The language functions of *tipo* in Argentine vernacular

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Abstract

This article provides a case study account of the language functions of *tipo*, which is a pragmatic feature of Argentine Spanish vernacular, as used by 10 young adult native speakers of the language (ages 18-25), in the context of oral face-to-face and synchronous technology-mediated written interactions with young adult Spanish L2 learners. An examination of naturally occurring and self-reported language awareness data suggests that *tipo* has acquired a wide array of pragmatic functions—it is a marker of hesitation, exemplification, reformulation, vagueness, and quoted speech. In its non-pragmatic marking uses, it can refer to an unspecified man, preface a hyponym, and be used to make a comparison. Participants' usage patterns, in conjunction with their understanding of sociopragmatic variability in the use of *tipo*, are discussed as a direction for research in colloquial features of youth vernacular.

1. Introduction

Interest in researching the characteristics of the language used by teenagers and young adults has increased in the last 20 years. However, there are still very few studies in this area, especially in regard to languages other than English (Stenström, Andersen, and Hasund, 2002) among which Spanish in particular has been neglected (Rodríguez, 2002). Zimmermann (1996) makes the case that youth vernacular does not receive much attention because the social group that uses this variety is considered marginal—young people are underage and economically dependent. Importantly, the characteristics of their speech are short-lived; new words are adopted and old ones acquire new meanings at a fast pace (Zimmermann, 1996). From a research perspective, the nearer we get to "the vernacular," teenage and young adult talk is "likely to play a part in language change and often works its way into 'standard' language" (Stenström et al., 2002: x).

Prior applied linguistics research has revealed that one of the most distinctive characteristics of teenage and young adult language is its vocabulary; an example in English is the prevalence of *like* and *go* over *say* as quotative verbs (Stenström et al., 2002). Teenagers and young adults have also been found to imbue old words with new meanings. To be sure, the way these speakers talk draws criticism from parents and instructors alike, especially their

"use of slang, vague and dirty words, often in combination with a lot of 'unnecessary' smallwords, especially *like*" (Stenström et al., 2002:63). However, a linguistic focus on these features is essential, as they are very frequent and thus constitute a defining characteristic of conversational grammar, "but are found much more frequently in adolescent conversation" (Stenström, 2012:2411).

More importantly, they are often used as an expression of a shared experience (Rymes, 2011) or markers of peer-group membership (Tagliamonte, 2016). Despite being "referentially opaque," expressions such as *tipo* "indicate not that their speakers are vacuous but that these words encapsulate ambiguities too complex or localized to express explicitly" (Rymes, 2011:208).

The term 'youth vernacular' here refers to the language production of Argentine undergraduate students during the spring of 2012 when the data were collected. *Tipo,* a feature of youth vernacular, is frequently used in, and is thus a hallmark of unplanned spoken interactions among young speakers of Argentine Spanish. The aim of this study is two-fold: (1) to provide a case-study account of the uses of *tipo* (which roughly serves similar functions as *type*, *guy*, *like* and *around* in American English), a colloquial lexical feature characteristic of Argentine Spanish vernacular, as spoken by 10 young adult native speakers of the language (ages 18-25). These uses are in the context of oral face-to-face interactions and technology-mediated written interactions (i.e., text chat) with

young adult Americans (ages 18-22) who were studying L2 Spanish in Argentina;

(2) to characterize its contexts of use, levels of formality, and any additional

layers of meaning (e.g., stereotypes) based on the participants' responses to a

language awareness test. Overall, this study blends a discourse analytic

description of the linguistic patterns that emerged from the participants'

documented language performance together with the analysis of participants'

metapragmatic awareness of their social functions.

2. The use of *tipo* in Argentine Spanish

According to recent dictionaries of Argentine vernacular Spanish, *tipo* is

most frequently used in colloquial Spanish as a noun to describe an individual

(male or female) with what is usually a slightly negative connotation (Conde,

2004). But in the current vernacular of Argentine adolescent and undergraduate

speakers, *tipo* appears to have acquired a more extensive array of language

functions, in particular as a pragmatic marker (Huseby, 2010; Kornfeld, 2013).

Tipo has also been found to be used as a pragmatic marker in other varieties of

Spanish, such as Madrid youth vernacular (Mihastch, 2010; Stenström, 2012), as

well as other languages, such as Swedish (Stenström, 2012), Italian and

Portuguese (Mihatsch, 2007; Mihastch, 2010).

Pragmatic markers are single or multi-word expressions that often serve two major functions. In their textual function, they help establish relationships between topics or grammatical units adding to the cohesiveness of discourse; in their interpersonal function, they not only express different speakers' attitudes but also their relationship to or attitude toward the hearer(s) (Brinton, 1996). Some Spanish pragmatic markers have received a fair amount of attention, especially in terms of their use by L1 Spanish speakers, for example *pues* 'so' (e.g., Martínez García, 1990; Porroche Ballesteros, 1996; Travis, 2005; Stenström, 2006a, b; Vázquez Carranza, 2013) and *bueno* 'well' (e.g., Fuentes Rodríguez, 1993; Bauhr, 1994; Serrano, 1999; García Vizcaíno and Martínez-Cabeza, 2005; Travis, 2005; Bellés-Fortuño and Fortanet- Gómez, 2009). In comparison, other pragmatic markers have received little attention; examples include two Spanish pragmatic markers with functions similar to those of 'like' in English: *como* (Jørgensen and Stenström, 2009) and *en plan* (Stenström, 2012; Jørgensen, 2009) in different varieties of Spanish. Such is also the case of *tipo* in Argentine Spanish, with what appears to be only one empirical study available to date (Huseby 2010). Like many other pragmatic markers, *tipo* is functionally complex and has different syntactic functions. Just like other frequent pragmatic markers that are characteristic of the spoken language production of young speakers

(Jørgensen and Martínez, 2007), its manifold pragmatic functions of *tipo* remain understudied.

Huseby (2010) examined the discourse functions of *tipo* in the Corpus Oral de Lenguaje Adolescente de Buenos Aires (Oral Corpus of Adolescent Language from Buenos Aires; COLAba) (Jørgensen, 2007)[1]. At the time of Huseby's study, COLAba had a total of 50,000 words. Huseby identified 462 uses of *tipo* as a discourse marker, to which she attributed six functions: to hedge, to approximate, to exemplify, to intensify, to gain processing time (i.e., as a filler), and to mark reported speech. The most prevalent functions in her analysis were hesitation and exemplification marker (with 301 and 114 uses, respectively). Huseby notes that the speakers in COLAba are all middle and higher middle class but she does not report the total number of speakers.

Throughout Huseby's thesis, the illustrative uses for each of these functions come from a group of ten speakers (9 females, 1 male). The vast majority of examples, however, come from two female speakers in particular (referred to as Agus and Noelia). In fact, Huseby argues that 98% of the uses in COLAba are from female speakers, with only 10 recorded uses for a restricted number of functions (filler, approximation, and exemplification) by males in the entire corpus.

