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Structuring Language and Community in an Online Space

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ABSTRACT

Massively multiplayer online games (MMOs) present an interesting area for linguistic and social research, being a setting for of computer-mediated communication (CMC) that is task-oriented in nature and often requires high level of cooperation between players. This study investigates how Spanish-speaking players of the MMO *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* use the linguistic phenomena of discourse markers, laughter and politeness to structure their communication and their community. Through analysis of in-game conversations gathered from a community of said players, this study demonstrates how each of these phenomena work together to build a community based on inclusive language and positive reinforcement.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In this day and age, language is being used in ways that were previously technologically impossible. While written language has existed for millennia, the ways in which people have used written language have changed drastically. Where at first language was restricted to tomes or tablets, the invention of papyrus, and later modern paper, drastically increased the availability of the written word. Tablets were primarily used for records owing to their durability. With paper and the postal system it was possible to send communications between people in the form of letters. With the internet we see another shift in the usage of written word. Now it is possible for people to communicate instantaneously from all over the globe.

Consequently, the internet has become a gathering place for people of like interests to share, discuss, interact and converse about things that matter to them. Various communities of people have formed over the internet, from families and friends interacting in social media such as Facebook, to complete strangers discussing political events in the comments section of a news article. Rather than the physical letters of the past, which had one intended recipient and could take days or even months (depending on the destination and the time period in which it was written) to be delivered to their intended recipient, the instantaneous communications of the internet allow people to have real conversation and discourse in text, much like one might find in an oral conversation.

The purpose of this study is to explore the linguistic processes that affect the structuring of both language and community in a particular virtual setting. Based on previous research as well as the exploratory observations of the researcher, discourse markers, laughter and politeness were elected as the three linguistic phenomena analyzed in this study. Guiding this investigation are four primary research questions:

1) How do DMs, laughter, and politeness structure both language and community?
2) How does the use of these linguistic phenomena in a CMC environment compare to a face-to-face setting?
3) How does the community in question structure itself through language?
4) Based on its usage of these phenomena, is this community's speech closer to a textual or oral register?

The analysis of these phenomena reveals a positive and cooperative community that establishes and maintains itself on mutual respect and inclusion through various linguistic methods.

The community in question is a group of Spanish speaking players of the massively multiplayer online game (MMO) *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* (FFXIV). MMOs such as this one present an interesting online setting for linguistic investigation, due primarily to the social situations inherent to them. MMOs of this genre (role-playing) are typically cooperative games in which players form communities and play together to accomplish common goals. In FFXIV, players create their own personal avatar and adventure through the world of Eorzea. This is a persistent virtual world in which players can interact with one another. It is common for a player to have only one character, a virtual avatar, to play with, or a "main" which they play with most frequently. This helps to foster a sense of community and create stability within it.

The main activities players engage in within the game are playing through various dungeons, defeating monsters and leveling up their character. After a player gains sufficient experience points from defeating monsters and completing challenges such as dungeon levels, a player's character will gain a level. The driving force to playing FFXIV is to grow one's character and progressively become stronger while exploring the world and completing the quests which tell the main story of the game. To this end, players are often forced to group up with one another to overcome obstacles that would be impossible alone.

Figure 1. A screenshot displaying what a player of FFXIV sees on-screen, including player groups (top left) and the chat log (bottom left)

For the purpose of this study, the data were obtained from a Spanish speaking community called a "Linkshell". It is important to note, that while the players in this group communicate in Spanish, FFXIV itself is not supported in Spanish. This may have various consequences for the players and this study, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Linkshells are synchronous channels for communication established by the players to serve as a host for a community. This form of communication is comparable to other instant messaging services, such as AOL Instant messenger, Windows Live Messenger (MSN) or Facebook (Varnhagen 2010: 720). The purpose of these linkshells can vary from purely social interaction to specific game-related challenges and tasks. The former of the two is more common, as another form of communication and organization is available for the latter (for a more in depth description of the chat log, see Ch 3.1).

In order to properly analyze the selected linguistic phenomena in this particular community, a variety of factors must first be understood. In my treatment of literature, I examine the research on online communication, paying special attention to synchronous communication, discourse markers, laughter and politeness.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review and summarize the various previous studies and research relevant to the present investigation. First, there will be a brief discussion on textual vs. oral registers. The second section focuses on research regarding online communication and MMOs as a social space. The third section is a review of relevant research regarding discourse markers. The fourth section is on laughter and its communicative significance. Lastly, the fifth section details previous research on politeness.

2.1 Textual vs. Oral Registers

In order to answer the fourth research question of this study, it is important to define the concepts of orality and literacy. Orality describes speech of an oral nature, while literacy describes written or textual language; "given that both speech and writing are legitimate forms of language, it is important to know in what ways and to what extent they are the same or different" (Biber 1986). To this end, there has been much investigation into what linguistic features characterize both oral and literate language (Biber 1986, 2006; Ong 2002; King 2011). These two modes of communication form two ends of a spectrum of registers, or types of speech that are used for a specific purpose or in a specific environment. As King (2011) points out, "it is important to note that recent research suggests that the language employed in a text may fall anywhere on a register continuum with values ranging from oral to literate" (652).

In an effort to analyze various registers of Spanish for multiple factors and across multiple dimensions, Biber (2006) performs a multi-dimensional analysis on a corpus consisting of twenty-million words, with samples from multiple types of speech, such as fiction, interviews, political speeches, etc. In doing so, a clear pattern emerges for various factors contributing to either oral or literate speech. Some notable factors that add to speech's orality include: first

person pronouns, first person pro-drop, future *ir a*, yes or no questions, *tú*, *usted*, indicative

mood and desire verbs. Notable literate characteristics include: long words, *se* passives, singular

nouns and postnominal past participles (2006: 13).

2.2 Online Communication

In recent years, computer mediated communication (CMC) has been studied at an

increasing rate. CMC is a broad category that can encompass any form of communication via the

computer, typically over the internet. There are many different channels of communication

through CMC, such as instant messaging, email, chat rooms, forums, blogs, comments, social

media, web cams and more. The distinguishing features of these channels are varied, but there

are some common to each. For the purposes of this study, the features of chat rooms are

considered most relevant, since the software used to communicate in FFXIV most closely

resembles them. Therefore, an explanation of the features of chat rooms is in order.

A chat room is a program on the internet designed for simultaneous text-based

communication between multiple users. One of the most prominent features of chat rooms is the

issue of synchronicity vs. asynchronicity. Synchronous communication is defined as

communication that happens at the same time, where there is a natural back and forth

communication between the speaker and the hearer, such as one might find in oral conversations.

Asynchronous communication, on the other hand, consists of communications that are not

spontaneous and immediate, in which a large amount of time may pass between exchanges

between the speaker and the hearer, such as in traditional letters. Chat rooms are typically

regarded as synchronous communication, due to the rapid back and forth responses between

users. Anderson et al. propose that chat rooms would be best considered as having "near

simultaneity (i.e. synchronous, one-way systems, as in instant messaging, multiparticipant chat

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rooms, and text chat in multiplayer games), in which users typically respond to others' comments as soon as they are received" (2010: 5). Additionally, the method of production may have various levels of synchronicity, even amongst chat rooms. Some chat rooms display each keystroke of a user as they type it, meaning that others can see the incoming communication as it is written. This provides a greater degree of synchronicity, however, it is more common for chat rooms to display text only after a user has completed his or her intended message and manually sends it to the chat room.

As Anderson et al. (2010) point out, chat rooms are a one-way system, meaning that while synchronous, there is a strict sequencing to the order of utterances from users. Yus (2011) elaborates, stating that "in chat rooms, turns are subject to the sequencing imposed by the software that manages interactions". In a chat room, numerous utterances may be posted by any given user at a time, however, all utterances are ordered chronologically by the software. Thus, if two utterances are produced simultaneously, the program will display one as having occurred before the other. This has important consequences for turn taking in chat rooms, as well as interactions between multiple participants.

By design, chat rooms are places on the internet that facilitate the simultaneous communication of multiple participants. However, due to the software's aforementioned chronological sequencing of the users' utterances on the screen, users cannot effectively talk over or interrupt one another, meaning "that there is no competition for the floor since all messages sent off will be posted" (Nilsen & Makitalo 2010: 92). On the other hand, all of the participants' utterances being posted causes a separate set of issues, particularly when multiple users are concerned. Often, multiple conversation threads may be going on in the same space,

with messages concerning one topic breaking up a conversation on an entirely different matter.[1]

"This quality might produce increased effort when following threads of conversation that are mixed up without a clear arrangement, and hence affect users' eventual estimations of relevance" (Werry 1996: 51).

Another effect of users' shared space within a chat room is the physical on-screen limitations that system presents. When multiple users communicate within a chat room, their messages can quickly fill the screen, causing older messages to be pushed off the visible part of the chat log. This can make the information difficult to process, which Yus (2011) calls "the scroll factor". One of the most evident consequences this scroll factor has on communication is the length of utterances, or their lack thereof. Yus (2011) observes that it is difficult to find utterances of over three lines in most chat rooms, while Werry (1996) suggests that utterances tend to be kept brief in order to keep pace with the speed of the chat room and maintain other users' attention. This provides us with the cause of one of the most noted features of a large portion of CMC, the presence of abbreviations and alternate orthography.

While abbreviations are utilized largely to increase efficiency and speed, alternate spellings and typography have different roots. Chat rooms, and indeed other types of CMC, are often considered oralized written texts, balancing aspects from both formal written text and casual oral communication. Baron points out that chat rooms and other CMC "are technically forms of writing, most varieties of online communication have often been thought of as forms of speech, with creative punctuation and typography substituting for paralinguistic cues (such as volume, proxemics, and facial expression) for expressing emotion" (2009: 107). Taken a step

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[1] In some textual examples from the corpus, portions of simultaneous conversations displayed in the linkshell as intertwined with those under consideration in the present study have been omitted from the data shown in chapter 4. In these cases, an ellipsis will be used to signal the absence of utterances corresponding to secondary conversations.

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further, Yus (2011) mentions that "it is even possible that users 'hear' their own voices while they are typing their messages. This 'written voice' leads to a textual deformation that aims at transcribing on the screen the message that the speaker would have said orally in a face-to-face conversation" (163). According to Savas (2011), this can affect many aspects of communication. For instance, a user's "choice of vocabulary, grammar, and style during [online discussions] reflected how they spoke rather than how they wrote" (309).

Savas (2011) is a variationist study concerned with discovering the distinctive characteristics of CMC. The study looks specifically at both native and nonnative speakers of English, with the nonnative speakers considered to have high English language proficiency. The data were collected using three different methods: a survey, a recorded instance of interactions in a chat room, and one on one interviews between the researcher and the participants. The analysis of the data consisted of examining several variables and their production between participants, including: gender, nation of origin, number of turns posted, post length, as well as the participants' perceptions of CMC taken from the interviews. A frequency analysis was performed in order to establish relationships between the variables and the participants' patterns of use, while a T-unit analysis was used to "determine the syntactic maturity of the individual's written language" (301). "T-Unit length is the number of words divided by the number of T-Units", where a T-Unit is "one main clause plus whatever subordinate clauses happened to be attached or embedded within it" (301). The author explains that, by analyzing the T-Unit length, one can determine the grammatical maturity of the utterances, and thereby determine its relationship to written text. According to Savas, this analysis "is used to determine how close a certain grammatical unit is to the written form of language," (2011: 302) based on syntactic maturity. In addition to this, Savas conducted a frequency analysis on participants' number of

utterances, number of words, number of one word responses, lowercase initial utterances, and number of turns that consisted entirely of a phrase (2011: 301). Additionally, Savas conducted interviews with the participants regarding their perception of CMC.

By analyzing the transcriptions of CMC, Savas found that participants' styles of communication varied widely irrespective of the variables she examined; some speakers produced speech-like CMC whereas others produced text-like CMC. Both gender and country of origin (native vs nonnative speakers) were found to not influence the speakers' utterances. However, based on the interviews, it was found that a participant's perception of CMC greatly influenced his or her production of it: Those who perceived CMC as a spoken interaction tended to produce fewer T-Units and fewer words overall, but took more turns. Participants that perceived CMC as a written form of communication produced more T-Units and words, but took fewer turns. Additionally, Savas found that those who viewed CMC as a written form of communication were less experienced with CMC overall.

