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STANCE-TAKING IN SPANISH-SPEAKING PRESCHOOLERS' ARGUMENTATIVE INTERACTION

The aim of this study is to determine what linguistic resources are used for stance-taking in confrontational interactions. For this purpose, we analyze 70 argumentative sequences in spontaneous peer conversations during play situations of 4 dyads (2 mid and 2 low socio-economic status backgrounds) of 4 to 7-year-old Argentinian children. Stance-taking relies on the use of evaluative language, understood as the markers of speaker's attitude (reference to internal states such as attribute, cognition, emotion, intention, and reported speech, [Shiro, 2003]); and the use of evidential markers, understood as speaker's reference to the status of the information in the utterance (causality, concession, capacity, deontic and epistemic modality, and inference, [Shiro, 2007]), including markers of politeness which serve to mitigate (or intensify) the confrontation (Watts, 2003). Our findings describe the evaluative resources used for stance-taking strategies produced by children at this early age in confrontational interactions with their peers.

Keywords: children's disputes, stance-taking, evaluative language

Children, at a very early age, learn how to use language for argumentative purposes, as this skill is fundamental for any effective use of speech (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987). In the early stages, they already learn how to agree and disagree, how to refuse to do something or how to disapprove (Dunn & Munn, 1987; Eisenberg, 1992; Maynard, 1985; Ninio & Snow, 1996; Phinney, 1986), implying that they must use their emerging linguistic resources to take a stance and express their communicative purpose. The aim of our study is to explore,

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from an interactive perspective (Blum-Kulka, Hamo, & Habib, 2010), how preschoolers use linguistic resources to engage in confrontational sequences during spontaneous interactions with their peers.

Much of the research on children's argumentation has focused on English speakers and has used experimental elicitation methods (Köymen, Schmidt, Rost, Lieven, & Tomasello, 2015; Matsui, 2014) or data drawn from adult-child naturally-occurring interaction (Eisenberg, 1987; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1990; Goetz, 2010; Bova & Arcidiano, 2013), and a number of studies have used spontaneous peer interaction (Kyratzis, Ross, & Köymen, 2010; Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004; Zadunaisky Ehrlich & Blum-Kulka, 2010). As Zadunaisky Ehrlich and Blum-Kulka (2010, p. 212) point out, the analysis of children's peer talk sheds light on their social and linguistic development, enabling us to understand the complexities and variations in child discourse. According to Blum-Kulka et al. (2004), peer talk offers particularly rich data for the study of child language as it functions simultaneously on two discursive planes. One reflects emerging cultural patterns in children's interaction:

> A social space within which children actively negotiate meanings and relationships related to their local peer culture, creating a web of cultural tools and possible worlds unique to childhood (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004, p. 308).

The other plane reflects children's language development, displaying discursive and pragmatic skills, as well as "the social skills of perspective taking that underlie both" (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004, p. 308). Therefore, peer talk is particularly suitable for the study of argumentative interaction.

In face-to-face oral interactions, adults try to avoid conflict, but children engage quite often in confrontational exchanges. Blum-Kulka et al. (2014) argue that peer talk offers children ample opportunities to listen in, practice and display conversational as well as academic discursive skills, and hence may very well prove a crucial site for pragmatic development.

Furthermore, in peer talk, children feel less intimidated and may use different argumentative strategies than with an adult, with whom the interaction is more asymmetrical (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004).

The type of peer talk examined in this paper takes place during play time. Cobb-Moore, Danby and Farrel (2009) study how social interaction is managed in play situations, suggesting that children engage in four interactional practices: a) claiming possession of objects and play spaces; b) appealing to pre-existing rules and to the social order to control interactions with their peers; c) using language strategically to regulate the actions of those around them; and d) creating and employing membership categories to include or exclude others and also to control and participate in the ongoing interaction. All of these practices can be present in confrontational interactions.

Researchers (e.g., Küntay, Nakamura, & Sen, 2014) agree that the pragmatic skills involved in confrontational situations are language and culture dependent, but only a small number of studies in the field are based on diverse populations. Indeed, despite the important contributions of previous studies to the knowledge of early discourse development, it should be noted that they concentrate only on middle income and mostly English-speaking children. A comprehensive theory of discourse development should also be based on data from understudied populations, enabling us to gauge the extent to which observations regarding a particular context of development can be generalized to other contexts (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010).

Even fewer studies have researched Spanish-speaking children's argumentation (Eisenberg, 1987, 1992; Peronard, 1991; Migdalek & Rosemberg, 2013; Migdalek, Rosemberg, & Santibáñez Yáñez, 2014a; Migdalek, Santibáñez Yáñez, & Rosemberg, 2014b) and, to the best of our knowledge, none have included children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, in this paper, we explore how Argentinian children, between the ages of 4 and 7, use linguistic resources for stance taking in naturally occurring confrontational interactions while playing with peers.

The research questions that guided our study are:

- What roles do children take when they argue during peer conversations?

- What linguistic resources are used to mark argumentative stance-taking when engaging in these roles?

Characteristics of Argumentative Discourse

For the purposes of this study, we define argumentation as a dialogic activity which is highly context dependent:

A *social practice* in which at least two parties take alternative positions on the same issue and develop their adversarial positions in various ways (Zadunaisky Ehrlich & Blum-Kulka, 2010, p. 214).

This interactive approach to argumentative discourse implies that we should focus on how participants use language to position themselves and which contextual factors have an impact on their language use.

Most studies on child argumentation focus on the reasoning behind children's association of ideas (Goetz & Shatz, 1999) but not on the linguistic and pragmatic resources children use for their argumentative strategies, even though differences in argumentative strategies may explain different language development paths (Kyratzis, Ross, & Köymen, 2010). For instance, Kyratzis et al. (2010, p. 139) argue, following Bornstein et al. (2004) that:

Boys' dispreference for agreement and expansion of partners' ideas may partially account for findings in the literature reporting that girls exceed

boys in MLU and complex sentence structure in the pre-school years (between the ages of 2;0 and 5;0).

Therefore, there is a need to determine how Spanish-speaking children use language when they participate in argumentative sequences while interacting with peers, given that only a few studies focus on Spanish-speaking children's argumentative discourse (Peronard, 1991; Migdalek & Rosemberg, 2013; Migdalek et al., 2014a; Migdalek et al., 2014b) and none of these give information about the linguistic, discursive and pragmatic resources used in these interactions.

According to Toulmin (2003), the structure of argumentative interactions consists of at least two main components: the claim, the proposition which is debated; and the data, the justification or evidence that sustains the proposition. The relationship between the claim and the data is the warrant, which is usually implicit and derived from reasoning based on socially accepted knowledge. Frequency of children's use of justifications in argumentative interaction increases with age (Eisenberg, 1992; Maynard, 1985; Phinney, 1986; Shantz, 1987, Köymen, Rosenbaum, & Tomasello, 2014).