The present study seeks to expand on Huseby's (2010) work by identifying and describing youth-speak meanings of *tipo* in two different media, face-to-face and technology-mediated communication, in interactions between Spanish speakers of undergraduate age. It also expands the scope of Huseby's work by investigating *tipo*'s functions in interactions between native and non-native speakers of Spanish (i.e., American undergraduates studying abroad in Argentina). With the addition of an awareness test to the performance data, it also probes expert speakers' understanding of sociopragmatic variability in the use of *tipo* in Argentine Spanish.

3. Study methods

3.1 Data collection

This study is based on selected data from a larger investigation of the use of youth vernacular in Argentine Spanish by a group of American and Argentine undergraduate students during the spring of 2012 (Fernández, 2013). The data used for the case study presented here are from ten Argentine undergraduate students aged 18–25.

The participants were instructed to audio-record their interactions with their American conversation partners (same and cross-sex pairings) in four face-to-face interactions (once per month for 4 months). These sessions were each a

minimum of 30 minutes long plus one weekly text chat session of at least 20

minutes on any technology-mediated platform of their choice, for a total of about

15 sessions spread over the same 4-month period. Their audio-recordings were

transcribed using regular orthography. The text chats were cleaned of identifying

information (usernames, time stamps, etc.) and collected into a language

database for further analysis.

In addition to performance data (i.e., the naturally occurring

conversations), this study also tapped into the participants' awareness of the

social meaning of *tipo* at the time of data collection. A modified version of

Paribakht and Wesche's (1993) Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS, Figure 1)

was used to determine the participants' self-perceived "receptive and initial

productive knowledge" (Schmitt, 2010, p. 218) of the youth vernacular uses of

the target lexicogrammatical feature. It elicited participants' understanding of its

meaning by, for example, asking them to use it in sentences. In addition to the

core questions, three additional questions about the constraints on the use of the

target lexical features (e.g., in this case, perceived contexts of use, functions in

discourse, and level of formality of *tipo*) were added to the instrument. This

additional layer of questioning was used to tap into participants' metapragmatic

awareness of the different uses of *tipo*. The adapted VKS was translated into

Spanish from its original, and administered in a paper and pencil format during

the interview. The participants were allowed to ask questions of the researcher

and they were audio recorded as they filled out the VKS.

Figure 1. Sample VKS Item (Spanish version) and Sample Participant Response (Jazmín)

3.2 Participants

The 10 student participants (Table 1) were majoring in different fields at

various universities in downtown Buenos Aires (*Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos

Aires*, CABA). All of the speakers were 18 to 25 years old (a common

undergraduate age range in Argentina, which is traditionally 6 years long) and

were studying at the university or college level in the city of Buenos Aires at the

time of data collection and had spent a minimum of 2 years living and/or studying

in CABA.

Table. 1 Participant demographic information

Pseudonym	Gender	Age
1. Analía	F	20
2. Adriana	F	24
3. Alejandro	M	20
4. Dalma	F	19
5. Jazmín	F	19
6. Mario	M	25
7. Pablo	M	18
8. Romina	F	19
9. Vanesa	F	19
10. Victoria	F	19

The participants had various socioeconomic backgrounds ranging from high (Alejandro, Jazmín, Romina, and Vanesa), to higher middle (Pablo), to middle (Adriana), to lower middle class (Analía, Dalma, Mario, and Victoria).

Participants were paired with conversation partners according to their stated list of interests and hobbies (collected through the background questionnaire and an initial interview with the researcher). These conversation partnerships were established primarily as a way for participants to get to know, interact with, and ideally develop a friendship with American undergraduates with similar interests, rather than as a means to act as a Spanish language tutor or to practice L2 English with an English L1 speaker.

3.3 Analysis

Occurrences of *tipo* were retrieved from the dataset using the freeware

AntConc (Anthony, 2014). The data set yielded attested uses of *tipo* with non-

pragmatic and pragmatic marking functions. In its non-pragmatic uses, *tipo* is

used to (1) establish a hyponym-general category relationship between two

terms (or as a binomial taxonomic noun, cf. Mihatsch, 2016), similar to the

English noun *type* as in "*qué **tipo** de peli te gustan?"* ('what ***tipo*** of movies do you

like?'), (2) make a comparison, similar to the English *like* as in *tipo Venecia* ('like

Venice'), and (3) to refer to an unspecified man as a noun (similar to '*guy'*, or

'*dude'*). The first two are documented in general dictionaries of Spanish (e.g.,

Real Academia Espanola[2]) and are used extensively in different written and

spoken genres, and thus appear to be the canonical or "sanctioned" (Kinginger

and Blattner, 2008) uses of *tipo*. The use of *tipo* to refer to a man (with its

feminine being *tipa*), however, is collected by several dictionaries of Argentine

slang or *lunfardo*. Most dictionaries of Argentine slang assign it a pejorative tone

(e.g., Conde, 2004) (however, the uses of *tipo* as a noun in the current database

did not seem to carry any negative connotation).

Pragmatic marking uses (textual and interactional) of *tipo* by each of the

participants were identified and are discussed in the results section. Each

occurrence was examined within its local and larger context. Only instances of

tipo produced by the participants were analyzed, i.e., uses by the L2 Spanish

speakers were not included in the present analysis. At the micro level, a

discourse analytic approach was employed to explore and describe the

pragmatic functions of *tipo*. The functional use categories discerned from the

data were compared and contrasted with those found in the literature for *tipo*

(Huseby, 2010) and the English pragmatic marker *like* (Andersen, 2001; Meehan,

1991; Underhill, 1988). Also, given the sampling method employed and the small

sample size, the data were analyzed qualitatively; that is, they have not been

analyzed for frequency of use by speaker, gender, and/or socioeconomic status.

The qualitative responses to the last five items in the modified VKS (i.e.,

meaning, sample sentence(s), perceived contexts of use, functions in discourse,

and level of formality) were collated and analyzed.

4. Results

The data provide a description of the pragmatic uses of *tipo* based on 142

uses in attested interactions between the participants and L2 learners. Given the

paucity of studies on the use of *tipo* in Argentine Spanish youth vernacular, a

description of each function is provided together with several examples from the

one-on-one interactions between the participants and their conversation partners.

In the interactional data, the participants were found to most frequently

use *tipo* with a pragmatic marking function, and to a lesser extent as a noun to

describe a man, to introduce a hyponym, or to make a comparison, as described in detail in each of the sections below.

4.1 Hesitation

Tipo was used very often as a hesitation device, and was seen as an indicator that the speaker needed time to think or to perform a word search. In excerpt 1, Alejandro's phonological prolongation of the final /o/ in *tipo* is followed by a short silence plus *eh*, the most common Spanish "filler" (Cenoz, 1998), which is also prolonged (line 6). The use of *tipo*, as well as the pause filled with the vocalization *eh*, appears to be a way to continue to hold the floor while searching for the most appropriate word in context (lines 6–7). Alejandro seems to be searching for the best descriptor for the type of tourism activities that he believes Erin wants to engage in. He first offers the adjective *tranquilo* ('relaxed' or 'calm'; line 6), and then settles for *sedentario* ('sedentary'; line 7).

