Misschien maar even over preferentie

The Modal Particles *even*, *maar* and *misschien* in Preferred and Non-preferred Responses

* Maybe just about preference

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1. Introduction

Now, maybe you did not even realize it, but typically, a lot of the words that we use, are just not really necessary to get the message across. However, they are necessary to get the message across *in a certain way*. We call these words *particles* (Vismans 1994: 5). In the informal first sentence of this thesis, there are four examples of modal particles: *now*, *even*, *typically* and *just*. Particles are very common in informal texts (Foolen 1996: 12), which is why the first sentence of this thesis comes across as informal. Without these four particles, the actual content of the sentence would have been exactly the same, but the particles somewhat change the sentence; *now* attracts attention, *even* and *just* reinforce the sentence (it makes the message come across stronger) and *typically* emphasizes the fact that it is a generalization.

More than in the English language, there are a lot of modal particles in the Dutch language (Foolen 1993; Haeseryn et al. 1997; Van der Wouden 2002; Vismans 1994). An example can be found in (1) (All examples in this thesis are either from the corpus used for this thesis, or made up for this research, unless a source is given.)

(1) Joost just came home and found a package from bol.com, a web shop, but he did not order anything. He suspects it is from his girlfriend Puck, and tries to ask this subtly.

1	Joost	ik zie	hier	in de	keuken	een pakje	staan (2.4)	met	mijn naam
		I see	*here*	*in the*	*kitchen*	*a package*	*stand*	*with my*	*name*
		derop,							
		on it							
	F_b[1]	I see a package here in the kitchen, with my name on it.							
2		(1.4)							
3	Puck	oke?							
		okay							
	S_b	Okay?							
4		(2.4)							
5	Joost	ja	ik heb	niks	besteld	volgens	mij,		
		yes	*I have*	*nothing*	*ordered*	*according*	*me*		
	F_{post}	Yeah, I did not order anything, I think.							
6		(1.1)							
7	Puck	heb	je	het al	opengemaakt.				
		have	*you*	*it already*	*opened*				
	F_b	Have you opened it already?							
8		(0.8)							
9	Joost	nou dat	ben ik nu	mee bezig=					
		now that	*am I now*	*with busy*					
	S_b	Well, that's what I'm doing right now.							

[1] In chapter 3, these annotations will be explained.

10	Puck	=oke. (1.5) dat lijkt me een eerste stap
		okay that seems me a first step
	F_{post}	Okay. That seems to me to be the first step.
11		(1.2)
12	Joost	ja daar ben ik mee bezig.
		yes there am I with busy
	S_{post}	Yeah, that's what I'm doing.
13		(.)
14		wee[t
		know
	F_b[1]	Do you know-
15	Puck	[j[a
		yes
	SCT	Yes.
16	Joost	[jij daar meer van.
		you there more from
	F_b[2]	Anything about that?
17		(2.1)
18	Puck	weet niet, **misschien** moet je het **maar** gewoon openmaken,
		know not maybe must you it but usual open
	S_b	I don't know, maybe you should just open it.

In line 18, *misschien* 'maybe' and *maar* 'but' are in bold face, because those are two of the three words that will be focused on in this thesis. *Gewoon* 'just' in line 18 is also a modal particle, but will not be discussed in this thesis. Two of the four English modal particles just discussed, *even* and *just*, are reinforcers, but *misschien* and *maar* in line 17 are the exact opposite: they have a mitigating effect (Vismans 1994). *Misschien* leaves open the option of not opening the package; it shows that opening the package is not obligatory. Without *maar*, the sentence would seem to be an order, while *maar* makes it feel less compulsory. The third particle that will be central to this thesis, *even* 'just', is also a mitigating particle, because it can suggest something will not take very long. The exact meaning and function of these three words, will be discussed later on.

Because these three modal particles all seem to be mitigating, they might only be suitable for sentences that, for whatever reason, are in need of mitigation; for instance, non-preferred responses. When someone invites you to a party, and you reject because you cannot make it, you give a non-preferred response (Schegloff 2007: 59). Because a rejection is not the preferred answer to an invitation, a mitigating particle could make the rejection less impolite. Thus, the particles *even*, *maar* and *misschien* are expected to only appear in non-preferred responses, to reduce the force of the speech act. After all, there is no reason to reduce the force of a speech act, if it is a preferred one. For instance, the conversation in (2) seems rather odd:

(2) 1 Emma Heb je zin om vanavond te komen eten?
have you liking to tonight TE *come eat*
Do you feel like eating at my place tonight?
2 Regina Ja, dat lijkt me wel **even** gezellig!
yes that seems me WEL *just pleasant*
Yes, I think that would be kind of nice!

In line 2, Regina accepts Emma's invitation, giving a preferred response, but by using the mitigating particle *even* (or the mitigating *kind of* in the English translation) which sounds peculiar. This is because *even* reduces the speech act, for which there is no reason in this sentence. A response as given in (3) is more common:

(3) 1 Emma Heb je zin om vanavond te komen eten?
have you liking to tonight TE *come eat*
Do you feel like eating at my place tonight?
2 Regina Ja, dat lijkt me wel gezellig!
yes that seems me WEL *pleasant*
Yes, I think that would be nice!

Because the speech act is accepting an invitation, it does not have to be mitigated; the force of the speech act can be strong, because it is a preferred response. Thus, it is interesting to see if, as hypothesized, mitigating particles only appear in non-preferred responses. When focusing on mitigating particles, Vismans (1994) discusses *even*, *maar* and *misschien*, which is why this thesis focuses on those three particles. In section 3.3.1 this decision is further explained. To my knowledge, no research has been done yet on how exactly mitigating particles are used in connection to preference.

Thus, one could expect mitigating elements to not occur in preferred, but only in non-preferred second pair parts, but is this indeed the case? This question leads to the research question of this thesis: What is the relation between the use of particles and preference organization? For this research, the focus will be on the modal particles *even*, *maar* and *misschien*, used in informal telephone conversations. To obtain an answer to this question, the following sub-questions need to be answered: 1) Do these three particles occur more frequently in non-preferred second pair parts? 2) Can these particles also occur in preferred second pair parts? 3) If they also occur in preferred second pair parts, then how can this be explained?

In the literature about the Dutch language, much attention has already been given to particles; its meaning, function and classification (Foolen 1993; Van de Poel & Van de Walle 1995; Vismans 1994; Vismans 1995; Van der Wouden 2002, 2010). For instance, Vismans (1994) has already done excessive research on the particles relevant for this research. However, he makes use of a corpus of written text. This research only looks at spoken text, to truly focus on spontaneous, informal speech, to obtain a corpus that shows how particles are used in sentences actually uttered by speakers of the Dutch language. Using a corpus existing of spoken text for research on particles, has been done before (for instance: Van der Wouden 2002, 2010),

but, to my knowledge, not in research on *even*, *maar* and *misschien* specifically, a gap this thesis aims to fill. Thus, the aim of this research is to find out how the three particles *even*, *maar* and *misschien* are used by different people in informal telephone conversations.

The following structure is followed in this thesis: First, the definition of particles, its function and the connection to politeness is given in section 2.1. Section 2.2 provides information about preferred responses within conversation analysis. Chapter 3 discusses the corpus that is used for this research (in 3.1). Section 3.2 is dedicated to the method chosen of this thesis, conversation analysis, and section 3.3 to the exact approach that is taken to answer the questions just formulated. The analysis of the Dutch modal particles as used in informal telephone conversations is given in chapter 4.

2. Literature

2.1. Particles

2.1.1. Definition

Particles are not very well defined in the literature (Van der Wouden 2002: 1). Some linguists consider certain words to be particles, that others do not. According to Foolen (1993: 13), in Germany, most research about particles focuses on modal particles, which are words that apply to the content of the sentence as a whole and subtly nuance this content (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 457). Dutch examples are *nou* 'now, well', *dan* 'then', *toch* (untranslatable), *maar* 'but', *eens* (untranslatable) and *even* 'just' (Van der Wouden 2002: 2).[2] An example of such a particle is given in (4).

(4) Wat zeg je nou?
what say you well
WHAT did you just say?

The sentence *Wat zeg je?* 'What did you just say/I'm sorry, what?' would just be a request to someone for a repetition of what he or she just said. However, when you add *nou* in Dutch, the speaker of that sentence shows how surprised he is to hear whatever he just heard. As you can see in (4), in this sentence in English, no particle is used to show surprise; that part of the meaning is in the intonation and prosody, illustrated by presenting *what* in capital letters.

Even though, as just mentioned, most research about particles focuses on modal particles, focus particles are also gaining attention (Foolen 1993: 13). Focus particles are words that bring certain parts of a sentence or certain meanings into prominence, for instance *zelfs* 'even', *alleen* 'just', *vooral* 'especially', *met name* 'in particular', *niet eens* 'not even' and *ook* 'moreover, also, too'. An example is shown in (5).

(5) Zelfs ik weet dat.
even I know that
Even I know that.

In this sentence, the focus is on *I*, because of the focus particle *zelfs* 'even'.

In research focused on the English language, certain types of particles are called *discourse markers*, although these words can also just be called particles and are also present in the Dutch language (Foolen 1993: 13). I will call these *pragmatic particles*, which are words that structure the conversation; they can call for attention, for instance *kijk* 'look' and *hé* 'hey', they can ask for confirmation, *hè* 'right', they can show that objection is not desirable, *hoor*

[2] Particles are very difficult to translate, because they do not have a fixed meaning. Still, for the purpose of making this thesis as accessible as possible, the most common translations are given when possible.

(untranslatable) and they can show that a summary of the conversation is given, *kortom* 'in short'. This is illustrated in (6).

(6) Hé, wat doe jij daar?
hey what do you there
Hey, what are you doing over there?

Following Foolen (1993), for this research I will define particles as all words that do not contribute to the propositional content. The reason this definition is used for this thesis, is because it is a clear definition that sets a straight dividing line as to what is a particle and what is not. In the existing research, most definitions of particles are not one clear definition, but only define the different kind of particles there are; modal particles, focus particles and discourse particles (Haeseryn, et al. 1997; Van der Wouden 2002). Often these definitions are vague and abstract, as the one for modal particles mentioned in the beginning of this section: words that apply to the content of the sentence as a whole and subtly nuance this content (Haeseryn et al. 1997: 457), nevertheless used in this thesis for lack of a better definition. In the existing research on particles, an overlapping definition is mostly absent. Foolen (1993) however gives such a definition of particles in general, that it makes sense to consider modal particles, focus particles and discourse particles all as kinds of particles.

But to be able to use this definition, the question is, what is the propositional content of a sentence? To answer such a question, it should be made clear what exactly is meant with the 'propositional content' of a sentence (Foolen 1993: 14).

To define propositional content, it is helpful to look at the sentences in (7).

(7) 1. Dave is ill.
2. Is Dave ill?
3. Unfortunately, Dave is ill.
4. Dave is probably ill. (Foolen 1993: 14)

In sentence 1, all three words contribute to the proposition, 'Dave is ill' (Foolen 1993: 14). Sentence 2 asks if this proposition is true. So, whether a sentence is a statement or a question, does not say anything about its propositional content; it only gives an indication as to why this proposition is being brought up. Consequently, the sentence-type of an utterance contributes – just as particles – to the non-propositional content (Foolen 1993: 15).

Sentence 3 and 4 illustrate a modal adverb, which is a word that a speaker can use to show his attitude or judgement about the propositional content. Usually, modal adverbs are not considered to be particles (Foolen 1993: 15; Van der Wouden 2002: 12), but in this thesis, following Foolen (1993), they are; after all, they do not contribute to the propositional content, they only show the speaker's attitude or judgement about that proposition. Thus, in this thesis, I will not distinguish between a particle and a modal adverb.

It can be pretty difficult to draw these boundary lines, to what exactly is and what is not part of the propositional content. Foolen (1993: 16-23) discusses most difficulties concerning propositional content to define which words are particles and which words are not. I will not

go into that discussion at this point, because I believe the definition of particles provided in this section (all words that do not contribute to the propositional content) already allows answering my research question.

2.1.2. Function

Now that we have established what particles are, it is important to discuss what their function is. According to Foolen (1993:33), particles have a deictic function. This means that they can never refer to something that does not exist in the here and now. Of course, particles do not actually *refer*, because this would mean they would contribute to the propositional content, as deictic words such as *me*, *now*, *here*. However, those words refer to something that also exists outside of the conversation, and particles do not. Particles always need a communication process, with a speaker, a hearer, a propositional content, an attitude, an intention, assumptions, expectations, preferences, and possibly preceding and following utterances. Therefore, particles connect the propositional content with an aspect of this communicative context in one way or another. So not just the proposition, but in particular particles make sure that certain aspects of the context are activated, or in other words, made relevant (Foolen 1993: 34). The fact that the hearer needs to know the context to understand the significance of a particle explains why particles are so hard to grasp (Van de Poel & Van de Walle 1995: 326). To elaborate on the function of particles even further, first the politeness theory, created by Brown and Levinson (1987: 143) is discussed.

Brown and Levinson make use of the concept 'face', introduced by Goffman (1967). The concept 'face' in this politeness theory, needs to be understood as in the expression *losing face*; when communicating, it is important to not lose face. Being in a situation where you could lose face, can be described as the face being threatened. According to Goffman, a face can be threatened, because people have two needs that are not always accounted for. The first need, is the need to be liked, to fit in. Brown and Levinson (1987: 311-312) call this the 'positive face'. The second need is the need to be left alone, the 'negative face'. Both of these faces can be threatened; that is, when these needs are not accounted for.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 317), politeness is the attempt to soften this threat. Brown and Levinson used these concepts and definitions to create a politeness theory. To counteract these threats, they have drawn up five strategies: say something straight forward, use a positive politeness strategy (that takes into account positive face), use a negative politeness strategy (that takes into account negative face), say something indirectly, and refrain from saying anything at all. Examples of these strategies are given in (8). Brown and Levinson (1987: 143) state that particles can increase the politeness of a message; this is shown in the examples in (8), made up for the purpose of this research. Any particles in the Dutch sentences have been made bold.

(8) Say something straightforward:

1. Koop een drankje voor me.
   Buy a drink for me
   Buy me a drink.

Use a positive politeness strategy:

2. Als je me vanavond op een drankje trakteert,
   If you me tonight on a drink buy me
   dan betaal ik de volgende keer hoor
   then pay I the next time HOOR
   If you buy me a drink tonight, I'll pay for the drinks next time!

Use a negative politeness strategy:

3. Ik wil je niet tot last zijn, maar zou je
   I want you not until burden be but would you
   misschien mijn drankje kunnen betalen?
   maybe my drink can pay
   I don't wanna be a burden, but could you maybe pay for my drink?

Say something indirect:

4. Echt zo dom dat ik mijn portemonnee vergeten
   Really so dumb that I my wallet forgotten
   ben, hè? Net nu ik zoveel zin had in
   am right just now I so much liking had in
   een lekker koud drankje!
   a nice cold drink
   It's so stupid I forgot my wallet, just when I was so looking forward to a nice, cold drink!

As illustrated in the first sentence in (8), the first strategy would be to make up a sentence that only consists of the propositional content, and nothing else, so you will not find any particles within this strategy – because, as discussed in 2.1.1, particles do not add new information to the propositional content. For obvious reasons, the last strategy, refrain from saying anything at all, also does not contain any particles. It is the three remaining strategies that you can chose, in which you could use particles, showed in sentence 2, 3 and 4 in (8).

However, particles can also function as an impolite feature of a sentence (Vismans 1995: 274). This is illustrated in (9).

(9) Doe toch eens wat ik van je vraag!
do TOCH EENS *what I from you ask*
For once, just do what I ask you to do!

Toch and *eens* are particles that make the message of this exclamation stronger, instead of making the sentence more polite. To explain how modal particles can make a sentence polite, but also impolite, Vismans (1995: 275) claims modal particles can be mitigating particles (that reduce the force of a speech act) and reinforcing particles (that impose the speech act more

strongly upon the addressee). Reinforcement, or in other words, the strengthening strategy, can have multiple goals: to convince the listener, to express impatience, to show superiority (Hengeveld 1989: 32), but also to express assertiveness, certainty, definiteness, positiveness, significance, specificity and rudeness (Vismans 1994: 34). Mitigation, or the weakening strategy, can have the following goals: to prevent losing face, to be polite, to leave room for the conversation partner to refuse or disagree, to make the listener feel comfortable (Hengeveld 1989: 32), but also to express non-assertiveness, doubt, indefiniteness, negativity, insignificance, generality and politeness (Vismans 1994: 34). And because reinforcement and mitigation can be expressed by modal particles, modal particles can function to reach one of those goals. The fact that particles can be either mitigating or reinforcing, explains the particles that make a sentence impolite; not all particles can be used in a negative politeness strategy, because some particles have a reinforcing function, thus enforcing the speech act performed in the sentence, as was illustrated in (9).

Already much research has been done on the relation between particles and politeness (Van de Poel & Van de Walle 1995; Vismans 1995; Van der Wouden 2002; Haverkate 2006; Jansen & Janssen 2013). Van de Poel and Van de Walle (1995), for instance, focus on different politeness strategies within their research on the acquisition of particles of second-language-learners. According to them, the use of particles makes it possible for a speaker to give information about his way of thinking in a subtle way (Van de Poel & Van de Walle 1995: 328). It also guides the hearer in interpreting the utterance. Particles can also be used to anticipate or even mitigate the response; they can intensify and mitigate a certain utterance. From a politeness point of view, mitigating and intensifying particles can be used to prevent threatening someone's positive or negative face; they can make a request less straight forward (mitigating the threat to the negative face), or an acceptation of an invitation more enthusiastic (intensifying the message to avoid a threat to the positive face). In contrast, according to Van de Poel and Van de Walle (1995: 329), intensifying particles are most common in phatic utterances, reassurances and thank you's.

Another article where the connection between politeness and particles is hinted at, is Jansen and Janssen (2013). They do not start from the viewpoint of politeness, they do it the other way around; they have noticed a short pause before giving a bad news-message, and from there on, try to find out what exactly the effect is of that pause. They call the use of *eh* in this short pause, a possible communicative-strategic tool you can use to make the bad news less unpleasant for the hearer (2013: 238). This is the case because an *eh* can show you are hesitating while giving the bad news, thus showing you do not want to be giving this bad news. Therefore, Jansen and Janssen argue that uttering *eh* can be seen as a politeness strategy; receiving bad news does not meet a person's need to be left alone and to be liked, but the hesitation shows the resistance of the bad-news-giver to threaten these needs. I do not consider *eh* to be a particle, but particles can have the same effect; when you encounter a mitigating particle, it can show hesitation, because it can delay the non-preferred response and make the utterance less direct.