Yus (2011) presents a thorough look at the various types of CMC, characteristics of each and their implications for pragmatics. Of particular relevance to the present study, Yus goes into an in depth analysis on the functions of chat rooms, linguistic considerations for MMOs as a platform for CMC, and politeness on the internet. This comprehensive look at pragmatics in an online setting provides a solid foundation to many background elements of CMC, such as synchronicity, facelessness, and emoticons. Since Yus has been cited extensively in the above portions of this review concerning chat rooms, this segment will instead focus on other salient aspects of Yus (2011).

Yus presents an analysis of online games, particularly those that would allow communication in virtual 3D. Drawing heavily on examples from *Second Life*, a virtual world, Yus goes on to discuss the differences a MMO might present compared to other forms of CMC. One of the most visible differences between an MMO such as *Second Life* and a conventional chat room is the presence of virtual avatars. These avatars, like the ones in FFXIV, are capable of replicating nonverbal behavior in the form of animations when initiated by the player. According to Yus, "the possible interpretive outcomes [depend] on the axes of 'intentional / unintentional' and 'understood correctly / incorrectly'" (2011: 212). In a face to face interaction, nonverbal behavior is often unintentional, or subconscious. In an MMO, on the other hand, nonverbal behavior must be consciously initiated by the player, and is thus almost always intentional. Yus points out that this may change the interpretation of nonverbal behavior such as blushing. Under normal circumstances, blushing is an uncontrollable physical response, however, in an MMO it is user-generated, which causes it to lose communicative naturalness and can affect one's interpretation of it (2011: 213).

Figure 2. Emotes as they appear in FFXIV

One of the more salient features of CMC is the presence of what Vandergriff (2013) describes as CMC cues. These cues consist of emoticons and other typographical markers, such as multiple exclamation marks, ellipsis or multiple question marks. It could be argued that these are a type of DM exclusive to online written communication. In Vandergriff (2013), the author examines these features using a microanalytical approach in order to correlate their meanings and functions in context. The data for the analysis were obtained from chats conducted by small groups of foreign language students of German. The students were assigned the task of ranking fictional characters on a morality system. The descriptions of these characters were such that there were no obvious answers. In order to complete the activity, the entire group had to reach a consensus. The activity was designed in such a way that the participants would have to debate amongst themselves which characters deserved which rankings.

Vandergriff encountered several instances of CMC cues throughout the data. She notes that "the interpretation of CMC cues is highly context-dependent and that their meanings only emerge in context" (2013: 8). Therefore, generalizations are hard to make concerning CMC cues. Regarding emoticons, Vandergriff found that they carried some of the same functional load as non-verbal behavior in face-to-face communication. However, it is important to remember that this does not mean that non-verbal behavior in face-to-face communication can be equated to emoticons; there is nothing that guarantees a one to one conversion of these features. The study found emoticons used in various situations, normally as a positive politeness strategy. The first example of this is when a user replies "hmmm:)", intentionally filling silence, which hints at disagreement with the previous user's suggestion, but is mitigated through the use of the 'smiley' emoticon.

In another example of a CMC cue, Vandergriff finds multiple exclamation points used to attack the face of a group member who did not agree with her interpretation of the assignment. She utilizes these face-threatening actions in order to force her interlocutor to agree with her, and the multiple exclamation points add emphasis to the attacks and "intensify this assertiveness" (7). Vandergriff concludes stating that "by and large, CMC cues were used in the service of politeness" (9). This is an interesting implication for CMC cues, as much of the preexisting theory centered on the idea that these cues merely filled in for the lack of a physical presence in online communication, or as Yus (2011) calls it, "compensating for the loss of the audio/visual channels" (Yus 2011: 162-166; Quinion 1996; Witmer & Katzman 1997 etc.).

LeBlanc (2010) explores the linguistic factors which contribute to community building through three different analytical approaches: relevance theory, (im)politeness theory and stance theory. The community in question is that of the Pen forums (www.penismightier.com/forums). Forums operate differently than the chat rooms described previously, firstly in that they are asynchronous. They are also archived, which allow users access to all past posts. To this end, all thread topics appear ordered according to most recent activity. LeBlanc goes on to describe how the Pen forum community engages in several principles of practice that govern how members interact and communicate.

The Pen virtual speech community utilizes a dialect of *leet speak*, a subgenre of netspeak, characterized by the substitution of letters for numbers, tech-based terminology and acronyms, and marks membership linguistically through this and other means:

> Being *leet* in the Pen community entails many principles, including but not limited to particular topic shifting behavior, adherence to anti-Gricean maxims of communicative order, framing talk centered on a set of normative topics and shirking or overtly rejecting those topics which do not fit within this set, use of the specialized orthography of Pen *leet* dialect, valuing novelty, *flaming,* and exploitation of the internet's opportunities to incorporate sound clips, image files, and links to other websites. (LeBlanc 2005: 16)

LeBlanc notes three strategies that members of this community use to mark their membership which I will briefly summarize here. First, the Medium-Enabled Principle describes how members use intertextuality to mark their membership. As previously mentioned, members code switch into *leet speak* in addition to posting image files or sound clips in threads. These may be posted repetitively and can be used in response to the violation of community norms or to demonstrate one's technological prowess. LeBlanc notes that the use of images or sound clips can serve as discourse markers within the Pen community used for marking topic shifting, thread derailment or hijacking.

Second, the Community Principle "involves those Pen strategies engaged in order to create and maintain community membership and identity" (LeBlanc 2005: 19). *Leet speak* serves as an in group marker under this principle. When engaging in the non-mainstream orthographical conventions associated with it, members are asserting their status as *leet* and as part of the community. Some of these conventions include: the clipping or suppletion of words (*leet* for 'elite'), the metathesis of letters (*teh* for 'the'), use of acronyms (DYJGTIT for 'did you just get the internet today'), the strategic use of systematic replacement of some letters for numbers (*h4xx0r* for 'hacker'), orthographically altered productive morphemes (-x0r in place of –er), and the role of the "nazi". The role of the "nazi" manifests in a variety of ways, but is brought on by the violation of norms, such as grammatical errors or community-defined topic shifting behavior. Any member may take on the role of "nazi" when the situation calls for it. For example,

> A member may post or act as a "grammar nazi" when the topic is somehow related to a literary field, or someone is posting something considered to be "highbrow". If this poster introduces a topic in an elevated register, and in the post misspells a word or uses grammar improperly, a "grammar nazi" may surface to chastise that member. (LeBlanc 2005: 20).

A "nazi", regardless of type, enforces the community norms "through virtually coercive means" (LeBlanc 2005: 20-21), which may include threatening to insert disturbing images, random

audio, or otherwise marking disdain. LeBlanc notes that the role of the "nazi" is to maintain order and reinforce the norms of the community, and that these activities do not constitute censorship.

Lastly, the Interactive Principle deals with those interactions that seem blatantly hostile or uncooperative, yet build community. Topic shifting is one such uncooperative interaction. Topic shifts occur frequently within discourse in the Pen community, and often through seemingly hostile methods, such as the discourse markers mentioned above. "The Pen community's seemingly gratuitous topic shifting flouts relevance in the Gricean sense [. . .] but is cooperative in nature – displaying their communicative competence while showing newcomers the appropriate topic behavior" (LeBlanc 2005: 23). Another notable practice within the Pen community is *flaming*. *Flaming* or *flames* are hostile interactions between users in which one user verbally attacks another. LeBlanc claims that these interactions demonstrate the rules and norms of a particular community, and what may happen if these norms are not upheld. According to LeBlanc, *flaming* can be classified as a heightened speech event, following Sherzer's (1987) criteria. "Heightened discourse is special in that it points to significant meaning beyond the literal content of the discourse. The heightened speech event of *flaming* is particularly important as a socialization tool, as well as a venue for display of linguistic virtuosity in Pen discourse" (LeBlanc 2005: 24). In this way, *flames* are more akin to a learning tool than a literal argument. Both *flaming* and topic-shifting interactions are learned through continual interaction, and while they seem hostile and uncooperative, they actually teach communicative competence to new members through repeated interaction.

2.3 Discourse Markers

Discourse markers are a linguistic feature that has been the subject of increasing amounts of research in recent years; however, this has not always been the case. Previously, discourse markers had been overlooked as a type of anomaly and considered a marginal element (Schwenter 1996). This was largely due to the fact that the primary function of discourse markers at the time was considered to be a pause-filler or crutch for the speaker to use to buy time and gather his or her thoughts (Travis 2005). While this is certainly one of the functions of DMs, it cannot be said that this made them devoid of semantic material or that they did not fulfill certain functions in discourse. This approach to DMs only started to change once researchers began examining spoken language. With discourse analysis becoming more prominent in the field, researchers have begun to look more closely at the roles DMs play in communication (Schwenter 1996).

One of the preeminent researchers in the area of discourse markers, Deborah Schiffrin, has defined DMs as being linguistic elements that signal relations between units of talk on multiple levels (1987). This definition, while commonly cited and recognized by those who study DMs, leaves much open to interpretation. Several characteristics of DMs have become evident and relatively agreed upon by scholars, however, and the following is a discussion of the more defining elements of DMs.

One of the aspects of DMs that has made them challenging to define categorically is their perceived lack of semantic meaning. Norrick points out that "DMs orient listeners, but they do not create meaning; therefore, DMs can be deleted with no loss of meaning, though the force of the utterance will be less clear," (2001: 850). More specifically, they lack "propositional meaning", signifying that they do not affect the truth condition of an utterance (Schourup 2001).

Due to this, it is possible to exclude a DM from the utterance it is a part of without changing the utterance's content. This has led to DMs' status as optional; however, this can be misleading: DMs may be optional in the grammatical structure of an utterance, but this does not mean they do not serve a particular function.

Another characteristic of DMs that is partially responsible for their being labeled as optional is their lack of a fixed syntactic category. Rather, DMs can come from a range of syntactic categories: conjunctions, adverbs, clitics, particles, grammatical or function words, frozen or idiomatic expressions, hesitations, fillers, tags, interjections, exclamations and emblematic elements (Brody 2011; Schiffrin 1987; etc.). Furthermore, King notes that this lack of a fixed syntactic category is "one of the most salient characteristics of DMs […]," (2011: 650). Instead, DMs form a pragmatic class due to their shared contextual functions (Fraser 1999). Following this description, some common Spanish DMs include: *Pues, entonces, por cierto, primero, después, luego, en fin, finalmente, asimismo, bien, pero, tú sabes, ¿verdad?, mira* and more (Rodríguez 2000; King 2011; Brody 2011).

Many of the earlier studies on discourse markers have held that DMs are sentence or utterance initial (Fraser 1999, Schourup 2001); however, others have noted that this tends to be the case in English, and not necessarily in DMs as a category (Brody 2011, Schwenter 1996, King 2011). DMs are now seen as able to "[…] appear sentence-initially, -medially, and -finally, at the beginning of a discourse or within it," (Schwenter 1996: 857). This is strongly related to DMs' lack of a rigid syntactic category, which allows them to act from different locations relative to utterances. These characteristics, along with those previously mentioned, reveal that DMs are a somewhat flexible particle; they are fluid syntactically, positionally and semantically. This locational flexibility is not to be confused with lexical flexibility, however, as Travis

cautions that "it is certainly not the case that speakers can simply slot a marker in which they might need to organize their thoughts," (2005: 1). One DM is not always able to substitute for the next as they may serve two entirely different roles.

This paints a clearer picture of what DMs are not, but still fails to explain what they are in more specific terms. Perhaps the best way to characterize DMs is through the functions they carry out in discourse. DMs contextualize utterances. Schiffrin (1987) described this by saying that DMs are both cataphoric and anaphoric. Travis clarified this, pointing out that "[DMs] indicate how an upcoming or prior utterance is to be understood in the context of the surrounding discourse…" (2005: 48). Plainly put, a DM's meaning or purpose is defined by the context of the utterance or utterances it modifies. It refers to something said before or after it and one can make sense of it by interpreting it with these referents. As mentioned above, DMs do not have propositional meaning, but rather aid the listener in interpreting how the utterance is intended to be understood by the speaker. Travis notes that DMs "can indicate the speaker's attitude to the message content as well as to the addressee and thereby can also be used by the speaker to appeal to the addressee to play the participatory role the speaker desires" (2005: 48).

Many classifications and categorizations of DMs exist, but the most complete and all-encompassing breakdown of DMs in Spanish comes from Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro (1999). This extensive outline of DMs and their functions and definitions is part of the *Gramática Descriptiva de la Lengua Española*. In this study, Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro outline five major categories of DMs: structuring, connecting, reformulating, argumentative operators, and conversational markers. Structuring markers are tasked with the arrangement of discourse; connectors join and relate topics and reformulating markers rephrase language. The last two categories are more nuanced and complex. To briefly summarize, the uses

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of conversational markers range from regulating turn taking in communicative exchanges to providing information about the exchange. Argumentative operators condition the argumentative element of a topic through their lexical significance. As previously mentioned, this study looks to focus on DMs primarily with regard to their capacity for structuring language; therefore, the most pertinent of these categories is the structuring markers.