Excerpt 1. *Tipo* as hesitation device (Alejandro and Erin)

1	<E> *hicimos lugares turísticos*	we did many touristic places (xxx) a
2	*(xx) muchísimos, de museos no*	lot, of museums not of but one in La
3	*de pero uno de la Boca, de*	Boca, in Puerto Madero, in cre-, in I
4	*Puerto Madero de cre-, de digo*	mean Plaza de Mayo like this.
	Plaza de Mayo así.	
5	<A> *si vos querés hacer mini*	if you want to do mini tourism ***tipo:***
6	*turismo **tipo**: e:h más tranquilo*	u:h more relaxed more u:hm
7	*más este: sedentario*	sedentary

In the next example, Analía is describing to Kaelyn the types of classroom activities she often conducts. In trying to find the best way to describe an activity in which the students take turns throwing dice and moving spaces on a board laid out on the floor (where there are review cards for them to pick up), Analía uses *tipo* with a prolonged final /o/ in between a repeated coordinating conjunction (line 6).

Excerpt 2. *Tipo* as hesitation device (Analía and Kaelyn)

1	<A> *así con cosas que para repasar y*	like with things that to review and well
2	*bueno*	
3	<K> *una pregunta o algo*	a question or something
4	<A> *claro*	right
5	<K> *uh*	uh
6	<A> *y **tipo:** y si no me retroceden un*	and ***tipo:*** and otherwise they go back a
7	*casillero y esas cosas*	space and things like that

In excerpt 3, Vanesa is explaining a linguistic phenomenon she has observed in Argentine Spanish, in which certain English words are borrowed and adapted into Spanish phonology. Their spelling is normalized and they are further adapted by adding the Spanish verbal ending *-ar* (lines 1–3; Escobar and Potowski, 2015). She provides *Google* and the verb *guglear* as an example (line 4) and produces a *tipo* (also with a prolongation of the final /o/) at the end of her utterance (line 4).

Excerpt 3. *Tipo* as a hesitation device (Vanesa and Paul)

1	<V> *Acá se hace mucho eso agarrar*	here we do that a lot to take a: a word in
2	*u::n una palabra en inglés? Y*	English? And make it into *eh* into a verb
3	*convertirlo en eh en verbo como*	like *googlear* for example instead of to
4	*guglear por ejemplo en vez de buscar en Google se dice guglear **tipo**:*	look up in Google you say *googlear **tipo**:*
5	<P> *sí*	yes
6	<V> *sí, vas a ver mucho de eso*	yes, you are going to see a lot of that

Another participant, Pablo, uses *tipo* (excerpt 4, line 4) on its own as he

appears to be thinking of ways to continue with the interaction, which by that

point seemed rather drawn out and topics of conversation seemed slightly forced.

Excerpt 4. *Tipo* as hesitation device (Pablo and Sally)

1	<P> *te gusta más cursar a la mañana o*	what do you like best to take classes in the
2	*a la tarde?*	morning or in the afternoon?
3	<S> *al mediodía [risa]*	at noon [*laughter*]
4	<P> ***tipo**:*	*tipo*:
5	<S> *me gusta u:m, once, entre las las*	I like u:m eleven [am] between eleven and
6	*once y las u::m dieciséis. Y tú en la mañana?*	u::m four pm. And you in the morning?
7	<P> *sí en la mañana sí*	yes, in the morning yes

4.2 Exemplification

When used to exemplify, *tipo* can be paraphrased as 'for example'. The

examples introduced often specify a more general concept or noun. In excerpt 5,

for example, when Molly describes the artistic activities of her host family, she

mentions that one of the host daughters can dance (lines 4 and 6). In the

following turn, Romina first repeats the hypernym or superordinate noun *dance*

and uses *tipo* to introduce two sample hyponyms to request that Molly narrow

down the specific dance form(s) she is referring to (line 7).

Excerpt 5. *Tipo* for exemplification (Molly and Romina)

1	<M> *sí. y: eh, la familia es u:h, me*	yes. a:nd eh, the family is u:h, I to like you
2	*gustar te mucho aaar mucha, u:hm, la*	a lot [masc.] aaar a lot [fem.], the mother
3	*madre puede: actar y: u:h canta:r y*	ca:n act a:nd u:h si:ng and u:hm, the
4	*u:hm, las hermanas u:hm, u:h una*	sisters u:hm, u:h one siste:r dance [noun]
	hermana: baile	
5	<R> *uh-huh.*	uh-huh.
6	<M> *baile y: la otra [.] le gusta [.]*	dance a:nd the other [.] she likes [.]
7	<R> *¿baile **tipo** ballet? o ¿tango?*	dance **tipo** ballet? or tango?
8	<M> *u:hm, clásico: y tap*	u:hm, classical and tap

Excerpt 6 is taken from Pablo's and Sally's third meeting, to which Pablo

had brought his Argentine friend and classmate Felicia. Here, Pablo and Felicia

are discussing expressions that would be essential for Sally to know in order to

get by in Argentina. In trying to understand what Pablo means by the "most

basic" expressions (line 2), Felicia asks for more specification (line 3). Pablo then

uses *tipo* to introduce sample expressions that might be of use (lines 4–5).

Excerpt 6. *Tipo* for exemplification (Pablo, Felicia, and Sally)

1	<F> *¿Cuáles son esenciales?*	Which ones are essential?
2	<P> *¿Esenciales? Las más básicas,*	Essential? The most basic ones,

3	<F> *¿A ver cómo cuáles?*	Let's see which ones?
4	<P> ***tipo*** *por favor, gracias, hola, ¿cómo*	*tipo* please, thank you, hello, how are
5	*estás?*	you?

4.3 Reformulation

The interactions also provided many examples of *tipo* used as a

reformulation device. *Tipo* was used to reword, paraphrase, elaborate, or explain

information, with the intent of clarifying, specifying, or expanding a point (Aijmer,

2007). In excerpt 7, Vanesa is describing to Paul a common nightlife practice

among undergraduates in Argentina (lines 5–6). She provides the youth

vernacular term for this social practice, *el bajón* (line 6), and then uses *tipo* after

the copula in an adjectival clause seemingly to unpack the meaning of this

expression for Paul's sake (lines 8–10), although Paul's *uh* in line 7 does not

unequivocally indicate that he does not know or understand the expression.

Excerpt 7. *Tipo* for reformulation (Vanesa and Paul)

1	<V> *acá por lo general lo que se hace*	here in general what you do is [.] you go
2	*es [.] vos haces una salida? A la noche,*	out? At night, you go to a night club all
3	*salís a un boliche todo*	
4	<P> *sí sí*	yes yes
5	<V> *y a las seis de la mañana haces lo*	and at six in the morning you do what we
6	*que se llama el bajón*	call the *bajón*
7	<P> *uh*	uh
8	<V> *que es **tipo** el así vas y comés a*	that is ***tipo*** the like you go eat at six in the
9	*las seis de la mañana una*	morning a hamburger and then they all
10	*hamburguesa y después se van todos a*	go home to sleep
11	*su casa a dormir*	

In several of its reformulation uses, the participants (particularly those who

spoke fluent English) code-switched into English. In excerpt 8, for example,

Romina introduces a type of photography called HDR (line 1), explains what the

acronym stands for (lines 1–2), and then elaborates upon what this digital

imaging technique involves (such as taking five pictures with different exposures;

lines 4–6). Romina then uses *tipo* (line 6) to introduce a reformulation of the word

exposición ('exposure'; lines 7–8), which is a fairly technical term. Here, Romina

provides an explanation or a translation of a term to aid Molly's understanding

(as in the case of a low-frequency and fairly specialized lexical item such as

exposure in the context of photography) and/or move the interaction along.

