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"I MEAN, WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?"*. SPONTANEOUS AND MOVIE CONVERSATION COMPARED.

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1. *Introduction*

This paper investigates the pragmatic functions of 'I mean' in three domains: spontaneous conversation, movie conversation in the original language, and dubbed Italian. The aim is to verify the extent to which these functions differ in spontaneous and movie conversation, and to identify the strategies activated when 'I mean' is dubbed to achieve an equivalent effect in Italian. Sections 2 and 3 offer a comparative investigation of the occurrences of 'I mean' in American spontaneous and movie conversation; in particular, Section 2, after giving a short account of discourse marker (henceforth DM) terminology, focuses on the pragmatic functions of 'I mean', whereas Section 3 investigates whether these functions change according to the position this DM holds in the utterance. Section 4, instead, provides a contrastive analysis of the occurrences of 'I mean' in American movies and their dubbed Italian versions.

The methodology adopted operates within the framework of a contextual and functional theory of meaning, and avails itself of language corpora and computers to describe data. In particular, the three conversational domains are analysed according to corpus-driven criteria[1]. The corpora investigated are the US spoken sub-corpus of the Bank of English (henceforth USBoE) and the American Movie Corpus (henceforth AMC[2]). The former, which currently consists of about 30 million words, was used to examine spontaneous conversation, while the latter, a small 70,000-word database, comprising nearly 8 hours of American movies and their dubbed Italian versions, was compiled for the study of movie language. The AMC was manually transcribed because, despite the relatively large amount of available spoken American English corpora (cf. the Bank of English, the ANC, the Santa Barbara Corpus, and the MICASE, *inter alia*), no corpus proved appropriate for the analysis of movie language. As pointed out by Forchini[3], web

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* Quote from the movie *Ocean's Eleven*, S. Soderbergh, 2001, Warner Bros.
[1] G. Francis, *A corpus-driven approach to grammar: principles, methods and examples*, in *Text and technology. In honour of John Sinclair*, M. Baker – G. Francis – E. Tognini-Bonelli ed., Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 1993, pp. 137-156. E. Tognini-Bonelli, *Corpus linguistics at work*, Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2001.
[2] P. Forchini, *"Well, uh no. I mean, you know". Discourse Markers in Movie Conversation*, in *Perspectives on Audiovisual Translation*, L. Bogucki – K. Kredens ed., Peter Lang, Bern 2010.
[3] P. Forchini, *Spontaneity in American English: face-to-face and movie conversation compared*, http://hdl.handle.net/10280/411 2007-08; P. Forchini, *"Well, uh no. I mean, you know"*.

(tran)scripts are not suitable for investigation either, in that they differ considerably from movie speech both in terms of overall length, and in the specific case of the frequency of discourse markers (henceforth DMs).

According to criteria laid out by Sinclair[4], McEnery and Wilson[5], Biber, Conrad, and Reppen[6], three key factors were taken into account while compiling the AMC. First, a representative sample of the variety under examination, namely contemporary American English spoken in movies, was chosen. Four movies, produced in the United States from 2000 on, acted/spoken mostly in American English, not set in previous centuries and eras, ordinary life settings[7], were transcribed. Their titles are *Mission:I-2* directed by John Woo (2000, Paramount Pictures); *Shallow Hal* directed by Bobby & Peter Farrelly (2001, 20th Century Fox); *Ocean's Eleven* directed by Steven Soderbergh (2001, Warner Bros); and *The Matrix Reloaded* directed by Andy & Larry Wachowsky (2003, Warner Bros)[8].

Secondly, the influence of genre variation on the frequency and use of DMs was controlled, by choosing four different genres[9]: adventure (*Mission:I-2*), comedy (*Shallow Hal*), thriller (*Ocean's Eleven*), sci-fi (*The Matrix Reloaded*).

Thirdly, so as to have machine-readable data, the transcribed movie dialogs were saved in .txt and .xls format; the former were processed with the software program *Wordsmith Tools* (Scott 2004[10]), the latter were manipulated and aligned with *Microsoft Excel* formulae and tables.

More specifically, to start with, the frequency of 'I mean' was calculated; then, the pragmatic function of this DM was investigated in context by analyzing the utterances it occurs in and the function it acquires according to its initial, mid or final position in the turn. To cope with the large amount of data available (i.e. 10,833 occurrences of 'I mean' in the USBoE), the analyses of the USBoE were performed on a sample selection of the data, following Sinclair[11] and Hunston[12] who suggest selecting random lines until they "no longer yield anything new". Given the more manageable size of the AMC corpus, instead, all the occurrences of 'I mean' there were investigated one by one.

