 35 (p.122): almost (ADV)

Example 36 (p.122): just the way (ADV)

Example 37 (p.122): and all of that (INT)

Example 38 (p.122):

NS15: yes perhaps there you are right. some public events can be prohibited.

Example 39 (p.123):

L24: =but as if you've used a quote from someone else and without realizing it
you're using their words yes I think that this is forgivable.

Example 40 (p.123): like (NS)

Example 41 (p.123): perhaps (NINS, NS)

Example 42 (p.123): maybe (NS)

Example 43 (p.123): perhaps (NS, ADV)

Example 44 (p.123): however you prefer (INT)

Example 45 (p.123): as if (ADV)

Example 46 (p.124):

NS17: many students well normally we don't have much money ...

Example 47 (p.124):

NS16: it is the only way that one can choose positions and the only way that one can responsibly soak things up ...

Excerpt 32 (p.133):

T1	1	L23:	to say it's important to study a lot mm (.) I wouldn't sat that.
T2	2	L24:	(0.9) yes. I believe that yes it's important to study [a lot]
T3	3	L23:	[yes of course]
	4		it's it's important
	5		to study it's important to get good grades and a [good]
T2	5	L24:	[ye:s]
T3	6	L23:	average and all
	7		that=
T2	8	L24:	=yes=
T3	9	L23:	=u:hm=
T2	10	L24:	=but they shouldn't the second part they shouldn't waste time going out
	11		at night and going to a lot of parties no: =
T3	12	L23:	=e:h a social life is very important al[so]
T2	13	L24:	[yes]
T3	14	L23:	((laughs)) a::nd [yes I]
T2	15	L24:	[well]
T3	16	L23:	would say that um life in the university is more than studying=
T2	17	L24:	=yes=
T3	18	L23:	=a lot more than studying (.) that's why I marked five.

Excerpt 33 (p.135):

T1	1	L28:	I put they should institute other options besides buses like a
	2		tram or public bikes with bike lanes so that there exists a a
	3		alter alternative to the buses.
T2	4	L25:	this is one or five? for you=
T1	5	L28:	=ah I put that as number one=
T2	6	L25:	=ah okay (0.7) and well I: put: number one with the busses should go
	7		with more frequency during weekends and summer. and why? mm
	8		it's that for me there are no problems with the bus system but I
	9		know that during the weekends it is awful and difficult to ah
	10		take the bus to other campuses.
T3	11	L28:	yes. and in the summers too
T2	12	L25:	yes.
T3	13	L28:	yes I put this as number two.

Excerpt 34 (p.141, p.152)

- T1 1 NINS1: well first that is that it's clear in the movie that the little girl is
2 selling tissues=
T2 3 NINS2: =yes=
T1 4 NINS1: =she isn't giving them for free. and the girl that is crying she offers
5 her a packet of tissues without charging. right? (so).
T2 6 NINS2: of course but from there the girl she sees her crying and goes and she
7 offers her a tissue but
8 more like making is crying like she would give her money and
9 the girl is looking for money in the purse=
T1 9 NINS1: =and-
T2 10 NINS2: -but when she finds it the little girl is already gone=
T3 11 NINS1: =yes but that that is she doesn't give her the tissue for sale
12 but rather for: to console her=
T2 13 NINS2: =to console her exactly ...

Excerpt 35 (p.142, p.153)

- T1 1 NINS3: so then the movie starts with a girl that uh girl gives uh not a
2 street girl (.) but a girl that sells-
T2 3 NINS4: -well we don't [know if]
T1 4 NINS3: [tissues]
T2 5 NINS4: she was from the street really but that is yes
from 6 the street right? because if not she wouldn't sell tissues that is a
[poor a girl]
T3 7 NINS3: [but she had a house]
T2 8 NINS4: humble (.) ah well [then yes]
T3 9 NINS3: [she has] a house?. because at the beginning it
could 10 be any homeless a [girl XX but no]
T2 11 NINS4: [ah no well she was] poor-
T3 12 NINS3: -a poor girl that is dressed is dressed cleanly it seems al[though]
T2 13 NINS4: [yes]
T3 14 NINS3: she was but she was clean ...

Excerpt 36 (p.144, p.207)

- T1 1 L22: what happens is that there is a girl () in the street. and she gives
2 everyone in the street (.) some (.) papers-
T2 3 NS2: -she was selling tissues=
T3 4 L22: =yes tissues (.) tissues yes she's not selling the truth is that she is
5 giving the tissues and gives tissues to a woman that thinks that the girl
6 expects money for the tissues.
T2 7 NS2: I I think that she was selling the tissues because the man at
8 the beginning the girl goes and gives the tissues to a man and he [gives]
T3 9 L22: [ok]
T2 10 NS2: money=
T3 11 L22: =to the man yes (.) that could be but (.) ah when she gives tissues to to
12 the woman ehm the girl [leaves]
T2 13 NS2: [yes]

T3 14 L22: before the woman can give her the the the
 15 money=
 T2 16 NS2: yes ...