Research on children's emerging argumentative skills suggests that preschoolers can already understand and produce the main components of arguments (Stein & Albro, 2001) and that they use argumentative strategies that can be simple (insistence on maintaining their position) or complex (new information that adds to the ongoing argument, either in favor of or against a position [Stein & Albro, 2001, p. 116]). According to Ochs (1986), these skills improve with age, during the language socialization process, and the strategies become more elaborate.

Regarding Spanish-speaking children, Peronard's (1991) four-year longitudinal study with five Chilean children examines the utterances used to persuade their adult interlocutor, generally the mother. The dialogical sequences are initiated, at first, by the adults and, later in development, children become more autonomous and initiate more. The argumentative sequences deal with issues regarding actions related to the material world, the cultural world, or the psychological world.

Similarly, studies on Argentinian child argumentation (Migdalek & Rosemberg, 2013; Migdalek et al., 2014a; Migdalek et al., 2014b) focus on the analysis of 3- to 5-year-olds' argumentative strategies in play situations at home or school. The results show an early use of argumentative strategies, both verbal and non-verbal, which regulate joint action. Developmental differences in the preschool period were found, implying that 4-year-olds experience a shift in the use of argumentative strategies, using complex justifications rather than mere oppositions to the interlocutor's point of view (Migdalek et al., 2014a; Migdalek, Rosemberg, & Arrúe, 2015). Likewise, differences were observed in the uses of connectors and deontic modals, as

the preschoolers varied their strategies depending on age and the context in which the play situation was taking place: at the preschool or at home (Migdalek et al., 2015).

Research on English-speaking children suggests that the age, gender and the relationship of the participants are contextual factors that strongly influence the types of argumentative interaction in which they engage (Goetz & Shatz, 1999) and, therefore, there is a need for varying these parameters in order to fully understand how children develop argumentative skills (Kyratzis et al., 2010).

Participants' Role and Positioning in Argumentative Interaction

In this paper, we analyze how Spanish-speaking preschoolers adopt roles in confrontational conversations with peers and how they use language, particularly, pragmatic skills. These roles (initiating the confrontation, opposing some aspect of the interlocutor's utterance or aligning oneself with the interlocutor's view and negotiating consensus) determine how the participants position themselves with reference to the topic at hand and their interlocutor.

As the confrontational interactions we examine in this paper take place in naturally occurring child-child conversations, we turn to research on conversational analysis which informs us about the ways in which utterances are interrelated both prospectively and retrospectively as meaning is constructed (Heritage, 1984; Heritage & Sorjonen, 1994; Linell 1998; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1968, 1990; Goodwin, 2006). Goodwin (2006) studies these aspects in children's argumentative interactions and shows how each utterance builds on the surrounding utterances. The conversational contingencies, defined by Goodwin as format tying, become the building blocks of the argumentative discourse structure, where participants are "faced with the task of building, sustaining, and arguing for their positions, while countering the proposals of others" (p. 449). One of the outstanding features of argumentative interactions, and one that explicitly marks the beginning of the confrontation, is when one of the participants provides a dispreferred response to the previous utterance (Sacks et al., 1974), which is, by definition, a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987) whereby the speaker takes on the role of an opponent. Opposing someone ostensibly in a face-to-face interaction is risky to a certain degree in all cultures, and as such, requires some softening strategies of politeness.

Politeness theory defines the notion of face as the public self-image that individuals present to others (Goffman, 1967; Burdelski, 2010). In any social interaction, but most particularly in confrontational interactions, the participants use face-saving strategies as they negotiate common ground, mitigate disagreements or minimize impositions. As a result, children learn from early on the requirements of politeness in their speech communities (Burdelski, 2010).

As the confrontational interaction unfolds, the participants take stances with respect to the object of the confrontation and, by doing so, they align

themselves or not with their interlocutor. Thus, using the appropriate language for positioning or stance-taking is absolutely necessary for all types of interaction, but even more so in argumentative discourse. According to Du Bois (2007, p. 142), "perhaps the most salient and widely recognized form of stance-taking is evaluation", whereby the speaker's positioning is expressed. Du Bois defines positioning as "the act of situating a social actor with respect to responsibility for stance and for invoking sociocultural values" (p. 143). Stance-taking then relies on the use of evaluative language, understood as the markers of speaker's attitude (reference to internal states such as emotion, cognition and volition, [Shiro, 2003, 2008]); and the use of evidential markers, understood as speaker's reference to the status of the information in the utterance (source of information, modes of knowing, degree of certainty, [Chafe, 1986]; [Shiro, 2004, 2007]).

Method

We analyze confrontational sequences in naturalistic play situations. The data is selected from a larger corpus that consists of 480 hours of video-recordings in 40 households of 4-year-old Argentinean children (Rosemberg et al., 2005-2012). None of the children were born prematurely; they do not have a hearing disability or other developmental handicap. The participants were matched for SES: 20 mid-SES families, where at least one parent had a university degree, and 20 low-SES families, where both parents had less than 9 years of education. Each family was recorded for 12 hours in 3 or 4 observation days, on different weekdays and at different times of the day. Adult participants and older children were asked to carry out regular daily activities with the 4-year-old child, as they usually do at home. During the recording, the observer responded to the participants' questions or comments but did not promote conversations or specific activities. The audios were transcribed following the CHAT format using the CLAN Program (MacWhinney, 2000). The transcription was complemented with written reports on other non-verbal characteristics (gestures, the participants' spatial arrangement, and other relevant information).

Procedure

From the larger corpus, we selected the transcripts of 12-hour recordings, in which four same sex dyads (two pairs of boys and two pairs of girls, two from mid-SES families and 2 from low-SES families, see Table 1) were observed while interacting during play situations at home. The dyads were formed by a 4-year-old child (who was the focus of the larger study) playing with an older sibling or with a friend. Table 1 shows the ages and the relationship between the participants in each dyad. We measured the children's language proficiency by calculating their mean length of utterance (MLU) for

the first 100 turns, to asses grammatical complexity, as well as their type token ratio (TTR) for the first 100 turns, to assess lexical diversity (see Table 1).

We extracted 70 confrontational interactions, in which the 4-year-old child, playing with another slightly older child, expressed conflicting views and took several turns in the dispute. Table 1 shows the number of confrontations (disputes) in which each dyad engaged.