In this section I explained the politeness theory of Levinson and Brown (1987), and how the use of particles can be explained by this politeness theory. In the next section, I will turn to preference, something that can be related to politeness.

2.2. Preferred Conversational Contributions

2.2.1. Conversation Analysis

Having discussed what particles are and the function they can have, it is now relevant to discuss what is meant with by *preference* of a conversational contribution, to be able to make the connection between particles and preference. *Preference* is a concept from Conversation Analysis. To be able to explain what *preference* is exactly, I need to explain some other concepts from Conversation Analysis.

Conversation Analysis is a research field concerning the analysis of interaction; it studies the principles of the organization of conversations, with which speakers give meaning to what they say and what they do (Mazeland 2003: 11). Within this field, researchers focus on sequential organization, which is 'the organization of courses of action enacted through turns-at-talk – coherent, orderly, meaningful successions or "sequences" of actions or "moves". Sequences are the vehicle for getting some activity accomplished' (Schegloff 2007: 2).

Conversation Analysis describes the organization of *turn taking* – which is not relevant for the present research – and the organization of *actions*, which is relevant for this research. The organization of turn taking focuses on how people know someone's turn is over and if it is their turn to talk. Because what is being said in a turn is more relevant for this research than why someone has a turn, I will directly move on to *actions*. Examples of actions are 'asking, answering, disagreeing, offering, contesting, requesting, teasing, finessing, complying, performing, noticing, promising (…) inviting, announcing, telling, complaining, agreeing, and so forth.' (Schegloff 2007: 7). Important to notice is that not all actions have names as the once just listed. The starting point of researching actions within Conversation Analysis, does not originate from that list – so questions as, 'Why is this a complaint?' are not asked (Schegloff 2007: 8). Instead, we ask ourselves: What is the speaker doing with these words? What action is he carrying out? When answering those types of questions, we look at how participants in the conversations interpret the action, by focusing on their responses. So we start 'from singular bits of data, each in its embedding context, and seek out what – in that instance – the speaker appeared to be doing, and what in the talk and other conduct underwrote or conveyed that that was what was being done.' (Schegloff 2007: 8).

According to Schegloff, most of the sequence types are organized around a 'basic unit of sequence construction, the *adjacency pair*.' (2007: 9). An adjacency pair consists of two turns, uttered by different speakers. The two turns are in principle adjacently placed, so directly placed after each other. The first turn is called a *first pair part* and the second one a *second pair part*. First pair parts begin a certain action, so they can consist of a question, a request, an offer, an invitation, an announcement, and so forth. Second pair parts finish that action, so they can

answer, grant, reject, accept, decline, agree/disagree with, acknowledge, and so forth, the first pair part. Important to note is that an adjacency pair really is a *pair*; so the action in the first pair part decides what kind of action in the second pair part can be carried out. In the next section, it will be discussed what kind of second pair parts can be considered 'preferred'.

2.2.2. Preference

In this section, the notion of *preference* is explained. After all, a second pair part is not just any response to a first pair part; there are certain rules to what a second pair part can be. As mentioned in section 2.2.1, obviously the action of the second pair part needs to be the right response to the action carried out in the first pair part (Bilmes 1988: 164). For instance, consider (10).

(10)	1	Mary	Are you coming to my party tomorrow?
	2	Elizabeth	I'm thinking about eating pancakes tonight.

Without context, this conversation does not make much sense. It is possible to think of a context in which the second pair part in line 2 would be appropriate; for instance, if Elizabeth always eats pancakes on Friday, but then gets an invitation to a party on Friday during dinner time, the answer 'I'm thinking about eating pancakes tonight' uttered on a Thursday (line 2) would make perfect sense; Elizabeth is coming to the party on Friday, and to make up for the missing pancakes due to that party, the pancake-eating will be moved to Thursday. Yet, let us say this context is not present, and the conversation showed in (10) takes place. It would probably confuse people. (11) would make more sense.

(11)	1	Mary	Are you coming to my party tomorrow?
	2	Elizabeth	Of course I am!
	3	Mary	Cool! And are you doing something fun tonight?
	4	Elizabeth	I'm thinking about eating pancakes tonight.

The reason why the meaning of the conversational contributions is more fitting, is because it is clear that the invitation in line 1 asks for an acceptance or a rejection of the invitation in line 2, which it receives; and a question about tonight, as in line 3, asks for an answer about tonight, which is received in line 4.

Yet, the crucial part is that, often, there is more than one response possible as a second pair part (Bilmes 1988: 166). As mentioned, an invitation can get an acceptance, but it can also get a rejection; both are possible and occurring second pair parts. An exception to this, is a greeting exchange. When someone says 'hi', one is obligated to return this greeting; another action as a response is not accepted (Schegloff 2007: 58). However, besides the greeting exchange, this lack of options almost never occurs. It is much more common that more than one action (or *type of second pair part*) is relevant as a response.

Schegloff (2007: 59) points out that 'alternative types of second pair part which a first pair part makes relevant are not equivalent, or equally valued.'. The first pair part is mostly

uttered to accomplish a certain goal, and the second pair part that helps accomplishing this goal, is the *preferred* second pair part. This is illustrated by example (12).

(12)	A)	1	Harvey	Hey Mike, how about watching the game together?
		2	Mike	Sounds great, you're on!
	B)	1	Harvey	Hey Mike, how about watching the game together?
		2	Mike	I'm sorry, Harvey, I'm already hanging out with Rachel tonight.

In both conversations, the second pair part, in the lines 2, carries out an action that is compatible with the action carried out in the first second pair part, the lines 1; as was mentioned before, an invitation can be accepted and rejected. The first conversation, (12a) shows the preferred second pair part in line 2, because it accomplishes the goal uttered in line 1. In (12b), Mike declines the invitation, thus giving a non-preferred second pair part, as can be seen in line 2.

It is, however, not always as simple as in (12). The preferred response aligns with the first pair part, and the response that is not preferred does not align with the first pair part. Yet, aligning with a first pair part is not always aligning with the speaker, and vice versa (Bilmes 1988: 167). Preference is determined by 'the *project* of the first pair part, and the course of action it is designed to implement.' (Schegloff 2007: 60). Consider example (13):

(13)	A)	1	Rachel	You probably don't have time to help me with this, do you?
		2	Donna	No, I don't, I'm sorry.
	B)	1	Rachel	You probably don't have time to help me with this, do you?
		2	Donna	Sure, I've got time.

Perhaps contrary to what instinct tells us, (13a) consists of a preferred second pair part in line 2, while (13b) consists of a non-preferred second pair part, in line 2. This is the case because, even though Rachel wants Donna to help her, Rachel formulates her sentence as if Donna will not be able to. So, within her invitation, shown in the lines 1, she already makes room for Donna to decline the invitation; the question is formed in a way that it will align with a negative answer. In other words, preference is not about the desires of the speakers, it is about what kind of answer the question is oriented to (Bilmes 1988: 163; Schegloff 2007: 63).

There are some features that can occur in an utterance, that are typical to non-preferred second pair parts. For instance, mitigation: dispreferred responses can be mitigated or attenuated (Pomerantz 1984: 64; Schegloff 2007: 64). This is illustrated in example (14).

(14)	1	Barney	Do you want to play laser tag with me tomorrow night?
	2	Ted	Well, I'm pretty busy tomorrow night, I'm afraid I won't be able to make it.

In line 2, Ted is basically saying that he will not be able to play, but he is doing this in a way that the disalignment is not explicit: by mitigating his answer. He does not say no, which is actually his answer, but uses the words he is 'afraid' he will not 'be able to make it'. Also, he uses the particle *well* to mitigate his message. By formulating his answer like this, Ted makes his rejection less direct and thus less painful for Barney.

Another example of a feature typical of non-preferred second pair parts is elaboration (Pomerantz 1984: 65; Schegloff 2007: 65). While preferred answers are often short and to the point, non-preferred answers tend to be longer, as you can see in (15).

(15)	1	Jane	Could you help me with my charity work?
	2	Rafael	Sure!
	3	Jane	Maybe you could take care of cooking dinner?
	4	Rafael	I don't know, maybe it's not such a great idea for me to be the cook, because I'm not very good at organizing. So I think it's better if I do something else.

First, Rafael gives Jane a preferred answer in line 2; it is short and to the point. His next answer in line 4, however, is a non-preferred one, and it is a lot longer. He could have just said 'no', which is one word, but instead, he uses 33 words to refuse; it is not until the end of the sentence, that the answer becomes clear. Before that, he gives an explanation to prepare Jane for a non-preferred answer. The last feature that is common in non-preferred responses, has something to do with positioning; non-preferred second pair parts are often not contiguous (Pomerantz 1984: 70; Schegloff 2007: 67). This means that a non-preferred second pair part often takes place:

a) after a long silence between the first pair part and the second pair part (a long silence would be longer than one second) (Jefferson 1983b);
b) after a delay within the turn (for instance by using 'uh') (Pomerantz 1984: 72; Schegloff 2007: 68);
c) after anticipatory accounts, excuses, appreciations, etc.;
d) after an agreement (so first the speaker agrees to something, to delay the non-preferred response a bit, for instance 'yes, but…') (Pomerantz 1984: 72; Schegloff 2007: 69-70);
e) after a 'reformulation with preference reversal' (so the question is asked again in reversed form, to give the hearer a chance to give a preferred response) (Schegloff 2007: 70).

In example (16), all of these features are visible.

(16)	1	Luke	Are you coming to my party tomorrow?
	2		(2.3)[a]
	3	Luke	Or did you already have plans?[e]
	4		(0.3)

5	Emily	Uh[b], yeah[b], I'm sorry[c]. I made these plans weeks ago[c]. So I won't be able to come.
6	Luke	That's too bad. But you're coming to movie night on Wednesday, right?
7		(1.2)
8	Emily	Yes[d], I definitely want to, but I don't know if I can stay the whole night. So maybe it's pointless for me to go.

The long silence in line 2 gives Luke the idea that Emily will decline his invitation, and thus will give a non-preferred response. Because he wants to avoid receiving a non-preferred response, he reformulates his question in 3, reversing the orientation of the question. After uttering this sentence, a rejection of the invitation has become the preferred answer. In line 5, a delay within a turn by using *uh* and *yeah* is illustrated, combined with an excuse and an explanation. In line 6, Luke produces a new invitation. Emily first accepts the invitation in line 8, but then she eventually declines it again, thus only been delaying the non-preferred response with the acceptance. In this conversation, all of the non-contiguous features are used. However, second pair parts can just have one or two of these features, instead of all of them. They can even appear without any of these features.

Now, if we look at the features common within non-preferred second pair parts, notice that c) after anticipatory accounts, excuses, appreciations, etc. and d), presented after an agreement, can be the result of using one of the politeness strategies discussed in 2.1.2. For instance, you could apologize within a non-preferred second pair part, which can be a negative politeness strategy ('I'm sorry to have bothered you, but…'; reckoning the need to be left alone, thus the negative face) and a positive politeness strategy ('I'm sorry, I cannot make it to your birthday, even though I really wanted to be there'; reckoning the need to be liked, the positive face). So even though politeness and preference are from a completely different field within linguistics, they do share some features. This is also discussed in Hayashi (1996), where the connection between politeness and non-preferred messages is explicitly mentioned. He focuses on refusals, which are (almost always) non-preferred responses (1996: 230). Following the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson, a refusal is always face-threatening; it is threatening to the negative face of the person giving the invitation, because its preferred action is refused and thus not happening the way this person wants it to happen. It is threatening to the positive face of the person giving the invitation, because this person wants to be liked and appreciated, and when someone rejects your invitation, you often do not feel liked or appreciated (Hayashi 1996: 231). So, Hayashi expects that a refusal as a response will influence the discourse structure.

To sum up, the preferred response is the second pair part that helps accomplish the goal, that the first pair part wants to see accomplished; a non-preferred pair part, is the response that does not accomplish that goal. In the next paragraph, the connection between particles and preference is made explicit.

2.3. Particles and Preference

Now that particles and preference are explained, it is time to discuss the (possible) connection between the two concepts, and make the hypothesis of this thesis explicit.

As already explained in the introduction, it is expected that the particles analyzed in this research are likely to appear in non-preferred responses. This is because *even*, *maar* and *misschien* are mitigating particles (Vismans 1994), and thus might only be suitable for sentences that are in need of mitigating, such as non-preferred responses. After all, there is no reason to reduce the force of a speech act, if it is a preferred one.

Thus, the hypothesis of this thesis, is that the mitigating particles *even*, *maar* and *misschien* only appear in non-preferred responses, not in preferred responses. In the next section, it is explained what method is used to test this hypothesis.

3. Method

3.1. A Corpus-based Study

According to Foolen (1996: 12), 'empirical particle research must be based on corpus study'. He claims that particles are most common in informal spoken conversations.[3] For this reason, a corpus was used for this thesis. The corpus exists of transcribed telephone conversations, based on over 10 hours of audio material, divided over 72 conversations. This resulted in over 400 pages of transcribed conversations. The longest conversation was a little over 2 hours, and the shortest conversation was 21 seconds. The average length of the conversations was about 9 minutes.

The corpus exists of telephone conversations that took place between November 2015 and July 2016 between me (the first participant) and my friends and family, and between a second participant and her friends and family. The reason for this is that, with this method, other than the two participants, the people do not know they are being recorded. For this, an app that records every telephone conversation was used. However, because people did not know that this app downloaded on the phone of the person they were talking to recorded the conversations, they were not as focused on their own language as they would have been if they knew they were being recorded. By gathering data this way the Observer's Paradox was avoided. This paradox comes down to the following: to find out how people use language when they are not being observed, you need to observe them (Labov 1972: 209). So if you really want to research the language people use when they do not feel observed and are not focused on their own language because of the absence of this observer, you need to observe without letting them know. This is a paradox, because to get what you need (data of non-observed, natural language use), you need to do the something that makes it impossible to get what you need (observe language use). Of course, after the telephone conversations were recorded, the people in the conversations were told they had been recorded, and they were asked for permission to make use of the conversations for scientific research.

Nevertheless, because of this app, there is one person who knows she is being observed: the person who downloads the app. Fortunately, this is not a problem for this research. First of all, being on the phone is something the two participants in this research who downloaded the app, did almost daily. If you do something that often, it becomes a routine, which means certain patterns in behavior are activated in comparable situations, without thinking about how to act (Bolhuis 2014). Secondly, the two participants were not aware of the app recording the conversation, while having the conversation. The way the app works is that when you hang up the phone, you see a screen, 'conversation recorded'. So, you are reminded of it after the conversation has ended. Both the participants were often surprised by seeing that screen, having completely forgotten they had downloaded the app in the first place. After a while, you

[3] Because Foolen reports on pragmatic particles, he makes this claim only about pragmatic particles. Yet, modal particles are also very common in informal spoken conversations (Van der Wouden 2002: 4).

get used to the screen appearing. Nonetheless, while having the conversations, the participants were too busy being in a conversation to be reminded of the app, recording in the background.

Another potential problem is not just knowing you are being recorded, but knowing what the focus of the research is about. To prevent this from happening, only telephone conversations held when it was not yet decided what this research would be about, were used for this research. So it is not possible that the speakers were influenced by knowing the subject of this thesis.

In the present research, only informal conversations were used. The definition of informal conversations used in this thesis is: conversations with friends and family, about every-day issues, such as hang-outs with friends, someone's wellbeing, organizing certain events. An example of such a conversation is shown in (17):

(17) A conversation between two friends.

1	Mila	hallo					
		hello					
	S_o[4]	Hey.					
2		(1.0)					
3		hoe	is het?				
		how	*is it*				
	F_b	How are you?					
4		(1.0)					
5	Puck	goed,=					
		good					
	S_b	Good.					
6		=en	met jou,				
		and	*with you*				
	F_b	And how are you?					
7		(0.4)					
8	Mila	gefeliciteerd	met je	huis	nu	echt	
		congratulations	*with your*	*house*	*now*	*really*	
	F_b	Congratulations with your house, for real this time.					
9		(0.3)					
10	Puck	ja	dank je				
		yes	*thank you*				
	S_b	Yeah, thank you.					
11		(1.1)					

[4] The $_o$ stands for opening of the conversation. It starts with the second pair part, because the first pair part was not recorded.

12	Mila	goed hoor=
		good HOOR
	S_b	I'm fine.
13		=ik ben nu net klaar met werk dus ik zit hier taart te eten.
		I am now just ready with work so I sit here pie TE *eat*
		ah hihihi=
		((laughs))
	F_b	I'm just done with work so I'm eating pie.
14	Puck	=o dat [is leuk,
		o that is fun
	S_b	O, well that's fun!
15	Mila	[haha
		((laughs))
16		(0.8)
17		carrot cake (0.6) [(wilde dat eens) proberen
		carrot cake wanted that EENS *try*
	F_b	Carrot cake. (Wanted to give that) a try.
18	Puck	[heb je lekker gewerkt?
		have you nice worked
	F_b	Did your work go well?
19		(0.9)
20	Mila	nou eigenlijk niet want ik had heel veel pijn aan mijn rug,
		now actually not because I had very much pain on my back
	S_b	Well, no, actually, because my back was hurting a lot.

As illustrated, Mila and Puck are talking about Puck's new apartment, what Mila is doing right now and how her work went. These are every-day topics discussed by friends, which makes it an informal conversation.

Having discussed the corpus used for this research, the next section will explain some theoretical terms that will help analyzing the corpus.

3.2. Conversation Analysis

To analyze the corpus discussed in the previous section, and how the three particles *even*, *maar* and *misschien* in (non-)preferred second pair parts are used, I will use the principles of Conversation Analysis. As discussed in 2.2.1, Conversation Analysis is a research field concerning the analysis of communicative interaction; it researches the principles of the organization of conversations, with which speakers give meaning to what they say and what they do (Mazeland 2003: 11).