Excerpt 37 (p.145, p.155)

T1 1 L25: and after she went to the poor woman again=
 T2 2 NS5: =mhm=
 T1 3 L25: =and he gave her a bill I think twenty dollars twenty something like
 that.
 T2 4 NS5: twenty? I think I thought that I saw something like ten or one hundred
I'm not sure.
 T3 5 L25: I think that it is twenty-
 T2 6 NS5: =I think that one hundred was a bit much yes=
 T3 7 L25: =it seems to me like it's a. a. type of bill less than than [fifty]
 T2 8 NS5: [than fifty]
 9 yes that is what makes sense and so I wasn't sure if it was twenty or?
 T3 10 L25: yes ...

Excerpt 38 (p.146, p.156)

T1 1 TS21: and she goes to a butcher shop=
 2 L221: =yes=
 T1 3 NS21: =buys a some meat=
 4 L221: =yes=
 T1 5 NS21: =gets to the house=
 T2 6 L221: =well (.) she gi:ves to to the butcher a twenty (.) of=
 T3 7 NS21: =ah yes . yes yes ...

Excerpt 39 (p.147)

T1 1 L220: then we see a restaurant.
 T2 2 NS20: yes but well why a restaurant?
 T1 3 L220: uh?
 T2 4 NS20: why do you see a restaurant?
 T3 5 L220: I don't know=
 T2 6 NS20: =you don't remember?
 T3 7 L220: no.
 T2 8 NS20: then the girl the little girl gives some tissues to the girl who is
 9 crying ...

Excerpt 40 (p.148, p.157, p.206)

T1 1 L28: well (it) began with the girl who was selling tissues to: people on the
 2 on the beach=
 T2 3 NS8: =the [beach?]
 T3 4 L28: [she wasn't] on the beach [oh]
 T2 5 NS8: [but] beach? no: it was a plaza
 T3 6 L28: there was water=
 T2 7 NS8: =you saw water?=
 T3 8 L28: =yes I saw I saw [the sea]

T2	9	NS8:		[no then] it was a: the boardwalk that's called a
			boardwalk	
T3	10	L28:	boardwalk ...	

Appendix I: Translations of commentary produced in metalinguistic protocol

- NS8 (p.190): I tried to explain my position. Maybe I was convincing him, but my intention was simply like to explain to him why prohibiting alcohol wasn't a good idea.
- NS18 (p.190): The fact that I am better, a native speaker, it seems like because of that you feel the need to take control a little, the command, although he may have a good level of Spanish, which he does, but the fact of being a native seems like it gives you more responsibility.
- NS10 (p.191): I believe that she didn't understand very much, what I was saying to her. She didn't understand Spanish very well, perhaps wasn't accustomed to a new dialect of Spanish because I spoke to her very naturally.
- NS19 (p.191): I picked the topics that seemed most current to me, that had appeared in the news, for example, like violence and food. To me it seemed like these are topics that are in existence.
- NINS2 (p.193): The topic of living in New Jersey seemed interesting to me because I recently moved here to work. So it's like very current for me, and easy to talk about this topic.
- NINS3 (p.195): We told the entire movie because of the task, you had to do it that way.
- NS11 (p.196): It seemed to me like I was the one giving the details. I don't know if she didn't understand or didn't remember or didn't have the ability to say or to give details.
- NS7 (p.197): I always allowed her to speak, always women first. So I let her speak to see what she would say and then I said what I remembered.
- NINS3 (p.199): It seemed to me that the topic of immigration gave you a lot more to talk about. Aside from that we had the experience and it seemed to me that there was more to say than about others.
- NINS4 (p.199): I suppose that it was out of interest in the topic, it was like a normal conversation, we didn't have to decide OK who is going to start, nothing like that.
- NS4 (p.200): Since I am supposedly coming from the group of professors, and he was obviously a student, we had a conversation that tended to be dominated by the person with more energy, on the other hand, being a student of a second language who doesn't feel very let's say, very strong or very secure in their Spanish, you tend to give concessions.

NS16 (p.203): It's a little simpler with a person who doesn't speak the language and you're always going to understand the person but you're going to expect them to say things that aren't correctly formed...one understands what they want to say but it's not pronounced correctly or something's missing or there might be a syntax error. But in general yes, I would say there weren't major problems, I didn't have to repeat things. There weren't communication barriers.

NINS1 (p.205): The fact that you have to go step by step gives a specific structure to the narration. It's like a preset order.

NINS2 (p.205): Since we both saw the same thing, what we had to do to describe the film was complete the exercise. If not, we would have talked about the problem, we would have started talking about a description of the sequence. But we did it, we told the whole thing because the exercise required we do it that way.

NS8 (p.206): I contributed some things that he was leaving out. I let him tell everything he had and I added some things.

NS2 (p.208): I believe that what I did was to create more of a position of professor and student, probably because of my, because of, I don't know, professional or professional practice. He already knew that I was a professor and I imagine that he was treating it in this way.

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