Structuring markers, according to Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro (1999), can be further divided into three subcategories: comment markers, ordering markers and digressive markers. Comment markers are defined as DMs that serve to introduce new commentary, and help to specify previous discourse as a separate topic, the most common of which is *pues*, particularly in oral registers (4083). Ordering markers "indican el lugar que ocupa un miembro del discurso en el conjunto de una secuencia discursiva ordenada por partes; y, en segundo lugar, presentan el conjunto de esta secuencia como un único comentario y cada parte como un subcomentario," (1999: 4086). These markers typically order discourse based on enumeration, time or space. They are further subdivided based on their order in a series within discourse segments. Opening markers orient the first part of the series, continuing markers indicate that its accompanying discourse segment is after the opening of a series. Lastly, closing markers signal the end of a discursive series (Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro 1999: 4087-4088).

As mentioned previously, Schiffrin (1987) is one of the most important foundational studies on DMs, and is responsible for spearheading research in this field. In her book, Schiffrin first discusses what a DM is and why it merits study. She then moves on to individually examining the English DMs *oh, well, and, but, or, so, because, now, then, I mean*, and *y'know*. The data in her study were obtained through sociolinguistic interviews with participants of a middle-class Jewish neighborhood in Philadelphia. The ideas Schiffrin presents in her book went

on to form the foundation for much of the subsequent research of DMs. Her definition of DMs as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk," (1987: 31) is cited by nearly every subsequent paper that has been written and published on DMs.

Schiffrin's research of DMs, while groundbreaking, is not above criticism, however. Her definition of DMs as "sequentially dependent" has been called vague by some, and as Travis points out, "it could be argued that all elements of talk are sequentially dependent," (2005: 32). Additionally, "[bracketing] units of talk" implies that DMs bookend utterances, however, this is not the case, as several DMs, such as *pues*, appear clause internally (Travis 2005: 33).

Another of the earlier and more prominent researchers on DMs is Bruce Fraser. In his 1999 article, Fraser tackles the issue of defining DMs as a category. While discourse markers have been the subject of much research in the past few decades, Fraser contends that there is still much confusion surrounding not only what a discourse marker is, but even what this linguistic feature is called. The author cites various papers which look at these elements under names such as discourse connectives, discourse particles, cue phrases, phatic connectives and more. With the aim of consolidating these terminologies, and also setting forth guidelines as to what constitutes a discourse marker, Fraser examines the past research of various prominent studies, as well as what discourse markers are and are not, how they function, what syntactic category they fit into and which classes of discourse markers exist.

Much of Fraser's theorizing regarding DMs echoes previous descriptions and statements on DMs, providing an accurate and concise portrayal of their features. Others, however, seem to go against the grain of much previous research, such as when he states that DMs "impose a relationship between some aspect of the discourse segment they are a part of […] and some aspect of a prior discourse statement" (1999: 938). While this is often the case with DMs,

particularly in English, it is important to remember that DMs are both cataphoric and anaphoric, and can refer to prior as well as upcoming discourse (Schiffrin 1987; Schwenter 1996; Brody 2011; etc.).

Schourup (1983) is one of the older studies on DMs, or as they are referred to by this author, discourse particles. Schourup focuses on the English DMs *well*, *like*, and *y'know*. Part of what makes Schourup's analysis of these commonly discussed DMs a unique approach is his focus on DMs as *evincives* and what he calls the three worlds of the speaker. An evincive is "a linguistic item that indicates that at the moment at which it is said the speaker is engaged in, […] thinking; the evincive item indicates that this thinking is now occurring […] but does not completely specify its content" (14). This leads into Schourup's three worlds of the speaker, which he lists as the private world, the shared world and the other world. The private world is defined as the covert thinking of the speaker, which may or may not be shared with other participants in the conversation. The shared world is "what is on display as talk and other behavior on the part of the conversants". Lastly, the other world is the covert thinking of other conversants, of which the speaker is unaware.

Using these ideas, Schourup argues that the DMs *like*, *well*, and *y'know* contain a core function, which is the disclosure of covert thinking. They are "responses to problems arising due to the 'invisibility' of undisclosed thinking" (103). As evincives, *well* and *like* bring to the shared world contributions from a speaker's private world. *Y'know*, on the other hand, attempts to probe the hearer's other world, questioning what effect the speaker's words had on the hearer. However, while this certainly appears to be the case in some instances of use of these particular DMs, it can be argued that this is not their only function, such as in Norrick (2001).

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In Norrick (2001) we see a demonstration of how DMs can take on different functions and applications in a variety of contexts. Specifically, Norrick examines the use of the English DMs *well* and *but* in oral narratives, arguing that they "function as a special sort of discourse marker in oral narratives, and that their functions within the oral narrative context follow neither from their usual meanings nor from their usual DM functions in other contexts" (849). Norrick agrees on the conventional descriptions of DMs proposed by previous studies such as Schiffrin (1987) and Schourup (1985), however, he proposes that DMs can function differently in different types of discourse.

Using the DMs *well* and *but*, Norrick explores storytelling as a type of discourse. He explains that storytellers use these DMs to organize the narrative, and that this depends in part on the listener's participation and interpretation of them (2001: 856). He concludes that these DMs have three distinct functions: to segue from an abstract to an orientation, to guide listeners back to the main sequence of narrative elements following interruptions and digressions, and to allow listeners to use these elements in a parallel way to re-orient the primary teller to the expected order of narrative presentation (866).

Of particular interest to the present study are the ideas that the roles of DMs can vary depending on the context, and that the listener may also condition the use of DMs. Norrick demonstrates that listeners can use *well* and *but* to "…[express] their concern with the form and meaning of narratives" (2001: 866). This seems to be a cooperative function, which may coincide with the corpus of the present study.

One study that has looked in depth at Spanish DMs is that of Travis (2005). In her book, Travis examines the semantic characteristics of the Spanish DMs *pues, bueno, o sea,* and *entonces* in Colombian Spanish. Specifically, Travis utilizes natural data recorded in Cali,

Colombia. Travis analyzes the DMs in question from a semantic perspective; one of her main goals is to determine whether DMs can be defined as homonymous or polysemous. Homonyms are words that are spelled the same way and sound the same but have multiple meanings. Polysemous words, on the other hand, are those that have multiple related meanings. Travis demonstrates that the lack of semantic meaning attributed to DMs "is only true of highly grammaticized markers, such as *pues* and to some degree *entonces*, while other markers can have very rich semantics," (2005: 287). Regarding polysemy, Travis finds that "there is no predefined semantic relationship between marker and non-marker forms," (2005: 288). Some markers have polysemous relationships while others are homonymous. Due in part to this, Travis argues that DMs do not constitute a fixed natural class, but rather they are elements that have a discourse marking role. One of the most prominent roles is that they comment on surrounding discourse and that their meaning is "essentially their illocutionary force" or "the instructions they give to the addressee in terms of how to relate the utterance they mark to the surrounding discourse," (287).

Rodríguez (1996) focuses specifically on the Spanish DM *por cierto* as a modern day digressive marker. This study is concerned with providing a detailed description of the marker, working through the various nuances and functions that define it. The paper begins with an overview of what a digressive marker is, before delving into the descriptions of *por cierto*. He defines digressives as particles "…que no forman parte de las oraciones que se insertan. Su función no es, por tanto, oracional sino textual; a saber: relacionar secuencias, que pueden ir de una palabra a un bloque oracional, en virtud de asociaciones o recuerdos" (532). Rodríguez analyzes *por cierto* from four different perspectives: phonetic, morphological, syntactic and pragmatic.

A number of studies have researched DMs in various texts, such as King (2011). In this study, King looks at the role of information structuring DMs in Cervantes' e*ntremeses*, a series of skits to be performed between larger acts of a *comedia*. King utilizes the written scripts of these skits to investigate the quotidian speech of Golden Age Spanish, which the *entremeses* aimed to emulate. Due to certain DMs being linked with specific registers of communication, King uses DMs to evaluate the register of the *entremeses* (649).

Specifically, King examines the structuring marker category of DMs. The number of structuring DMs found in the corpus is recorded and divided according to subcategory and individual DM. The analysis is broken into different sections for each subcategory of structuring marker. In addition to describing and analyzing their patterns of use, the DMs found in the corpus were compared to DMs found in modern Spanish corpora. Based on his findings, King comes to the conclusion that "there is significant evidence from the results of this study that would justify the classification of the *entremeses* as being representative of oral varieties of speech of their time" (2011: 658). This is important to the present study, as it shows previous evidence of written text, in this case of a literate nature, approximating oral communication, which is what I expect to find in the current study.

2.4 Laughter

Laughter is a feature that has been recognized in recent decades as relevant to the field of pragmatics although it is considered an extralinguistic feature. While laughter is typically tied to humor and jokes, it is not inherently nor exclusively used for these purposes (Jefferson 1979, 1984; Gavioli 1995; Norick 1989, 2006; Osvaldasson 2004; Clift 2012). Laughter has been found to obey certain rules of discourse (Sacks 1974) and have definitive communicative effects,

such as being used for repair sequences (Norrick 1989) or as managing disagreements (Osvaldsson 2004).

These previous studies on laughter have been approached primarily from the perspective of discourse analysis and have been of an oral nature. With the arrival of computer mediated communication (CMC), laughter can now be examined from a written perspective as well. While previously uncommon in written texts, new abbreviations and codes used to indicate laughter have surfaced in CMC, such as "haha", "jajaja", "jejeje" and "lol" (Varnhagen 2010). The question, then, is if this written substitution for laughter serves the same purposes as the oral varieties, if it takes on different functions or if it can even be considered the same phenomenon. There seems to be a lack of research into laughter in CMC at large, as well as in Spanish, and one of the aims of this thesis is to add to that pool of knowledge.

Gail Jefferson's 1979 article is widely regarded as a seminal work in linguistic research on laughter. Working from a conversation analysis perspective, Jefferson investigates the idea of laughter being used as an invitational sequence by the speaker, offering the opportunity to laugh to the hearer. Jefferson claims that this invitation can extended by the placement of a laugh at the end of an utterance, at which point the hearer can respond with a laugh immediately following it. The hearer may then decline the invitation to laugh, but simply remaining silent is not a valid option. Instead, "the recipient must actively decline to laugh. One technique for declining a postcompletion invitation to laugh is the placement of speech, by the recipient, just after onset of speaker's laughter, that speech providing serious pursuit of topic as a counter to the pursuit of laughter" (93). Jefferson also notes that the number of recipients can affect the way the speaker chooses to receive a declination to laugh; if there are multiple recipients rather than just one, others may laugh in place of the one who declines. While not exceedingly common, the subject

of laughter invitations can be referenced in the speech. Of particular import, Jefferson presents a method of transcribing laughter which has gone on to influence most subsequent studies investigating oral laughter. This transcription method allows for precise examinations of the placement of laughter and is able to account for speakers' utterances overlapping.

O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams (1983) presents one of the few in depth examinations of the function of laughter as a structuring force in discourse. They examine the oral variety of laughter and divide its uses into five different categories: providing turn-taking cues, providing instructions to the hearer, as a display of hearership, inviting elaboration, and affiliation.

Defining laughter as a momentary loss of control of speech, O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams assert that this breakdown in speech provides other participants the opportunity to interject in the turn taking order. They note, "however, because laughter's duration is temporary and variable, a subsequent speaking turn must be taken before laughter's completion" (1983: 178). Additionally, they note that speakers often use laughter to mark the completion of an utterance, signaling that the hearer may take a turn speaking.

Aside from turn taking cues, laughter can also condition a hearer's response. One common scenario is that by laughing, the speaker invites the hearer to also laugh, which is "thereby restraining a recipient's possible next utterance" (1983: 180). When confronted with this invitation to laugh, the hearer has two options: accept the invitation and laugh or decline it and not laugh. In order to decline the invitation, the hearer must eliminate the relevance of the laughter. According to O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams, this effect is commonly achieved by resuming the conversation and refocusing on the topical import of the prior utterance (1983: 180). Another form of conditioning a hearer's response is through within-speech laughter. "Within-speech laughter consists of laugh particles that are performed *in* talk" (1983: 180).