Excerpt 8. *Tipo* for reformulation (Molly and Romina)

1	<R> *HDR que e:h, es high dynamic*	HDR that e:h, is high dynamic range, I
2	*range, creo*	think
3	<M> *all right*	all right
4	<R> *que es como, está buena, es*	that is like, it's great, it's like you take of
5	*como que sacás de una misma cosa*	the same thing like five pictures with
6	*como cinco fotos con diferente como*	different like exposure *tipo* you change
7	*exposición* **tipo** *el shutter time lo vas*	the shutter time
	cambiando	

Reinforcing *tipo*'s reformulating function, speakers oftentimes used it in

combination with (i.e., immediately preceded or followed by) the pragmatic

marker *o sea*, which translates as 'that is (to say)'. As a case in point, in excerpt

9, Vanesa uses the term *guachos* (line 1). Paul offers a candidate hearing,

baches (line 2), indicating to Vanesa that he did not know this word. She thus

repeats the word (line 2) and then uses *tipo* followed by *o sea* to introduce a

reformulation or explanation of the term. In this explanation, she uses *tipo* three

more times, twice to introduce English translations for the two possible meanings

of the word (line 5), until Paul gives indication that he has understood it (line 7).

Excerpt 9. *Tipo* for reformulation (Vanesa and Paul)

1	<V> *Qué guachos!*	Such bastards!
2	<P> *sí [.] qué baches?*	yes [.] what potholes?
3	<V> *Guacho **tipo:** [.] tsck o sea [.]*	*Guacho tipo:* [.] tsck that is [.] *guacho*
4	*guacho can be it can be negative like*	can be it can be negative like uhm *tipo* a
5	*uhm **tipo** a bad person o guacho **tipo***	bad person or *guacho tipo* you lucky
6	*you lucky bugger* [xxx] ***tipo:***	bugger [xxx] *tipo*:
7	<P> *Ah sí, claro*	Oh yes, right

4.4 Vagueness

When used as a vagueness marker (for approximation or hedging), *tipo* is

often placed before a quantitative noun (phrase), usually a number representing

a time of the day, rendering the quantity to which the number refers less precise.

This appears to be done to provide for some flexibility, particularly when it comes

to arranging times to meet, for example, as shown in excerpt 10, which is a

portion of a Facebook exchange between Dalma and Kelly when they were

arranging a time to meet. Because Dalma had to take public transportation to get

to their meeting place from work (which, though frequent, was often unreliable in

the city due to traffic), she suggested meeting "*tipo* five," allowing some flexibility

in case she did not make it on the dot. In this case, *tipo* appears to have a

function similar to that of the hedge *around*, added to numerical expressions in

order to make them less precise, or the suffixes –like and –ish used in colloquial

English (Cheng and Warren, 2003; Mihatsch, 2007).

Excerpt 10. *Tipo* for approximation (Dalma and Kelly, technology mediated)

1	<D> *hola gordi. yo hoy no podía. podés*	hello sweetie. today I wasn't available. can
2	*el miércoles?*	you [meet] on Wednesday?
3	<K> *sí!*	yes!
4	<D> ***tipo*** *5 dale? xq salgo del instituto y*	***tipo*** 5 okay? 'cause I finish at the institute
5	*voy para once*	and I leave for Once [name of a
		neighborhood]
6	<K> *bueno!*	okay!

Tipo was also used as a hedging device when the speaker appeared

unsure or did not want to fully commit to the truth or accuracy of her statement. In

excerpt 11, Analía is very vaguely referring to a piece she had seen on the news

about Kaelyn's home state in the United States. She uses the pragmatic marker

tipo to hedge the fact that the news was about championships. It appears that

she does not want to commit to the truth of that statement. Her lack of

commitment is further reinforced by the use of the question *puede ser*? ('can it

be?') twice (lines 2-3 and 6), the vague markers *algo* ('something'; line 5) and

algo así ('something like that'; line 6; Fernández, 2015), and the expression *no

me acuerdo* ('I don't remember'; line 5).

Excerpt 11. *Tipo* for approximation (Analía and Kaelyn)

1	<A> *el otro día estaba viendo que era*	the other day I was watching what was
2	*una noticia de Pennsylvania puede*	news from Pennsylvania can it be?
3	*ser?*	
4	<K> *s- ah pued- bueno, de qué?*	y- uh it ca- well, about what?
5	<A> *y no me acuerdo algo de **tipo***	I don't remember something about *tipo*
6	*campeonatos o puede ser algo así ?*	championships or can it be something like
7	*después te lo paso*	that? later I'll send it to you
8	<K> okay	okay

4.5. Quoted speech

Vanesa and Jazmín produced several instances of *tipo* with a quotative function. Its position was fixed "before an embedded clause which is interpreted as a quote" (Meehan, 1991:46). As shown in excerpts 12 (lines 1 and 7) and 13 (line 5), in this function *tipo* can be immediately preceded by the copula. The construction frequently used by the speakers was "(it) is/was *tipo* + quote." In 12, Vanesa is retelling her first experience visiting the Grand Canyon. She uses *tipo* twice, both times preceded by the verb *ser* (to be), first in present tense (line 1) and then in past tense (line 7).

Excerpt 12. *Tipo* as quotative (Vanesa and Paul)

1	<V> *la verdad llegás y es **tipo** ¡wow*	and the truth is you arrive and it's ***tipo***
2	*son enormes!*	wow they are huge!
3	<P> *sí*	yes
4	<V> *es algo que no, tenés que ir a*	it is something that no, you have to go
5	*verlo*	and see it
	[…]	
6	<V> *no, yo llegué al Grand Canyon y*	no, I arrived at the Grand Canyon and

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| 7 | *fue **tipo** wow soy muy chiquita, soy un* | it was ***tipo*** wow I'm very small I'm a |
| 8 | *organismo m<u>u</u>y pequeño* | v<u>e</u>ry small organism |

In excerpt 13, Jazmín uses *tipo* twice to introduce "paradigmatic exemplars" or statements "similar in form and content" which "might have been produced in the circumstance in question" (Fleischman and Yaguello, 2004: 140). In this case, Jazmín is referring to typical greetings she has repeatedly heard from cashiers at stores in the United States (lines 4 and 5). In this instance, she clearly does not have a particular speaker or quote in mind, but rather a speech act that she deems recurrent (and thus superfluous or devoid of any real meaning). Here again, the construction "(it) is/was *tipo* + quote" is used for introducing 'paradigmatic' quoted speech.