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[4] J. Sinclair, *Corpus concordance collocation*, OUP, Oxford 1991; J. Sinclair, *Trust the text: language, corpus and discourse*, Routledge, New York 2004.

[5] T. McEnery – A. Wilson , *Corpus linguistics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 1996.

[6] D. Biber – S. Conrad – R. Reppen, *Corpus linguistics: investigating language structure and use*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998.

[7] Even though some of the characters of the movies selected have extraordinary powers – e.g. Neo in *The Matrix Reloaded* – they are people who lead ordinary lives – Neo, for instance, works in information technology.

[8] In this paper, the movies are referred to by the following acronyms: MI-2, SH, O's 11, and TMR.

[9] It is worth noting that movie genres tend to imply fuzzy categories. Cf. also L. Morandini – M. Morandini, *Morandini 2007: dizionario dei film*, Zanichelli, Bologna 2006.

[10] M. Scott, *Wordsmith Tools 4.0*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004. Software.

[11] J. Sinclair, *A way with common words*, in *Out of corpora: studies in honour of Stig Johansson*, H. Hasselgård – S. Oksefjell ed, Rodopi, Amsterdam 1999, pp. 157-179.

[12] S. Hunston, *Corpora in applied linguistics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, p. 52.

2. *Terminology, classification and function of 'I mean' in spontaneous and movie conversation*

What emerges from the literature on discourse markers, in general, and on 'I mean', in particular, is that there is little consensus about terminology, their classification and function. First and foremost, these devices are often described according to a variety of labels: Schiffrin[13], Fraser[14] and Blakemore[15] call them 'discourse markers'; in an earlier work Blakemore[16] refers to them as 'discourse connectives'; Östman[17] defines them either as 'pragmatic expressions' or as 'pragmatic particles'; still others label them as discourse signaling devices, indicating devices, phatic connectives, pragmatic connectives, pragmatic formatives, pragmatic operators, semantic conjuncts, sentence connectives (cf. Schourup[18] for a detailed account), *inter alia*; finally, Aijmer[19] dismisses all previously existent terminology and refers to them simply as 'discourse particles'. The aim of the present research is certainly not to seek solutions to problems such as terminology and the classification of DMs; rather, a straightforward approach is adopted which considers 'I mean' a discourse marker on the basis of the fact that it is typical of spoken discourse[20] and, it is assumed, marks something by "focus[ing] on the organization and orientation of the discourse"[21]. This view matches a theoretical framework that starts from frequency – which, for example, checks the presence of 'I mean' in the three conversational domains – and then considers the function of the item and the environment within which it occurs, analyzing, for example, 'I mean' in context in order to see what it marks.

Added to this, classification within the same terminological frameworks is sometimes particularly problematic: although Schiffrin[22] and Fraser[23], for example, agree about labelling these devices 'discourse markers', the former considers 'I mean' within the category, whereas the latter does not. The labelling of functions seems controversial too, in that different labels are often introduced to describe similar functions. For this reason, the following simplification is suggested[24], based on the observation that similar definitions can be conflated:

a) when 'I mean' is considered a strategy to introduce a clarification[25] and to correct

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[13] D. Schiffrin, *Discourse markers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987.

[14] B. Fraser, *What are discourse markers?*, "Journal of pragmatics", XXXI, 1999, pp. 931-952.

[15] D. Blakemore, *Relevance and linguistic meaning. The semantics and pragmatics of discourse markers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002.

[16] D. Blakemore, *Understanding utterances*, Blackwell, Oxford 1992.

[17] J.O. Östman, *You know: a discourse functional approach*, Benjamins, Amsterdam 1981.

[18] L.C. Schourup, *Discourse markers*, "Lingua", CVII, 1999, pp. 227-265.

[19] K. Aijmer, *English discourse particles, evidence from a corpus*, Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2002.

[20] P. Forchini, *"Well, uh no. I mean, you know"*.

[21] B. Erman, *Pragmatic expressions in English: a study of* you know, you see*, and* I mean *in face-to-face conversation*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Sweden 1987, p. 128.

[22] D. Schiffrin, *Discourse markers*.

[23] B. Fraser, *What are discourse markers?*

[24] P. Forchini, *"Well, uh no. I mean, you know"*.