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Within-speech laughter gives the hearer a point to contribute laughter to the speaker's. In addition to invitations for hearer laughter, laughter can also provide cues for states such as irony and sarcasm. While tone plays a part in making the hearer aware of sarcasm or irony, laughter can also signal to the hearer the speaker's intentions concerning an utterance. Taken together with tone, laughter can enhance the way the hearer interprets the utterance more so than just one of these two resources alone.

Laughter can also be used by the hearer as a sign of hearership, or to display attention. As speaker laughter instructs a hearer in how to respond, "hearer laughter displays how a message was heard, and of course, that it was heard" (182). As previously mentioned, hearer laughter can come in response to speaker invitations, but it may also appear without previous invitation. In both instances, hearer laughter is used to convey how the hearer interpreted the speaker's utterances. What the laughter specifically conveys to the speaker depends heavily on the context, but O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams demonstrate that beyond basic comprehension, where the laughter occurs can indicate comprehension of ideas conveyed at that particular moment.

Another function of laughter proposed by O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams is providing an invitation to elaborate. In instances of problematic or unclear laughter, hearers will often ask for some kind of elaboration as to the purpose of the laugh. Another possibility is that the speaker, fearing that their laughter may be ambiguous, will elaborate on his/her own laughter during the same turn (1983: 185).

Lastly, O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams discuss laughter as a form of affiliation between those participating in speech. The preceding conversational functions of laughter share a common element in their effects: interactional coordination. Through each of the previously mentioned uses of laughter, people are able to show affiliation, or a cooperative connection, with

one another. This can range from using laughter to show agreement with a statement, or to laughing to demonstrate solidarity (186). To demonstrate this use, O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams analyze a conversation in which the two participants coordinate laughter to build affiliation. O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams cite, as an example, an instance in which participant W begins an utterance and participant X laughs while W is speaking:

W: the f(h)ull na:me.heheh
X: [hhh]   [yeatha.]fuller the name =

Precisely at the end of X's laugh, W laughs as well while continuing her utterance. The effect is that W latches her laughter onto X's laughter. "X's laughter displays that X is hearing W's utterance as a laughable candidate. And, in W's laughing, she similarly displays, and perhaps confirms, that her utterance warrants laughing" (189). O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams note that this is a highly coordinated use of laughter "[a]nd, in this coordination, the participants come to identify a mutual understanding of their talk" (189).

Clift (2012) deals with laughter in non-humorous contexts, specifically, directly reported speech. She presents three examples which demonstrate instances of laughter which was not met with laughter in response. In deducing the purpose of the laughter in each example of reported speech, Clift finds that each instance of laughter occurs within one turn-constructional unit. By first examining the content of the reported speech, Clift notes that "the most common context for reported speech is overwhelmingly that of story-telling" (1304). Clift further notes that the specific cause in common in these instances is complaints. By examining the position of the phenomenon in question, Clift finds that the laughter is very precisely placed; it occurs in the part of the complaint that is objectionable. The laughter here serves to highlight the offensive or troubling event that the speaker is complaining about.

In addition to this, laughter can serve a more important role in complaints as well. Clift cites Jefferson (1984), drawing a parallel between laughter in complaints and laughter in trouble talk. It mitigates the negative effect that complaining can have on the hearer, and presents the speaker as being in a state of good spirits, managing despite the thing being complained about. In order to avoid the detrimental effects of complaining, one must avoid presenting utterances in such a way that can be interpreted as complaints. To this end, laughter serves to mask the complaint and shield the speaker from the negative opinion of the hearer. This study serves to reinforce the idea that laughter is not always indicative of humor, and actually fulfills a variety of additional functions.

Potter & Hepburn (2010) focus on laugh particles, bursts of aspiration interpolated within words, which they rename interpolated particles of aspiration (IPAs). They begin their analysis by stating that they will not make any assumptions regarding the connection between laughter and humor throughout the course of the article and that they will treat laugh particles within words as a different entity from laugh particles outside them. They then characterize IPAs. IPAs are not propositional; they have no content or meaning to them on their own. IPAs may accompany standard laughter, but more often do not. Also of note is that the inclusion of an IPA in a word does not hinder the delivery of the utterance. "In this sense, IPAs are similar to features of talk such as emphasis, volume and pitch shift" (2010: 1546).

According to Potter & Hepburn, one of the primary functions of IPAs is to mark problematic lexical terms. "That is, they may signal possible trouble in the use of the word or that there is more going on than the mere use of the word would indicate" (2010: 1546). This function does not, however, imply that the speaker is making a correction, or that this admittance of insufficiency somehow negates the meaning of the utterance. It is possible that in such

instances there may not be a better option for the speaker that the problematic word. What this accomplishes, though, is to allow the speaker to "specifically and visibly mark that they see problems with the term" (1547). After marking the problematic term with an IPA, it is not necessary to mark it again on subsequent uses.

This presents another function of laughter separate from humor. However, with regard to the present study, it is unlikely that this type of laughter can appear in text based settings, due to the nature of IPAs. In order to include this type of laughter in text it would have to be written out in the middle of a word, which would in turn interfere with the delivery of that utterance. This is contrary to the very definition of IPAs. It is, however, possible that laughter in online text-based settings could fulfill similar functions to IPAs albeit in different ways.

Stewart (1997) serves as a perfect transition between this section of the literature, laughter, and the following, politeness, precisely because the central focus of this study is on the face-related functions of laughter in conversation. Stewart examines the uses of laughter in conversation between native and non-native speakers of Spanish. Stewart separates laughter into three categories: metalinguistic, evaluative, and joking. Metalinguistic laughter is defined as having to do with regulating speech itself. This type of laughter "includes actions such as backchannelling, regulating the flow of conversation and interrupting" (7). Laughter may mark the end of a topic or a speaker's turn, as well as steer the conversation in a new direction. Evaluative laughter allows the speaker or hearer to express their attitude towards a certain element of the conversation. It can be used to agree, indicate hearership, express amusement, display other positive emotions, to disagree (by contradiction and challenge), mitigate, boast or brag, disapprove, self-deprecate or display other negative emotions (11). Lastly, joking laughter can be used to gain acceptance, tease, confirm in-group identity, display intimacy, express

amusement, ridicule and taunt. This type of laughter is not to be confused with purely reactional laughter, what O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams (1983) define as a momentary loss of control of speech. Rather, this laughter is still capable of expressing more than simply finding something humorous or having a gut reaction to something in the conversation.

Stewart then introduces the concept of face as an additional dimension with which one can analyze laughter. Face is defined here as the public self-image that every member of society desires and tries to maintain (for a more detailed description of face, see the following section). Some acts threaten the face of the speaker or hearer, and other acts may serve to mitigate or protect them from incoming threats. According to Stewart, laughter can fall into both of these categories, and the previous functions of laughter can be divided clearly based on their ability to harm or enhance one's face. Stewart then analyzes various Spanish conversations according to these functions of laughter, finding that laughter in conversation can indeed server a variety of purposes apart from humor and often directly linked to face.

2.5 Politeness

Politeness has been one of the most studied aspects of pragmatics, being an aspect of language that is not intrinsically tied to categories such as syntax or phonetics. For years, there has been a certain difficulty in defining exactly what is meant by the term politeness. While a layperson may refer you to etiquette and manners, linguistic politeness consists of the forms of language used to make a person feel at ease. There are various theoretical approaches to how politeness works and what rules govern it, though most of them share a common origin: Grice's Cooperative Principle. The Cooperative Principle states: "make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of talk exchange in which you are engaged" (1975: 45). Simply put, say what you mean to say when

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you need to say it. The Cooperative Principle's general effect is the idea that when two people are engaged in conversation, they must work together in order to achieve mutual understanding. Therefore, each participant of the conversation actively tries to effectively communicate; without cooperation, communication may break down.

The overall goal of Grice's work with his Cooperative Principle and the various conversational maxims he postulates is to demonstrate a need for efficiency in speech. This is contested, however, by Brown and Levinson (1987) and their views on politeness. While Grice would say to speak as efficiently as possible, Brown and Levinson suggest that one of the foremost reasons for not speaking in such a manner is for the sake of politeness. Brown and Levinson build off of Grice's core idea that "there is a working assumption by conversationalists of the rational and efficient nature of talk" (1987: 4). Brown and Levinson state that linguistic politeness must be communicated in the form of a message, and that the lack of this message can result in the hearer perceiving the speaker as having an impolite attitude. Brown and Levinson propose a framework of politeness based around a model person, one who is linguistically and socially capable and aware of the surrounding social environment and the expectations upon him or her.

At the core of their framework is the concept of "face", which they derive from Goffman (1967). Goffman defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (1967). Brown and Levinson expand upon this definition, citing two kinds of face, positive face and negative face. Positive face is the want of every member of society that his or her wants be desirable to others. Positive face deals with the idea of being desirable and accepted by one's peers. Negative face, on the other hand, is the want

of every competent adult that his or her actions be unimpeded by others. Negative face deals

with a person maintaining freedom and independence, being unencumbered by others. Being a

social construct, the status of a person's face is constantly changing. People constantly monitor

their face in interactions, since face can be gained, lost, maintained or enhanced. In interactions

with others, face can often be threatened, which leads to members closely guarding their face.

The vulnerability of face is generally known to all competent members, or model persons.

Harkening back to the Cooperative Principle, since the model person is aware of others' face

needs, "the assumption is made that it is generally in everyone's best interest to maintain each

other's face and to act in such ways that others are made aware that this is one's intention"

(Fraser 1990: 229).

With these motivations understood, Brown and Levinson posit four different

interpretations of face-threatening acts, and common linguistic strategies for performing them.

The four types of face-threatening acts are: threatening the hearer's negative face (ordering,

advising, warning), threatening the hearer's positive face (complaining, criticizing), threatening

the speaker's negative face (accepting an offer, unwillingly promising), and threatening the

speaker's positive face (apologizing, confessing, accepting compliments). The strategies for

performing face-threatening acts normally deal with reducing the threat to the hearer's face

rather than the speaker's. These strategies fall into a taxonomy created by Brown and Levinson.

There are four primary methods of performing a face-threatening act following this taxonomy:

off record (indirectly, without using unavoidable impositions), baldly on record (performing the

FTA directly and without mitigation), on record with redressive positive politeness (expressions

of solidarity, reaffirming the hearer's positive face), and on record with redressive negative

politeness (expression of restraint on the speaker's part, leaving room for the hearer to deny the request).

Brown and Levinson go on to create a formula to determine the level of threat to one's face in each FTA. Their formula[2] is that the weightiness (risk to face) of an act equals the social distance between the speaker and hearer, plus the amount of power the speaker has over the hearer, plus the culturally and situationally defined ranking of the imposition. This last variable, R, is an especially important component, as it allows the formula to account for the differences in politeness in various cultures. R is ranked according to "the degree to which [it is] considered to interfere with an agent's wants of self-determination or of approval (his negative- and positive-face wants)" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 77). There is no single static ranking of R, since a variety of factors influence these rankings and are often different between cultures, situations, and people. These three variables affect how the speaker judges the amount of threat in a FTA and determines what type of strategies can be used to help make his or her point while maintaining the hearer's face.

By taking into consideration cultural practices in the last variable of their formula, Brown and Levinson make the claim that this model is universally applicable. However, some scholars (Ide 1982; Matsumoto 1989; Fukada & Asato 2003) have claimed that this model is Eurocentric in nature. Specifically, an argument has been raised (Ide 1982; Matsumoto 1989; Fukada & Asato 2003) that Brown and Levinson's model does not fit with the Japanese use of politeness, particularly in honorifics. The argument is that while a person may have a choice in how to perform an FTA in English, in the case of Japanese honorifics a speaker does not have a choice

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[2] The formula is expressed as: $W_x = D(S,H) + P(S,H) + R_x$

concerning which to use. The use of honorifics is essentially grammatically obligatory, similar to, say, conjugating a verb in Spanish. This lack of volition does not factor into Brown and Levinson's model, and it is argued that because of this, honorifics are not expressing politeness but simply fulfilling syntactic obligation.

Watts (2005) argues against this idea, in addition to adding a new dimension to our analysis of linguistic politeness. Watts examines the idea of politeness as commonly defined in everyday speech, versus the theoretical notion of linguistic politeness. He points out that there is often a conflation of the two ideas, and a new term is necessary to properly work with the topic. Watts argues that if politeness is a universal feature of language, "we must then conclude that all speech communities have linguistic ways and means at the disposal of masking less altruistic ends" (47). These practices and resources vary from culture to culture, but these are typically what are referred to when politeness is mentioned, sets of customs and etiquette adhered to by a community. Because of the arbitrary nature of the rules of etiquette, Watts proposes a new term, *politic behavior*, to describe socially appropriate behavior that one would expect in a given situation. Several strategies considered polite by Brown and Levinson would fall under this category of politic behavior, while "what counts as polite behavior depends entirely on those features of the interaction which are socio-culturally marked by the speech community as being more than merely politic" (51).