Table 1. *The participants*

DYAD	Participant	Age	Relation	Gender	SES	MLU	TTR	# of disputes
DYAD 1	CHILD 1A	4;3	Brother	Male	Low	3.4	0.5	19
DYAD 1	CHILD 1B	7;0	Brother	Male	Low	7.4	0.37	
DYAD 2	CHILD 2A	4;0	Friend	Female	Low	3.9	0.42	15
DYAD 2	CHILD 2B	4;0	Friend	Female	Low	6.2	0.31	
DYAD 3	CHILD 3A	4;3	Brother	Male	Middle	4.2	0.25	12
DYAD 3	CHILD 3B	6;0	Brother	Male	Middle	4.6	0.35	
DYAD 4	CHILD 4A	4;0	Cousin	Female	Middle	5.9	0.42	24
DYAD 4	CHILD 4B	5;0	Cousin	Female	Middle	7.2	0.41	

The criterion for identifying the beginning of the fragments was to find a turn whereby one of the children opposed some aspect of the other child's utterance or action. Then, we selected the previous turns, identifying the introduction of the topic, as the beginning of the confrontational sequence (Dersley & Wootton, 2001). Changing the topic by introducing another topic was considered the cut-off point for the exchange, whether or not the confrontation reached a consensual ending. In certain cases, the initial dispute was retaken once or more later in the conversation and we analyzed those confrontational sequences separately but relating them to the initial sequence. Each confrontational sequence was divided into clauses and coded with the following analytic scheme:

i. Macro analysis: the unit of analysis was the utterance in which we determined the role of the participant, understood as the position taken by the speaker in the confrontation. For the purposes of our study, we identified 3 roles in terms of the speaker's alignment:
- The opponent, the point of reference for identifying the confrontational sequence, whereby the speaker expresses a conflicting point of view by rejecting, denying, refuting or disagreeing with some part of the previous speaker's utterance or action.
- The proponent, identified as the speaker whose utterance or action is being confronted. Thus, the role of the proponent could only be identified with respect to that of the opponent.

- Acceptance: whereby the speaker expresses agreement with the previous speaker. Acceptance also has a restricted position in the interaction. If the acceptance occurred without a previous opposition, we could not count that as a confrontational sequence. Thus, the role of accepting had to be at least after the second turn of a dispute. As a result, the simplest confrontational sequence contained two speaker roles (in two turns): the proponent and the opponent. The role of acceptance was not always present, and it occurred as a third turn or later in the sequence.

ii. Micro analysis: the unit of analysis was the clause, within which we identified stance-taking resources, understood as the linguistic markers speakers use to signal their roles. Thus, we coded for evaluative language (Shiro, 2003, 2007, 2008), the main linguistic resource for expressing subjectivity and therefore, for signaling stance. For each clause, we determined if it contained three types of evaluation (see Table 1, 2 and 3 for a brief definition and examples):
   - Evaluative expressions, defined as a reference to internal states (attribute, emotion, cognition, intention, internal physical state or reported speech, see Table 2).
   - Evidential markers, defined as attitude towards the information in the clause (causality, concession, capacity, deontic, epistemic, and inference, see Table 3).
   - Markers of politeness, defined as expressions used to mitigate or intensify the confrontation (which is always face-threatening). We coded for terms of address, intensifiers and mitigators, and positive or negative polarity, understood as a bare "yes" (*¡porque sí!*) or "no" (*¡porque no!*) standing as an argument for a claim with no justification whatsoever (see Table 4).

Table 2. *Evaluative expressions*

Category	Definition	Example
Attribute	An epithet offering a characteristic	"The **big** boy."
Emotion	Reference to feelings, (dis)likes	"She was **angry**."
Intention	Reference to volition, desire	"He **is going to** cry."
Cognition	Reference to mental processes	"I **don't know** what happened."
Physical	Reference to a physical state	"The cat **was sleeping**."
Reported Speech	Citing someone's speech: direct, indirect, free	"He said: **I can't play**." "He said **you can't play**."

Table 3. *Evidential expressions*

Category	Definition	Example
Causality	Reference to cause, motive or purpose	"Cause **I don't want to**."
Concession	Admit, acknowledge something	"**Very well, alright**."
Capacity	Reference to a physical ability	"He **can't** jump."
Epistemic	Reference to a mental state, to (un)certainty	"I don't **know**."
Deontic	Reference to obligation	"You **must** listen."
Inference	Deriving a conclusion from a previous utterance	"He **must be** sick. He is bleeding."

Table 4. *Politeness markers*

Category	Definition	Example
Mitigators	Intensify or mitigate a part of an utterance	"He is **very** tired."
Terms of Address	Use a vocative to address the interlocutor	"**Rafa**, let me play."
Positive Polarity	Countering a previous negative utterance	"**Yes, I do**."
Negative Polarity	Countering a previous positive utterance	"**No, I don't**."

Results and Discussion

Roles in the Confrontational Interactions

In the confrontational sequences, the two children take up different roles. The beginning of a confrontation can be identified only when one child makes a statement or undertakes some action, and the other child takes the role of opposing that statement (or action) in certain ways (Dersley & Wootton, 2000, 2001). Both parts of this adjacent pair need to be present in order to identify the beginning of a dispute (evidently, the proponent realizes that there is a disagreement when the other participant adopts the role of opponent). Confrontational sequences can end after just a few turns or they can take up a large part of the conversation. The endings can take up different forms: just an abrupt change of topic, one of the participants accepting the other's proposal or, in the best of cases, both participants reaching a consensus. As the participants take turns during a confrontational sequence, they alternate different roles which enable them to move the conversation forward. In the children's peer conversations, we found three main roles: proponent, opponent, and acceptance. As we mentioned before, the role of proponent in this kind of interaction can only be determined in contraposition to the role of opponent. The role of accepting implies that one of the participants accepts the other's

proposal or claim. Accepting the other participant's proposal does not necessarily mean that a consensus is reached. Negotiating a consensus requires both participants to agree, and thus, they take several turns to reach an agreement.
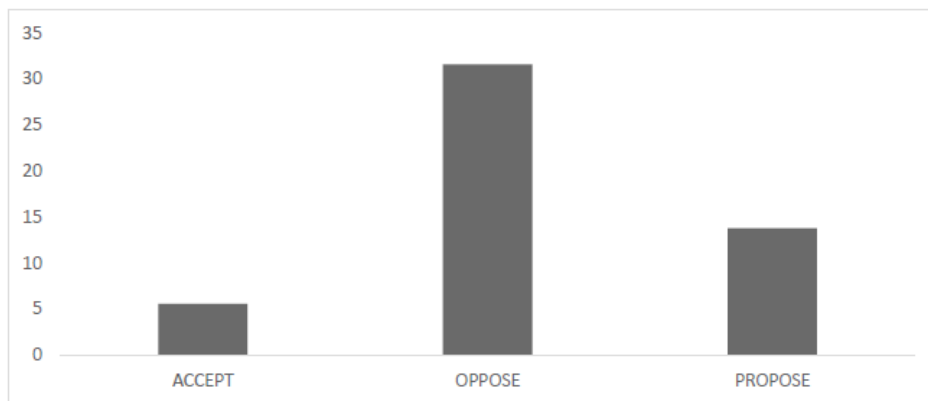

Figure 1. Percentage of utterances for roles adopted by children in confrontational sequences

As shown in Figure 1, children talk more when they adopt the role of opponent (as measured in the number of utterances in which the child adopts this role) than in any other role, as they intend to justify their opposition to the interlocutor. This is unsurprising, because no confrontation can exist without a participant opposing a proposal at least once, and thus, in these particular sequences, children adopt these roles more frequently. Figure 2, however, shows that the proportion of opposing utterances varies from dyad to dyad and from child to child. Dyad 3, with 2 male mid-SES participants, displays the highest percentage of opposing utterances. It is worth mentioning that there seems to be a symmetry within the dyads, so that the children who use a higher percentage of opposing utterances have partners who also produce a high percentage of opposing utterances.