Excerpt 13. *Tipo* as quotative (Jazmín and Harry)

1	<J> *es como que te saludan [.] siempre*	it's like they greet you [.] it's always that
2	*está la cosa en Estados Unidos me di*	thing in the United States I realized that
3	*cuenta es como que no sé vos pagas*	[it's] like you pay for something in the
4	*algo en un supermercado y siempre*	supermarket and it's always *tipo* have a
5	*es **tipo**" have a nice day!" O **tipo** "hi,*	nice day! or *tipo* hi how is it going? but
6	*how is it going?" pero te lo preguntan*	they ask you this like automatically
7	*como automático*	
8	<H> *yeah*	yeah

Tipo can also be used to introduce a direct quote and follow a verb of saying (though not always immediately preceding it, as seen in line 2), such as

decir ('say/tell') in excerpt 14. In this case, Vanesa is retelling her expressions of

disbelief when she found out that her father was invited to a popular concert and

he did not had to pay entrance.

Excerpt 14. *Tipo* as quotative (Vanesa and Paul)

1	\<V\> *y no tuvo que pagar tipo lo*	and he didn't have to pay *tipo* he was
2	*invitaron, yo le dije "sos un guacho",*	invited, and I told him "you're a [lucky]
3	*tipo "me estas j-" tipo me estas*	bastard", *tipo* "you are sh-" *tipo* you are
	cargando	pulling my leg
4	\<P\> *sí*	yes

Tipo appeared to also be used for dramatic effect (Meehan, 1991), as in

excerpt 15. This is a 'hypothetical' quote (dramatizing different possible

utterances) (Jones and Schieffelin, 2009) introduced by *tipo*, with no verb of

saying. Vanesa is demonstrating the types of questions that Paul can ask her if

he does not understand her (lines 3–4).

Excerpt 15. *Tipo* as quotative (Vanesa and Paul)

1	\<V\> *no te preocupes, en serio. Cualquier*	don't worry, I mean it. For anything
2	*cosa interrumpime. No tengas miedo,*	interrupt me. Don't be afraid. *Tipo* what
3	*tipo "qué es eso?" "Qué me estás*	is that? What are you telling me? I don't
4	*diciendo?" "No te entiendo"*	understand you
5	\<P\> *uh okay*	uh okay
6	\<V\> *y yo te lo explico. No tengo*	and I explain it to you. I have no
7	*problema*	problem

Jazmín (excerpt 16) also used *tipo* to introduce a hypothetical quote when discussing the types of questions she wished she would be asked in a particular high-stakes test of English proficiency (lines 3–4).

Excerpt 16. *Tipo* as quotative (Jazmín and Henry)

1	<J> *no sé, es un, nunca te van a*	I don't know, it's a, they are never going
2	*preguntar algo importante. No te van a*	to ask you something important. They
3	*preguntar **tipo** no sé,* "what is your	are not going to ask you *tipo* I don't know
4	opinion about the foreign policies of your	"what is your opinion about the foreign
	country?" [*se ríe]*	policies of your country?" [*laughs*]
5	<H> yeah, *porque algunos tienen que*	yeah, because some have to prove that
6	*probar que podés hablar no de qué*	you can talk not about what

Several patterns appear to emerge in these examples. In excerpt 12, Vanesa uses the impersonal second person singular in the present tense, with the verb ending for *vos* ('you') as used in Argentine Spanish, to paradigmatically refer to anybody who arrives at the Grand Canyon. She then proceeds to introduce the paradigmatic quote she assumes would be everybody's reaction upon gazing on it for the first time (lines 1–2). When she switches to her own experience (lines 6–8), she uses past tense to introduce the quote (i.e., in the construction *fue tipo x*). In this case, the quote introduced by *tipo* appears to mark her "internal thought" trying to take in such a majestic view for the first time rather than the report of an utterance "actually spoken aloud" (Dailey-O'Cain, 2000:66).

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A similar paradigmatic quote is used in excerpt 13, when Jazmín

introduces a prototypical greeting at a store in the United States with the 'to be' +

tipo construction in the present tense. The fact that this is not an actual quote is

strengthened by the use of the frequency adverb *siempre* ('always'), *siempre es*

tipo + quote. Jazmín also uses *tipo* to introduce a hypothetical quote (though not

immediately preceding the quote) together with the frequency adverb *nunca*

('never') in excerpt 16, although in this case she does not use the copula, but

rather the verb of saying *preguntar* ('to ask') in the present tense.

Finally, Vanesa also uses *tipo* to introduce a hypothetical quote when she

lists all the questions that Paul can ask her (excerpt 15), although in this case

there is also no copula or verb of saying (though it can be hypothesized that if it

had not been omitted, given that the rest of the utterance is in present tense, the

verb would be in present tense as well). In contrast, when preceded by a verb in

the past tense, then *tipo* appears to introduce a direct quote (as shown in excerpt

14). The quote, however, is often not to be taken literally. As argued by Huseby

(2010), when used as a quotative, *tipo* retains some of its approximating value.

4.7. Expert-speaker information about the social meanings of *tipo*

In the language awareness test, participants assigned *tipo* several

language functions. The five functions they identified are discussed in order of

frequency of mention in the VKS responses to questions IV 'I know this word. It

means…', V 'I can use this word in a sentence', and VII 'the function of this word

in speech is.' As will become evident, and unsurprisingly for a pragmatic marker

of this kind, the participants assigned *tipo* more than one language function.

Table 2. VKS responses to Item IV

Participant	Examples
1. Analía	*Nos encontramos **tipo** 8.*
	We met/Let's meet *tipo* 8.
2. Adriana	*Es como **tipo** re inteligente esa chica.*
	It's like *tipo* super intelligent, that girl.
3. Alejandro	*Y sí **tipo** 8 o 9 éramos.*
	And yes we were *tipo* 8 or 9.
4. Dalma	*Pensé que estabas cocinando así **tipo** con una cuchara.*
	I thought that you were cooking like *tipo* with a spoon.
5. Jazmín	*Te encuentro **tipo** 4.15.*
	I'll meet you *tipo* 4.15*.*
	*Conocí a este **tipo**.*
	I met this *tipo*.
	*Ella es **tipo** re simpática.*
	She is *tipo* super nice*.*
6. Mario	***Tipo** un gobierno de derecha pero no lo es.*
	Tipo it's a right-wing government but it is not.
7. Pablo	*Tenía una bici que era **tipo** de carrera.*
	I had a bicycle that was *tipo* a racing bicycle*.*
8. Romina	*Voy para tu casa **tipo** cinco.*
	I'll come to your place *tipo* five*.*
9. Vanesa	*Este es un ejemplo del **tipo** práctico;*
	This is an example of the practical *tipo*.
	*La palabra **tipo** es tipo una muletilla.*
	The word *tipo* is *tipo* a filler.
10. Victoria	*Donde fuimos el sábado era **tipo** el bar de la semana pasada.*
	The place we went to last Saturday was *tipo* the

bar *from last week.*

Five participants (Analía, Adriana, Jazmín, Romina and Vanesa) assigned *tipo* a filler function referring to it as '*una muletilla'* (literally, a small 'crutch' used metaphorically to refer to an expression that interactants 'lean on' when speaking). Three more (Alejandro, Pablo and Victoria) also assigned it filler function by noting that it is used "to buy time" in conversation. Adriana specifically noted that it is a filler *de moda* "in fashion," or popular at the moment of data collection, while Vanesa argued that it is a "moda lingüística" 'linguistic fashion' that started about ten years ago and is now established in the discourse of young speakers. Analía, in turn, circumscribed its use as a filler to *Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires* 'downtown Buenos Aires.' Overall, this was by far the function with which the participants associated *tipo* most frequently in the language awareness test.