Returning to the argument of universality of politeness, if we take this new concept of politic behavior and apply it to Japanese honorifics, we see that honorifics are merely politic behavior engaged through negative politeness strategies as posited by Brown and Levinson. FTA strategies, when examined through the lens of politic behavior, further separate themselves from what we imagine as typically polite. In this sense, they can capture the use of Japanese

honorifics, defining them instead as politic behavior. The motivation for the use of these honorifics is the same variables as featured in Brown and Levinson's formula for weightiness, distance, power and cultural context; however, politic behavior dictates that this not be used to convey a polite term; it is merely the status quo.

Culpeper (1996) examines politeness from the other end of the spectrum, that is, impoliteness. He argues that in order to understand politeness, one must also understand impoliteness and confrontational strategies, since at times these play key roles rather than marginal ones. He examines various forms of impoliteness, looking at their cause and how they are performed, with the goal of building a working framework of impoliteness. Culpeper starts by examining the issue of inherent impoliteness. While all acts must be considered in their respective contexts, Culpeper points out that some acts are inherently face-threatening, such as the humorous example, "Do you think you could possibly not pick your nose?" In this example, the very act of asking this of someone is inherently face-threatening to the hearer because it draws attention to an antisocial action.

Another form of impoliteness discussed by Culpeper is mock impoliteness, or banter. Mock impoliteness is impoliteness which appears to be just that on the surface, but is instead false, and serves to reinforce social bonds. He cites Leech's (1983) Banter Principle, which states: "In order to show solidarity with *h*, say something which is (1) obviously untrue, and (2) obviously impolite to *h*. [Therefore] what *s* says is impolite to *h* and is clearly untrue. Therefore, what *s* really means is polite to *h* and true" (1983: 144). The underlying principle here is hyperbole. The speaker makes use of something contextually outlandish, so much so that the hearer will interpret it as being false, because it is otherwise highly illogical and violates the assumption that the speaker is a competent and logical participant in communication.

Culpeper proposes that, as the opposite of politeness, impoliteness superstrategies mirror the politeness strategies put forth by Brown and Levinson. These impoliteness strategies are: bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withholding politeness. He notes that:

> "it is important to distinguish [bald on record impoliteness] from Brown and Levinson's Bald on record. For Brown and Levinson, Bald on record is a *politeness* strategy in fairly specific circumstances. […] In these cases little face is at stake, and, more importantly, it is not the intention of the speaker to attack the face of the hearer" (1996: 356).

Conversely, the point of bald on record impoliteness is to convey impoliteness as directly as possible; the intent is to damage the hearer's face. Positive impoliteness consists of actions which damage a hearer's positive face, their desire to be included and accepted. This can be accomplished through several means, such as: ignoring the other, excluding the other, being disinterested, obscuring or using secretive language, and disassociating from the other. These acts diminish solidarity between the speaker and the hearer. On the other hand, negative impoliteness damages the hearer's negative face through various means, such as frightening the other, condescending or scorning the other, invading the other's space, associating the other with a negative aspect, or putting the other's indebtedness on the record. These actions attack a hearer's negative face by hindering his/her independence, such as bringing up a debt he/she owes or otherwise imposing on him/her.

It is important to understand online communication, DMs, laughter and politeness in order to analyze these factors in the specific context of FFXIV. Some of the previous research such as Vandergriff (2013), LeBlanc (2010) and Stewart (1997), demonstrate how two or more of these factors may overlap or work together in influencing communication and community building. In the follow chapters, I analyze the presence of these factors in the FFXIV linkshell community and show how they work together in order to effectively build a community.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

As mentioned previously, this study aims to analyze three different phenomena, discourse markers, politeness and laughter. Therefore, three separate analyses were conducted, each examining a different linguistic phenomenon.

3.1 Community

The community observed in this study was that of a Spanish speaking linkshell in the MMO *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn* (FFXIV). The linkshell used in this study is a group with over 100 members, dedicated specifically to creating a social space for Spanish speaking players of FFXIV. Within this group, conversations typically consist of game-related discussion, but also idle chat on whatever topic comes up. It is important to note that no information regarding the participants' identities or demographics was gathered. This is due to several reasons: First, asking about people's real life information is, for the most part, considered taboo within the community, and would greatly discourage participation in the study. Second, there is no way to verify any information volunteered by participants. This is particularly troublesome regarding age and gender, as some people who play MMOs are known to lie about this information for various reasons. To avoid these issues, this type of information was left out altogether. All references to participants as he or she in the present study are therefore arbitrary. What is known is that the data is primarily from Latin American countries, based on the time zone of people playing as well as the absence of the *vosotros* form and other regional markers in the corpus.

As mentioned previously, FFXIV is not supported in Spanish. This means that the game based text, such as non-player character dialogue, help text, location names etc. do not appear in Spanish, but rather in one of the four supported languages: English, Japanese, German or French, depending on which version the player purchases. Players may play with one another regardless of language, nationality or version of the game, however, various servers have been recommended for Japanese, North American and European players, so that players of similar time zones and languages can group together more easily if they choose. The linkshell in question is located on a North American server, meaning that they are surrounded primarily with players who speak English, and also likely have an English copy of the game. This particular server, however, was chosen by the Spanish speaking player community as a designated server for Spanish speaking players, via various FFXIV community forums. Members of this linkshell have definitely been influenced by English, as evidenced by references to place names and other minor code switching. However, while some of these players are likely balanced bilinguals, there are still others who are likely monolingual Spanish speakers.

In FFXIV, players have the ability to communicate through the game's chat log. The chat log is a window made up of customizable tabs set up to display various sources of chat. There exist several types of chat in which players can engage, including: party chat, linkshell chat, free company chat, say chat, shout chat and tells. Players can determine which tabs display which types of chat; multiple forms of chat can be displayed in one tab or they can be divided up into separate tabs. The type of chat is marked by color (which is also customizable) and form.

Each chat has a specific use as well as a specific range of people that can view it. Say and shout are based on proximity, say allows a player to communicate with anyone nearby, and shout is used to communicate with anyone within a larger range. Any player within the given range can

view these chats and they are the only forms of chat based on a character's location in the game.

Tells are private messages sent to a specific player.

Figure 3. FFXIV's chat log

Party chat is used to communicate with members of a player's party members. Free company

chat is visible only to other members of the free company a player is enrolled in. Linkshell chat

is visible to members in a given linkshell. Unlike what Yus (2011) describes in Second Life,

where players interact primarily through the use of their virtual avatars (thus creating a virtual

face to face interaction), linkshell communication often takes place when players' avatars are not

located near each other. The data in the present study does not take into account any interactions

that occurred outside of the dimensions of the linkshell, such as avatar interactions.

3.2 Ethics and Data Collection

The methodology of data gathering from online sources presents various ethical concerns that are nonexistent -or else already resolved- in face to face communication. One of the first hurdles facing research in computer mediated communication (CMC) is the matter of consent and privacy. As a researcher, there is a certain imperative that one's subjects must be protected from any potential harm that may come about from research conducted. For linguists, this is often accomplished through protecting the participants' identities and maintaining a level of confidentiality. As mentioned previously, the internet is used for many types of interactions, most of which are readily available to the public. Due to this, a researcher could gather data without the speaker's awareness or consent. Consequently, as Paccagnella puts it, "field research conducted with unobtrusive techniques is inevitably doomed to create major ethical problems," (1997: 7).

While it is important to uphold the obligations to participants mentioned above, one must also consider the advantages of online data gathering. First and foremost is the ease of data collection itself. Unlike in face to face interviews, the data collection process does not require that the researcher create labor intensive transcriptions from recordings; by virtue of the written nature of online communication and the technological capabilities of duplicating the texts with ease we can forego this process. Another advantage is that communication on the internet creates a persistent record of communication, that is, the text remains for people to see well after it was written, in many cases. An observer may then collect data from interactions that already occurred that they were not a part of, instead of having to instigate interviews with participants or elicit data.

Regarding the ethicality of online data gathering, there has been a bit of debate on how to approach the recording of data as well as the issue of participant consent. What all seem to agree on, however, is that the privacy of the individuals be protected. To that end most researchers use pseudonyms and otherwise omit any personal information that could identify the participants from the study altogether. Many scholars in the field, such as Sudweeks and Rafaeli (1995), argue that public discourse online is just that: public. Rafaeli goes on to say that, "Analysis of such content, where individuals', institutions' and lists' identities are shielded, is not subject to 'Human Subject' restraints. Such study is more akin to the study of tombstone epitaphs, graffiti, or letters to the editor. Personal?– yes. Private?– no." More directly, "analyzing online community or culture communications or their archives is not human subjects' research if the researcher does not record the identity of the communicators," (Kozinets 2010 as quoted by Maíz-Arévalo 2013: 51).

The present study acknowledges the need to act cautiously in protecting its participants' privacy, but also that there is minimal risk involved in the study. Therefore, no more than normal precautions are required. The observer did not obtain the identities of participants. Additionally, pseudonyms are employed instead of the screen-names used by the participants, so that their online personas will be protected as well. With the participants' identities concealed and taking into account the public nature of the communication in question, this study has opted out from obtaining consent from the participants, based on the arguments presented in the previous paragraph. Again, this will in no way affect the participants, and provides a boon in the study by allowing for the most naturalistic data possible by mitigating the effect of the Observer's Paradox.

3.3 Discourse Markers

The methodology of this study consists of the identification and analysis of the discourse markers in question and is based in part on the methodology of King (2011). First, the data were obtained from the participants online by monitoring the chat log. To preserve the purity of the data, conversations in which the observer took part have not been included in the corpus. The data consist of 2,504 words and account for a total of over 36 hours of observation. The data were copied and pasted into word processing documents, which allowed for ease of use in the analysis. Next, the data were examined for DMs pertaining to the structuring marker subclass. DMs belonging to other subclasses were not examined in this study. The DMs in this study were based on the descriptions and classifications provided in Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro (1999). After potential DMs were selected, each individual token was examined in context to determine whether or not it fulfilled the role of a DM and the ones that did not were eliminated from the study. The remaining DMs were examined for their pragmatic functions. This qualitative analysis will determine whether the DMs used in this online context are being used for similar or different purposes in comparison to other varieties of Spanish, in particular, oral varieties.

3.4 Laughter

While oral laughter is easily recognizable, laughter in CMC may take on different forms, making recognizing it that much more difficult. In order to analyze this phenomenon, it was first necessary to establish criteria for what constitutes laughter in an online context. The first category of laughter would be any orthographic onomatopoeia designated to represent the sound of laughter, such as "hahaha" or "jajaja". The second group is any commonly employed acronym that represents laughter, such as "lol", "rofl" or "lmao". While this group is made up of

acronyms that come from English, these are also frequently used in Spanish and much of the online world as common abbreviations, particularly in western languages. The last group is comprised of emoticons that represent the act of laughing, such as "XD", depicting a face with eyes closed and an open mouth in a smile, or ":P", representing a face with the tongue out. The exact meaning of many emoticons is nebulous at best; however, general consensus suggests that these emoticons in particular often indicate laughter or a teasing mood. Emoticons are very context dependent and so they require careful consideration on a case by case basis to determine whether or not they qualify as a form of laughter.

One major question this study aims to address is how these forms of laughter are used to structure language, as well as how their use compares to oral occurrences. This study will, therefore, compare the instances of laughter found here to the features described by O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams (1983): providing turn-taking cues, providing instructions to the hearer, as a display of hearership, inviting elaboration, and affiliation. Additionally, the study will attempt to find a link between the type of laughter employed and the role it fulfills in conversation.

3.5 Politeness

In order to examine how politeness was manifested in CMC, it was first necessary to identify instances of face-threatening acts (FTAs) in the data. FTAs were identified based on the criteria for intrinsic FTAs set forth by Brown and Levinson (1987). According to these authors, intrinsic FTAs considered can be found in Figure 4.

After identifying all FTAs found within the data, the FTAs were then analyzed to identify which types of FTA mitigation strategies were employed by the participants. The FTA mitigation strategies taken into consideration here were also postulated by Brown and Levinson (1987: 60), and form a hierarchy that can be seen in Figure 5.