The role of proponent is also necessarily present at least once, at the opening of a dispute. However, we found in our sample that 14 confrontational sequences were initiated by a child's action, rather than her utterance, that triggered the other child's opposition. As was to be expected, we found that children use fewer utterances in their role as proponents than as opponents. In Figure 2, we see that the proportion of proposing utterances varies more than that of opposing utterances and it is less symmetrical within dyads. The highest percentage of proposals was produced by a female mid-SES Child 4A in Dyad 4, but Child 4B produced considerably fewer proposals, as shown in Figure 2.
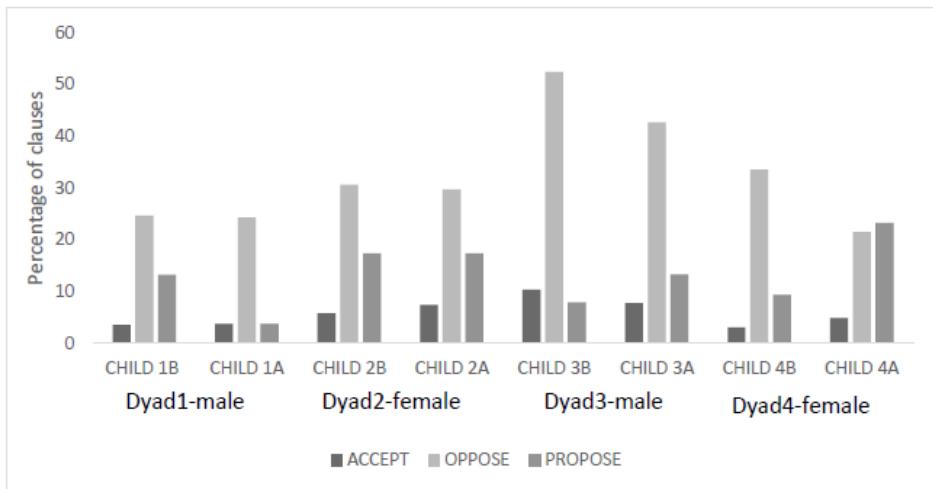
Figure 2. Variation in roles adopted by children in confrontational sequences

The lowest percentage of utterances belong to the role of accepting, which is again not surprising because this is a sufficient but not necessary requirement to end the confrontation. Child 3B, a mid-SES boy, whose opposing utterances were also the most frequent, produced the highest proportion of accepting utterances, but the confrontations in this Dyad 3 did not end in consensus. In our corpus, a negotiated agreement was reached in only one dispute, in Dyad 4, which continued across several confrontational sequences in the conversation of two mid-SES girls, and excerpts of which are shown in Examples 1, 2 and 3 below. And it is Child 4A in this dyad who also produced the highest percentage of proposals, which might imply that there is an association between the high number of proposals and the fact that a consensus was reached. However, our sample is too small to support this hypothesis.

In one of the confrontational sequences, we illustrate how children adopt these roles. Child 4A and 4B are planning to wear their princess dresses, but 4A would like to wear 4B's dress, not her own. This is the initial sequence (the numbers before each turn indicate their sequence)[1]:

Example 1 (Dyad 4)

1.   B: *Vestidos de princesa, nos ponemos los nuestros [c]*? PROPOSE
     (Princess dresses, we'll wear ours [c])

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[1] The numbering of turns reflects their sequence in the transcript with all the extracts of confrontational interactions in which this dyad participated. The two girls in this dyad engaged repeatedly in a dispute about their princess dresses, interspersing it with other confrontations related to different topics. The numbers show how far apart one segment is from the other. Example 1 is the beginning of the confrontation and Example 2 is the end (after 581 turns).

2. A: *Mirá [c] yo te presto el mío [c] y vos me prestás el tuyo [c]*.
    PROPOSE (ALTERNATIVE)
    (Look [c], I'll share mine [c] and you'll share yours [c])

3. B: *Yo traje el mío [c] para que yo me lo ponga [c]*. OPPOSE
    (I brought mine [c] so that [only] I can wear it [c])

4. A: *Dale [c]*. PROPOSE (INSIST)
    (Please [c])
    B: *No [c] porque mamá y yo lo trajimos para que [c]*. OPPOSE
    (JUSTIFY-INCOMPLETE)
    (No [c], because mother and I brought it so that…[c])

5. A: *Bueno [c] pero después [c]*. ACCEPT (OPEN ALTERNATIVE)
    (OK [c], but afterwards…[c])

The confrontation continues interspersed with other topics of conversation
and other disagreements. Approximately more than 500 turns later, 4B changes
her stance as she proposes a solution that is in agreement with 4A's claim, and
therefore, the confrontation is reaching an ending which is explicitly marked
by both participants (lines 580-581) with a formulaic expression ('It's a deal'):

Example 2 (Dyad 4)

576. B: *Te prometo que [c] si vos encontrás tu vestido [c] yo te lo
     cambio* [c]. PROPOSE (PROMISE)
     (I promise [c] that if you find your dress [c], I'll change it with
     mine [c])

577. A: *Bueno [c], si lo encuentro [c]*. ACCEPT (CONDITION)
     (OK [c], if I find it [c])

578. B: *Si no lo encontrás [c]*. PROPOSE (REPEAT CONDITION)
     (If you can't find it [c])

579. A: *No me lo das [c]*. (PROPOSE (REPEAT CONSEQUENCE)
     (You don't give it to me [c])

580. B: *Trato hecho [c]*? ACCEPT (ASK FOR CONSENSUS)
     (Is it a deal [c]?)

581. A: *Trato hecho [c]*. ACCEPT (CONSENSUS)
     (It's a deal [c])

Child 4B agrees to share her dress but with certain conditions, and 4A
accepts the promise with the condition attached. This is shown clearly in lines
578-579 as 4A completes 4B's sentence of what would happen if the condition
is not fulfilled. The negotiations that led to this agreement included different
pleas on 4A's part, the strongest is illustrated in the following example:

Example 3 (Dyad 4)

334. B: *Mi papá no deja [c] que yo se lo preste a alguien más
       porque [c]*. OPPOSE (AUTHORITY)
       (Father doesn't let me [c] share it with anyone because [c])

335. A: *Ay [c] no me lo digas [c] porque* si me lo decís [c]
       le cuento [c] o si me lo decís [c] me muero [c]. OPPOSE
       (THREAT)
       (Hey [c], don't tell me [c] because if you tell me [c], I'll tell too
       [c] or if you tell me [c] I'll die [c])

336. B: *La puta madre [c]*. OPPOSE (EMOTIONAL)
       (F… [expletive] [c])

337. A: *Querés [c] que me muera [c]*? PROPOSE (INSIST,
       APPEAL TO EMOTION)
       (Do you want [c] me to die [c]?)