Next, six participants (Analía, Adriana, Alejandro, Dalma, Mario and Victoria) assigned *tipo* primarily a comparative function – that is, comparing and contrasting two things that are similar or one thing that is like the other (*algo parecido* 'something similar' or *es como (que)* '[it] is as if/ like'). This use appears to be close to *tipo*'s original meaning ('a type of') and is exemplified in Mario's example (Table 2): '[It] is *tipo* a right wing government but it isn't.'

Two participants (Analía and Jazmín) associated the use of *tipo* with

approximation (Analía explicitly equating it with *aproximadamente* 'approximately'

and Jazmín with the expression *más o menos* 'more or less'). However, under

other functions (namely, as filler, marking exemplification, or showing similarity),

Alejandro and Romina also provided examples of its use for approximation

(Table 2).

One of the participants, Vanesa, equated the meaning of *tipo* to that of *o*

sea but referred to both pragmatic markers as fillers to be avoided in formal

situations (such as talking to a professor), rather than focusing on identifying their

reformulating functions. One the other hand, Romina assigned it the function of

introducing examples, but she did not provide an illustration of this meaning

among her examples.

Two of the participants (Jazmín and Vanesa) noted that *tipo* is the

equivalent of the American *like*. However, they did not identify which one(s) of

the many potential meanings of *like* (see Andersen, 2001) they had in mind, or if

they would all be overlapping. These were the two participants who used *tipo* as

a quotation marker. It could thus be argued that they might have had *like*'s

quotative function in mind.

Another participant, Pablo, responded that *tipo* had the sole meaning of

denoting 'a class of' (i.e., *un tipo de* 'a type of' introducing a hyponym) in youth

vernacular. His example, however, was ambiguous. His sentence read '*tenía una bici que era tipo de carrera*' '[I/he/she] had a bike that was *tipo* for racing.' A racing bicycle ('*una bici de carrera*') is a type of bicycle. However, he did not use *tipo* in a hyponym construction, such as *un tipo de (bicicleta)* 'a type of (bicycle).' As a result, the sentence could also be interpreted as indicating similarity, i.e. a bicycle that looked like for racing. Vanesa stated that it denotes 'a category of something,' (exemplified in her sentence '*Este es un ejemplo del tipo práctico*'), but both in written and oral form stated that this was its formal or canonical use.

Table 3. Contexts of use and level of formality of *tipo*

Participant	Contexts in which I'd use this word:	I'd say the level of formality of this word is:
1. Analía	With friends and family	It's informal
2. Adriana	Only with friends and people I know well.	It's vulgar
3. Alejandro	With my family, when hanging out with friends or people I know; with professors or people from other ages	Impolite, informal, but it doesn't imply that you are disrespecting (the interlocutor)
4. Dalma	I'd use it with everybody	It's neutral (nor impolite nor polite)
5. Jazmín	With friends, people I know, and conversation partners.	It's in between somewhat impolite and neutral depending on the context.
6. Mario	With everybody	It's neutral
7. Pablo	With friends only	It's informal
8. Romina	With everybody although we shouldn't use it in a professional context (but it is difficult to avoid)	It's both neutral and informal.

| 9. Vanesa | I wouldn't use it in a formal context, like with a professor. I'd use it with friends and people I know. | It's both neutral and informal (it's not offensive or vulgar, I've heard it in formal contexts, though I wouldn't use it). |
| 10. Victoria | With friends, people I know, professors, my conversation partner. | It's neutral |

The participants appeared evenly divided as to whether *tipo* would be appropriate in any context (formal or informal) (Alejandro, Dalma, Mario, Romina and Victoria) or only in an informal context (Analia, Adriana, Jazmin, Pablo, and Vanesa).

The participants orally expressed that *tipo* is very frequent in spoken language (especially when speaking with their peers). However, they argued that they themselves either did not use it at all or that, when they did, they could not help it and would have really liked to stop doing so. For example, Romina argued that 'we shouldn't use it' in a formal or professional context. Vanesa added that in a formal context it should not be used to "*hacer tiempo porque quita claridad*" ("that is, it should not be used as a filler because it obfuscates meaning") but in an informal context she would not only use it but hear it all the time. Analía (excerpt 17) argued that while her classmates used *tipo* all the time (lines 4-5), she did not use it at all with this pragmatic marking function (line 6), and that she was not able to provide a good example (7).

Excerpt 17. Analía's opinion about *tipo* (Analía, interview 3)

1 *A: Yo quiero poner que [tipo]*	A: I want to write that [tipo] means "[it]
2 *significa "es como" (.5) sí se usa*	is like" (.5), yes it is used a lot, on top
3 *mucho, encima, pero justo en el*	of that, but right now I cannot think of
4 *momento no me sale (.10) ay la*	anything (.10) on top of that they use it
5 *usan todo el tiempo en mi facultad*	all the time in my university and now
6 *encima para todo ahora se me*	it's all hazy. u::hm (.7) well I don't use
7 *nubló. e::hm (.7) bueno yo no la uso*	it like this but (.5) very bad my
así pero (.5) malísimo el ejemplo.	example.

Another case in point is Jazmín's distaste for the use of *tipo* (line 8), which

she qualifies as something 'very personal' (lines 4 & 15) but does appear to be

rather consistent across participants. Although she expressed that she was

bothered by it and would not want people to use it all the time (as her friends do),

she admitted that she just "pick[ed] it up" (line 7) and could not help but use it

(lines 4-5; 7-8).

Excerpt 18. Jazmín's opinion about *tipo* (Jazmín, interview 3)

1 *J: [se ríe] (.3) y justo con lo de: tipo*	J: [laughs] (.3) and about *tipo* I
2 *contesté como que era neutral pero*	answered like it is neutral but leaning
3 *tirando a descortés pero por una*	to impolite but that's my issue
4 *cuestión mía de que tengo amigas*	because I have (female) friends that
5 *que lo usan s̲i̲e̲:mpre*	use it all the time
6 *Re: sí*	Re: yes
7 *J: y a mí también se me pega pero*	J: and I pick it up too [literally: it sticks
8 *me molesta es como que*	to me too] but it bothers me it's like
9 *Re: okay*	Re: okay
10 *J: lo tengo como no sé algo medio*	J: I have it like I don't know
	something kind of
11 *Re: [se ríe]*	Re: [laughs]
12 *J: como que no me gustaría que*	J: like I wouldn't want that somebody

13	*alguien me hable y siempre lo use*	talk to me and use it all the time
14	*Re: está bien*	Re: all right
15	*J: muy personal eso*	J: that (is) very personal

Finally, as regards its level of formality, five participants stated that it is neutral (Dalma, Mario, Romina, Vanesa and Victoria), five participants identified it as informal (Analía, Alejandro, Pablo, Romina and Vanesa), and in a more nuanced answer one participant, Jazmín, specified that whether it is informal or neutral depends on the context. Alejandro also further clarified that while it can be impolite, it does not involve disrespect for the interlocutor. Only Adriana identified it as vulgar.