	Positive face-threatening		Negative face-threatening		
Hearer Threatening	Displays S's negative opinion of H's positive face	Neglects H's positive face needs	Acts that predicate some future act of H, and put pressure on H to do or not do said act	Acts that predicate some future positive act of S, and pressure H to accept or reject them	Acts that predicate some desire of S toward H or H's goods, giving reason to think that he may have to protect or give said good to/from S
	• Disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule, complaints and reprimands, accusations, insults • Contradictions or disagreements, challenges	• Expressions of violent emotions • Irreverence, mention of taboo, inappropriateness • Bringing up bad news about H, or boasting about S • Raising of dangerous or divisive topics • Non-cooperation in activity, interrupting, non-sequiturs or non-attention • Address terms or other status-marked identifications in initial encounters	• Orders and requests • Suggestions, advice • Reminders • Threats, warnings, dares	• Offers • Promises	• Compliments, envy, adoration • Expressions of strong negative emotion towards H
Speaker Threatening	• Apologies • Acceptance of a compliment • Breakdown of physical control of body • Self-humiliation • Confessions, admissions of guilt or responsibility • Emotion leakage, non-control of laughter or tears		• Expressing thanks • Acceptance of thanks or apology • Excuses • Acceptance of offers • Responses to H's mistakes • Unwilling promises and offers		

Figure 4. Chart of FTA's based on Brown and Levinson (1987)

Based on these procedures, the politeness strategies employed by this group will be examined, with the goal of determining what kind of strategies are being used with what kind of FTAs. Of particular interest is whether or not the realization of politeness strategies in this community may present forms that are specific to CMC.
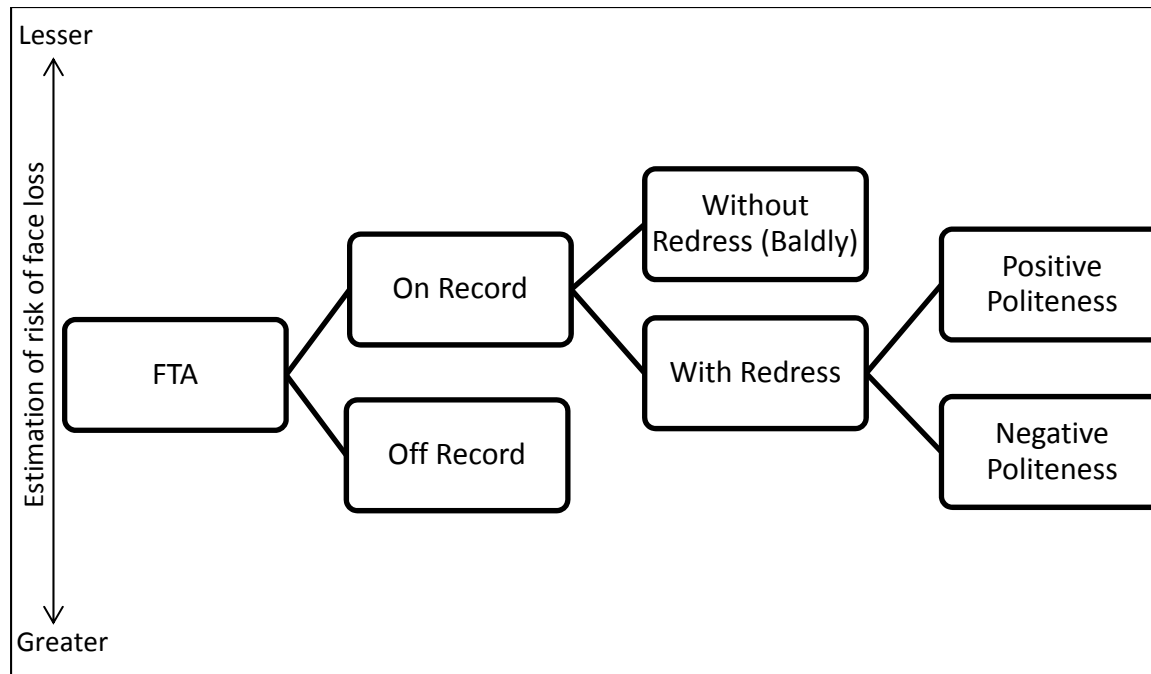
Figure 5. Hiearchy of Politeness Strategies from Brown and Levinson (1987)

The three separate analyses of discourse markers, laughter and politeness are contained within this chapter. With regard to politeness and laughter, it was found that there was a substantial overlap in both data and examples. As will be discussed below, certain emoticons were found not only to structure language in a fashion reminiscent of DMs, but also to do a degree of face-work, hence functioning as politeness strategies.

4.1 Discourse Markers

4.1.a. Comment Markers

This study focused on information structuring markers, as defined by Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro (1999), and the analysis below consists of these markers specifically. Firstly, in the comment marker subcategory, two instances of *pues* were noted. These instances of *pues* were the only form of comment markers found in the data, making them the most common, consistent with previous literature, including King (2011) and Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro (1999). While there are few information structuring DMs within the data, an abundance of conversational markers were noticed. Note that each letter represents a different participant in the conversation. This letter does not necessarily represent the same participant across different examples.

(1):[3]

A: si capi mate a los adds uno por uno

[…]

A: y no se salgan del circulo del centro

B: pues uno tiene que matar adds y el otro tiene que darle duro al boss

---

[3] See footnote 1.

In this exchange, one member of the linkshell is asking for advice concerning a strategy for a particular boss battle. Member A responds to his or her request by advising that he or she kill the additional monsters, or *adds* as they are commonly called, in the encounter one by one. Member B adds to this by saying that in addition to one person in the group having to defeat the additional monsters, another one needs to fight the boss head on. In this instance, member B uses *pues* as a comment marker, adding in additional commentary related to what member A had to say.

The second example of *pues* as a comment marker comes shortly afterwards in the same conversation, when the same member asks for a further explanation of the game mechanics. After asking why players used to prefer playing a particular level over another one, but have since switched opinions, member B again offers an explanation.

(2):

> B: es que creo antes wp no daba tomos de mithology capi, por eso hacian mas castrum
>
> […]
>
> B: y pues de los dungeon 50 wp es el que se me hace mas facil y con mismos tomos

Member B starts by explaining that, previously, the level "Wanderer's Palace" did not give players a particular reward, "Tomestones of Mythology", making it undesirable. Member B follows this by saying that in addition to this change, "Wanderer's Palace" is the easiest level with the same number of rewards as the other options available to players. In this exchange, *pues* is again used as a comment marker, positioning the clause "de los dungeon de nivel 50, Wanderer's Palace es el que se me hace más fácil y con los mismos tomos," as additional information relevant to the previous statement.

4.1.b. Ordering Markers

Within the subset of ordering markers, there is a further division into three other subsets, opening markers, continuing markers and closing markers. It is important to keep in mind that that while the type of marker does influence its position relative to the discourse in question, not *all* openers must be used at the beginning of an utterance, and so on (Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro 1999: 4088). The ordering subcategory of markers saw the most varied use of DMs out of the structuring markers. Five different ordering markers were recorded: *después, luego, al fin, en parte,* and *primero*.

Two of these DMs appeared in the same unit of discourse.

(3):

> A: en los flanes iztpa debe hacer aoes y uste tene que matar uno por uno
>
> A: siempre el blue primero
>
> A: despues los demas

In this example, the speaker is explaining to another member how an encounter in the ever-popular Wanderer's Palace works. The DMs *primero* and *después* are used here in part of a series of events. The members are to kill the enemies one by one in a particular order, starting with the blue one and then following with the remaining ones. Again, in the case of *primero*, it is not necessary that it precede the information it describes, even though this would be more common. Additionally, it is notable that while *primero* is classified as a maker that deals with enumeration, *después* is a marker of time. Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro point out that "aunque no sea habitual, no es imposible que se combinen número, espacio y tiempo, o, dentro de cada tipo, se utilicen ordenadores que no son correlativos" (1999: 4087). The above example illustrates that both numerical and chronological ordering can be used to make one cohesive sequence.

Returning again to a previous context, the question of why people prefer Wander's Palace to Castrum Meridianum, another member volunteers information a bit later, where we find the DM *en parte*.

(4):

> A: y lo que dijo [other member] es la razon, masta, en parte, claro
>
> […]
>
> A: antes era castrum porque no estabamos tan equipados y porque no daba
> tantos tomos WP
>
> A: Ya con buen gear para SR y el update de los tomos, se volvio el favorito

En parte is similar to DMs such as *por una parte* and *por su parte* but is distinct in that it can function as both an opening marker and a continuing marker. In the above example, *en parte* functions as an opening marker, signaling the previous clause, "Y lo que dijo Manuel es la razón" as the first in a series of reasons. Afterwards, the speaker states the other reasons, but does not use ordering markers to denote them, which, according to Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro, is quite common (1999: 4088).

4.1.c. Digressive Markers

Only one instance of digressive DMs was recorded, which consisted of the phrase *por cierto*. Digressive markers, as a subclass, introduce secondary and tangential information or commentary while maintaining some degree of relatability to the main or previous topic of discourse. The digressive marker *por cierto* is described as the most common DM of its subclass (Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro 1999: 4091).

(5):

> A: yo me apunto a wp en una hora mas o menos para subir de lv primero :P
> A: porcierto zela te va a gustar mi nuevo sombrero :P
>
> B: vanya?
>
> A: si =)

In this exchange, speaker A begins by talking about his/her plans to play certain content, WP again, once he reaches the appropriate level. s/he then uses the digressive *por cierto* to transition into his/her next statement, which talks about how the hearer, B, will like his or her new hat. This use of *por cierto* obviously fulfills the first part of the definition of a digressive marker by being tangential to the previous statement. It is also, more subtly, relatable to the previous statement; the hat in question, a vanya hat, is a piece of equipment that can only be used by a character that has reached level 50 first. In this way, it relates back to the previous statement, and makes a textbook demonstration of the digressive *por cierto*.

4.2 Laughter

This section will discuss the findings regarding laughter in the order of factors presented in the methodology section: providing turn-taking cues, providing instructions to the hearer, as a display of hearership, inviting elaboration, and affiliation, as well as any additional findings or commentaries.

Laughter is cited as a type of turn taking cue that can function in two ways: it can provide a window of opportunity for the hearer to interject while the speaker is in the process of laughing, and it can signal the end of the speaker's turn (O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams 1983: 178). In CMC, turn taking sequences are strictly regulated in one part by the medium itself; "in chat rooms, turns are subject to the sequencing imposed by the software that manages interactions" (Yus 2011: 158). As a result, it is not possible for the first type of turn taking function to appear within the data here, as participants are not able to speak simultaneously. However, this second type of turn taking cue is present throughout the data, such as in example (6).

(6):

<blockquote>
A: una pregyunta cual es la raza mas nivelada enneste ff

B: todas XD

A: por lo0 que e visto no

[…]

A: mira en cracion de pj

B: [A] variación de 1 punto nada mas
</blockquote>

In this example, A is asking a relatively simple question--which race is *leveled* (referring to

leveled up, or played) the most by players. B responds with a short reply and marks it with the

emoticon "XD", taken here to represent the act of laughing. This reply forms a possible

completion point for B's response; however, B could have expounded on his or her reply, going

into the details as to why this would be the case. Instead, s/he tags the reply with XD, which,

according to O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams, "more clearly displays what is already formulated as a

possible completion point" (1983: 179). While it can be argued that the use of XD is superfluous

due to the imposed sequencing of the chat program, the same sequence without XD tagging B's

initial response would not have the same pragmatic import. It is quite possible that A, seeing

todas by itself, and expecting a more thought out answer, would have misunderstood the

response as being completed and would have waited for a further reply. Sending short responses

in CMC and then following them up with larger utterances is not uncommon in CMC (Yus

2011), and as we can see from the rest of the conversation, there was more to be said on the

matter (A is concerned about a statistical advantage from playing one race as opposed to

another).

Providing instructions to the hearer is an important primary function of laughter. This

informs the hearer how s/he is to interpret the utterance. Normally, "the cue invoked in such

laughter is that the utterance in which laughter occurs warrants subsequent laughter" (O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams 1983:179). When this occurs, there are two possible outcomes: the hearer responds with some kind of laughter, or the speaker declines the invitation to laugh. We see this in examples (7) and (8).

(7):

> A: holaas
> A: sabes quien soy [B]?
>
> B: [other screenname for A]
>
> A: sii XD
>
> B: XD asi tas en feis no?