In section 2.2.1, the adjacency pair was discussed. An adjacency pair is the most basic unit, which can be expanded in different ways (Levinson 1983; Schegloff 2007). There are three

possible places where expansions of an adjacency pair can take place: pre-expansions take place before the first pair part, insert expansions between the first and the projected second pair part, and post-expansions after the second pair part. So an adjacency pair can be extended to a long conversation, with the underlying adjacency pair being called the base pair (Schegloff 2007: 27).

The *pre-expansion* can also be called the *pre-sequence*, when the pre-expansion exists of an adjacency pair itself (Schegloff 2007: 28). The first pair part (or: FPP) of a pre-sequence can make way for a potential base FPP. For instance, for an invitation, the FPP of the pre-sequence could be a pre-invitation, making relevant a second pair part (or: SPP): a response to the pre-invitation. This response can lead to the occurrence of the base first pair, the invitation, but this is not necessarily always the case (Schegloff 2007: 29). Take a look at example (18).

(18)	A)	1	Emily	F_{pre}[5]	What are you doing?
		2	Richard	S_{pre}	Nothing.
		3	Emily	F_b	Wanna come over and watch a movie?
		4	Richard	S_b	That sounds like fun!
	B)	1	Emily	F_{pre}	What are you doing?
		2	Richard	S_{pre}	I'm heading over to my parents, I'm eating there tonight.
		3	Emily		O, okay.

In line 1 of (18a), you can see the FPP of the pre-invitation, which makes relevant the SPP, in line 2. Because of this response, 'nothing', the base first pair, the invitation itself, can be uttered. Indeed, in (18b), line 2 prevents the invitation from happening. Important to note is that in (18b), Emily's and Richard's turns are still a pre-sequence, even though the base sequence does not take place; it was meant as a pre-invitation, and Richard responds to it as it being a pre-invitation (Schegloff 2007: 34). Other examples of pre-expansions are pre-offers, pre-announcements and other pre-tellings.

Pre-expansions can be directly related to preferred and non-preferred responses. A pre-invitation as 'what are you doing', is a way to avoid a non-preferred response, because if someone makes clear in reaction to a pre-invitation that he or she is busy, you know you do not even have to utter your invitation, having avoided a rejection (Schegloff 2007: 57).

The *insert expansions*, or *insert sequences* can also relate to preference and dispreference (Schegloff 2007: 97). An insert expansion is always placed between a first pair part and a projected second pair part, and it is always initiated by the recipient of the preceding first pair part. Consider example (19):

[5] The *F* stands for the *first pair part*, just as the *S* in the next line stands for *second pair part*. *Pre* stands for *pre-expansion*, just as *b* in the third and fourth line stands for *base unit*. Later on, I will also use *ins* for *insert expansions* and *post* for *post-expansions*.

(19)	A)	1	Phoebe	F_b	Please say you're coming to the zoo with us.
		2	Leo	F_{ins}	Is Billy coming?
		3	Phoebe	S_{ins}	No, he had to work.
		4	Leo	S_b	Okay then, I'll be tagging along!
	B)	1	Phoebe	F_b	Please say you're coming to the zoo with us.
		2	Leo	F_{ins}	Is Billy coming?
		3	Phoebe	S_{ins}	Yeah, he is.
		4	Leo	S_b	Ehm, sorry. I'm going to sit this one out.

As you can see, the insert sequence takes place in between the FPP and SPP of the base unit, and Leo starts the insert sequence, while Phoebe started the base unit. Furthermore, the first pair part of the insert sequence defers the base second pair part; Leo needed an answer first to his question, before he could answer Phoebe's question.

As mentioned before, an insert expansion can, just as the pre-expansion, be initiated to avoid giving a dispreferred response. So, looking at (19), it appears Leo does not like Billy, because when he found out Billy was one of the people going to the zoo in (19b), Leo decided to turn down the invitation, thus giving a non-preferred response. However, in (19a), Phoebe says Billy is not coming along, resulting in a preferred response from Leo. So to be able to produce a preferred response, Leo needed to initiate an insert sequence, because with Billy going to the zoo, Leo did not want to join the group. If Leo had not asked the first pair part of the insert sequence, he might have turned down the invitation, just in case Billy was going to the zoo with them. So in (19a), Leo avoided giving a non-preferred response, because of the insert sequence.

Another example of an insert sequence, is a repair sequence (Schegloff 2007: 100). An example of such a sequence can be found in (20).

(20)	1	Bonnie	F_b	What do you think about my new camera?
	2	Nick	F_{ins}	You're what?
	3	Bonnie	S_{ins}	My new camera.
	4	Nick	S_b	O, yeah, it's great.

This is different from the conversation in (19), because Nick starts an insert sequence because he did not know exactly what Bonnie said. He therefore does not need more information to be able to produce his second pair part, he just needs to hear the first pair part again. This last contribution by Nick is a post-first insert expansion, while the first one was a pre-second insert expansion.[6]

The last type of contribution is a *post-expansion*, which is an expansion after a second pair part of a base unit. According to Schegloff (2007: 117), sequences with preferred second pair parts are, in general, 'closure-relevant', while sequences with a non-preferred second pair part are often 'expansion-relevant'. As a consequence, just as pre-expansion and insert

[6] This distinction is not relevant for the present research, so I will refrain from elaborating on it further.

expansion, post-expansion can also be oriented to (the possibility of) dispreferred responses. First, we have minimal post-expansions, also called a 'sequence-closing third' (SCT) (Schegloff 2007: 118). Such an expansion is designed to be a minimal extension after the second pair part. It is meant to close the sequence; an action that can get accepted by the recipient, but it does not have to. SCT's can appear after both preferred and dispreferred responses, and are mostly words as *oh*, *okay* and *good*. It can also be a combination of any of those words. Example (21) shows how the SCT can be used in conversation.

(21)	1	Jess	F_b	How are you?
	2	Schmidt	S_b	I'm good.
	3		F_b	How are you?
	4	Jess	S_b	I'm fine.
	5	Schmidt	SCT	Good.
	6	Jess	F_b	I thought you were going out tonight?
	7	Schmidt	S_b	No, I'm staying home.
	8	Jess	SCT	Oh, okay.

An assessment as *good* in line 5, 'articulates a stance taken up' (Schegloff 2007: 124). So Schmidt shows his appreciation for Jess's answer in line 4. In line 8, marks Jess's *oh* information receipt, while *okay* marks acceptance (Schegloff 2007: 118, 120). So, first she shows she got the information given to her in line 7 and, immediately after that, she shows she accepts the response.

A second kind of post-expansion is the non-minimal post-expansion. A non-minimal post-expansion itself is a first pair part, so unlike a minimal post-expansion, it projects 'at least one further turn' (Schegloff 2007: 149). In (22), an example is provided.

(22)	1	Susan	F_b	You want some cheese on your sandwich?
	2	Lesley	S_b	No, thank you, I'm vegan.
	3	Susan	F_{post}	You're what?
	4	Lesley	S_{post}	I'm vegan.

Here, another repair sequence is presented, which is similar to the insert sequence in (20). The base sequence is finished, but because Susan did not hear Lesley's answer, she asks Lesley to repeat her answer in line 3, thus starting a post-expansion. Another example of a non-minimal post-expansion is topicalization, where a post-expansion can be the inducement of a new topic (Schegloff 2007: 149). Also rejecting, challenging or disagreeing with the second pair part can form a post-expansion. Sometimes the post-expansion has the function of reworking the first pair part; then, the first pair part is somewhat changed to be more appropriate in the conversation, for instance by making room for a preferred second pair part, instead of a non-preferred one.

In conclusion, there are a lot of ways to expand a basic unit. Since expansions can influence the preference organization, as discussed, they will be carefully analyzed in this thesis.

3.3. Approach

3.3.1. Mitigating Modal Particles

3.3.1.1. Mitigation and Reinforcement

Now that the expansions have been discussed, the exact approach that will be taken in this thesis can be explained. For this thesis, the particles that are being researched are *modal, mitigating* particles. As already briefly discussed in 2.1.2, Vismans (1995) takes the relation between modal particles and politeness as his main focus. He looks at nine modal particles: *dan* 'then'*, eens* (untranslatable)*, even* 'just'*, maar* 'but'*, misschien* 'maybe'*, nou* 'now, well')*, ook* 'moreover, also, too'*, soms* 'sometimes' and *toch* (untranslatable). Vismans discusses, among others, the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), also discussed in 2.1.2. As mentioned before, they focus on politeness strategies that take into account the positive and the negative face. Using particles is one of the strategies that takes into account the negative face, also called a negative strategy (Brown and Levinson 1987: 145). According to Brown and Levinson, a particle can say something is partially true, or only true in certain respects, or that it is more true than perhaps expected. However, Brown and Levinson do not focus on impoliteness. This raises a problem for Vismans (1995: 274); his intuition tells him that particles can also function as an impolite feature of a sentence, as already discussed. Thus, Vismans (1995: 275) divides the nine modal particles into mitigating particles and reinforcing particles:

Reinforcing	*dan*	*eens*	*nou*	*ook*	*toch*
Mitigating	*even*	*maar*	*misschien*	*soms*	

Table 3.3: nine modal particles divided by Vismans (1994) into reinforcing and mitigating particles

As already discussed, reinforcement, or in other words, the strengthening strategy, can have multiple goals: to convince the listener, to express impatience, to show superiority (Hengeveld 1989: 32), but also to express assertiveness, certainty, definiteness, positiveness, significance, specificity and rudeness (Vismans 1994: 34). Mitigation, or the weakening strategy, can have the following goals: to prevent losing face, to be polite, to leave room for the conversation partner to refuse or disagree, to make the listener feel comfortable (Hengeveld 1989: 32), but also to express non-assertiveness, doubt, indefiniteness, negativity, insignificance, generality and politeness (Vismans 1994: 34). And because reinforcement and mitigation can be expressed by modal particles, modal particles can function to reach one of those goals. The fact that particles can be either mitigating or reinforcing, explains the particles that make a sentence impolite; not all particles can be used in a negative politeness strategy, because some particles have a reinforcing function, thus enforcing the speech act performed in the sentence.

However, this thesis does not focus on impoliteness; for this reason, the reinforcing particles *dan*, *eens*, *nou*, *ook* and *toch* are left out of the research. The mitigating modal

particles that Vismans discusses (1995) are the ones that will be analyzed in this research, because these particles are expected to be used to make a sentence more polite, and thus could very well be used in non-preferred responses. After all, as mentioned in 2.2.2, non-preferred responses are often mitigated, so mitigating modal particles, among other mitigating elements of course, can be expected in non-preferred second pair parts. For instance, look at (23).

(23)	A)	1	Winston	F_b	Zal ik je helpen met de gootsteen *shall I you help with the sink* repareren? *fix* Shall I help you with fixing the sink?
		2	Nick	S_b	Misschien is dat niet zo'n goed idee. *maybe is that not so an good idea* Maybe that's not such a good idea.
	B)	1	Winston	F_b	Zal ik je helpen met de gootsteen *shall I you help with the sink* repareren? *fix* Shall I help you with fixing the sink?
		2	Nick	S_b	Dat is niet zo'n goed idee. *that is not so an good idea* That's not such a good idea.

In line 1, Winston asks Nick if he can help Nick with fixing the sink. This is an offer, to which a preferred answer would be acceptance of the offer. However, Nick rejects the offer, thus giving a dispreferred answer. There are multiple mitigating elements in line 2, such as the word *zo'n* 'such a', but also the content itself; Nick could also have just said 'no'. However, he chooses to make use of a mitigating formulation, by mentioning that Winston helping him is not such a good idea. This is mitigating, because it is less direct; by saying it, it appears as if Nick is not telling Winston no, but he is just explaining his take on it. But apart from the other mitigating element, *misschien* in line 2 of (23a) is an important part of this mitigation, as is illustrated by the difference between (23a) and (23b); even though the propositional content of line 2 in (23a) and (23b) is exactly the same (Winston helping Nick is not a good idea), there is a difference in the force of the speech act. In (23a), the speech act is uttered with less force. How *misschien* can mitigate the force of a speech act will be discussed later on in this section.

In sum, this thesis focuses on *even*, *maar* and *misschien*. Even though Vismans (1994: 1995) also mentions the particle *soms* 'sometimes' as a mitigating, modal particle, this particle will be left out of this research. This is because of what kind of sentences will be researched in this thesis; something that will be discussed in 3.3.2. In the following sections, the three relevant particles are discussed.

3.3.1.2. *Even*

The Dutch *even* can be translated as 'just'. The informal form of *even* is *effe*, which reflects the way it can be pronounced in informal speech (Vismans 1994: 69). This particle has a diminutive form, *eventjes*/*effetjes*, which according to Vismans is an indication that *even* is mitigating; using a diminutive form signals insignificance, which is an aspect of mitigation. *Even* as a modal particle is related to the adverb of time *even* 'briefly'. An example of the use of *even* is provided in (24).

(24) In this conversation, Maarten calls Joost to ask if he left his bag at Joost's house. Maarten has just explained what the bag looks like.

1	Joost	ja	ja	heb ik.=
		yes	*yes*	*have I*
	S_b	Yes, I have it.		
2	Maarten	=oke	top	
		okay	*great*	
	SCT	Okay, great.		
3		(0.3)		
4		nou top (.) moeten we **even** afspreken		wanneer we
		now great must	*we just make an appointment*	*when we*
		dat eh (0.7)weer eh (0.4) (mee		doen)
		that eh again eh	*(with*	*do)*
	F_b	Well, great, we just have to make an appointment when we will, eh, (join in).		

Even in line 4 is used to mitigate the utterance that is rather face-threatening; Maarten says they have to make an appointment, which is threatening Joost's negative face (the need to be left alone). It mitigates the message, because *even* suggests it does not take a lot of time and effort to make this appointment, and thus attenuates the force of the speech act. Vismans (1994: 69-70) explains that the temporal aspect has been lost, and only the insignificance aspect is left. This is not always clear, because as can be seen in (24), often *even* refers to an action that can be carried out in a short time. But *even* can also be used in a sentence where it refers to an action that takes a lot of time and effort (see Vismans 1994: 70). So with *even* also expressing insignificance, the force of the speech act is attenuated; because Maarten uses the words *moeten we* 'we must', it almost seems like an order to himself and to Joost. But this order is mitigated by *even*, because while *moeten* means they have to make an appointment, *even* signals insignificance, thus giving the idea they do not have to do it, that it is not an order per se.

3.3.1.3. *Maar*

The modal particle *maar* can be translated as 'only, just'. According to Foolen (1993: 174), the use of *maar* as a modal particle comes from *maar* as a focus particle (which does not only mean *but*, but also *only*). As explained in 2.1.1, focus particles are words that bring certain parts of a sentence or certain meanings into prominence (Foolen 1993: 141), as illustrated in (25).

(25) Dave only eats meat.

The focus of the sentence is on *meat*, and that is exactly what *only* refers to. According to Vismans (1994: 71), *maar* is a mitigating particle because as a focus particle, there is clearly a negative meaning visible; as can be seen in (25), Dave only eats meat, and nothing more, so it excludes higher values. Therefore, the mitigating aspect derives from this negative meaning. The modal particle *maar* is illustrated in (26).

(26) Mila and Puck are going to the theatre together. Puck is still on her way there, and Mila just explained to her how to get there.

1	Mila	ja	bel	me **maar** als je		niet weet
		yes	*call*	*me but*	*if you*	*not know*
	F_b	Yes, you can call me if you can't figure it out.				
2		(0.6)				
3	Puck	is goed				
		is good				
	S_b	I will.				

Here, *maar* is meant as an encouragement. Puck has to get to the theatre and Mila just explained the way. In line 1, Mila encourages Puck to call her again if she still cannot find it. Calling someone can be a threat to the negative face of the person that would get the call, because it does not meet the need to be left alone. Yet, with *maar*, Mila assures Puck it is okay to call her, so she mitigates how much of a threat the calling would be. But it is also the other way around; it almost seems as if Mila is ordering Puck to call her, which is face-threatening to Puck. After all, being told what to do is the opposite of being left alone, thus threatening the negative face. *Maar* attenuates this order.

3.3.1.4. *Misschien*

The next particle, *misschien*, can be translated to *maybe* or *perhaps*. It signals the possibility of something, and therefore mitigates the message (Vismans 1994: 72). An example of *misschien* as a modal particle is provided in (27).

(27) Joost and Puck are going to meet up at Saskia's. They are on the phone to talk about their day, but before they start chatting, Joost makes sure he first tells Puck something about going to Saskia.

1	Joost	en eh (0.8) even voordat we ergens anders *and eh just before we somewhere else* dingen over gaan hebben (1.2) (het gaat) (1.0) ik zat te denken *things about go have (it goes) I sat* TE *think* (0.5) als het straks ook nog zo regent als jij klaar bent en *if it later too still so rains if you ready are and* je naar Saskia gaat *you to Saskia goes*
	F_b[1]	Yeah, and, eh, just before we're going to talk about other things, (it goes well), I was thinking, if it's still raining like this when you're done, and you're going to Saskia.
2		(0.6)
3	Puck	hm[hm ((continuation sounds))
	C[7]	Uhu.
4	Joost	[dan (0.8) kan eh je misschien beter maar wel met de *then can eh you maybe better but* WEL *with the* bus komen inderdaad *bus come indeed*
	F_b[2]	Then, eh, maybe it's better to indeed go by bus.
		(1.3)
5	Puck	o oke *o okay*
	S_b	O, okay.

The *misschien* used in line 3 has a mitigating function; Joost advises Puck to go by bus if it keeps on raining, and his *misschien* diminishes this face-threatening act; it leaves an option open, it leaves room for Puck to not follow his advice. So the force of the speech act advising, is attenuated by using *misschien*, by stressing it is an option and not an obligation.

To sum up, *even*, *maar* and *misschien* reduce the force of the speech act, so it is interesting to look at in what kind of sentences they are used. It will be explained in the next section what kind of sentences are being researched.

[7] C means this is a continuator; it encourages Puck to continue to speak and shows here Joost is still listening.

3.3.2. Second Pair Parts that answer Questions

Now that the three mitigating particles this thesis focuses on are discussed, it is time to narrow down the instances of these modal particles that will be analyzed. After all, since this thesis focuses on preference organization, and in what kind of sentences (preferred or non-preferred) the particles are being used, it is not necessary to look at every instance of one of the three particles. This will be explained below.

Because of the focus on preference, it is only necessary to look at second pair parts. This is because the preference of a sentence depends on its relation to the first pair part. Consequently, a first pair part is a certain speech-act, and the second pair part is the preferred or dispreferred response to that speech act.