[25] B. Erman, *Pragmatic expressions in English*, L. Brinton, *I mean: the rise of a pragmatic marker*, Paper presented at GURT 2003.

or reformulate previous utterances[26], its function is described here as 'clarifying';

b) when it is deemed to be used to inform[27] and to evaluate[28], its function is described here as 'telling/commenting';

c) when it works as a turn-taking device, a turn-yielder, or a confirmation-seeker[29], its function is said here to be 'turn-dealing';

d) when employed as a mitigator[30] to make the speaker less committed[31], as a softener[32], as a compromiser[33], as a hesitation marker[34], or as a politeness marker[35], since 'I mean' allows the speaker extra time to find the most appropriate words because (s)he does not know either what to say or how to say something, its function is defined as 'time stalling';

e) when labelled as an emphasizer[36], the function of 'I mean' is said to be "emphasizing".

This categorization not only simplifies things by employing hypernymic labels, but also shows that the terminological disagreement that emerges from the literature on the functions of 'I mean' is only apparent. Besides, the USBoE data suggest that the multi-functionality of 'I mean' is not in fact considerable: 497 sample occurrences demonstrate that 'I mean' is basically used either to guide the listener in the interpretation of the utterance by clarifying, telling or commenting, or to allow the speaker time to find an appropriate way of expressing him/herself in order to appear less committed. In the first case (i.e. guiding the listener), 'I mean' is mostly used within a 'clarifying function' (i.e. 400 occurrences out of 497) in that it explicates, corrects, reformulates previous utterances, as illustrated in the following example:

(1) Simon: Sylvia, there's a part of me that – that thinks you should be more than flattered for this. You should be reimbursed. 'I mean', these folks are using your name. [USBoE]

'I mean' can also be used, though less frequently (i.e. 82 occurrences out of 497), within a 'telling function', namely, it can introduce information or comments, rather than explanations, as shown in example 2:

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[26] B. Erman, *Pragmatic expressions in English*; J.E. Fox Tree – J.C. Schrock, *Basic meaning of you know and I mean*, "Journal of pragmatics" XXXIV, 2002, pp. 727- 47. L. Brinton, *I mean*.

[27] B. Erman, *Pragmatic expressions in English*. J.E. Fox Tree – J.C. Schrock. *Basic meaning*.

[28] *Ibidem*; L. Brinton, *I mean*.

[29] B. Erman, *Pragmatic expressions in English*.

[30] *Ibidem*.

[31] *Ibidem*; J.E. Fox Tree – J.C. Schrock. *Basic meaning*; L. Brinton, *I mean*.

[32] D. Crystal – D. Davy, *Advanced conversational English*, Longman, London 1975.

[33] A.R. James, *Compromisers in English: a cross-disciplinary approach to their interpersonal significance*, "Journal of pragmatics", VII, 1983, pp. 191-206.

[34] B. Erman, *Pragmatic expressions in English*.

[35] J.E. Fox Tree – J.C. Schrock. *Basic meaning*; L. Brinton, *I mean*.

[36] *Ibidem*.

(2) I think Dean Rushed was not feeling well, and he started calling me trying to get stuff on Dean Rushed. 'I mean', it was an astonishing thing in paper that is often in terms of its prose – and particularly 25 years ago rather turgid – these were illuminating. [USBoE]

In the second case, instead, 'I mean' is used, though rarely (i.e. 15 occurrences out of 497), as a *time staller*, in that it is employed to fill a gap, as in example 3:

(3) Reed: Why not an oboist? Oboist, you know, looks funnier in print. But 'I mean', sure an oboist. [USBoE]

The preliminary findings from the USBoE sample do not bear out the idea of multi-functionality and confirm only 3 out of 5 functions found in the literature on 'I mean', namely, the 'clarifying', 'telling/commenting', and 'time stalling' ones. What has not emerged, instead, are the turn-dealing and emphasizing functions reported respectively by Erman[37] and Brinton[38]. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that also Erman's[39] findings show that the turn dealing function is not particularly frequent, especially if compared to the most frequent clarifying one. Besides, it may be speculated that the turn-dealing and emphasizing functions may be co-present with other functions; for example, when 'I mean' appears in initial position, it can have a turn-dealing function in that it may act as a turn-yielder, and at the same time, it can introduce a new topic, as in example 2 above; or, when 'I mean' bears a time-stalling function, it may also act as an emphasizer, as in example 3 above where the use of 'I mean' also emphasizes the difficulty of the situation. Thus slightly fuzzy categorizations may be applied when functions overlap.

The data from the AMC show similar patterning of 'I mean' usage[40]. More precisely, in movie conversation 'I mean' occurs in the same circumstances found in the USBoE: it either guides the listener in interpreting what follows or it allows the speaker time to find an appropriate way of wording his/her thoughts. The 'clarifying' function of 'I mean', which is present in 25 out of 37 occurrences, and the 'telling/commenting function', which occurs 4 out of 37 times, are illustrated in examples 4 and 5. These functions are respectively present when the discourse marker is used either to explain, justify, repair, modify the content of the previous utterance or to introduce a new topic, add information or comment on something respectively.