(8):

> A: mi pensar es que para cuando sala pal ps4 tenemos cap raise y expansion con nuevos jobs
>
> B: y porque habrían de hacer eso con la de ps4
> B: No deja de ser una "consola", no?, y dicen los "conocedores"
>
> […]
>
> A: dije es mi pensar XD
>
> B: pero si, tienes, razon, podria suceder
>
> A: ya ve con zilart

In example (7), we see an instance in which the speaker encodes a cue for the hearer with the tag XD. B then responds with XD as well, accepting the speaker's invitation. This is the only manner in which XD was observed to head an utterance, aside from being used alone. In example (8), A tags his or her utterance with XD, trying to elicit laughter and reduce the combativeness on their debate on the arrival of potential expansion packs to the game. Jefferson (1979) states that in order to decline the invitation of laughter, a hearer must do more than simply withhold laughter. "The invitation to laugh can be declined if the topical import of the prior utterance is taken up in subsequent talk" (O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams 1983:180), which is

exactly what B does, by pursuing the topic. A then returns to the topic and the conversation continues.

In addition to informing the hearer that the utterance warrants laughter, the speaker can use laughter to for other purposes as well, such as "to accomplish irony, sarcasm, facetiousness, and other ontological states" (O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams 1983:180). This is by far the most common of the functions of laughter observed within the data. This is the most frequent use of the emoticons XD and :P, rather than responding to or invoking laughter, though these have been observed as well.

Expressing hearership is another function of laughter which was observed frequently in the data. As laughter can be used to provide cues to the hearer on how to respond to an utterance, it can likewise be used by the hearer to convey how and if the previous utterance was understood. Consider example (9).

(9):

    A: nooo mi control esta chafeando T.T el stick derecho se keda trabado T.T

    B: haha

In this example, A states that his/her controller is breaking down. B responds with laughter, which provides a type of phatic response, making it known to A that he or she was heard. In this case, the laughter was not invited by the speaker through his or her own laughter, but rather volunteered by the hearer, B. This adds an additional dimension of hearership when compared with one in which laughter was invited.

(10):

    A: y ustedes de que la giran?

    B: hechando la heuva, like always

A: ic

[…]

B: y tengo que ir a Castrum Meridianum con el DRG
B: pero me da hueva flagear el duty xd

A: lol

In example (10),we see A responding to B with "lol", again acknowledging that he or she heard B. In this particular example, however, A is responding to an invitation to laugh. B marks the end of his or her utterance with xd, the emoticon representing laughter, expressing his or her views on the statement and inviting others to laugh.

It is important to note that all of the instances of laughter that expressed hearership were found to consist only of the laughter text itself. Additionally, these hearer responses were most commonly "lol", followed by "haha" and "jaja". "XD" was only found as a hearer response once, and was similarly the only text in the utterance.

Laughter can also be used as a resource to foster affiliation. Affiliation is defined as "a relationship or link maintained for any of various reasons, such as accordance with the other party's political or religious views, facilitation of trade" (Oxford English Dictionary 2014). O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams (1983:186) claim that laughter encourages affiliation through its accomplishments of interactual coordination. Laughter "can be heard to support some intendedly non-serious first speaker's utterance" which demonstrates "a coincidence of thought, attitude, sense of humor, and the like" (Schenkein 1971: 364) between the speakers. This feature was found throughout the data, and overlapped with other functions of laughter, since it is precisely through these other conversationally coordinating functions that affiliation is accomplished. (11):

A: ya sigue castrumcastrumcastrum

B: cool

C: no masta de hecho

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B: wpwpwpwpwpw

C: es mas rapido hacer WP si se hace speed run XD
C: pero a usted le va a tocar ya a version light

A: y entonces porque castrumcastrumcastrum? XD

This conversation consists of B and C informing A that he or she should be doing a different activity, WP, instead of Castrum Meridianum. The laughter emoticon XD used by C helps to reaffirm his/her agreement with B that WP is the better choice. Additionally, A then replies, ending his or her utterance with XD as well, which helps to emphasize his or her agreement with the advice given by the other two speakers.

Many of the instances of laughter in the data were found to function as politeness strategies. The idea of conversationally affiliating with participants seems directly related to this. The function of laughter as an expression of positive politeness will be discussed in further detail in the following section; however, it is worth mentioning some of the ways it is related to affiliation work. Positive politeness strategies often deal with making the hearer feel included, so as to pay face to them and blunt the force of some act that would otherwise damage it (Brown and Levinson 1987). This likely draws directly from its ability to emphasize affiliation, a status of being included and in the group. The distinction between affiliation and politeness work then, is this: laughter can be used to show agreement and demonstrate a bond between speakers, which is a mechanism of affiliation. When laughter as a mechanism of affiliation is invoked specifically to mitigate potential damage to a hearer's face, it is then that it is a positive politeness strategy.

4.3 Politeness

This section discusses the findings on how the community uses politeness. It is organized according to the hierarchy of politeness superstrategies given by Brown and Levinson (1987), on which this analysis is based, consisting of off-record, baldly on record, redressive positive

politeness, and redressive negative politeness. Consideration is given to the type of FTA, whose

face is being threatened, and the linguistic forms used in any mitigating strategies.

4.2.a. Conventional Indirectness

Conventional indirectness is the closest the participants in the study were to using off the

record, or completely indirect, forms of realizing FTAs. Conventional indirectness was one of

the least frequently means of mitigating negative FTAs to the hearer. The instances that did use

this strategy were relatively standard.

(12):

> A: pop de odin al norte de camp tranqui al que guste

> B: voy a mirar :P
> B: hay party? XD

Here we see member A informing the rest of the group that Odin has popped, meaning that this

boss enemy has appeared somewhere in the world and gives his suspected location. Member B

responds, saying that s/he will check it out, and then asks if there is a party, the in-game term for

a system of grouping that allows players to play on the same team. While the locutionary act of

this utterance ends there, the illocutionary act of the utterance is actually that member B is

seeking to join member A in fighting Odin. This is in part because member B would have to be

invited to join by member A. By virtue of the advanced level in the game required to participate

in this activity, we can assume that both members here are competent players of the game (an

extension of the model person from Brown and Levinson (1987)). Therefore, A would

immediately understand the question as an indirect request to invite B to a party. However, by

asking in a conventionally indirect manner, B satisfies his or her desire to both go on record in

asking yet staying just off record enough to avoid imposing.

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4.2.b. Positive Politeness

Positive politeness consists of redressive strategies designed to mitigate threats to positive face. These FTAs typically threaten one's status as a welcomed and included member of the group who is needed and admired; therefore, positive politeness strategies often reaffirm that status in some way, particularly when the hearer is threatened.

On the other hand, positive politeness strategies can also be used when the speaker is threatened. In their descriptions of intrinsic FTAs, Brown and Levinson (1987: 68) mention losing physical control of one's body, or other embarrassing physical failings, such as tripping. This threatens the speaker's face (or actor's face, as the case may be) because such behavior may demonstrate to other members that the speaker is not in fact a model person, in that they are not capable of maintaining normal bodily functions. While not a linguistic act, such events would necessitate the use of mitigating techniques in order to maintain the speaker's positive face. Although it may seem that such FTAs would be negated in an online context since most physical manifestations of this FTA are not observable without being face to face, there are still instances in which this type of FTA is applicable.

(13):

> A: hol a todos
>
> B: ke kieres?? o.O
> B: Hola [A]
>
> A: como estas?
>
> B: mt al ke kieres
> B: x.x

In example (13), we see member A starting off the interaction by greeting the linkshell. Member B, however, then asks what he or she wants, expressed with incredulity based on the additional question marks and the accompanying emoticon, "o.O" (which represents a wide-eyed look,

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possibly signaling disbelief or amazement), a potentially rude reaction in face of a greeting. Member B then immediately greets member A. Two lines later, we see where the confusion comes from, as member B announces his previous statement was a mt, short for "mis-tell" or "mis-type", meaning he sent that message to the wrong recipient. In a virtual space, this could easily constitute a breakdown of physical control and brings with it a certain level of embarrassment. This is evidenced in member B's final line by the emoticon "x.x" (which depicts a face with x's for eyes, representing being knocked out in an exaggerated fashion). As mentioned previously, the exact meaning of any given emoticon is difficult to pin down, however, given the context this emoticon takes on the quality of being defeated, or perhaps even ashamed or embarrassed. The use of an emoticon in order to do face-work is a phenomenon mentioned in previous research (Vandergriff 2013; Darics 2010). According to Darics, the use of an emoticon can often bring in a sense of levity or humor, which may act to soften potential FTAs (2010: 141).

More commonly, however, emoticons have been found to be used as a part of hearer-oriented politeness strategy. Darics cites smiley emoticons as a "part of a workplace culture that functions as a positive politeness strategy for creating a collaborative work environment" (2010: 141). While specifically mentioned in the context of the work environment, the same could be said to extend to a setting such as the present linkshell, which may form a similar type of bond. The desire to cooperate with other members is a clear trait in both settings. Consider example (14).

(14):

        B: consejo masta
        B: equipe su drg con dl de armor pero loos accesorios vaya sacando con mithology

        [….]

C: no le hagas caso a Max capi

A: lol

C: esta chavo y no sabe lo que dice xD
C: guarda todos tu mithologys hasta que saques tu relic weapon

In this example we see B offer up a suggestion to A, however, C dismisses B's claim. This constitutes a positive FTA to B's face, as C is directly challenging his/her claim as erroneous. Instead, C offers up his or her own opinion on how A should best progress through the game. As part of his/her dismissal of B, C refers to B as inexperienced and unknowledgeable, but ends the utterance with a laughter emoticon, "xD". While the use of this emoticon can be difficult to define, it is commonly accepted to depict a wide smile with eyes that are squinted shut, possibly in laughter. The interpretation is typically either laughter or a smile, either one reinforcing a sense of playfulness.

Another common positive politeness strategy is the use of nicknames. These nicknames often function as terms of address, bestowing in group status upon the hearer and thus paying them positive face. Although a considered a positive politeness strategy, examples of this were found in both positive and negative FTA's, such as in the following example of a challenge or correction.

(15):

B: con quien va masta ?

A: ARC PLD SCH DRG
A: y el ARC es Itzpa xD

C: dira smn capí xD

[…]

A: no Capi, es SCH :P, el SMN no vino

C: ah perdon lei Arcanist lol
C: y dije wtf es smn

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A: ACN seria :P

(16):

B: masta se va a hartar d ehacer ese dungeon XD
B: bueno aunque ya vienen los nuevos eso si

I will discuss both examples in this subsection, since although example (16) constitutes an FTA threatening the hearer's negative face, I argue that the politeness strategy used to mitigate the FTA is still positive in nature.

In example (15), we see the nicknames *masta* and *capi* appear multiple times from different speakers. This example actually demonstrates two separate challenges, which are considered positive FTAs to the hearer. The first comes from C, who corrects A that the acronym ARC (Arcanist) should actually be SMN (Summoner), because Arcanists have upgraded to Summoners as part of the game at that level. However, A counters C's claim by stating that the Arcanist instead upgraded to a SCH (Scholar), and that a Summoner did not come. The point of confusion here is that the ARC in question was intended to stand for Archer, not Arcanist, as C later realizes. In both instances of correcting the other, the speaker uses the nickname *capi* to address the other. This creates a sense of familiarity and friendliness, paying positive face to the hearer and letting him know he is accepted, thus lessening the blow of the FTAs.

On the other hand, in example (16) we see an FTA that threatens the hearer's negative face. This would be classified as a warning, since B is warning A that that he will grow sick of the dungeon they are discussing. Here B uses the nickname *masta*. This is, however, contrary to what one would expect to find, as the use of nicknames constitutes a positive politeness strategy and the FTA in question is one that targets the negative face. According to Brown and Levinson, warnings "predicate some future act A of H, and in so doing put some pressure on H to do (or refrain from doing the act A)" (1987: 289). An appropriate politeness strategy would therefore be

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redressive negative politeness, which Brown and Levinson cite as having the benefit of allowing the speaker to "maintain social distance, and avoid the threat (or the potential face loss) of advancing familiarity towards the addressee" (1987: 294). It bears mentioning that this is not an isolated incident, but rather 15 out of 20 instances of nicknames were used in mitigating negative FTAs. One possible explanation is that even though warnings and advice are considered negative FTAs according to Brown and Levinson, this particular community may be interpreting them as positive FTAs. It may be the case that the community is trying to avoid the offering of advice or warnings as being viewed as criticisms on a player's performance or perhaps on how knowledgeable he/she is. In the effort to avoid seeming like they are criticizing members, which is a positive FTA, these players may be compensating with positive politeness in the form of nicknames.