It is important to note that when focusing on second pair parts, the fourth mitigating particle Vismans (1994) discussed, *soms*, will not appear in the relevant data. This is because *soms* only occurs in interrogative sentences; so essentially only in first pair parts. To be sure, the corpus was checked for any use of *soms* in a second pair part, but indeed, no instances were found. This is why it was decided to exclude the modal particle *soms* from this research. Fortunately, *misschien* did not have to be excluded from this thesis, even though according to Vismans (1994: 5), *misschien* can also only occur in interrogative sentences. This would have meant that *misschien* would also have to be left aside. However, in my data, instances of the particle *misschien* were indeed found in second pair parts.[8] So it was not necessary to also leave out *misschien*. According to Vismans (1994: 5), *maar* and *even* can occur in declarative sentences, so these two particles could also stay included in the research.

The particles *even*, *maar* and *misschien* occur in a multitude of pair parts. That is, among other reasons, why I decided to not focus on all the second pair parts in which one of these particles is used, but only on second pair parts that answer questions. Another reason for this choice is that by doing this, it is clearly defined what contributions to the conversation I will look at. A question can be defined as: 'An interrogative sentence calling for an answer' (Question, in: The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language, 2004). The answers that questions can get are the focus of my research. I will consider requests and invitations to also be kinds of questions, for these are also interrogative sentences calling for an answer. Another reason why answers to questions are an interesting kind of second pair part to focus on, is that preference is very relevant with question asking. This is because asking a question is a face-threatening act in itself. It can be a threat to both the positive and the negative face; it can threaten the speaker's own positive face, because if the conversation partner decides to not answer the question, the speaker could feel he or she is not liked by this person. It can also threaten the negative face of the conversation partner; if he or she just wants to be left alone, a question is not appreciated.

As discussed in 2.2.2, a preferred response is the response that helps accomplish the goal brought up by the first pair part. We have already seen examples of this with questions that

[8] It could, however, also be the case that Vismans (1994) does not consider these cases of *misschien* to be a particle, because of a less broad definition of *particle*.

can be answered with *yes* or *no*; when a questions orientates to an affirmative answer, then that is the preferred response. However, for questions that cannot be answered with *yes* or *no*, it is a bit different; those questions do not orientate to a certain answer. Better yet; they orientate to every appropriate answer. To solve this problem, in this thesis a slightly different definition of a non-preferred response is applied when we are dealing with a question that cannot be answered with *yes* or *no*: A non-preferred second pair part to such a question, would be a response that does not succeed in answering, as is illustrated in (28).

(28) Joost and Puck want to go out to dinner together in a city they don't really know. Joost tries to plan ahead and think about where they can go.

1	Joost	maar	wat	zou	jij	willen eten.		
		but	*what*	*would*	*you*	*want eat*		
	F_b	But what would you want to eat?						
2		(4.0)						
3	Puck	weet	ik niet (1.7) ik heb			net heel veel	chips	op. (3.4) ik
		know	*I not*		*I have*	*just very much*	*potato crisps*	*on I*
		heb	sowieso heel veel			gegeten dus ik kan nou **even**		nie aan eten
		have	*anyhow very much*			*eaten so I can now just*		*not on food*
		denken						
		think						
	S_b	I don't know, I just ate so many potato crisps. I ate too much in general so I cannot think about food right now.						

In line 3, Puck does not succeed in answering the question; she responds to Joost, but Joost still does not know what Puck would want to eat. Thus, in this research, a response as in line 3 is seen as a non-preferred second pair part.

In sum, in this research I will focus on second pair parts that answer a question and contain the particles *even*, *maar* or *misschien*.

3.3.3. A Step by Step Working Plan

Now that it has been discussed what kind of sentences will be focused on, it is time to discuss how to analyze these pair parts in the corpus used in this research.

As discussed in 3.1, the corpus of this thesis is an overview of informal telephone conversations. These conversations were typed out in basic transcriptions. These transcriptions focus on what is said; only the words and the occasional laugh is typed out, without any punctuation. However, to get a clear image of the parts where one of the relevant particles is found, these pieces needed to be transcribed more precisely. Within Conversation Analysis, there are standard transcription conventions, developed by Jefferson (1979, 1983a and 1983b), which shall be used in the present study. These conventions help to precisely describe what is being said in the conversation and how the interlocutors say it, with the focus on capturing the

interactional details that are important to the interpretation of the conversation (Mazeland 2003: 0).

However, I do not consider every convention to be relevant for my research. For instance, when a certain syllable is stressed, that syllable is underlined in a standard conversation analysis transcription. Because what is said, is more important for this thesis than the prosody, this is one convention that I did not use. Some conventions have an effect on the readability; for instance, when a word is being pronounced while laughing, it is customary to place bold h's in the word (e.g., 'l**h**au**h**ghi**h**ng'), which makes it harder to read and understand. In this thesis, laughing will be transcribed as 'haha', 'hehe' or 'hihi', depending on the sound of the laugh. So, to preserve the readability of the transcripts, and to keep the focus on what is really important for this research, I will not be using all the rules of the Jefferson's transcript system. The conventions I will use, are illustrated in the appendix.

Because the data are in Dutch, English translations are also provided. As can already be seen in some previous examples, and illustrated here in example (29), I will first give the example in Dutch, the way it has been said in the telephone conversations, following the transcription conventions just mentioned.

(29)				
	1	Mila	o gaan we nu	**maar** normale wraps=
			o go we now	*but normal wraps*
		F_b[1]	O, we're just making normal wraps?	
	2	Cammy	=ja=	
			yes	
		S_b[1]	Yes.[9]	

The word that is the focus of the analysis, in this example *maar*, is made bold. Right beneath the words, a literal English translation is given (in italics) of every word, without looking at the context. It is made sure the translation of each word is right beneath the word in Dutch, so that it is clear which translation belongs to which word. However, for some words, there is no one-on-one translation in English. With these words, the Dutch word is repeated in capital letters in the translation line. Beneath the translation line, a proper translation of the sentence as a whole is provided (with a grey shade). This sentence is with normal punctuation.

In front of the sentence, it is shown what kind of sentence this is, from the perspective of conversation analysis. For instance, line 1 in (29) is the first pair part (F) of the base pair ($_b$), and it is the first part (^{1}) of the first pair part. So, Cammy started to talk, without Mila being finished with her base pair part. This ^{1} is also shaded grey, so that it will not be confused with footnotes. Line 2 is the first part (^{1}) of the second pair part (S) of the base pair ($_b$).

After having transcribed all the conversations accordingly, we look for the particles *even*, *maar* and *misschien*. Subsequently, the sentences where these particles are used as modal particles are filtered out. The ones that are part of first pair parts are left out of the research, just as the second pair parts that do not answer a question. Eventually, we end up with an overview of the three modal particles being used in second pair parts that answer questions.

[9] This example has been slightly altered for the purpose of showing the way of transcribing used for this thesis.

To answer the research question of this thesis, about the relation between the use of particles and preference organization, the found instances of the three modal particles are being analyzed. Because this research focuses on mitigating particles only, as mentioned in 2.3, it is expected that the three particles will only be found in non-preferred second pair parts; however, if instances of the modal particles in preferred responses are found, it will be explained what a mitigating particle is doing in such a sentence.

In the next section, the particles found in the corpus are analyzed.

4. Analysis

In this section, the results and the analysis are discussed, to come to a clear answer to the research question.

4.1. Results

	Preferred	Non-preferred	Total
Even	5	11	16
Maar	29	16	45
Misschien	2	1	3
Total	36	28	64

Table 4.1: found instances of even*,* maar *and* misschien *in the corpus*

After having filtered out all the instances of *even*, *maar* and *misschien* as modal particles, used in second pair parts that answer questions, we eventually ended up with 64 instances in total, existing of 16 instances of *even*, 45 instances of *maar* and 3 instances of *misschien*, as illustrated in table 4.1. The small number of instances of *misschien* illustrates that even though I did find a couple of occurrences of *misschien* in a second pair part, Vismans (1995: 275) might be right that *misschien* is not likely to occur in non-interrogative sentences. However, the 3 instances found in this research will still be analyzed.

In the following sections, the analysis of the found instances is discussed. First, the found instances of *even* will be analyzed, then *maar* and then *misschien*. Every section has the same structure: first the instances in non-preferred responses are discussed, then the instances in preferred responses. Every section on a specific particle, will end with a conclusion.

4.2. *Even*

4.2.1. *Even* in Non-preferred Responses

4.2.1.1. *Even* as a Mitigator

As illustrated in table 4.1, 16 instances of *even* as a modal particle used in a second pair part that answers a question were found; 11 instances were found in non-preferred second pair parts, and the other 5 instances in preferred second pair parts.

As already discussed in 3.3.1.2, *even* is a mitigating particle (Vismans 1995: 275), which means it reduces the force of the speech act. It was hypothesized such particles are more likely

to appear in non-preferred sentences. And indeed, 11 instances of the mitigating particle *even* were found in non-preferred responses. An example of this use of *even* is provided in (30):

(30) Puck and Joost have been on the phone with each other for about thirty minutes, and they just mentioned that they both need to go to the bathroom. Joost then proposes to hang up the phone to go to the bathroom.

1	Puck	oke (0.3) moet ik je daarna dan weer terugbellen?
		okay must I you afterwards then again call back
	F_b	Okay, do I have to call you back again afterwards?
2		(1.3)
3	Joost	hhh ja nou ja ik moet sowieso **even** men tegoed oplaaien,
		((sighs)) *yes now yes I must anyhow just my balance charge*
	S_b	Yeah, well, yeah, in any case I just need to recharge my balance.

The first sign that shows line 3 is a dispreferred second pair part, is the 1.3 seconds silence in line 2. As mentioned in 2.2.2, a non-preferred answer often appears after a long silence (with a silence longer than 1 second being perceived as long) (Jefferson 1983b). Also, Joost sighs, (the *hhh* shows that), he stutters a bit, maybe out of doubt, by saying *ja nou ja*, and his answer is implying that Puck does not have to call him back, while the preferred answer to the question in line 1 would be an affirmative answer. However, *even* softens this non-preference; it gives the idea that recharging the balance (the act *even* refers to) will just take a little while, so calling again later is still a possibility, as is illustrated in example (31).

(31)

A)	1	F_b	Puck	Oké, moet ik je daarna dan weer *okay must I you afterwards then again* terugbellen? *call back* Okay, do I have to call you back again afterwards?
	2	S_b	Joost	Nou, ik moet mijn tegoed opladen. *now I must my balance charge* Well, I need to recharge my balance.
B)	1	F_b	Puck	Oké, moet ik je daarna dan weer *okay must I you afterwards then again* terugbellen? *call back* Okay, do I have to call you back again afterwards?
	2	S_b	Joost	Nou, ik moet mijn tegoed even opladen. *now I must my balance just charge* Well, I just need to recharge my balance.

In (31a), line 2 seems to be a rejection; it entails the explanation of why the idea proposed in line 1 is not a good idea. However, line 2 of (31b) does not have to be a rejection, it could also mean that even though Puck calling Joost again is not possible right away, it may be possible after a little while. This is due to *even*, the only difference between (31a) and (31b). Thus it reduces the force of the speech act, stressing the fact that, eventually, it may not be a rejection.

The last example discussed here of *even* used in a non-preferred second pair part, is shown in (32).

(32) In this conversation, Maarten calls Joost to ask him if he left his bag at Joost's house. Joost is looking around his house and finds a bag that is not his; he asks if that is Maarten's bag by describing what it looks like. Maarten, however, does not really know what the bag looks like.

1	Joost	o (0.8) eh (0.7) zwart polstasje.
		o eh black handbag
	SCT	O. Eh. A black handbag.
2		(0.4)
3		Puck, (2.5) zie jij een
		Puck see you a
	F	Puck, do you see a-
4		eh (0.8) hier (1.7) ja, ik heb hier wel een tasje (0.7) eens
		eh here yes I have here WEL *a bag* EENS
		even kijken wat er in zit. (0.3) tis zwart (0.6)
		just look what there in sit it is black
		en der staat (1.3) roof collection op?
		and there stands roof collection on
	F	Eh, here- Yes, I have a bag here. Let me see what's inside it. It is black and has the text Roof Collection on it.
2		(1.7)
3	Maarten	wat zit erin?
		what sits there in
	F_b	What's in it?
4		(0.5)
5	Joost	der staat roof collection op of zo,
		there stands roof collection on or something
	S_b	The text Roof Collection or something like that is on it.
6	Maarten	ja (.) weet ik wat er in u wat zit erin?
		yes know I what there in u what sits there in
	F_b	As if I know- What's in it?
7		(0.5)

8	Joost	ik kijk **effe**,
		I look just
	F_{ins}[1]	Let me see.

Joost's response in line 8 is not an answer to what is in the bag; you could see it as a delay of the answer. Because it does not succeed in answering the question, you could say it is a non-preferred response. For instance, line 6 shows all Maarten wants to know is, whether this is the bag he is looking for. *Ik kijk effe*, is not an answer to this question; it delays the answer-giving. In line 8, *effe*, the informal use of *even*, mitigates this non-preference, for it stresses the fact that the looking in the bag will not take long, so the time it will take to carry out the action is insignificant, and thus the answer to the question asked in line 6 will come soon. This use of *even*, to delay an appropriate answer, is found 5 times out of the 11 instances in the corpus, so it is used rather frequently.

However, the *effe* in (32) is an example of a mitigating *effe* that may not have the effect it is supposed to have. The fact of the matter is, that this bag that Maarten is looking for has all of his important possessions; his passport, car registration papers, wallet, and so forth. Instead of *effe* having the effect of saying it will just take a little while, thus mitigating the delay, it could also have the effect that Joost comes across as casual and as if he does not really care. It could come across as if Joost meant that the action to be carried out is insignificant, instead of the time it will take him to carry out this action. So the message acted out in this sentence, Joost telling Maarten to wait a little while so he can look in the bag, can actually come across as reinforced to Maarten, instead of mitigated; it stresses the fact that Joost is not being very cooperative in Maarten's opinion, for he had already asked what was in the bag in line 3, but Joost kept talking about what the bag looked like. Instead of answering the question now that it has been asked for the second time in line 6, Joost delays the answering again, while coming across as nonchalant by using the informal form of *even*. Thus, *effe* can be a word of reassurance that it will all be sorted out any moment now, but to Maarten, it could very well be the reason of his frustration, that he still does not know where his important handbag is; this is the unintended perlocution (Coulthard 1985: 19), thus the unintended effect on the speaker.

Thus, as expected, the modal particle *even* is used in non-preferred second pair parts that answer questions. However, it turned out that *even* is not always mitigating; one occurrence of a reinforcing *even* was found in the corpus. This occurrence is analyzed in the next section.

4.2.1.2. *Even* as a Reinforcer

Even though almost all of the found instances of *even* as a modal particle had a mitigating function, there was one exception. This is illustrated in (28), here repeated as (33).

(33) Joost and Puck want to go out to dinner together in a city they don't really know. Joost tries to plan ahead and think about where they can go.

1	Joost	maar	wat	zou	jij	willen eten.		
		but	*what*	*would*	*you*	*want eat*		
	F_b	But what would you want to eat?						
2		(4.0)						
3	Puck	weet	ik niet (1.7) ik heb			net heel veel	chips	op. (3.4) ik
		know	*I not*		*I have*	*just very much*	*potato crisps*	*on I*
		heb	sowieso heel veel			gegeten dus ik kan nou **even** nie aan eten		
		have	*anyhow very much*			*eaten so I can now just not on food*		
		denken						
		think						
	S_b	I don't know, I just ate so many potato crisps. I ate too much in general so I cannot think about food right now.						

As already discussed in 3.3.2, line 3 is a non-preferred second pair part; after all, it does not succeed in answering the question.

Now, the modal particle *even* is mitigating for a reason; *even* means a very short amount of time. If you ask someone to do something, *even* is a clever choice of words, because it gives the idea that whatever someone asks you to do, it will just take a little while. In line 3, Puck uses *even*, to make clear to Joost that at least for now, she does not want to think about food. However, *even* in line 3 seems to not be mitigating, but reinforcing. This is because of the fixed combination *nu even niet* 'not right now' that reinforces the speech act, which can be several things: for instance, wanting to be left alone or not spoken to. Or *nu even niet* can be said to avoid a certain topic. The *even* in (33), is part of that fixed combination; Puck says *nou even nie*, because she wants to avoid the topic of food. Without *even*, the sentence would get a different feeling:

(34)	Ik heb	sowieso heel veel	gegeten dus ik kan nou niet aan eten denken.					
	I have	*anyhow very much*	*eaten*	*so*	*I*	*can now not on*	*food*	*think*
	I ate too much in general so I cannot think about food right now.							

The English translation has remained the same as in (33). This is because for me, a native speaker of Dutch, all *even* does in (33) is adding a feeling of annoyance, that cannot be translated to an English word. Even though without *even*, the sentence is still pretty firm, *even* adds annoyance, which reinforces the speech act. Of course there are other elements that can bring about this feeling of annoyance, for instance intonation, but example (34) shows *even* definitely contributes to this feeling; the message seems to be formulated more strongly in (33), due to *even*. It is clear Joost understands the message that Puck wants to talk about something else, and that she is possibly a bit annoyed. This is illustrated in (35), where Joost's response is shown.

(35)	3	Puck	weet ik niet (1.7) ik heb net heel veel chips op. *know I not I have just very much potato crisps on* (3.4) ik heb sowieso heel veel gegeten dus ik kan nou *I have anyhow very much eaten so I can now* even nie aan eten denken *just not on food think*
		S_b	I don't know, I just ate so many potato crisps. I ate too much in general so I cannot think about food right now.
	4		(1.3)
	5	Joost	o (1.7) sorry *o sorry*
		F_{post}	O. I'm sorry.

After 1.3 seconds of silence and then 1.7 seconds of silence shown in line 4 and 5, Joost apologizes for his question. Apparently, Joost feels that he did something that he needs to apologize for, and that might be due to the reinforcing *nu even niet*.