338. B: *Dije eso [c] porque vos decías [c] que te morías [c] la puta
       madre [c]*. OPPOSE (JUSTIFY)
       (I said that [c] because you said [c] that you would die [c], f…
       [expletive] [c])

These examples show that, even though describing the participants' role
in an argumentative interaction helps us understand how children position
themselves with regard to their interlocutor, it gives us an incomplete picture
of how the confrontation evolves and it does not explain how effective
children's argumentative strategies are. For this purpose, we need to analyze
more closely the linguistic resources used in the confrontation.

Linguistic Resources for Stance-Taking: Evaluative Expressions

The children use linguistic resources to take a stance in the confrontational
interaction and, for this purpose, they use evaluative expressions and evidential
markers. As we have seen, reference to internal states is a very common
resource for stance-taking. An average of 52.3% (range 44%–62%) of the
children's clauses produced in the confrontation contained some reference
to internal states. Figure 3 shows the types of evaluative expressions used
on average by the children. Not surprisingly, the most frequent type of
evaluation by far is reference to intention. This can serve as a strategy to signal
the speaker's stance and justify it (*Yo traje el mío para que yo me lo ponga*,
[I brought mine, so that (only) I can wear it], in Example 1 above) or to try to
reach a common ground (*Nos ponemos los nuestros*, [We'll wear ours], in
Example 1) or to try to change the interlocutor's position (*Querés que me
muera?* [Do you want me to die?], in Example 3 above). The second most
frequent evaluative device is attribute, which constitutes a structurally simple

and descriptive way of signaling stance by adding an epithet to the object of the evaluation (e.g., *Vestidos de princesa* [Princess dresses], *Sos grande* [{You} are great]).
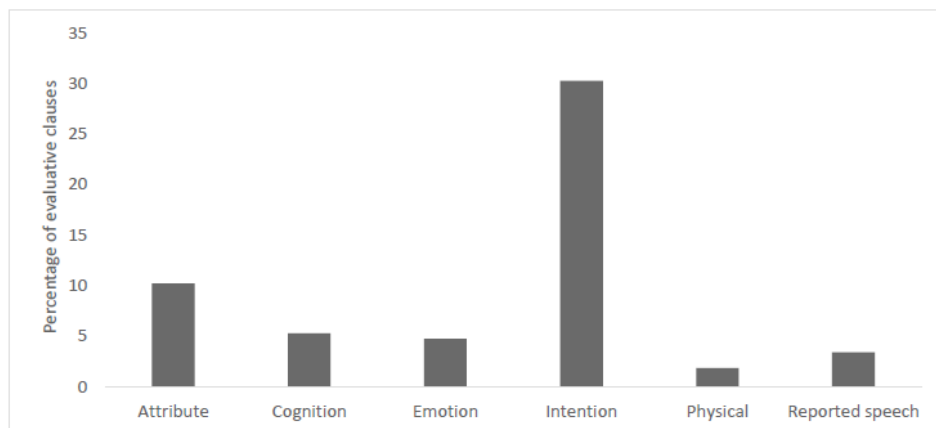

Figure 3. Average evaluative markers in confrontational interaction

Example 4 illustrates an interesting case of confrontation in which the attribute ('to be a dad' i.e., 'to behave like a dad') is the center of the dispute:

Example 4 (Dyad 3)

A: *Vos no sos **mi papá**, Rafael [c]*!
    (You are not **my dad**, Rafael [c]!)

B: *No te dije eso [c] no te dije [c] que yo soy **tu papá** [c]*.
    (I didn't say that [c], I didn't say [c] that I was **your dad** [c])

A: *Bueno [c] pero los papás dicen eso [c] que vos estás diciendo [c]*.
    (Well [c] but dads say [c] the things you are saying [c])

Child 3A questions 3B's authority by rejecting his authoritarian stance, and when 3B replies that he had not given himself the attribution of being 3A's dad, he skillfully retorts, 'but you talk like dads do'.

Reference to cognition is the third most frequently used evaluative expression. In Example 5, we observe that 3A and 3B are competing for a flyer which they transform into an imaginary map (*Yo tengo el mapa, mirá* [I have the map, look]). The perception verb *mirá* (look) serves as an attention getter, reinforcing the value of the 'map', whose purpose is to know where you are (*Para ver dónde están ustedes* [To see where you are]) and thus, humanizing it (*Mapa… sabe donde es todo* [map… knows where everything is]).

Example 5 (Dyad 3)

A: *Igual yo tengo el mapa [c] es más bueno el mapa [c]* **para ver** *[c] dónde están ustedes [c]*.
(Just so, I have the map [c], it's such a good map [c], **to see** [c] where you are [c])

B: [Intenta convencer a L de que le entregue el mapa] *esto haces así* [= abre el techo del auto] [c] *y acá tenés un mapa* [= señala adentro] [c]
([Tries to convince L to give him the map] this is how it's done [= opens the roof of the car] [c] and here is the map [= signals inside] [c]

A: *No [c] porque este es un mapa [c] y* **sabe** *[c] donde es todo [c]*.
(No [c], because this is a map [c] and it **knows** [c] where everything is[c])

Example 6 illustrates even more the effective argumentative use of cognitive expressions. In this sequence the whole disagreement revolves around what each girl knows or does not know (observe the occurrences of the verb *saber* together with other cognitive verbs, marked in bold):

Example 6 (Dyad 4)

A: *Ay [c] no* **sabés** *algo [c]*.
(Oh [c] you don't **know** something [c])

B: *Qué [c]*?
(What [c]?)