5. Discussion

This analysis demonstrates that *tipo* is a functionally complex pragmatic marker with flexible distribution. As regards function, it was found to signal hesitation (e.g., excerpt 1), introduce an example (e.g., excerpt 5), mark vagueness (e.g., excerpt 10), preface an explanation or reformulation (e.g., excerpt 7), or introduce a quote (e.g., excerpt 13). In terms of distributional properties, and as illustrated in the excerpts included in this paper, it occurred between propositions or utterances, at the end of utterances, as a separate

utterance, within phrases, between clause constituents, and as part of the construction "(it) is/was *tipo* + quote."

In Peninsular Spanish and other languages (French, Italian, and Portuguese), the uses of *tipo* as an approximator have been shown to have followed a path of pragmaticalization (Mihatsch, 2007). Based on the present results, it appears that in the vernacular of this group of young speakers *tipo* has undergone a process of grammaticalization that has resulted in a variety of non-propositional uses (cf. Kornfeld, 2013). However, no claims can be made as to its complete exclusivity to youngspeak or its stage in a process of grammaticalization (or pragmaticalization) given that a comparable data set of adult speakers was not collected for the same time period (Andersen, 2001). Therefore, it cannot be established that Argentine young speakers use *tipo* more frequently and for a wider range of functions than adult Argentine Spanish speakers (Foolen, 2012).

The functions of *tipo* described here are based on its use in interactions between L1 speakers of Argentine Spanish and American L2 Spanish learners. It is possible that these functions may not extend to interactions among expert or native speakers of the language, especially the reformulating function of *tipo* (not documented as a separate function, for example, by Huseby, 2010). The functions of *tipo* reported here should be considered preliminary yet indicative of

patterns in Argentine youth vernacular and as a direction for further inquiry.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study begins to address some of the gaps

in the area of pragmatic marker use among Argentine youth speakers, and in

particular, the paucity of empirical descriptions of the use of *tipo*.

The medium of communication (face-to-face vs. technology-mediated

discourse) seemed to have an effect on the frequency of use and functions of

tipo. The participants used *tipo* in their technology-mediated interactions much

less than in their face-to-face interactions. Online, *tipo* was used mainly as a

vagueness marker (approximation) — e.g., *tipo mediodía* (*tipo* noon), and to a

much lesser degree for reformulation— e.g., *Hongos. Sí, tipo moho* ('Fungi. Yes,

tipo mold'). No uses for hesitation, exemplification or quoted speech were found

in the technology-mediated interactions.

Fox Tree (2010) argues that because instant messaging is spontaneous

and speakers treat it as "conversation" the use of pragmatic markers is frequent,

particularly when the interlocutors are "experts" in the domain, which would be

the case with the undergraduate population here, known for their frequent use of

Facebook. She points out, however, that spoken interactions have a higher rate

of pragmatic marker use than instant messaging (IM). She attributes this

difference to "the relative costs of typing a discourse marker versus saying one"

(p. 277).

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Whereas Fox Tree (2010) mentions the minimal amount of time that the interactants have to revise their text as they are chatting on IM, in this study one of the reasons behind the lower proportional preferences for the use of *tipo* in the online environment might lie in speakers' prescriptive attitudes towards these types of spoken pragmatic markers (Dailey O'Cain, 2000), often looked down upon as *muletillas*. In the language awareness data, most participants characterized *tipo* first and foremost as a "filler" that they "could not avoid" in speech, implying that they attached a negative value to it.

In terms of the identified functions, "evincive" (Schourup, 1985) uses of *tipo* (i.e., uses indicating that the speaker is processing information before proceeding) co-occurred with prolongations and repetitions, particularly of function words (excerpt 3), which are common hesitation strategies in spontaneous speech (Pillai, 2006). These hesitation marking uses of *tipo* can be considered part of interactional strategies related to turn-taking management, which allow the speakers to hold their turn, signaling to the listener(s) that this is not a transition relevance place (excerpt 2). At the same time, *tipo* can also be strategically deployed to signal to the listener that the speaker is "giving up" (Stenström, 2014:80), that is, the speaker realizes that she has nothing else to add and thus yields the turn (excerpt 5).

At the interpersonal level, the use of *tipo* for approximation and hedging (vagueness) can be viewed as a politeness strategy that speakers draw on when trying to save face or intending to leave the door open for possible alternatives. In this case, it can be argued that *tipo*, much like the pragmatic marker *like*, can be used for politeness purposes by serving as "a tool for not sounding too assertive" and allowing the speakers to express themselves "with a tentative attitude" (Andersen, 2001:229).

Tipo was also used as a device for introducing quoted speech. The patterns that emerge from the data indicate that when used with the copula (in the construction *es tipo x*) or a verb of saying (such as *preguntar*, to ask) in present tense *tipo* introduces either a paradigmatic or a hypothetical quote. When the verb 'to be' or verb of saying is in the past, *tipo* appears to introduce a direct quote that represents internal thought or not to be taken literally. These findings are preliminary, given that this was the least frequently used function in the current data, which falls in line with Huseby's (2010) findings (this was one of the two least frequently used functions in her study, together with approximation).

At the discourse level, *tipo* was used to introduce an example, as well as a reformulation (in the form of a paraphrase, elaboration, or specification). Its uses to clarify or expand a point, together with its frequent association with the reformulation marker *o sea* (that is, in other words), indicate that *tipo* is a

"paraphrastic" reformulation marker, which expands the semantic content without altering it (Aijmer, 2007). Huseby (2010) did not identify reformulation as a separate function in her study. However, a few of the examples from COLAba that she discusses in the sections on exemplification and at least one of the examples for intensification (excerpt 21, p. 54) (which is immediately preceded by *o sea*), have a function in discourse that would be considered reformulation in this study. In addition, there are a few more examples of *tipo* (some of them immediately preceded and/or followed by '*o sea*') in COLAba (not discussed by Huseby), which seem to indicate that the reformulating function of *tipo* is not limited to the present data.

Interestingly, in this study the speakers often code-switched to English when reformulating (see excerpts 9 and 10). The various motivations behind code-switching have been studied extensively. In this case, the use of code-switching appears to be linked to the specific context, that is, to interactions between native and non-native speakers. By discussing the functions of *tipo* in interactions between native speakers of Argentine Spanish and American undergraduates on a semester abroad, this paper indirectly contributes to the literature on second/foreign language (L2) learning abroad. Current findings suggest that study abroad students can arguably become more proficient users of informal registers (e.g., Dewaele & Regan, 2001; Kinginger and Farrell, 2004).