So, the modal particle *even* does not always mitigate the speech act – although this seems to be the only example of *even* as a reinforcing particle within the corpus used for this thesis. That *even* can also reinforce a speech act, instead of only mitigate, can be found in the literature: Van de Poel and Van de Walle (1994: 333), mention that *even* can also be used in utterances that do not ask for minimalization, but for maximization of the effect of the action. So how could *even* in *nu even niet* be used for a maximization effect, and still mean 'a short time'? It could be possible that this was not always the case; maybe in the beginning of *nu even niet*, the *even* was used to mitigate the speech act. After all, asking someone to leave you alone or to not talk about a certain topic, threatens the positive face, for you could give this person the feeling you do not like him or her. *Even* could have mitigated it, by emphasizing it only applies to a short time. Later on, the meaning could have slightly changed, through the 'invited inference theory of semantic change' (Traugott 1999). An invited inference is something you can infer from an utterance, that has not been explicitly said. Geis and Zwicky (1971) give the following example: If you tell someone you will give him five euros if he mows the grass, you get the promise M (stands for mowing the grass) > G (stands for giving five euros). Subsequently, you can assume -M > -G, so if you do not mow the grass, you will not get five euro. However, this is not explicitly mentioned; it is an invited inference. Starting from this point, Traugott (1999) introduced 'the invited inference theory of semantic change'. This means that the inference you can make from something, can become part of the meaning. Thereafter, the meaning of the fixed combination or word changes. This theory could explain how the mitigation of *even* in *nu even niet* has disappeared. Because *nu even niet* is often used to express annoyance, the meaning 'wait a minute, come back in a minute' could change to 'just leave me alone', because that is what can be inferred from an annoyed *nu even niet*. This meaning can then become the meaning of the fixed combination as a whole. Because *even* is a crucial part of this fixed combination, you do not get the exact same meaning with *nu niet*; this seems to be a less strong version of *nu even niet*. That could be the reason why *even* has a reinforcing function in (33).

Thus, even though *even* is indeed almost always mitigating, this is not always the case; in one non-preferred response, *even* is used as a reinforcer. But as mentioned in the beginning of this section, *even* is also found in preferred responses. These occurrences are analyzed in the next section.

4.2.2. *Even* in Preferred Responses

In section 2.3, it was hypothesized that *even* would be used in non-preferred second pair parts. However, 5 instances of the modal particle *even* were found in preferred responses. An example of *even* in a preferred second pair part can be found in (36).

(36) Jack and Puck are talking about how Puck is going to visit him the day after, and Jack is wondering if she will stay for dinner.

1	Jack	dus eh (0.7) en kom je dan met (.) wil je dan *so eh and come you then with want you then* mee-eten? *eat with*
	F_b	So, are you coming with- Do want you eat with us, then?
2		(1.3)
3	Puck	eh ja k (.) ik denk het wel en ik denk Joost ook (.) maar dat m dat *eh yes k I think it* WEL *and I think Joost too but that m that* zal ik nog wel **even**, *shall I still* WEL *just*
	S_b	Yeah, I think so, and I think Joost will too. But that- I will just-

In line 3, a mitigating instance of *even* is used in a preferred response. The way the question is asked, orientates to a yes-answer; otherwise the question would have been formulated as: 'and you will not be joining us for dinner?' Puck answers she probably will be staying for dinner, which makes it a preferred answer. So how can the appearance of a mitigating particle in a preferred response be explained? Not only that, Puck also stutters a bit, saying *eh ja k*, and says *ik denk het wel* 'I think so', instead of just yes. All these mitigating elements can be explained by the politeness theory. Even though saying yes to the offer of eating with Jack is the preferred response, it is a face-threatening act. After all, it threatens the negative face of Jack; the need to be left alone. And Puck does not only say yes, she also mentions Joost will probably come for dinner, too, which is even more face-threatening; after all, Joost was not invited like Puck was. Jack got his answer to the question if Puck will be staying for dinner, but now he does not know for sure if Joost is coming too, which is exactly what *even* is mitigating; right now, Puck does not know for sure if Joost will stay for dinner too, but she will ask him *even*. Here, *even* refers to the short amount of time it will take to ask Joost, and thus mitigating the unknowing state of Jack; he does not know right now who exactly will be staying for dinner, but he will hear that soon. So even though the response aligns with the question (Puck says yes), it is still in need of

mitigating elements, because the speech act, accepting a face-threatening offer and adding someone who will probably want to make use of that offer too, threatens the negative face. So mitigating elements are not just appropriate in non-preferred responses, but in all potentially face-threatening acts.

Another example of an occurrence of *even* in a preferred response, is illustrated in (37):

(37) Puck and Joost are talking about a dog, Buddy, that Puck is sharing with her ex-boyfriend, Matt. She needs to make an plan to combine having Buddy and going to school. Joost wants to know what her plans are.

1	Joost	dus. (0.6) en (0.6) hoe zie je dat voor je,
		so and how see you that for you
	F_b	So. How are you picturing that?
2		(2.0)
3	Puck	nou als het gewoon weer om de week (0.7) kan zijn met
		now if it just again every the week can are with
		Matt (0.8) dan heb ik in ieder geval al (0.8) dat ik (0.3) om
		Matt then have I in any case yet that I every
		de week er gewoon echt vijf dagen kan zitten,
		the week there just real five days can sit
	S_b[1]	Well, if it can be every other week again with Matt, then at least I can really be there for five days every other week.
4		(1.6)
5	Joost	ja
		yes
	C	Yes.
6		(0.6)
7	Puck	en (0.8) ehm (2.1) als ik buddy heb proberen om twee dagen te
		and ehm if I buddy have try to two days TE
		komen dus (0.6) proberen (0.7) met papa en mama **even** te
		come so try with dad and mum just TE
		regelen of eh (1.4) iemand die dan gewoon op buddy
		arrange or eh someone that then just +[10] buddy
		kan passen of zo
		can +baby-sitting or something
	S_b[2]	And ehm, when I have Buddy I can try to go there two days, so I can just try to arrange something with mum and dad, or, eh, someone else who can dog-sit Buddy, or something like that.

[10] *Oppassen* is a separable verb in Dutch, so this + means that *op* in itself does not mean anything, without the other half, *passen*. So *passen* gives the right meaning to *oppassen*, which is baby-sitting (or in this case; dog-sitting).

As explained in 3.3.2, an answer to a question that cannot be answered with *yes* or *no* that succeeds in answering the question, is a preferred answer, thus Puck gives a preferred second pair part in lines 3 and 7. Still, Puck uses *even* in this preferred response. This can be explained by looking at the subject matter of the conversation. Joost is asking about Puck's plan to combine having a dog and going to school, and Puck answers by laying out her plan. She is confident this is a good plan and everything will work out, and to get this message across, she uses *even*. *Even* refers to arranging something with her mother and father; by using *even*, she is saying this arranging is no big deal. She just needs to sort it out with her parents, and everything will be okay. So it mitigates the action of arranging something with her parents, reassuring Joost (but maybe also herself) that she will come to an arrangement with her parents and her plan will work out.

Thus, in (37) *even* is mitigating not the speech act per se, but something else in the sentence, as a reassurance. This is also the case with the other 3 instances of *even* in a preferred second pair part; these occurrences can be explained by the meaning of *even*. As discussed in 3.3.1.2, *even* can mean the action it refers to will take a short amount of time, or the action it refers to is insignificant. In the three remaining examples of *even* in a preferred response, *even* mitigates the action it is referring to, not necessarily the whole speech act. This can be seen in (38).

(38) Tammy and Mila are on the phone, but Tammy cannot hear what Mila is saying, because she keeps hearing some sort of echo.

1	Tammy	ik hoor je echt niet zo goed ze ze sta je
		I hear you really not so good ze ze stand you
		op de speaker of nie?
		on the speaker or not
	F_b	I can't hear you very well, ze ze- Are you on speaker, or something?
2		(.)
3	Mila	ja (.) wacht ik doe he[t wel **effe**
		yes wait I do it WEL *just*
	S_b	Yeah, wait, I'll just do-
4	Tammy	[o haha
		o ((laughs))
	SCT	O.

In line 3, Mila gives a preferred response; Tammy asks if Mila has got her telephone on speaker, and Mila answers with *yes*. After that, Mila produces a sentence she does not finish, but it is clear she means that she will fix the problem. Even though *effe* in line 3 is used in a preferred response, it is still a mitigating particle; it mitigates the action *effe* refers to, the *doe* 'do'. She asks Tammy to wait, and says she will do something, and by using *effe*, she is saying this will not take long. So Tammy points out a problem; she cannot hear Mila properly, and Mila responds by saying she will fix the problem, in a short amount of time. The other instances of *even* in

preferred second pair parts, also have this time-meaning; they refer to some sort of action that will not take long, thus mitigating the action.

In the next section, a conclusion will be drawn as to the relation between preference and the modal particle *even*.

4.2.3. Conclusion

In the previous sections, it was discussed that out of the 16 appearances of the modal particle *even* in the corpus, 11 appeared in non-preferred responses. Because these were non-preferred responses, *even* was used to reduce the force of the speech act. However, 1 of those 11 instances of *even*, was not mitigating but reinforcing. This seemed to be an isolated instance; *even* was used in the fixed combination *nu even niet* 'not right now'. It is proposed *even* once was a mitigating particle in *nu even niet*, but through the invited inference, the meaning could have slightly changed; because this fixed combination is often used to express annoyance, perhaps now this has become the meaning of the fixed combination. Thus, this non-preferred response needed a reinforcing use of *even*, to express this annoyance.

However, even though the other 10 instances of *even* were mitigating, 1 instance was meant to be a mitigating response, but probably came across as reinforced to the one asking the question. This is due to the different meanings of *even*: it can refer to time, thus saying something will take a short amount of time, but it can also refer to the insignificance of the action that *even* refers to. When it is meant as a reference to time, saying it will just take a little while, but it is interpreted as a reference to the insignificance, saying it is not important, it could come across as reinforced to the interpreter who does think the action is important. Such an instance was found once.

A common use of *even* in non-preferred second pair parts, turned out to be the use of *even* to delay an appropriate answer. *Even* used for that function, was found 5 times out of the 11 instances in the corpus.

Even though it was hypothesized *even* would appear in non-preferred responses, it also occurred in preferred responses 5 times. All of these instances were mitigating. 1 instance of *even* could be explained by the politeness theory; even though a response can be preferred, it can still be a threat to the positive or negative face, and thus be in need of mitigation.

But in the other 4 instances of *even*, it did not mitigate the speech act, but the action that *even* referred to. More specifically, for 3 of those 4 instances, it mitigated the action by stressing it will just take a little while, by using *even*.

In sum, *even* did occur more frequently in non-preferred second pair parts, suggesting there is a relation between this (mostly) mitigating modal particle and preference. However, it also occurred in preferred second pair parts, thus making the relation between *even* and preference less strong. The analysis of *even* illustrated that not only preference can influence the appearance of *even*, but also politeness and other aspects that call for mitigation.

4.3. *Maar*

4.3.1. *Maar* in Non-preferred Responses

4.3.1.1. *Maar* as a Mitigator

As mentioned in 4.1, 45 instances of *maar* as a modal particle used in a second pair part that answers a question were found; 16 instances were found in non-preferred second pair parts, and 29 instances in preferred second pair parts.

As already discussed in 3.3.1.3, *maar* is a mitigating particle (Vismans 1995: 275), so you would expect it to appear in non-preferred second pair parts, to reduce the force of the speech act. However, in the previous section, it turned out that mitigating particles can also occur in preferred responses, for there are other aspects that can call for mitigation. But 16 instances of the modal particle *maar* were indeed found in non-preferred responses. An example of this, is illustrated in (39).

(39) Puck and Joost are talking about an appointment Puck just had, with a school psychologist. Joost wants to know if Puck thought the psychologist was pleasant to talk to.

1	Joost	en was ze een beetje prettig?
		and was she a bit pleasant
	F_b	And was she pleasant?
2		(0.5)
3	Puck	ja (0.4) ze was eh (1.0) ze was wel heel erg fijn (0.4) ze was wel in ieder geval fijner dan de die ik eerst had zeg maar
		yes she was eh she was WEL *really very pleasant she was* WEL *in any case more pleasant than the that I first had say but*
	S_b	Yeah, she was, eh, she was very pleasant, in any case she is more pleasant than the one I had before.
4		(1.2)
5	Joost	je bedoelt eerst die man of eerst die vrouw,
		you mean first that man or first that woman
	F_{post}	Do you mean the man from before, or the woman?
6		(.)
7	Puck	nee eerst dus zeg **maar** een paar jaar geleden (0.3) die vrouw.
		no first so say but a couple years ago that woman
	S_{post}	No, first, so I mean a couple of years ago, that woman.

An alternative question asked in line 5, in which two choices for an answer are given, offers three ways to answer the question. Puck could have said: 'Yes, the woman', because Joost mentions the woman. Another option would have been, 'The woman,' in which she just gives the right answer, without agreeing or disagreeing with Joost. However, she chooses the last option, 'No, the woman', disagreeing with the other option Joost gave, the man. The first two options, 'Yes, the woman,' and 'The woman,' would have been preferred answers. However, she chose 'No, the woman', which is a non-preferred answer. Because Joost gave two options, the only two answers that were possible, the preferred answer to the question is a positive one; after all, Joost mentions the right answer as an option. Yet, Puck focuses on the fact that he also gives the wrong answer as an option, thus answering with no. Her answer is not a positive one, so it is a non-preferred response. She does, however, use *maar* to mitigate this non-preference, together with *zeg*, forming the fixed combination *zeg maar*. According to Olmen (2011: 7) *zeg maar* can be a hedge. A hedge is a word (or multiple words) that avoids commitment (Crompton 1997: 286). When *zeg maar* is a hedge, it is added at the end of a sentence to mitigate the message, just as, for instance, *I think*. When using *zeg maar*, the suggestion is that whatever you are saying, is just one of the possibilities; it is presented as tentative and unsure, hence the avoiding commitment. It makes the message a bit vague, so when someone disagrees, you can hide behind *zeg maar* and say that that is not exactly what you meant. This indirectness is what makes *zeg maar* a mitigating particle cluster; it reduces the force of the speech act by coming across as unsure and doubtful.
Another interesting example discussed in this section, is (1), here repeated as (40).

(40) Joost just came home and found a package from bol.com, a web shop, but he did not order anything. He suspects it is from his girlfriend Puck, and tries to ask this subtly.

1	Joost	ik zie	hier	in de	keuken	een pakje	staan (2.4)	met	mijn naam
		I see	*here*	*in the*	*kitchen*	*a package*	*stand*	*with my*	*name*
		derop,							
		on it							
	F_b	I see a package here in the kitchen, with my name on it.							
2		(1.4)							
3	Puck	oke?							
		okay							
	S_b	Okay?							
4		(2.4)							
5	Joost	ja	ik heb	niks	besteld	volgens	mij,		
		yes	*I have*	*nothing*	*ordered*	*according*	*me*		
	F_{post}	Yeah, I did not order anything, I think.							
6		(1.1)							

7	Puck	heb	je	het al		opengemaakt.			
		have	*you*	*it*	*already*	*opened*			
	F_b	Have you opened it already?							
8		(0.8)							
9	Joost	nou dat		ben ik nu		mee bezig=			
		now that		*am I*	*now*	*with busy*			
	S_b	Well, that's what I'm doing right now.							
10	Puck	=oke. (1.5) dat			lijkt	me een eerste stap			
		okay		*that*	*seems*	*me a*	*first*	*step*	
	F_{post}	Okay. That seems to me to be the first step.							
11		(1.2)							
12	Joost	ja	daar	ben ik mee bezig.					
		yes	*there*	*am I*	*with busy*				
	S_{post}	Yeah, that's what I'm doing.							
13		(.)							
14		wee[t							
		know							
	F_b[1]	Do you know-							
15	Puck		[j[a						
			yes						
	SCT	Yes.							
16	Joost		[jij	daar	meer van.				
			you	*there*	*more from*				
	F_b[2]	Anything about that?							
17		(2.1)							
18	Puck	weet	niet, misschien		moet je	het **maar** gewoon openmaken,			
		know	*not*	*maybe*	*must you*	*it*	*but*	*usual*	*open*
	S_b	I don't know, maybe you should just open it.							

First of all, line 18 is analyzed as a non-preferred second pair part, because it does not succeed in answering the question asked in line 14 and 16. Especially since the package is indeed from Puck, so the proper answer would be, *yes, I do*. However, for the purpose of surprising Joost, she does not answer the question, thus giving a non-preferred response. But to reduce the force of the speech act, she adds *maar* to her sentence, which has a mitigating function in this sentence. After all, *maar* makes the sentence less compulsory. Without this mitigation, the sentence would look more like an order, as is illustrated in (41). Because *misschien* and *gewoon* can also affect this, these particles are left out to be able to illustrate exactly what *maar* does.

(41)	A)	weet	niet, je	moet het **maar** openmaken,				
		know	*not*	*you must*	*it*	*but*	*open*	
		I don't know, you should just open it.						

B) weet niet, je moet het openmaken,
know not you must it open
I don't know, you should open it.

As illustrated, (41b) is an order, Joost must open the package. *Maar* in (41a), however, makes it adhortative, instead of imperative. Thus, the speech act without *maar* is an order, while the speech act with *maar* is more like an advice. So *maar* mitigates the speech act, because of its adhortative function. By mitigating her non-preferred answer, she does not come across as rude. In 4.4, *misschien* in this sentence will be discussed.

Thus, as expected, the modal particle *maar* is used in non-preferred second pair parts that answer questions. However, it turned out that *maar* is not always mitigating; occurrences of a reinforcing *maar* were found in the corpus. This is discussed in the next section.

4.3.1.2. *Maar* as a Reinforcer

Just as with *even*, *maar* did not always turn out to be a mitigating particle; *maar* can also function as a reinforcer. An example is shown in (42).

(42) This is a conversation between Naomi and Puck. Puck needs certain information that her dad has written down in a notebook, and Puck is asking her sister Naomi if she can find the notebook. At this point in the conversation, Naomi has found what Puck needs and she wants to take a picture of the page in the notebook, but to do that she needs to hang up the phone.