A: *Que había mucha [c] hace mucho tiempo [c] que nadie nacía en este lugar [c] había gente antigua [c]*.
(That there was a lot [c] once upon a time [c] nobody was born in that place [c] there was an ancient people [c])

B: *Ya* **sé** *[c] vos no* **sabés** *lo [c] no* **sabés** *[c] lo que había [c] porque a mí en el jardín me contaron [c]*.
(I **know** [c], you don't **know** that [c] you don't **know** [c] what was there [c] because I was told in kinder)

A: *A mí también [c] tengo la foto de las chicas antiguas y del chico antiguo [c]*.
(Me too [c], I have the picture of the ancient girls and the ancient boy [c])

B: *Te digo una cosa [c]*?
([Should] I tell you something [c]?

A: *Qué [c]*?
(What [c]?)

B: *En el jardín me **enseñaron** más [c], **sabés** [c] de dónde era el agua [c].*
(In kinder I was taught [c], you know [c], where water is from [c])

A: *Ya **sabía** [c] y no te voy a decir [c] porque no me **acuerdo** [c] qué era [c].*
(I **knew** that [c] and I'm not going to tell you [c] because I can't **remember** [c] what it was [c])

B: *Ah [c] no [c] el agua era del río [c].*
(Oh [c], no [c], the water was from the river [c])

A: *0 [niega con la cabeza y hace un ruido que acompaña el gesto].*
(Shakes her head and makes a noise together with a gesture)

B: *Sí [c] sí [c] era del río [c] pero vos no sabés nada [c] porque te voy a ... [c].*
(Yes [c] yes [c] it was from the river [c] but you **know** nothing [c] because I'm going to…[c])

References to emotion, reported speech and physical states are fewer. Children in this sample use mostly interjections (*ah, oh, ay*, etc.) to express emotion. All children used some sort of interjection (mean = 7.13, range 2–16). Only rarely did they refer overtly to emotional states as in examples 7 and 8:

Example 7 (Dyad 4)

A: *Está **triste** [c]?*
(Is she **sad** [c]? = referring to a doll)

B: *0 [niega con la cabeza].*
(shakes her head)

A: *Y por qué está **llorando** [c]?*
(Then why is she **crying** [c]?)

Or to physical states as in:

Example 8 (Dyad 2)

A: *La bebé se cayó y le **duele** la cabeza*
(The baby fell and she has a **headache**)

The occurrence of reported speech is also relatively low (3.4%), but we need to have a closer look, given its importance in overtly signaling stance by inserting voices in the confrontational interaction.

As the explicit insertion of voices in the confrontation is an outstanding feature of stance-taking, we are interested in the number of times this happens in the confrontations, rather than in the percentage. There are three ways speakers can introduce voices in their speech: direct, indirect, and free reporting (Shiro, 2012). The first two usually, but not always, contain two parts: a reporting

clause and a reported clause (Direct: 'She said: "I'm leaving"; Indirect: 'She said she was leaving'). The free report does not contain a reported clause, it only makes reference to what was said, without quoting it ('She told you a lie'). Thus, in Figure 4, we see that free reporting was the most frequent type of reported speech (on average, 4.75 cases per child). The presence of reporting clauses was not very frequent (on average, 2 cases per child), implying that most of the reported speech was not preceded by a 'he said/she said' clause. Similarly, there were only a few indirect (on average, 1.5 cases per child, but see Example 4) or direct (on average, 1 case per child, as shown in Figure 4) reported clauses.
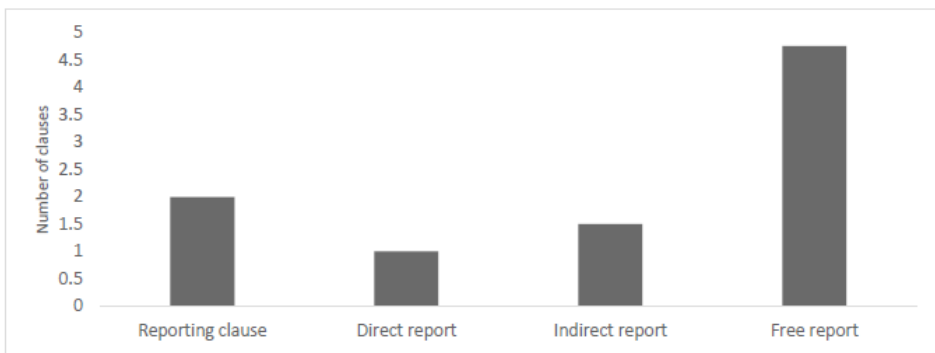

Figure 4. Reported speech in confrontational interaction

By using reported speech, other voices are inserted in the confrontational interaction, enabling children to combine different points of view and thus, to strengthen their stance. Example 9 illustrates how children can use reported speech for argumentative purposes. In this context, the children include an imaginary character in the conversation. Child 4B suggests that a Barbie doll which belongs to both girls should be given as a gift to an imaginary friend, a third party in the conversation. Child 4A rejects this proposal, arguing that the doll belongs to both of them and cannot be given away. Child 4B replies that they should ask the imaginary friend whether she would like the Barbie as a present. Child 4A "calls" the imaginary friend and reports back that she (the imaginary friend) would like a (different) doll, rather than the Barbie.

Example 9 (Dyad 4)

A: [A B] *Un bebé quiere así [c] que ... [= a la amiga imaginaria] no [c]*, **no querés Barbie [c], no [c]**.
([Addressing B] She wants a baby [c] so that ... [Addressing the imaginary friend] no [c], **you don't want a Barbie [c], no [c])**

B: [A la amiga imaginaria] *Entonces, **vos querés una Barbie** [c]*.
([Addressing the imaginary friend] Then, **you want a Barbie** [c])

A: [Voz de la amiga imaginaria] *Sí, **por supuesto [c], claro claro [c], porque yo no quiero una muñeca** [c]*.
([Imitating the voice of the imaginary friend] Yes, **of course [c], sure, sure [c], because I don't want a doll** [c])

B: [A A] *No [c], a vos te dijo [c], a **vos te dijo un chiste** [c], porque, porque ...[c]*.
([Addressing A] No [c], she told you [c], **she told you a joke** [c], because, because…[c])

A: [A la amiga imaginaria] *Sí [c] hola amiga [c]… Barbie [c]. [a B] ah [c] **te dijo una mentira [c], ah[c] te dijo una mentira** [c]*.
([Addressing the imaginary friend] Yes [c], hello [c], …Barbie [c]. [Addressing B] oh [c], **she told you a lie [c]**, oh [c], **she told you a lie** [c])

We can see here how reported speech is used as a powerful persuasive resource, by positioning the speakers in alignment with a certain point of view (in this case the voice of an imaginary third party) which may be considered valid for both participants in the confrontation.

Linguistic Resources for Stance-Taking: Evidential Markers

As mentioned above, evidential expressions mark the speaker's commitment to the information contained in the utterance. As evidentials signal the speaker's degree of (un)certainty, they are different from evaluative expressions in the sense that the absence of evidentials in an utterance implies stronger commitment (i.e., more certainty), whereas the absence of evaluation implies that the statement is less subjective (i.e., more factual). The children in our sample produced 28.14% of clauses (range 22.5%–38.5%) containing evidential markers, a much lower percentage than the percentage of their evaluative clauses.