Having examined most of the findings in the politeness portion of this investigation, it is also important to discuss what was not found. Of the seven broad categories of FTAs included in this study, there was a notable absence of positive FTAs targeting the hearer that derived from neglecting the hearer's face needs. This category includes "expressions of violent (out-of-control) emotions, irreverence or mention of taboo topics, bringing of bad news about the hearer, raising of divisive topics, and blatant non-cooperation in an activity" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 290). I postulate that the lack of FTAs in which the hearer's positive face is neglected is indicative of the community under examination. Due to the cooperative nature of the game as well as the tight-knit and supportive environment of the linkshell, as evidenced by numerous examples of advice and an abundance of positive politeness strategies that foster community, there is no neglecting the face-needs of other members. This runs counter to what has been

observed in other communities online, such as LeBlanc (2010), where trolling and flaming are common phenomena that were not witnessed here.

4.2.c. Negative Politeness

Address forms and verbal conjugations corresponding to the 'V' person (Brown and Gilman 1960) were noted in several instances of negative face-threatening FTAs directed at the hearer. This was most noticeable in cases in which the speaker was giving advice or warnings to the hearer, solicited or otherwise.

(17):

> A: algun consejo para el ultimo boss de The Wanderer's Palace?
>
> B: de que va masta?
>
> A: its my first day
> A: SAM
>
> C: si capi mate a los adds uno por uno
>
> A: -_-
> A: DRG
>
> B: jajajjaa
>
> C: y no se salgan del circulo del centro
>
> B: pues uno tiene que matar adds y el otro tiene que darle duro al boss
>
> C: pa que no agre a los tonberries slackers cuando popen
> C: ya con eso la hace

In this example, we see speaker A asking for advice about the last boss of Wanderer's Palace. Both B and C attempt to answer his/her request for information. B responds first, asking what class A is using to complete the dungeon, saying "*de que va masta?*" demonstrating the use of the second person formal form of the verb *ir*. Likewise, C also uses the formal *usted* when saying "…*mate a los adds uno por uno*" and "*pa que no agre a los tonberries slackers cuando popen*". Of note is the fact that both B and C refer to A using the 'T' form (according to Brown and

Gilman 1960) elsewhere in the data. It is only when providing advice or warnings to A or other members that they employ the 'V' form. On occasion, the subject pronoun *usted* is used as well. (18):

> A: lo que me cago fueron los flanes >_<
>
> C: grats capi
>
> A: tnx
>
> B: en los flanes iztpa debe hacer aoes y uste tene que matar uno por uno

This matches previous literature which suggests that the use of formal address forms is a method of showing deference and reminding the hearer that, being in a position of power, he or she does not have to comply with the advice given, and thus mitigates the damage that would be done to the hearer's negative face.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

The data in this study have presented a stark contrast to online communities in previous studies. Whereas others such as LeBlanc (2010) observed communities that were established on anti-Gricean behavior such as *flaming*, the community in the present study demonstrates high levels of mutual respect and cooperation through the language of its members/participants. Specifically, the FFXIV Spanish speaking linkshell community demonstrates a high usage of positive politeness strategies inside the linkshell, reinforcing community norms in this way.

The present study offers the beginnings of a picture into the state of language use in FFXIV, and by extension, in MMOs and smaller online communities. The overall usage of DMs found in the corpus appears to match the descriptions found in Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro (1999). On patterns of use, it is interesting to note that the majority of the DMs used in the present data seem to be motivated by the explanation of certain dungeon/game mechanics. One possible explanation for this is the complex nature of the mechanics, which require the assistance of DMs to ensure that the speaker's intent comes across. Additionally, a large number of conversational markers were noted, which bears further investigation in future studies.

This study has also provided insight on the use of laughter in a CMC context. Interestingly, the use of "lol" and onomatopoeias such as "haha" and "jaja" were far fewer than expected. Instead, the use of emoticons such as "XD" was far greater than expected. Whereas oral laughter uses the same vocal apparatus, there are a variety of textual expressions of laughter. The data suggest that these different textual forms of laughter are being used distinctly from one another. "Lol" and "haha" were found to be used mostly as an indicator of hearership, while emoticons were found to be used in a variety of manners, including as a turn taking marker, a cue on the tone of an utterance, and an indicator of politeness.

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Politeness itself was shown to be addressed through various strategies, such as conventional indirectness, formal registers, nicknames, and emoticons. Conventional indirectness was relatively uncommon, even though it is so frequently used in colloquial oral language. This is possibly because instances that have conventional and grammaticalized forms of politeness are simply not as present in the online setting. Nicknames, emoticons and formality were all very common in the data, and the most common FTA was advice. This reflects upon the community being observed. While many online locations, such as the message boards of 4chan, actively make sport out of trolling (taunting or failing to take seriously) or flaming (harsh criticism or put-downs) other members, the online community in this study goes to great lengths to help its members, and this is reflected in their speech through their use of politeness. Following this point, no instances of ignoring the hearer's face needs, a positive FTA cited by Brown and Levinson (1987), were observed. This further reinforces the idea that members are acutely aware of the need to reinforce other members' positive face and actively work towards building community in this manner.

Another goal of this study was to determine whether the community in question's register was more oral or literate. A variety of factors indicate that the speech of the community observed here is of an oral register. First, comparing the data to Biber's (2006) criteria for determining orality, several features stand out. The data is largely first person pro-drop, while *tú* and *usted* are used frequently as well. Biber (1986) characterizes written discourse as "highly abstract, detached content (high frequencies for passives, nominalizations, prepositional phrases etc., coupled with markedly low frequencies for place and time adverbs, relative pronoun deletion, and subordinator that deletion)" (403). The frequent use of the second and first persons

demonstrates that this speech is not passive. Likewise, as previous discussion detailing the content of the data shows, the speech here is not abstract, but rather highly specific.

Additionally, the specific linguistic phenomena analyzed here can be used to point towards a register of speech. As previously mentioned, King (2011) uses DMs to classify the register of Cervantes's *entremeses*. Certain DMs are more common in oral registers while others appear more often in literate registers. The DM *pues* is considered indicative of an oral register (King 2011; Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro 1999) while others such as *por cierto que*, ordering markers, and markers that end in *que* are all considered to indicate a more literate register (King 2011; Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro 1999; Rodriguez 1996). The lack of literate DMs and the presence of oral markers, such as *pues,* point towards an oral register in the present corpus .

Although there are examples of features ascribed to both oral and literate registers present in the data, the data as a whole point towards an oral register. This is likely due to what Savas (2011) notes, that "the participants' perspectives about the mode of language greatly influenced their SCMCs (synchronous computer-mediated communication)" (310). Participants have varying perceptions of CMC, and their own personal interpretation of the mode of communication seems to influence their choice of language. Users who perceive chat as a spoken conversation tend to approximate oral speech whereas those who perceive it as written communication tend to adhere more strictly to written norms. Savas points out that "because chatters 'write back and forth to each other at the same time,' chat takes on 'a tone of conversation'" (2011: 309) and that those less accustomed to SCMC are less likely to be aware of this tone. Thus, more experienced or competent users are more likely to treat SCMC as oral communication than inexperienced or new users. This echoes LeBlanc (2010), in which the use

of a particular register, in this case *leet speak*, was directly related to how experienced and integrated the member was in the community. While it may prove interesting for a future study, the data in the present study were not analyzed based on individual members. However, it is my belief that some participants perceive SCMC as written communication, while others perceive it as oral. This is likely due to varying levels of experience, as mentioned by Savas (2011), but potentially due to other social factors as well.

Emoticons represent the most interesting and somewhat unexpected intersection of this study. It is here that we see an overlap of the functions of DMs, laughter and politeness. In particular, "XD", a laughing emoticon and CMC cue (Vandergriff 2013), has been shown to fulfill various roles of laughter in CMC. Among these roles are both turn taking and creating affiliation. Turn taking is a function commonly associated with conversational markers (Martín Zorraquino and Portolés Lázaro 1999). While this is a different category of DMs than the one examined here, it bears repeating that their presence within the data was notable. Additionally, there are similarities between the turn taking function of 'XD' and closing markers, one of the subsets of structuring markers. This type of marker ends discursive sets, while laughter can serve as a "topic-ending indicator" (Stewart 1997: 5).

There are numerous similarities between laughter and CMC cues. Both laughter and CMC cues can perform face-work. Stewart (1997) notes that "laughter can be classified in one of two ways: 1) as a face-saving action or 2) as a face-threatening action which runs contrary to the desires of either speaker or hearer" (4), while Vandergriff (2013) claims that "CMC cues constitute important (im-)politeness strategies and play an important role in enhancing, maintaining and/or challenging relationships" (10). In addition, both laughter and CMC cues have been shown to function as backchanneling devices (Vandergriff 2013; Darics 2010; Stewart

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1997). Backchanneling devices are "non-verbal utterances, such as *ah, oh, mm, hm*" (Darics 2010: 144) that "reinforce or respond to the current speaker, lending support and agreement to what is being said" (Stewart 1997: 5).

Turning to the role of laughter as an affiliation resource, we can see that this greatly informs upon how laughter can be used as a positive politeness strategy. By demonstrating agreement, laughter can build affiliation, or connections, between people (O'Donnel-Trujillo & Adams 1983: 186). These connections and agreements mirror the acceptance and need to be in a group that makes up the concept of positive face. It comes as no surprise, then, that laughter is used to mitigate threats to that positive face by evoking and enhancing the connection the conversants have. In much the same way, CMC cues can enhance one's positive face and strengthen ties to create a collaborative space (Darics 2010). By performing both of the functions mentioned above in the data, 'XD' exemplifies the overlapping functions of CMC cues and laughter, particularly where politeness work is concerned.

As mentioned above, the phenomena analyzed in this study can perform politeness work, which includes both politeness and impoliteness. However, within this community these phenomena were not used for impolite purposes. While DMs, CMC cues, and laughter all have polite and impolite uses, the community chose to exclusively use their polite functions. This is a key distinction between this and other virtual communities, such as the one observed by LeBlanc (2010). For example, in LeBlanc's community, DMs in the form of vulgar images or say, the word "boobies", are used to initiate a topic shift by derailing or hijacking the conversation. On the other hand, DMs in the linkshell community are often used to add in commentary on a topic in such a way as to not directly refute the previous speaker's statements (see example 1). LeBlanc also details *flaming* behavior as a method to regulate membership within the Pen

community. This aggressively noncooperative behavior is in stark contrast to the typical behavior of the linkshell community, which is shown to be very aware of its members' face needs. This fits in with the workplace community described by Darics (2010). Daric's community made heavy use of politeness strategies, often involving CMC cues, "in order to construct an informal working environment and achieve successful cooperation" (2010: 146). This ideal seems to be reflected in the present community, which because of the task based nature of the game, as well as the forced reliance on other players in order to progress through the game, structures itself based on mutual respect, politeness and cooperation, rather than the hostile behaviors of LeBlanc's Pen community.

There are, however, certain limitations to the present study that need to be noted. The lack of demographic background information about members makes it impossible to categorize the results of this type in terms of groups of people. Comparisons between men and women, countries of origin and age cannot be compared currently, and it is unknown if these factors are evenly distributed or not, which could potentially affect the data. Additionally, though there were numerous participants in this study, they were all (presumably) of a similar background, in that they play MMOs. The relatively closed off community of FFXIV's Spanish speaking players constitutes a small and somewhat niche pool to pull from, which makes it difficult to apply these findings to broader CMC contexts. Emoticon use, for example, varies greatly from setting to setting, often defined and established by the community itself. It is my hope that in spite of these shortcomings this study has presented relevant findings and shed new light on the structuring work of communities in CMC.

Regarding future studies, I believe that analyzing other linguistic features in a CMC setting through the lens of politeness theory would be beneficial, as opposed to the present one

which looks at politeness as a separate issue, at least initially. Additionally, analyzing these features on an individual level as well as a community scale may present interesting trends, and hopefully also allow for the collection of demographic material. This study also presents practical applications in the working of community as well as interesting avenues for future research. Daric (2010) points out that "communication failure might not only result in miscommunication of content, but also interpersonal misunderstanding. In a workplace setting, however, neither of these is acceptable, as both have a negative impact on the efficiency of the group" (146). Studies such as Daric (2010) and the present one can serve to demonstrate linguistic methods for building and maintaining cooperative communities, which can be used to foster effective workplaces through language choices.

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VITA

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