1	Naomi	maar dan eh moet ik wel effe de telefoon ophangen ja?
		but then eh must I WEL *just the phone hang up yes*
	F_b	But then, eh, I'm just going to hang up the phone, okay?
2		(0.8)
3	Puck	ophangen of neerleggen.
		hang up or put down
	F_{ins}	Hang up or put down?
4		(1.0)
5	Naomi	o ophangen toch,
		o hang up TOCH
	S_{ins}	O, hang up, right?
6		of wil je nog iets hebben
		or want you still something have
	F_{ins}	Or do you need something else?
7		(0.9)

8	Puck	o nee hoeft eigenlijk niet (0.3) ja nee nee dat klopt *o no matter actually not yes no no that correspond* nee da *no that*
	S_{ins}	O right, that's not necessary, yes, no, no, you're right, no, that-
9		als je **maar** gewoon zorgt dat alles gewoon *if you but usual see to that everything usual* leesbaar is en erop staat dan is dat *readable is and there on stands then is that* helemaal goed. *entirely good*
	S_b	As long as you just make sure that everything is readable and is in the picture, then that's totally fine.

In line 6, Naomi asks if Puck needs anything else. Puck answers with *no* in line 8. This is a non-preferred answer to line 6, because this question is formulated positively, thus a positive answer would be the preferred answer. Interesting to see is that the answer in line 8, which basically is, 'we can hang up the phone', is a preferred answer to the question Naomi asked in line 5. But in line 6, she formulates a new question, to which 'we cannot hang up the phone' is the preferred answer. This is probably because Naomi wanted to hang up the phone (uttered in line 1), to which Puck asked if she was going to hang up the phone, or just put it down (line 3). Because she asked this, Naomi probably expected Puck to have something else to say, otherwise, it would not have mattered if Naomi would hang up or not. So first, Naomi asked for confirmation of her expectation that they could hang up in line 5 ('hang up, right?'), directing to a yes-answer. But maybe after that, she realized that maybe Puck would need something else, so she reformulates the question, in such a way that will align with the answer she is expecting. This is explained in 2.2.2, and is called reformulation with preference reversal (Schegloff 2007: 70). However, because of Naomi's question, Puck realized she did not need anything else, and they could hang up the phone, which resulted in the non-preferred answer, 'no, we can hang up.'

However, as already mentioned, in this conversation *maar* does not mitigate the speech act, but reinforces it. It stresses the importance of the message, that is, getting everything readable and visible in the picture. This can be explained by the negative meaning *maar* has, explained in 3.3.1.3. As discussed, *maar* as a focus particle excludes higher values; it can also mean 'only'. Vismans (1994: 71) mentions this fact as an explanation as to why *maar* is a mitigating particle, but in example (42), it is this meaning that makes it a reinforcing particle. The *maar* in line 9 does exclude higher values; the only thing Naomi needs to do is make sure everything is readable and in the picture, nothing more, so it is clear it has an excluding meaning. However, in this sentence, by excluding other options, it puts the focus on what does need to be done. This is because *maar* in line 9 refers to something that needs to be done; making sure everything is readable and in the picture. (43) illustrates *maar* in a different sentence type.

(43) Ik ben maar een schoonmaakster.
I am only a cleaning lady
I am only a cleaning lady.

In a sentence like that, *maar* again excludes higher values; the I-person in the sentence is only a cleaning lady, and has no higher function (Vismans 1994: 70). *Maar* has a mitigating effect, because it puts the focus on everything that the I-person is not. A cleaning lady is not considered to be a prestigious job, and by excluding anything else, and with that, also the more prestigious jobs, it is a mitigating way to talk about a certain job. But in (42), something needs to be done, and by using *maar*, Puck seems to mean: whatever happens, just make sure this is done. So here it excludes other things that do not need to be done, but by doing this, it stresses the importance of what needs to be done, making sure it is a good picture, and thus the speech act is reinforced by the use of *maar*.

To make sure this force is really caused by *maar*, and, for instance, not by *gewoon*, we can leave out *gewoon* to see what happens:

(44) Als je er maar voor zorgt dat alles leesbaar is en
if you there but for see to that everything readable is and
erop staat.
there on stands
As long as you make sure that everything is readable and is in the picture.

Maar is still reinforcing this message, and certainly not mitigating it; after all, the meaning 'whatever happens' is still present. In fact, it is interesting to see what the sentence would be like without *maar*:

(45) Als je er gewoon voor zorgt dat alles gewoon leesbaar is
if you there usual for see to that everything usual readable is
en erop staat.
and there on stands
If you just make sure that everything is readable and is in the picture.

This makes the sentence less strong, as can be seen in the translation, so the force of the speech act in line 9 in (42), can definitely be attributed to the modal particle *maar*. This is because the meaning 'whatever happens' is not present anymore, which is what makes (42) so strong.

So why did Puck choose to reinforce the speech act, if she was uttering a non-preferred response? This can be explained by the importance of making a good picture. Puck needed the information from that notebook her sister was looking at, at that particular moment. So it would only take more time, if Naomi would not take a good picture. So at this moment, getting the message across was more important to Puck than mitigating her non-preferred response.

The fact that *maar* can also be a reinforcing particle, can be found in the literature (Van de Poel & Van de Walle 1994: 328; Vismans 1994: 186-188). As already discussed, *maar* places the focus on a specific word or meaning, and by putting extra focus on a certain word or meaning, *maar* could reinforce the message.

Another interesting example of a reinforcing use of *maar* in a non-preferred response, is provided in (46).

(46) Joost and Puck are on the phone, talking about how Puck's day was.

1	Joost	o oke
		o okay
	SCT	O okay.
2		(1.4)
3		( )
4		(0.5)
5		en (0.5) hoe was het dansen met eh (0.5) Helen.
		and how was the dancing with eh Helen
	F_b	And how did dancing with eh, Helen go?
6		(1.1)
7	Puck	o ja dat was **maar** heel kort dus (0.3) ja dat was meer
		o yeah that was but very short so yeah that was more
		gewoon wat ik vorige week had gemist
		just what I last week had missed
	S_b	O yeah, that was only very short, so yeah. That was just, just what I missed last week.

Maar in line 7 looks like a focus particle, but in this thesis, it is also considered to be a modal particle. After all, with *maar* Puck shows her attitude towards the dancing, the given definition of a modal particle in 2.1.1. *Maar* in line 7 is a reinforcing particle, but it has also an adversative function. In fact, its reinforcing effect comes from *maar* being an adversative particle in this sentence. *Maar* signals the contrast between what Joost thought the situation would be (and maybe what Puck thought too, beforehand) and what the situation turned out to be; that is, Joost thought Puck was going to dance with Helen for a longer time, making it an experience that can be reviewed afterwards. However, apparently, Puck and Helen danced for such a short amount of time, that Puck does not think it is worthy of a review; Joost asks her how it went, and she does not answer this question. All she says, is it was very short, meaning it was so short, it is barely worth mentioning, let alone reviewing. And because Joost thought it would be worth reviewing – hence, his asking the question how it went, *maar* is appropriate in line 7 to signal this contrast. And it is because of this contrast that *maar* is a reinforcing particle. The speech act acted out in line 7, is giving an answer to the question asked in line 1. The answer, however, is a dispreferred one, for it is not formulated as if it really answers the question. By saying *dus ja* 'so yeah', she seems to mean something like, in contrast with our expectations, it is not worth reviewing. The fact that it is a dispreferred response, is reinforced by *maar*. After all, it is this word that makes the contrast explicit. Without *maar*, there would still be a contrast, but there would not be anything signaling it. Thus, *maar*, reinforces the dispreference.

So again, Puck chooses to use a reinforcer in a non-preferred response. Perhaps again,

because getting the message across that, instead of what Joost might think, dancing with Helen was not anything worth reviewing, was more important to Puck than mitigating her non-preferred response.

Thus, *maar* can also be used as a reinforcing particle. But as mentioned in the beginning of this section, *maar* is also found in preferred responses. These occurrences are analyzed in the next section.

4.3.2. *Maar* in Preferred Responses

4.3.2.1. *Maar* as a Mitigator

Because *maar* is described in the literature as a mitigating particle (Vismans 1994: 71), it was hypothesized that it would be used in non-preferred second pair parts. However, in the corpus used for this research, more instances of *maar* were found in preferred responses, than in non-preferred responses; 29 instances of the modal particle *maar* were found in preferred responses. An example of one of those instances can be found in (39), here repeated as (47).

(47) Puck and Joost are talking about the appointment Puck just had, with a school psychologist. Joost wants to know if Puck thought the psychologist was pleasant to talk to.

1	Joost	en	was ze	een beetje prettig?						
		and	*was she*	*a*	*bit*	*pleasant*				
	F_b	And was she pleasant?								
2		(0.5)								
3	Puck	ja (0.4)	ze	was eh (1.0)	ze	was wel	heel	erg	fijn (0.4)	
		yes	*she*	*was eh*	*she*	*was* WEL	*really*	*very*	*pleasant*	
		ze	was wel	in ieder geval fijner			dan	de	die ik eerst	
		she	*was* WEL	*in any*	*case*	*more pleasant*	*than*	*the*	*that I*	*first*
		had **zeg maar**								
		had say but								
	S_b	Yeah, she was, eh, she was very pleasant, in any case she is more pleasant than the one I had before.								

In line 3, Puck gives an affirmative answer; the answer that aligns with the question asked in line 1, which makes it a preferred response. This example shows us a mitigating use of *maar*, again used in the fixed combination *zeg maar*. As discussed in 4.3.1.1, *zeg maar* can be a hedge; a word (or multiple words) that avoids commitment (Crompton 1997: 286). However, because line 3 is a preferred second pair part, making use of a mitigating element as *zeg maar*, does not seem necessary. Especially because the message is that her new psychologist is more pleasant than the one she had before, so the information given with this sentence will not affect Joost on a personal level, either negatively, or positively. Thus, line 3 does not entail a face-

threatening act, so there seems to be no reason to mitigate this message. It could be possible, that in this case, *zeg maar* is just a filler. When *zeg maar* is used as a filler, it does not necessarily have a meaning (Stroop 2006: 5). People just add fillers as *zeg maar* at the end of their sentences, for no communicative reason. Alternatively, as Stroop mentions, they might be used because speakers have some air left and want to make use of it. So, when used in spoken language, *zeg maar* does not always have a clear meaning; it could very well just be a filler. Because there is not really a reason for Puck to mitigate her preferred message, the *zeg maar* in line 3 is probably just this; a filler, a way to end the sentence.

Another interesting example of *maar* in a preferred second pair part, is the continuation of the conversation given in (30), repeated here as example (48):

(48) Puck and Joost have been on the phone with each other for about thirty minutes, and they just mentioned that they both need to go to the bathroom. Joost then proposes to hang up the phone to go to the bathroom.

1	Puck	oke (0.3) moet ik je daarna dan weer terugbellen?
		okay must I you afterwards then again call back
	F_b	Okay, do I have to call you back again afterwards?
2		(1.3)
3	Joost	hhh ja nou ja ik moet sowieso even men tegoed oplaaien,
		((sighs)) *yes now yes I must anyhow just my balance charge*
	S_b	Yeah, well, yeah, in any case I just need to recharge my balance.
4		(0.9)
5	Puck	hmhm,
		hmhm
	SCT	Uhu.
6		(2.8)
7	Joost	zei die met de mooie d-elisie
		said he with the beautiful d-elision
	F_{post}	He said with the beautiful d-elision.
8		(0.7)
9		maar eh (1.3) ja
		but eh yes
		But, eh. Yes.
10		(2.0)
11		ho ho (0.4) ik weet een nog betere (0.5) zei die met een
		ho ho I know one even better said he with a
		mooie (0.4) d-letie.
		beautiful deletion
	F_{post}	O, I know one that's even better. He said, with a beautiful d-eletion.
12		(0.7)
13	Puck	h[hhh

	S_{post}	((laughs))
14	Joost	[aaaaah
	SCT	((makes excited noises))
15		(0.4)
16	Puck	hehehehe hehe
	SCT	((laughs))
17		(0.5)
18	Joost	dies mooi he
		that is beautiful right
	F_{post}	That's a good one, right?
19		(.)
20	Puck	(h[eel mooi)
		very beautiful
	S_{post}	Very beautiful.
21	Joost	[( ) (0.5) oke (0.6) ehm (1.4) ja maar bel **maar** terug ja
		okay ehm yes but call but back yes
	S_b[2]	Okay, ehm. But yes, you can call me back.

As discussed in 4.2.1.1, in line 3, Joost gives a non-preferred response using *even* to mitigate the message, to give the idea that the option of calling back later is still open. Interesting to see, is that this feeling that the mitigating *even* gave, really turned out to be true; eventually, in line 21 Joost gives the preferred second pair part – along with a mitigating instance of *maar*. Only the second *maar* has been made bold, because the first *maar* is not a modal particle; it has the function of a skip-connector. This means it refers back to a turn that is further back (Mazeland 2003: 186), in this case line 1, for line 21 answers the question asked in line 1.

If you look at the silences in line 21 and the stuttering in lines 9 and 21, it seems that when Joost uttered his line 3, he did not know for sure yet that he would eventually give a preferred answer. He was still thinking about it, so it is possible that the *even* in line 3, does not just give the idea of the option of calling back being open, at that point, Joost already knew that the option of calling back could become reality. Line 21 is the preferred response, because the question asked in line 1 was asked with a positive formulation, thus aligning with a positive answer. However, *maar* is a mitigating modal particle. This can be explained, just as in 4.2.2, with the politeness theory. Even though line 21 is a preferred answer, Joost does tell Puck what to do, which threatens her negative face. Thus, *maar* mitigates the force of the speech act. If you read the sentence without *maar*, it suddenly seems to be an order, instead of a request.

Another interesting example of *maar* as a mitigating particle, is shown in (49).

(49) Puck and Joost are talking about Puck not wanting to talk about her problems with other people. Joost wants to know the reason for this, and Puck says she is afraid people will *het relativeren* 'put it into perspective'. However, she is not sure if *relativeren* is the right word for her feelings.

1	Puck	ja ik weet niet zeker of rel[ativeren het goeie woord is.
		yes I know not sure if put into perspective the good word is
	F_{ins}^1	Yeah, I'm not sure if putting it into perspective is the right way to say it.
2	Joost	[en dat je daar in meegaat.
		and that you there in with goes
	F_b	And that you will go along with that.
3		(0.3)
4	Joost	nee ja [als
		no yes if
	S_{ins}^1	No, yes, if-
5	Puck	[wat betekent dat?=
		what means that
	F_{ins}^2	What does that mean?
6	Joost	=**zeg maar**
		say but
	S_{ins}^1	Just-
7	Puck	hehehe
		((laughs))
8		(0.7)
9	Joost	(nou ja) zo gaat doen van nou het valt toch
		(now yes) so goes do from now it falls TOCH
		allemaal wel mee eigenlijk
		all WEL *with actually*
	S_{ins}^2	If you just, act like, well, it is all not that bad, actually.

In line 6, Joost utters the words *zeg maar*. This, together with line 9, is a preferred response; it succeeds in answering the question Puck asks in line 5. In line 9, Joost explains what *relativeren* 'put into perspective' exactly means. However, explaining what a word means, is a face-threatening act to both parties; if Joost does not explain the word correctly, he loses face, claiming he knows the answer to the question, but giving the wrong answer. So perhaps he used *zeg maar* to avoid commitment, in case he did not explain it correctly. However, it could also be by using *zeg maar*, Joost is protecting Puck's face. Puck has just used a word, *relativeren*, but after that, she admits she is not sure what the word means. Perhaps she is a bit embarrassed by this, trying to laugh this embarrassment off in line 7. By asking this question, she loses face; she just used a word, that she possibly does not know the correct meaning to. Joost protects her face by answering a bit indirectly and vaguely, by adding *zeg maar*. Thus, the use of this mitigating *maar* can be explained by the politeness theory again.

But *maar* in preferred responses does not only function as a mitigator, but also as a reinforcer. This is discussed in the next section.

4.3.2.2. *Maar* as a Reinforcer

As mentioned, there were also cases found of a reinforcing *maar* in preferred responses. One example of these, is *maar* as part of the fixed combination *ook maar* 'so much as'. In the literature, *maar* in this fixed combination is referred to as being a focus particle (Foolen 1993: 155-160; Hoeksema 2002: 54). In this thesis, this fixed combination is also considered to be a focus particle; however, this does not mean it cannot also be modal particle, as is illustrated in (50), in which *ook maar* is used.

(50) In this conversation, Puck and Joost are talking about how Puck has been feeling down a lot. Puck mentions that talking to Joost is not helping her, because often he does not make her feel better in the long run, but just for a little while, and when he is gone, the bad feeling comes back anyway, so Puck calls it a fake kind of happiness.

1	Joost	maar waarom is het dan nepblijheid.
		but why is it then fake happiness
	F_b	But why is it a fake happiness?
2		(5.3)
3	Puck	kweenie omdat het zo (0.3) tis zo verbonden aan jou en
		dunno because it so it is so connected to you and
		als jij (3.1) als als er ook maar ie (0.5) een heel klein dingetje
		if you if if there also but ie a very little thingy
		fout gaat dan is (0.3) toch weer weg en (1.4) voelt gewoon zo
		wrong goes then is TOCH *again gone and feels usual so*
		tijdelijk,
		temporary
	S_b	I don't know, because it is- It is so connected to you and if you- If, if so much as one little thing goes wrong, then it's gone anyway, and it just feels so temporary.

First of all, again, line 3 is a preferred response, because it succeeds in answering the question that is asked. In this preferred response, Puck adds *ook maar*, that, as a focus particle, refers to the focus of the sentence; *een heel klein dingetje* 'one little thing'. Yet, *ook maar* also has another function; it functions as a modal particle. In line 3, *ook maar* gives an idea about the attitude Puck has towards what she is saying; it shows her point of view. She stresses that only one thing needs to go wrong for her to feel bad again, by using *ook maar*, and thus excluding higher values. By using *ook maar*, Puck shows it is not normal for people to feel bad over one little thing; if this was normal, *een heel klein dingetje* would not have been stressed. Thus, *ook maar* shows her attitude towards the situation and this attitude indication is why it can also be called a modal particle.

As already mentioned, *maar* in (50) is a reinforcing particle. Again, *maar* has a negative meaning; it excludes higher values. Only one little thing needs to go wrong for Puck to feel

down again, just one little thing is enough. Because it has an excluding aspect, the fixed combination is often used in threats. This is illustrated in (51).

(51) Als je ook maar één ding breekt, komen we hier nooit meer terug.
if you also but one thing breaks come we here never more back
If you so much as break one thing, we're never coming back here.