Reference to obligation, deontic expressions, are by far the most frequent evidential markers found in our data. Example 10 illustrates Child 4A's questioning of the deontic norm imposed by 4B:

Example 10 (Dyad 4)

B: *Yo voy a cocinar [c]*.
(I'm going to cook)

A: *Ah* [= solloza] *[c] **por qué siempre tenés que cocinar vos** [c], **por qué siempre usás eso** [c]*?
(Ah, [= sobbing] [c], **why do you always have to cook** [c], **why do you do this** [c]?)

The frequent use of deontic modality is not surprising (Migdalek et al. 2014a), given the relevance of social ties in confrontational interactions. As the conflict appears while the children are playing, the rules must be negotiated and explicitly stated, as shown in Example 11 where 3A formulates the rules for the car fight and expresses the obligation to stick to the rules:

Example 11 (Dyad 3)

A: *Empiezo yo [c] y **vos no la podés tocar** [c]*. [= Toma el camión y avanza hacia el auto del hermano. A lo mira, B simula dispararle].
(I start [c], and **you can't touch it** [c]. [= Takes the truck and pushes it towards his brother's car. A watches B who pretends that he is shooting A])

B: *No [c] no quiero [c] que me mates [c]*!
(No [c], I don't want you [c] to kill me [c]!)

A: *No [c] pero si te mato [c] te mato [c] **tenés que respetar las reglas** [c]*.
(No [c], but if I kill you [c], I kill you [c], **you have to respect the rules** [c])

Expressions of causality constituted the second most frequent evidential marker. Although considerably less frequent than deontic modality, it is an important resource which serves as justification for children's claims (Migdalek et al., 2014). In example 5 above, we observe how Child 1A justifies his opposing claim by giving the reason why he adopts the stance of refusing to give the map to 1B.

(Taken from) Example 5 (Dyad 1)

A: *No [c] **porque este es un mapa** [c] **y sabe** [c] **donde es todo** [c]*.
(No [c], **because it is a map** [c], **and it knows** [c] **where is everything** [c]).

The third most frequently used evidential marker is concession, which enables the participants in the confrontation to adopt alternative stances that may lead to possible agreements. This can be seen in Example 2 (above) where 4A's concession is marked by *bueno*, preceding the repetition of a part of 4B's statement.

(Taken from) Example 2 (Dyad 4)

B: *Te prometo [c] que si vos encontrás tu vestido [c] yo te lo cambio [c]*.
(I promise [c] that if you find your dress [c], I'll change it with mine [c])

A: **Bueno** [c], **si lo encuentro** [c].
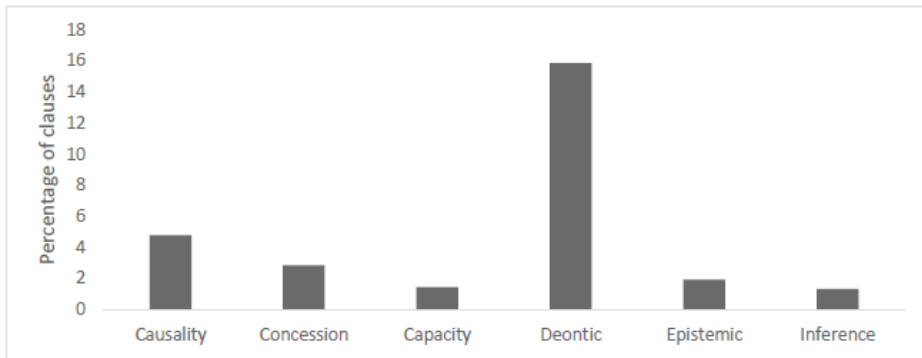(**OK** [c], **if I find it** [c]).

Figure 5. Percentage of evidential markers in confrontational interaction

The high proportion of deontic expressions and the low frequency of evidential markers, in general, may be interpreted as a signal of a strong assertive tone used by the children in these confrontations.

Linguistic Resource for Stance-Taking: Politeness

Confrontations are always face-threatening situations, which require certain socially acceptable behavior (Watts, 2003; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Burdelski, 2010). Our coding of salient linguistic markers of (im)politeness included, in order of frequency, expressions referring to: negative polarity, terms of address, mitigators, and positive polarity (Figure 6).
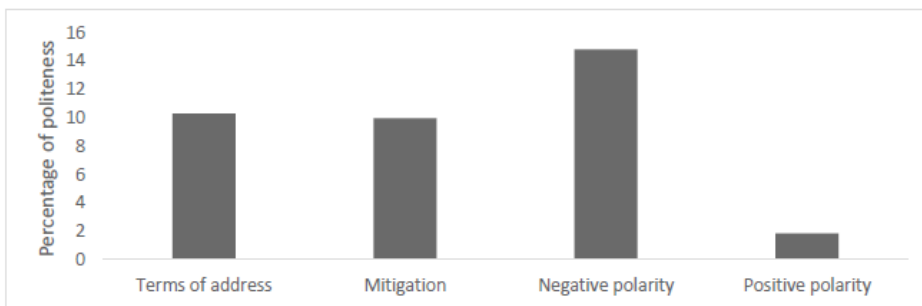

Figure 6. Percentage of politeness markers

Example 12 illustrates negative polarity and terms of address as politeness markers in the context of Child 3B's repeated refusal to play with 3A. The vocatives *Rafaeeel* (with vowel lengthening) and *Rafa* produced by 3A in both utterances are terms of address used as a salient feature for insisting

on 3A's request to play. Examples of vocatives can also be found in example 14 and 15 below, as they are a very common strategy when appealing to the interlocutor's good will. They are especially necessary when faced with a bare rebuttal, such as the negative polarity used in example 12 by 3B ('No' or 'No, I won't') to 3A's previous demand. In this case 3B's rebuttal with the negative adverb *no* followed by an explicit report of his response (*La respuesta mía es no* [My answer is no]) indicates his (impolite) rejection of 3A's request.

Example 12 (Dyad 3)

A: [Grita] ***Rafaeeel** dale [c]*!
([Shouting] **Rafaeeel** please [c]!)

B: *No [c] solo si los dos queremos [c] y la respuesta mía es no [c]*.
(No [c], only if we both want [c], and my response is no [c])

A: [Llora] *Pero quiero [c] jugar [c] dale **Rafa** [c]*!
([Crying] But I want [c] to play [c], please **Rafa** [c]!)