It has been argued that an increased access to interactions with L1 speakers outside of the classroom has the potential of leading to increased exposure and, therefore, to increased use of vernacular language by L2 learners (e.g., Mougeon, Nadasdi and Rehner, 2010). However, few studies have examined the nature of the vernacular vocabulary that study abroad students are exposed to in these types of interactions. A close examination of the language functions of a youth vernacular pragmatic marker such as *tipo* becomes essential given that study abroad students' expert-like use of pragmatic markers can be taken as an "accurate indicator of the extent to which a speaker is integrated into the local speech community" (Sankoff, Thibault, Nagy and Blondeau, 1997: 193 as cited in Grieve, 2010). As marker of in-group membership, *tipo* is a language resource that L2 study abroad participants could draw on while in the host community in order to build stronger ties with age-peer local speakers. This would potentially lead to a more thorough social integration in the host culture(s), and ultimately more successful study abroad experiences.

Overall, the results of this study lay the foundation for future pragmatic and sociolinguistic explorations of the uses of *tipo* in Argentine Spanish vernacular, some of which are identified in the next section.

6. Future directions

Although the functions described here were observed in the speech of different speakers in the sample, it is noteworthy that there were marked differences in the proportional preference for *tipo* between different speakers. For example, Vanesa used it twenty times times as a pragmatic marker, whereas Victoria only used it three times to introduce a hyponym. These differences could be attributed to several factors, including individual preference and differences in participants' sociocultural backgrounds. In fact, this study shows a tendency toward Argentine participants of higher socioeconomic status (Alejandro, Jazmín, Romina, and Vanesa) using *tipo* more frequently than the rest of the participants. Prior research on the uses of *like* points to the predominance of its use by middle class (Tannen, 1986; Blyth, Recktenwald and Wang, 1990) or higher social class (Andersen, 1997) speakers. This issue certainly calls for further research, given that other participants of lower socioeconomic status used *tipo* for some of the same discourse functions, although much less frequently.

The language functions of *tipo* might also vary according to sociocultural background. For example, only two women of higher socioeconomic background used *tipo* to introduce reported speech. During a language awareness task (see Fernández, 2013), Jazmín and Vanesa both explained that *tipo* approximately corresponds to the American English pragmatic marker *like*. These participants also had rather higher proficiency in English, which could have had an influence

in their use of *tipo*. The sample reported here does not serve well as a basis for

drawing broad conclusions of this nature, but this is a necessary and fecund line

of future sociolinguistic research.

In terms of other promising future research in this area, it is also important

to take into account the gender of the speakers. While Huseby's (2010) limited

results for *tipo* seem to point to female preference in the use of *tipo*, taken as a

whole, prior research has produced contradictory results in regard to the

relationship between the use of pragmatic markers such as *like* and gender

(Romaine and Lange, 1991; Hasund, 2002; Ferrara and Bell, 1995; Dailey-

O'Cain, 2000; Blyth et al., 1990). In this study, although *tipo* was used with

pragmatic marking functions by the male Argentine participants, comparisons of

its use between Argentine men and women will help to better understand

whether it is used as a linguistic enactment of gender.

From these results it appears that *tipo* shares some pragmatic functions

with the English pragmatic marker *like* (Andersen, 2001). For example, *like* also

has an approximating discourse function as in *sort of*, *around* (Underhill, 1988),

or *approximately* (Meehan, 1991), as well as an exemplification function

(Andersen, 2001). *Tipo* also shares with *like* its quotative function, which has

recently received considerable attention in the applied linguistic literature

(Barbieri, 2009; Müller, 2005). Traugott (1997) questions the possibility of making

"cross-language generalizations (…) about the development of discourse

particles in terms of both their likely semantic sources and their semantic-

pragmatic paths (p. 4). Fleischman and Yaguello (2004) call for more cross-

language pragmatics studies "given the high probability that certain pragmatic

functions are if not universal then at least widely attested across languages (p.

143). There is indeed a need for more diachronic and synchronic contrasting

studies in this area, which are rather scant potentially due to the lack of spoken

corpora and databases of the type discussed here (Jørgensen and Stenström,

2009).

Another future direction is to investigate pragmatic markers that share

similarities with *tipo*. As an example, the Spanish pragmatic marker *como* 'like'

(Kern, 2014; Mihatsch, 2009) appears to share some of the pragmatic functions

identified for *tipo* in the present study, and to be used by young adolescents of

(Peninsular and Chilean) Spanish (Jørgensen and Stenström, 2009; Jørgensen,

2011). *Como* has also been shown to have undergone a process of

grammaticalization (Kern, 2014, Mihatsch, 2009) and has been found to have

acquired several pragmatic marking functions. For example, it is used with

focusing and quotative functions, as a filler, and for exemplification,

reformulation, hedging, intensification and codeswitching (Kern, 2014; Sánchez-

Muñoz, 2007; Said-Mohand, 2008; Jørgensen, 2011). As shown in the different

excerpts, the participants in this study also made extensive use of *como* as a

pragmatic marker. As an illustration, in excerpt 13, Jazmín uses (*es*) *como (que)*

(together with *no sé* 'I don't know') with an approximating or hedging function

(Vigara Tauste, 1996; Mihatsch, 2009). Examining pragmatic markers with

shared similarities may shed more light on participants' expressive preferences

vis-a-vis their pragmatic functions.

Finally, in terms of the effects of the medium of communication on the use

of the focal pragmatic marker, it is plausible that the lack of immediacy inherent

in technology-mediated conversation afforded the participants more chances to

exercise their own censoring attitudes toward youth-speak in general

(Fernández, 2013), and *tipo* in particular. This certainly appeared true in relation

to features associated with a filler function (such as *tipo*), which a number of the

participants considered necessary to avoid. This avoidance might be fueled by

the fact that young speakers' perceived corruption of language in IM and

pervasive use of 'empty' pragmatic markers such as *tipo* "both have been widely

identified in the popular imagination with threats" to standard language (Jones

and Schieffelin, 2009: 108). The media quite often present both of them in "a

negative light" (Jones and Schieffelin, 2009: 108). Huseby (2010) reports on

several newspaper articles decrying the loss of the language's (i.e., Argentine

Spanish) richness at the hands of thoughtless teenagers, who use words they do

not know the meanings of (Rey, 2004). *Tipo (que)*, in particular, is singled out as among the bad lexical habits of young speakers adults try to correct (Reina, 2006). This is evidence of the "rising public discourse about the communicative ineptitude of young people" (Thurlow, 2006: 671). In truth, "the patterns of language use (…) documented in IM do not support the view that users are 'simplifying' language to make communication easier or more efficient;" they are actually more concerned with expressivity and infusing IM with "speech-like qualities" (Jones and Schieffelin, 2009: 109). Future research in this area should acknowledge existing layman attitudes toward colloquial lexical features in vernacular usage but fully recognize and build upon their importance for peer group membership and meaning-making in youth speak (face-to-face and online) communities.

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NOTES

[1] This appears to be the only existing corpus of Argentine teenage Spanish language. It comprises colloquial interactions among teenagers from Buenos Aires (all L1 speakers). Access to COLAba can be requested at http://www.colam.org/om_prosj-espannol.html.

[2] Although not all the meanings (certainly not the most recent ones) of *tipo* have made their way into traditional dictionaries (e.g., the *Diccionario de la lengua española* from La Real Academia Española), several are included in recent dictionaries of Argentine colloquial vocabulary and *lunfardo* (e.g., Conde, 2004; Espíndola, 2002).