So you only need to break one thing, for the threat to become reality. In a threat, *ook maar* reinforces the speech act; it makes clear no mistakes are permitted, because of the excluding aspect. After all, breaking just one thing is enough for the threat to become reality. Because breaking one thing is enough, formulated with *ook maar*, higher values are not even relevant, and thus the sentence stress is on *één ding* 'one thing'. *Ook maar* in (50) is reinforcing for the same reason. Just one little thing going wrong is enough for Puck to feel bad again; *ook maar* excludes higher values. And because of this excluding aspect, the stress of the sentence is on *een heel klein dingetje* 'one little thing', making this little thing very important; after all, it is enough for Puck to feel bad again. So *ook maar* has a reinforcing effect. Because it is used in a preferred response, no mitigation was necessary. Puck probably used this reinforcing element, to get the message across.

Important to note, is that *maar* is needed for the fixed combination to be reinforcing. This is illustrated in (52).

(52) A) Als er maar een heel klein dingetje fout gaat, dan is het goede
if there but one very little thingy wrong goes then is the good
gevoel toch weer weg.
feeling TOCH *again gone*
If only a little thing goes wrong, the good feeling goes away anyway.

B) Als er een heel klein dingetje fout gaat, dan is het goede gevoel
if there a very little thingy wrong goes then is the good feeling
toch weer weg.
TOCH *again gone*
If a little thing goes wrong, the good feeling goes away anyway.

C) ?[11]Als er ook een heel klein dingetje fout gaat, dan is het
if there also a very little thingy wrong goes then is the
goede gevoel toch weer weg.
good feeling TOCH *again gone*
?If also a little thing goes wrong, the good feeling goes away anyway.

(52a) and (52b) still roughly have the same meaning as line 3 in (50), but there is less stress on the *een heel klein dingetje*. In (52a), *maar* still reinforces the message. However, the reinforcing effect was stronger in the fixed combination *ook maar*, with *ook*. It still refers to and puts stress

[11] The question mark is used to illustrate it is up for debate if this sentence is a correct Dutch sentence.

on *een heel klein dingetje*, because of the excluding aspect of *maar*. But *ook* adds extra stress on *een heel klein dingetje*, so without *ook*, this part of the sentence is less stressed and thus the reinforcing effect is less. But without *maar*, the stress on *een heel klein dingetje* is completely gone. The excluding aspect has disappeared, the sentence has become factual, without a clear attitude towards the situation. Looking at (52c), it is clear that *ook* needs *maar*. Without *maar*, *ook* does not make sense in this sentence. This is why (52c) does not even seem like a correct Dutch sentence; *ook* without *maar* in a sentence like this, seems very misplaced.

In sum, *ook maar* stresses *een heel klein dingetje* the most, and thus has the largest reinforcing effect. *Maar* in a sentence like (50), has the same meaning and function as *ook maar*, but because there is less stress on *een heel klein dingetje*, the reinforcing effect is somewhat smaller. But without *maar*, the stress is completely gone, thus losing the reinforcing effect. *Ook* without *maar* has a completely different meaning. This shows that *maar* is a crucial word in the fixed combination *ook maar* to have a reinforcing effect, thus showing *maar* in itself is a reinforcing particle in (50).

In the next section, a conclusion will be drawn as to the relation between preference and the modal particle *maar*.

4.3.3. Conclusion

In the previous sections, it was discussed that out of the 45 appearances of the modal particle *maar* in the corpus, 16 appeared in non-preferred responses. Because these were non-preferred responses, *maar* was used to reduce the force of the speech act. However, 3 of those 16 instances of *maar*, did not mitigate the force of the speech act, but reinforced it. For these cases, it turned out to be more important to get the message across loud and clear, than to reduce the force of the speech act. The other 14 instances of *maar* in a non-preferred response, were mitigating.

Maar can reduce the force of a speech act by making an order seem more like an advice, thus by making it less compulsory. It can also reduce the force of a speech act by making the message less precise – *maar* seems to do that only in the fixed combination *zeg maar* 'say but'. When *maar* was found as a reinforcing element, it was reinforcing by its excluding function; it excludes higher values, putting the stress on the thing *maar* refers to.

Even though it was hypothesized *maar* would appear in non-preferred responses, it occurred much more in preferred responses; out of the 45 instances of *maar*, 29 times it appeared in a preferred response. Most of these instances can be explained with the politeness theory again; even though the responses were preferred, the speech act was still a threatening one. *Maar* could then reduce this face-threatening act, for instance by avoiding commitment; by adding *zeg maar*, it seems that was is being said is just one of the possibilities.

4 of the 29 instances of *maar* in preferred responses, were reinforcing. Because these second pair parts were preferred, no mitigation was necessary. The reinforcing effect seem to have been added to get the message across as best as possible.

In sum, even though *maar* was mostly used as a mitigating particle, it occurred much more frequently in preferred responses. For the instances of *maar*, politeness seemed to be a

bigger influencer on the appearance of *maar* than preference; it is expected that preferred responses are not in need of mitigation, but often these preferred responses were face-threating acts, thus needing mitigation after all.

4.4. *Misschien*

4.4.1. *Misschien* in Non-preferred Responses

This section discusses the modal particle *misschien*. As discussed in 3.3.1, according to Vismans (1994: 5) *misschien* as a modal particle cannot appear in second pair parts, but only in questions. However, the corpus used for this thesis provided 3 instances of the modal particle *misschien* used in a second pair part, so *misschien* could be included in this research. In this section, *misschien* in non-preferred responses is discussed.

As mentioned in 3.3.3, 3 instances of *misschien* as a modal particle used in a second pair part that answers a question were found; 1 instance was found in a non-preferred second pair part, and 2 instances in preferred second pair parts.

As already discussed in 3.3.1.4, *misschien* is a mitigating particle (Vismans 1995: 275), so you would expect it to appear in non-preferred second pair parts, to reduce the force of the speech act. However, in the previous sections, it turned out that mitigating particles can also occur in preferred responses, for there are other aspects that can call for mitigation. This can perhaps explain, that only 1 instance of the modal particle *misschien* was found in a non-preferred response. This example is portrayed in (53), earlier discussed as (40).

(53) Joost just came home and found a package from bol.com, a web shop, but he did not order anything. He suspects it comes from Puck, and tries to ask this subtly.

1	Joost	ik zie	hier	in de	keuken	een pakje	staan (2.4)	met	mijn naam
		I see	*here*	*in the*	*kitchen*	*a package*	*stand*	*with my*	*name*
		derop,							
		on it							
	F_b	I see a package here in the kitchen here, with my name on it.							
2		(1.4)							
3	Puck	oke?							
		okay							
	S_b	Okay?							
4		(2.4)							
5	Joost	ja	ik heb	niks	besteld	volgens	mij,		
		yes	*I have*	*nothing*	*ordered*	*according*	*me*		
	F_{post}	Yeah, well I did not order anything, I think.							
6		(1.1)							

7	Puck	heb	je	het al		opengemaakt.		
		have	*you*	*it*	*already*	*opened*		
	F_b	Have you opened it?						
8		(0.8)						
9	Joost	nou dat		ben ik nu		mee bezig=		
		now that		*am I now*		*with busy*		
	S_b	Well, that's what I'm doing right now.						
10	Puck	=oke. (1.5) dat			lijkt	me een eerste stap		
		okay		*that*	*seems*	*me a*	*first*	*step*
	F_{post}	Okay. That's the first step you have to take.						
11		(1.2)						
12	Joost	ja	daar	ben ik mee bezig.				
		yes	*there*	*am I with busy*				
	S_{post}	Yeah, that's what I'm doing.						
13		(.) wee[t						
		know						
	F_b[1]	Do you know-						
14	Puck	[j[a						
		yes						
	SCT	Yes.						
15	Joost	[jij	daar	meer van.				
		you	*there*	*more from*				
	F_b[2]	Anything about that?						
16		(2.1)						
17	Puck	weet	niet, misschien	moet je		het maar gewoon openmaken,		
		know	*not*	*maybe*	*must you*	*it*	*but*	*usual*	*open*
	S_b	I don't know, maybe you should just open it.						

As already discussed in 4.3.1.1, line 17 is a non-preferred second pair part. In this non-preferred response, Puck uses, next to *maar*, also the modal particle *misschien* to mitigate this non-preference. *Misschien* 'maybe' makes it less strong. 'You should just open it', is very direct, and even though it is basically what Puck meant, her *misschien* makes it softer. It gives the idea Joost does not have to open it; *misschien* (referring to *openmaken* 'open') leaves open other options (like not opening it). Basically, *misschien* signals possibility. It gives a possible option, but no obligation whatsoever; without *misschien*, the sentence would seem to be an order. Because *misschien* changes the speech act, it is not an order anymore, but something of a suggestion instead, thus reducing the force of the speech act.

This is the only instance of *misschien* used in a non-preferred second pair part; the mitigating *misschien* reduces the force of the speech act, which this non-preferred response needed to not come across as rude. In the next section, the two other instances of *misschien* are analyzed.

4.4.2. *Misschien* in Preferred responses

Because *misschien* is described in the literature as a mitigating particle (Vismans 1995: 275), it was hypothesized that it would be used in non-preferred second pair parts. However, in the corpus used for this research, more instances of *misschien* were found in preferred responses, than in non-preferred responses; 2 instances of the modal particle *misschien* were found in preferred responses. One of these two instances can be found in (54).

(54) Puck is camping with her family. She stayed on the campsite, while her mother and father were going to do some shopping. She is on the phone with her mother, Janet, because Janet wanted Puck to know it was taking a bit longer than expected. Puck tells Janet that it is really hot on the campsite and that she is very thirsty, but drinking water does not seem to help. Then, Janet asks her if she should buy her something to drink.

1	Janet	moeten we iets	te drinken voor jou meenemen Puck
		must we something	*to drink for you take with us Puck*
		iets anders (.) dan wa[ter	
		something other than water	
	F_b	Do we have to buy you something to drink, Puck? Something other than water?	
2	Puck		[ja dat is **misschien** wel lekker ja
			yes dat is maybe WEL *nice yes*
	S_b	Yes, that would be nice.	

Here, line 2 provides a preferred response; Puck gives an affirmative answer, the answer that aligns with the question asked in line 1. However, *misschien* is a mitigating element. Janet asks Puck if she should bring her something to drink. Puck would like that, but to stay polite she does not give her speech act too much force. With the use of *misschien*, she mitigates her message, accepting the proposal, but technically leaving the option open for Janet to take her words back, because of the use of *misschien*; this leaves other options open. It shows Janet that Puck feels buying her something to drink is a possibility, but Puck does not obligate Janet to do this. Why Puck makes use of a mitigating element in a preferred response, can be explained by politeness. Even though line 2 in (54) provides the preferred answer, Puck is still asking Janet to do something for her, which is threatening Janet's negative face. So even though there is perfect alignment, to prevent threatening Janet's negative face, Puck still needed to mitigate the force of her speech act, because of the face-threatening quality of the speech act that she performs.

The last instance found of *misschien*, is illustrated in (55).

(55) After a silence of 8.4 seconds, Joost concludes that he and Puck do not really have anything left to say.

1	Joost	dus maar het eh gesprek is een beetje over he?
		so but it eh conversation is a bit over right
	F_b	But, the, eh, conversation is kind of done, isn't it?
2		(0.6)
3	Puck	hahahaha ja misschien een beetje
		((laughs)) *yes maybe a bit*
	S_b	Yes, maybe a little bit.

In line 1, Joost says *hè* 'isn't it', which indicates that agreement would be the preferred answer, and in line 3, Puck shows her agreement. Thus, line 3 is a preferred second pair part. Again, *misschien* has a mitigating function, but this example is a bit more complicated than the previous one. Joost lets Puck know he thinks the conversation has come to an end. He mitigates this message somewhat by using *een beetje* (a little bit). So he is not saying the conversation is over, he is saying it is a little bit over, thereby giving Puck room to disagree. However, she does not disagree. She even repeats his words, echoing so to speak, by also using *een beetje*. However, she also adds *misschien*, which mitigates the message even more, by adding an aspect of possibility. Thus, after Joost mentions the conversation is a little bit over, Puck adds to this that indeed, there is a possiblity that the conversation is a little bit over. This extra mitigating element, *misschien*, is interesting, because Joost has already said he thinks the conversation is over, so there is no reason for Puck to be polite; her answer aligns with the question and no face-threatening act is acted out. Furthermore, without *misschien*, she would still be polite by using *een beetje*, so why does she add another element of politeness? This could be explained by the long silence before line 1. After such a long silence, 8.4 seconds, while every topic has been concluded, it is pretty clear they apparently have nothing to say anymore. Hence, Joost was basically stating the obvious. Maybe Puck found it rather funny; after all, she starts her turn in line 3 with laughing. She could think it is funny that he adds such a mitigating element as *een beetje* to his speech act, even though it was abundantly clear the conversation was indeed over. Perhaps for Puck, there was no reason for Joost to be polite in the first place. As a consequence, her adding another mitigating element could maybe just be ironic; ridiculing his mitigation, by putting another mitigating element in a sentence that does not need it. Nevertheless, *misschien* is still a mitigating element in this sentence, which means there was no instance of *misschien* as a modal particle in my data that was also a reinforcer.

In the next section, a conclusion will be drawn as to the relation between preference and the modal particle *misschien*.

4.4.3. Conclusion

In the previous sections, it was discussed that out of the 3 appearances of the modal particle *misschien* in the corpus, 1 appeared in a non-preferred response. Because it was a non-preferred response, *misschien* was used to reduce the force of the speech act.

Even though I expected *misschien* to mostly or only appear in non-preferred responses due to its mitigating effect, out of the 3 instances of *misschien*, it appeared in a preferred response 2 times. One of these two instances can be explained with the politeness theory again; even though the response was a preferred one, the speech act was still face-threatening. *Misschien* could then reduce this face-threatening act, by leaving other options open. The other instance of *misschien* in a preferred response, seemed to be more ironic. Mitigation was not at all necessary in this conversation, so it seemed as if using *misschien* was meant to be some sort of joke; using mitigation to ridicule the mitigation in the first pair part.

In sum, even though *misschien* was always used as a mitigating particle, 2 of the 3 occurrences were found in preferred responses. Thus again, not preference but politeness seemed to influence the appearance of *misschien*, needing mitigation to reduce the force of the speech act, but mitigation was also used not because it was needed, but for the purpose of making a joke.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

When a mitigating particle is used in a non-preferred second pair part, it is used to reduce the force of the speech act and thus mitigating the non-preference. Because mitigating elements can reduce the force of the speech act by, for instance, changing the speech act by formulating it as a request instead of an order, it was hypothesized that they would only occur in sentences that were non-preferred pair parts, and are thus in need of mitigation. However, this turned out not to be true for any of the three modal particles. A mitigating particle is not only used in non-preferred responses, and a non-preferred second pair part does not always entail a mitigating modal particle. Mitigating particles can very well be used in preferred responses, because there can be other aspects that ask for mitigation; for instance a face-threatening act. This means that to stay polite, a politeness strategy is needed, and using a mitigating particle is a negative politeness strategy. Sometimes, a non-preferred second pair parts entails a reinforcing particle, for instance because getting the message across was more important than mitigating the non-preference. Hence, to be able to predict if a modal particle will occur in a certain sentence, it is not just important to look at the preference of the utterance; it is also important to see if politeness strategies could play a role.

After analyzing the modal particles, it turned out that some of these, according to Vismans (1995: 275), mitigating modal particles do not always have a mitigating effect. For *even* and *maar*, instances of not mitigating, but rather reinforcing the message were found in the corpus used in this research: transcribed, informal phone conversations, recorded by an app on the mobile phones of the participants. However, *misschien* did not occur as a reinforcer in the data.

Some particles were used in a certain fixed combination. Because this research focused on *even*, *maar* and *misschien*, all uses of these modal particles were analyzed, which means also the ones used in a fixed combination. In this research, I did not consider, for instance, *maar* in *alleen maar* to be exactly the same as *maar* without *alleen maar*, but because one of the goals was to research *maar*, *alleen maar* was also analyzed to get a complete picture of the use of *maar*.

Even though this study yielded some clear results, there were also some limitations. First, unfortunately, only fifteen different people were recorded in the phone conversations that were included in the analysis. The people were not evenly divided across the conversations; some people only occurred in one or two short conversations, while others were in most conversations, which sometimes even lasted for an hour. In almost all of the conversations, Puck was one of the speakers. The analysis would be more reliable, if more people had been recorded, and if everyone had roughly the same word count. The research did not reach people from all over the country; we had four people that were from the province South Holland, two were from North Brabant, and the other nine were from Guelders (in Dutch: Gelderland). It would be interesting to see if people from more northern provinces use the modal particles in a different way, since no people from the north of the Netherlands were included in this research. If you look at age, seven people were in between 20 and 25 years old, three were in

between 25 and 30 years old, two were in between 50 and 55 years old, two in between 60 and 65 years old, and one person was older than 80. Four of the fifteen participants were male, the other eleven were female. All things considered, the people participating in this research, do not completely reflect the Dutch speaking community.

Another difficulty is that only 3 instances of *misschien* as a modal particle in second pair parts that answer questions were found. There were no instances found of *misschien* as a reinforcer, but with only 3 instances, the result cannot be generalized to all uses of this particle. It would be ideal if there were more data with more instances of the modal particle *misschien*. Perhaps in further research on this topic, more instances of the modal particle *misschien* could be included.

It should also be noted that all of the data has now been analyzed by just one person. The analysis would have been more reliable, if it was double-coded. Within this research, some steps could have benefitted from another set of eyes. For instance, the answer to the first question: is this instance of *even*, *maar* or *misschien* a particle? For this reason, double-coding would have made the research more internally reliable. Perhaps this can be done in further research on this topic.

While preference is a well-defined concept, it turned out to be more difficult to work with than previously expected. When a request or an invitation is uttered, it is not complicated to figure out what the preferred response is, but with a question that cannot be answered with *yes* or *no*, for instance about how someone's day is going, it is much more difficult. In this thesis, with such open questions, the decision was made to treat responses that succeed in answering the question as preferred responses. However, this brings about a new problem; a non-preferred response to a question that can only be answered with *yes* or *no*, for instance, a rejection to an invitation, succeeds just as much in answering the question as a an acceptance of an invitation. Thus, the different kind of questions operate on a different level. While notions like preference seem to be very clear, when you are dealing with a more complex conversation than a simple invitation and rejection, it still raises some questions that need answers.