The category of mitigation includes both intensifiers and mitigators. Intensifiers are also very frequent in our data (see also Migdalek et al. 2014b) –as shown in Example 13– as well as mitigators, sometimes marked with the diminutive suffix (*vueltita* [a short walk]) common in Spanish (Example 14):

Example 13 (Dyad 3)

A: *Me lo leés [c]*?
(Are you going to read it to me [c]?)

B: *Ay [c] voy a ver [c] si es **muy** largo o **muy** corto [c], vos decíme [c] si es largo [c] o es corto [c]*.
(Yeah [c], let's see [c], if it's **very** long or **very** short [c], you tell me [c] if it is long or short [c])

Example 14 (Dyad 4)

A: *Hija [c] puedo ir a pasear [c] a dar una **vueltita** [c]*?
(Daughter [c], may I go out for a walk [c], just a **short walk** [c]?)

B: *Sí, a pasear [c] tenés que [c] esperá Sol [c] después [c]*.
(Yeah [c], a walk [c], you have to [c], wait Sol [c], later [c])

Example 15 (Dyad 1)

B: *Gooooool [c]*.
(Gooooal [c])

A: *En el culo [c]*.
(In the butt [c] = angry remark)

B: *Eh tramposo no vale [c] el otro no jugás [c] no jugás [c]*.
(Hey, cheating [c], not fair [c] you won't play the next one [c] you won't play [c])

A: *Metí gol [c] sete a uno, siete [c]*.
(I scored [c], seven to one, seven [c])

B: *Siete, siete estás [c] … no vale [c] Edu [c] vos sos un tramposo [c] hacés uno más [c] y no jugás [c]*.
(Seven, seven, you are [c] … Edu [c] you are cheating [c] you'll do one more [c] and you won't play [c])

A: ***Sí [c]***!
(Yes [c]!)

B: *Sí [c] pero cero a cero [c] pero no hay que hacer así [c] Edu [c] yia [: ya] [c] yia [:ya] si no [c] no juega [c]*.
(Yes [c] but 0-0 [c] but you can't do like this [c] Edu [c] yia [:ya] [c] yia [:ya] if not [c] you won't play [c])

Positive polarity, understood as a rebuttal to a negative utterance, is very scarce and is illustrated in Example 15 when 1A answers 'yes' and rejects 1B's threat to not let 1A play any longer. Interestingly, 1B's next utterance is also a 'yes', but rather than a rebuttal, it is an acceptance, as he signals his agreement to let 1A play, but only under certain conditions.

Again, the high proportion of negative polarity, together with low proportion of evidentials (among which deontic expressions were the most frequent), implies that children tend to position themselves in a very assertive manner in these confrontational interactions.

Conclusions and Implications

In this exploratory study, our aim was to describe the linguistic markers children use while positioning themselves in confrontational situations with peers. Our findings give an overall picture of how a group of Argentinian preschoolers use their linguistic abilities to fulfill the specific pragmatic requirements of this type of interaction. Given that we have analyzed the production of only 4 dyads and, even though each dyad participated in a large number of confrontational sequences, we cannot extrapolate our findings to a larger population, but we can assume that our detailed analysis of a large speech sample of these 8 children sheds light on the language resources used by them for stance-taking in argumentative interactions. Further studies should determine whether similar children in similar circumstances use the same or similar language resources in confrontations. Even though the development of evaluative skills extends into adolescence (Berman, 2004), it may be the case that in specific situations, such as confrontations, children need to make use of certain linguistic resources, more often and earlier, than in other situations,

giving rise to discourse-led theories of language development (Kyratzis et al., 2010) which imply that certain language forms are developed earlier when they are required in a particular situational context for a specific discursive or communicative purpose. The disputes analyzed in this paper took place exclusively in at home-play situations. However, Migdalek et al. (2015) showed that 4-year-olds from Argentinean low-income populations tend to use even more argumentative strategies and terms reflecting negative polarity in the preschool classroom context than at home. Thus, it is possible to assume that the other evaluative and evidential resources identified in the current analyzes would also be observed in the classroom context. Future studies will be aimed at examining, in further detail, similarities and differences between both contexts.

In confrontational interactions, social ties become extremely relevant. Thus, analyzing children's disputes enables us to observe how language functions both as an end and a means in the child's socialization process (Ochs, 1986; Blum-Kulka et al., 2004). Our results imply that preschoolers are quite capable of identifying their interlocutor's positioning, and of taking a stance with respect to it. In fact, their stance-taking is highly assertive. They can achieve this by using different types of evaluation which are appropriate for the interaction. It is important to mention that we have not encountered confrontational sequences where there was a misunderstanding between the participants; in all cases their responses were appropriate and relevant. Thus, all the children identified the role adopted by their interlocutor and responded in an appropriate manner, either opposing (as they did very frequently, engaging in the confrontation) or aligning themselves with their peer (which they did less frequently, as they tried to negotiate consensus). The fact that reference to intentions was the most frequent type of stance-taking resource in our sample may imply that young children, more often than not, express their volition, as a way of positioning themselves in the confrontation. This assumption is further reinforced by the frequent use of deontic modality, which is a way of stating an obligation, by imposing one's will on others, trying to change the interlocutor's stance in order to align it to one's own. The frequent use of negative polarity in our sample indicates that these young children have not yet developed face-saving strategies, the way adults might use, even though there was frequent mitigation (using mitigators and terms of address to soften the directness of imposing one's view on the interlocutor).

In sum, our findings show how children perceive the need to take a stance in confrontational interaction and use their linguistic resources accordingly, in order to signal their own positioning or try to change that of their opponent. As other studies (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004; Rosemberg, Silva, & Stein, 2011) have found, our results also imply that when children engage in a dispute, they must combine social, emotional and cognitive skills and, for this purpose, they use complex linguistic resources (Nelson, 1996, 2007).

As mentioned above, one of the limitations of our study is that our findings, at this stage of our investigation, are descriptive and should not be extrapolated to other populations, given that, even though our analysis is rich in detail, it is based on a small number of participants who spontaneously produced a great number of confrontational sequences, while being recorded in play situations. It is possible to assume that these are only emerging skills, and longitudinal studies should determine how they develop with age and which other factors influence their development. As the pragmatic resources analyzed here have been shown to be language and culture dependent, further research should examine Spanish-speaking children from varied cultural backgrounds to determine which factors have a stronger impact on the development of argumentative skills.

It is possible to conclude that this line of research should be pursued, as it sheds light on a combination of social, emotional and cognitive developmental processes, through the lens of language use. For this reason, we agree with other researchers (Blum-Kulka et al., 2004) who consider that peer talk gives children the opportunity to practice oral skills of a higher order than those used in other types of interaction and it can be helpful for later developmental processes, like those related to school requirements, such as academic discourse and literacy learning as well as metacognitive skills, such as self-regulated reflective thought (Leitão, 2007).

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