There were more complications with definitions of conversation analysis. Just as with preference, a first pair part and a second pair part seem to be clear concepts; however, when you are dealing with complex conversations that do not always exist of clear actions such as invitation and rejection, it is complicated to pin point exactly what is still part of a second pair part, and what is part of a new adjacency pair. For instance, when a *yes*-answer also contains an explanation of this answer, and that explanation is followed by a sequence-closing third, the explanation seems to be part of the second pair part. But this choice did not seem to work well in every situation, so it turned out to be difficult to set straight boundary lines as to what exactly is the second pair part in a adjacency pair. It is problems like these that come to the surface when working with conversation analysis.

Terms as mitigation and reinforcement were also not as clear-cut as they seem to be. While these concepts seem to be clear, when dealing with particles it is often not as simple to work with as is expected. Even though mitigating and reinforcing are the exact opposite, when analyzing a sentence loaded with particles, specific intonation, and other elements that can

bring about a sense of mitigation or reinforcement, it turned out to be complicated to decide what the function of that particle was exactly; when surrounded by reinforcing elements, it is tempting to analyze a particle as reinforcing, but sometimes it was not clear if it was not mitigating after all. When discussing these problems with colleagues, there indeed turned out to be different opinions on whether a particle is mitigating or reinforcing the speech act. However, when given the chance to explain why I though a certain particle was reinforcing or mitigating, eventually agreement was reached. But this did show that it is not easy to decide what the function of a particle is exactly, and that interpretation of a sentence (or even a conversation) plays a big part in making such a decision.

However, using conversation analysis for this research was still fruitful because it shed more light on how the three particles are used. This is because with conversation analysis you also focus on silences, unfinished words and sentences et cetera, and all these elements are very useful when focusing on the mitigating and reinforcing function that particles can have. It was also interesting to look at particles from a preference-perspective. Even though this had never been done, the two concepts can be easily combined, because – as turned out – preference can indeed be the reason why a particle is uttered. Interesting would be to more often make use of conversation analysis and the concept preference, when researching particles, to see how preference can affect the appearance of other particles. So for further research: *als we het dan toch over partikels hebben, zullen we het dan* ***misschien*** *ook* ***maar even*** *over preferentie hebben?*[12]

[12] Translation: if we're talking about particles, we might as well talk about preference.

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7. Appendix

7.1. Transcription Conventions

Conventions you will find in this thesis and have to understand to be able to comprehend the analyzations, are the following:

1. Every new turn starts on a new line;
2. Turns are positioned relatively towards each other, either by stating the silence in between turns, or by marking the place where the overlap between turns starts;
3. Silences are reported as (1.5) for a second and a half silence;
4. Silences shorter than 0.2 seconds are reported as (.);
5. If no silence can be heard, we place a = at the end of the turn and in the beginning of the new turn on the next line;
6. When two people start to talk at the same time, we put a [in front of what is being said;
7. When someone interrupts the other, you also show this with a [;
8. When the intonation goes down at the end of a sentence, we use .;
9. We use a , to show the intonation goes up slightly;
10. We use ? when the intonation goes all the way up at the end of a sentence, even when it is not a question;
11. A ! is being used when the speaker pronounces the sentence as if it is an exclamation;
12. When someone stops talking and a word is not finished, we use -;
13. If what is being said cannot be heard properly, we either use ( ) or if we think we know what is being said but aren't sure, we put the word we think is being said between ( );
14. If a non-verbal activity takes place, this is put in between (()).

7.2. *Even* as a Modal Particle

All of the instances of *even* as a modal particle in a second pair part that answers a question, typed out in a basic transcription.

7.2.1. *Even* in non-preferred responses

1. X: oke moet ik je daarna dan weer terugbellen
   Y: ja nou ja ik moet sowieso even mijn tegoed oplaaien
- *Mitigating*

2. Y: hm ga je dit weekend al verhuizen
   X: nou we gaan morgen gaan we ernaartoe en gaan we even goed kijken wat er allemaal moet gebeuren en zaterdag ( )
- *Mitigating*

3. Y: dus je bent de hele dag met NAAM in de weer
   X: nee maar ik heb nu net met hem gelopen dus dan ga ik wel even
- *Mitigating*

4. Y: ja weet ik wat er in u wat zit erin
   X: ik kijk effe er zit een ja paspoort en zo en een portemonnee ja is van jou
- *Mitigating*

5. X: ik weet niet wat vo wat voor kasten zijn het
   Y: ehm nou misschien heeft mijn vader foto's ik zal wel effe vragen
- *Mitigating*

6. Z: nou ja dat maakt het niet zo heel lastig dat betekent dat er gezocht moet gaan worden
   X: ja
   Z: dus eh
   X: en wanneer zou je dat kunnen doen
   Z: o ik kan eh straks wel effe kijken
- *Mitigating*

7. Z: je komt vanavond na het eten hiernaartoe
   X: we gaan misschien in de trein eten dus dan zijn we der iets eerder maar we moeten effe kijken
- *Mitigating*

8. Y: ja op zich kan je dat wel zeggen natuurlijk veertien voor half je zegt niet kwart voor half maar wel tien voor half elf voor half twaalf voor half dertien voor half veertien voor half maar ehm oke dus eh dan in theorie neem ik die dan van van van veertien voor half toch
   X: hm ja ik zal effe kijken
- *Mitigating*

9. Y: oke maar dit water heb je nog geen water overgestoken je moet je moet water over om in het centrum te komen ik weet niet ( )
   X: oke ik zal effe ja ik zal effe ik zit op de kaart te kijken
- *Mitigating*

10. Y: maar jij gaat je gaat dan eerst nog langs NAAM
    X: misschien ik laat het wel effe weten
- *Mitigating*

11. Y: maar wat zou jij willen eten
    X: weet ik niet ik heb net heel veel chips op ik heb sowieso heel veel gegeten dus ik kan nou even niet aan eten denken
- *Reinforcing*

7.2.2. *Even* in preferred responses

12. Y: dus en hoe zie je dat voor je
    X: nou als het gewoon weer om de week kan zijn met NAAM dan heb ik in ieder geval al dat ik om de week er gewoon echt vijf dagen kan zitten
    Y: ja
    X: en ehm als ik NAAM heb proberen om twee dagen te komen dus proberen met papa en mama even te regelen of eh iemand die dan gewoon op NAAM kan passen of zo
- *Mitigating*

13. Y: dus eh en kom je dan met wil je dan mee-eten
    X: eh ja k ik denk het wel en ik denk NAAM ook maar dat m dat zal ik nog wel even
- *Mitigating*

14. X: hhh ja maar wat moet ik dan doen dan
    Y: nou ja je minder op de kast laten jagen door dingen die hij zegt en ik bedoel dat maar dat is effe los van hoe het nu deze keer met NAAM moet worden geregeld want ja want je vroeg net moet ik nou voet bij stuk houden of niet
- *Mitigating*

15. Y: ik hoor je echt niet zo goed je s sta je op de speaker of niet
    X: ja wacht ik doe het wel effe
- *Mitigating*

16. X: oke wil je nog even samen chillen
    Y: ja kan wel maar ga dan maar eerst effe aan scripts werken dan kan ik nog heel eventjes door
- *Mitigating*

7.3. *Maar* as a Modal Particle

All of the instances of *maar* as a modal particle in a second pair part that answers a question, typed out in a basic transcription.

7.3.1. *Maar* in non-preferred responses

1. Y: je bedoelt eerst die man of eerst die vrouw
   X: nee eerst dus zeg maar een paar jaar geleden die vrouw
- *Mitigating*

2. Y: maar dat heeft dus niks met taalkunde te maken eigenlijk toch
   X: nou ja het is ook wel onderdeel van taalwetenschap maar de communicatie afstudeerrichting is wel veel groter zeg maar en (nu de nu) een paar mensen iets doen met interculturele communicatie en dat kan dus niet en daar is NAAM het heel erg niet mee eens want als zij dat willen moeten zij dat gewoon kunnen
- *Mitigating*

3. Y: moet je men naam daarvoor effe geven of zo of nie
   X: eh nee het is zeg maar daar eh meteen aan de deur zeg maar
- *Mitigating*

4. Z: o heeft ie nog naar de muur gekeken
   X: heb je nog naar de muur gekeken nee hij heeft alleen maar m en ms gegeten en koekjes gegeten haha
- *Mitigating*

5. Z: ehm ja ik ik ehm is het gewoon egaal grijs of is het een werkje of is er ( )
   X: het is niet egaal het is allemaal zeg maar dat het lijkt dat dat eh dat je oma kan wijsmaken dat het echt laminaat is tis allemaal zeg maar planken
- *Mitigating*

6. Y: oke dus bel ik jou dan zo terug of
   X: nou doe anders maar later vanavond want ik moet want NAAM moet ook nog eten krijgen en die zat net al bijna van mijn bord te eten en dan moet ie wel heel veel honger hebben als ie dat gaat doen
   - *Mitigating*

7. Y: weet jij daar meer van
   X: weet ik niet misschien moet je het maar gewoon open maken
   - *Mitigating*

8. Y: en je moet voor woensdag vo voor maandag moet je alles gecodeerd hebben
   X: nou dat moest eigenlijk gister al maar goed
   - *Mitigating*

9. Y: heb je het buurmeisje al eens gezien
   X: nee maar wel eh het meisje zeg maar eh niet tegenover maar daarnaast want er zitten er vier op mijn verdieping
   - *Mitigating*

10. Y: ehm wat had je ermee gedaan wat was je conflict of is dat ook meteen een conflict eigenlijk
    X: nou ja ze wilde je moest zeg maar het moest kort zijn dus het mocht ook maar een plek en een tijd zijn gewoon een scène zeg maar
    - *Mitigating*

11. Y: want je weet wel wat je moet gaan doen anders of
    X: nou ja eh je bedoelt na eh na mijn studie zeg maar
    - *Mitigating*

12. Y: oke dus gewoon de over het station het eh spoor aan de overkant
    X: nee je moet wel zeg maar niet aan de overkant je moet wel een trap op
    - *Mitigating*

13. X: nee want ik wacht ik kan pas iets doen als mijn docent heeft terug gemaild en die heeft nog niet gemaild en ( )
    Y: o of het wel goed is eh eh (of die)
    X: nee ik of een een iets anders zeg maar of ie het een goed plan vindt of hij mijn plan van aanpak goed vindt
- *Mitigating*

14. Y: o oke ( ) en hoe was het dansen met eh NAAM
    X: o ja dat was maar heel kort dus ja dat was meer gewoon wat ik vorige week had gemist
- *Reinforcing*

15. Y: o ophangen toch of wil je nog iets hebben
    X: o nee hoeft eigenlijk niet ja nee nee dat klopt nee da als je maar gewoon zorgt dat alles gewoon leesbaar is en erop staat dan is dat helemaal goed
- *Reinforcing*

16. Y: en wat voor merk had je dan gekeken
    X: ehm da weet ik niet meer ik heb daar niet op merk gelet ik had alleen maar met wasmachines op merk gelet
- *Reinforcing*

7.3.1. *Maar* in preferred responses

17. Y: en was ze een beetje prettig
    X: ja ze was eh ze was heel erg fijn ze was wel in ieder geval fijner dan de die ik eerst had zeg maar
- *Mitigating*

18. X: ehm nou het is wel handig als je dat je in PLAATS zou wonen en dat je heel dicht bij NAAM zou wonen das ook leuk voor mij ehm eh ja dat ( ) ja en en tegens hu i ik weet weet het niet echt want ik weet niet hoe het gaat zijn maar
    Y: hoe wat gaat zijn
    X: zeg je nou iets ik hoor namelijk alleen maar wind
    Y: ja hoe wat gaat zijn
    X: o nou als je daar woont dat weet ik niet ik weet niet wat er daar allemaal gaat gebeuren zeg maar dus
- *Mitigating*

19. X: oke moet ik je daarna dan weer terugbellen
    Y: ja nou ja ik moet sowieso even mijn tegoed oplaaien
    X: hmhm
    Y: zei die met de mooie d-elisie maar eh ja ho ho ik weet een nog betere zei die met een mooie deletie aaaaaaah haha
    X: haha
    Y: die is mooi he
    X: ja ( )
    Y: ( ) oke ehm ja maar bel maar terug ja
- *Mitigating*

20. X: wat betekent dat
    Y: als zeg maar (maar) zo gaat doen van nou het valt toch allemaal wel mee eigenlijk
- *Mitigating*

21. Y: met hoeveel dansen doe je mee
    X: nou ik doe der ehm sowieso drie
    Y: ja
    X: en we zijn nu gevraagd zeg maar urban een heeft een klein groepje maar met zen zessen
- *Mitigating*

22. X: wanneer wilden jullie dan gaan
    Y: eh wij hebben een gat van tweeëntwintig nee vanaf drieëntwintig juli tot en met negen augustus daar in de buurt zeg maar
- *Mitigating*

23. Y: welk seizoen
    X: ik ben nu bij einde seizoen elf dus ik loop bijna zeg maar
- *Mitigating*

24. Y: wat voor iets is het
    X: nou het is echt een appartement en ehm ja het heeft gewoon een woonkamer en een keuken die zeg maar een soort van wel in de woonkamer zit en gewoon
- *Mitigating*

25. Y: (wat) zielig en hoelang moet jij nog je studie
    X: nou ik ben als het goed is in de zomer klaar maar ik ga misschien ga ik ook nog een eenjarige master doen dat ik zeg maar docent kan worden want
- *Mitigating*

26. Y: is dat eh ja weet je wat hoe laat eh ja ik v red ik dat nog waar ben je nu
    X: ik loop nu zeg maar bij s waar NAAM woont woonde
- *Mitigating*

27. Y: maar hoe bedoel je optillen
    X: nou zeg maar eh weet je wel als je getrouwd bent en dan moet je je bruid zo over de drempel tillen
- *Mitigating*

28. X: ja ik had eigenlijk te veel gemaakt maar dat bedacht ik me halverwege pas
    Y: halverwege het maken of het opeten
    X: halverwege het ma halverwege het maken maar ik had toch maar alles opgegeten
- *Mitigating*

29. X: wat zeg je wat zei je als laatst
    Y: was dat waren daar veel mensen was dat voor iedereen tegelijk zeg maar voor alle
- *Mitigating*

30. Y: je k de klas waar je inzat was vreselijk
    X: ja zeg maar iedereen er waren heel veel mensen die kenden elkaar van de middelbare school er waren echt allemaal groepjes t was echt heel vervelend
- *Mitigating*

31. Y: zal ik eens vragen aan NAAM of dat mag
    X: ja doe maar
- *Mitigating*

32. Y: ( ) ja ja nou ja als het maar helpt he dat spul he je kunt het er altijd nog een keer op doen toch of hoe vaak moet je dat herhalen
    X: je moet het eh ik heb je moet het zeg maar een keer in de maand doen
- *Mitigating, preferred,* zeg maar*, filler*

33. Y: hoeveel minuten heb je al gedaan
    X: nou ehm ik heb veertig minuten uitgetypt en nou ben ik nog de stiltes ik moet ben ik eh ben ik er opnieuw aan het (langsgaan) om nog wat extra informatie toe te voegen zeg maar dus alles
- *Mitigating*

34. Y: ja maar wat denk je dat het dan is
    X: ja ik weet het niet ik zat er ook over na te denken want hij heeft natuurlijk wel (rond) want dat kon namelijk ook gewoon van een spelen met een hond als er geen een keertje iets is blijven hangen zeg maar
- *Mitigating*

35. Y: de de dat ze dat een hond hem eh verwond heeft of zo bedoel je
    X: ja zeg maar meer per ongeluk hoor maar dat met spelen gewoon
- *Mitigating*

36. Y: hee ik sta op het perron waar ben jij
    X: eh ik ik waar ik sta zeg maar aan de voorkant waar sta jij o op het perron zei je
- *Mitigating*

37. Y: hie en het het kan niet ergens anders o nee hier liggen helemaal geen kleren meer o hm maar welk welk jurkje is het dan lichtblauw
    X: ja zo'n eh zachte stof zeg maar of zacht ik bedoel eh een beetje koude weet je wel ik kan het niet goed uitleggen
- *Mitigating*

38. X: ehm ha waar heb ik zin in even nadenken gewoon bij jou koken
    Y: ja laten we dat maar doen
- *Mitigating*

39. X: en jij hoe laat moet jij gaan slapen
    Y: eh ik wil niet te laat slapen maar goed dat zeg ik elke dag en lukt niet ehm en ik moet zo meteen nog even (wat) beneden opruimen en dan wil ik rond een uurtje of twaalf gaan slapen
- *Mitigating*

40. X: oke wil je nog even samen chillen
    Y: ja kan wel maar ga dan maar eerst effe aan scripts werken dan kan ik nog heel eventjes door
- *Mitigating*

41. Y: maar even ja maar even terug redeneren eh even kijken hoelang als jij eh je accu als jij je laptop volledig hebt opgeladen hoeveel tijd heb je dan
    X: ja dat weet ik ook niet precies als ik alleen maar typ denk ik iets van vijf zes uur of zo
- *Reinforcing*

42. Y: maar waarom is het dan nepblijheid
    X: kweenie omdat het zo tis zo verbonden aan jou en als jij als als er ook maar ie een heel klein dingetje fout gaat dan is toch weer weg en voelt gewoon zo tijdelijk
- *Reinforcing*

43. Y: en en waarom wil je dat ik je met rust laat
    X: ja omdat toch het helpt toch niet en t alleen maar kutter voor jou en ja voelt gewoon alsof het geen zin heeft
- *Reinforcing*

44. Y: waarom niet
    X: ga ik alleen maar nadenken

- *Reinforcing*

7.4. *Misschien* as a Modal Particle

All of the instances of *misschien* as a modal particle in a second pair part that answers a question, typed out in a basic transcription.

7.4.1. *Misschien* in non-preferred sentences

1. Y: weet jij daar meer van
   X: weet ik niet misschien moet je het maar gewoon open maken
- *Mitigating*

7.4.2. *Misschien* in preferred responses

2. Y: dus maar het eh gesprek is een beetje over he
   X: hahaha ja misschien een beetje
- *Mitigating*

3. Y: moeten we iets te drinken voor jou meenemen NAAM iets anders dan water
   X: ja das misschien wel lekker ja
- *Mitigating*