(4) Linux: But what about Rusty and the whole argument? 'I mean', what was that about? [O's 11]

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[37] B. Erman, *Pragmatic expressions in English.*
[38] L. Brinton, *I mean.*
[39] B. Erman, *Pragmatic expressions in English.*
[40] There is only one difference between the two domains: unlike in the spontaneous conversation sample data, there is also one occurrence of '*I mean*' in the AMC which functions as a knowledge marker.

(5) Mauricio: Yeah, I'll check into that. Anyway, 'I mean', did did did something go wrong here? [SH]

The 'time stalling function' (i.e. 7 occurrences out of 37), instead, used as a strategy to play for time, or to fill a gap or as a mitigator/hedge while the speaker seeks the right words because (s)he does not know what to say or needs to gain time to soften the severity of the situation, is shown in example 6:

(6) Hal: Oh. Huh? Sorry. I just... I 'I mean', yeah, you're you're really pretty. [SH]

Interestingly, although the data from both corpora show some pragmatic multi-functionality of 'I mean', it emerges clearly from the data that there is a definite preferred function: 'I mean' tends to occur with specific functions, especially with the *'clarifying'* one. This recurrent co-occurrence, which I called 'co-function'[41] recalling Firth's[42] and Sinclair's[43] concepts of 'collocation' and 'colligation', refers to the functional company a word or phrase keeps, namely, the most common function a word or phrase occurs with. This frequent co-occurrence with the 'clarifying function' also shows that 'I mean' is not grammaticalized, as Chaume 2004[44] claims, but rather pragmaticalized: 'I mean' does not seem to lose its lexical meaning; on the contrary, it acquires some extra pragmatic function in context, and remains closer to its lexical rather than to its discourse-marker-like meaning.

2.1 Functions and frequency of 'I mean' within utterance/turn position

Regarding functions in context, Erman[45] provides a detailed description of the functions that 'I mean' displays according to its position in the utterance/turn. Specifically, Erman reports that this DM has the highest frequency of occurrence in mid position (i.e. 89.3%) where it works as a device to refer to the previous argument. In terms of my functional categorization mentioned above, his findings can be interpreted by saying that the 'clarifying function' is the most frequent function of 'I mean' in spontaneous spoken conversation.

As Table 1 illustrates, these figures are confirmed by the sample data from the US-BoE: 'I mean' is by far most frequently used in mid-position, the second place in which it tends to occur is initial position and the last one is final position in both the USBoE and Erman's reference corpus.

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[41] P. Forchini, *"Well, uh no. I mean, you know"*.
[42] J. Firth, *Papers in linguistics*, 1934-1951, OUP, London 1957.
[43] J. Sinclair, *Corpus*.
[44] F. Chaume, *Discourse markers in audiovisual translating*, "Meta", XLIX, 2004, pp. 843-855.
[45] B. Erman, *Pragmatic expressions in English*.

Erman (1987) *I mean* turn position in the CEC (A Corpus of English Conversation, Svartvik & Quirk 1980)						
DM	INITIAL		MEDIAL		FINAL	
I MEAN	#	%	#	%	#	%
	21	9	208	**89.3**	4	1.7
US Spoken Subcorpus of the Bank of English 2007						
I MEAN	#	%	#	%	#	%
	56	11.26	418	**84. 1**	23	4.62

Table 1. Data from Erman[46] vs. Data from the US Spoken Sub-Corpus of the Bank of English.

The data from the USBoE (cf. Table 2 and 3 below) also confirm that when 'I mean' occurs in mid-position, it displays a 'clarifying function', or, in Erman's[47] terminology, it works as a device to refer to the previous argument. However, unlike Erman[48], who interprets 'I mean' as a turn-taking device when in initial position and as a confirmation seeker or a turn-yielder when in final position, in the USBoE the 'telling function' is the most frequent function in both initial and final position. It may be argued that, as explained in section 2, this divergence is a case either of differing terminology or of overlapping functions since, for example, 'I mean' may be used as a turn-taking strategy to provide information.

I mean Turn Position and Function US Spoken Subcorpus of the Bank of English [2007]				
FUNCTION	INITIAL	MEDIAL	FINAL	TOTAL
Telling	**45**	20	**17**	82
Clarifying	10	**388**	2	**400**
Time Stalling	1	10	4	15
TOTAL	56	**418**	23	497

Table 2. 'I mean' Turn Position and Function in the US Spoken Sub-Corpus of the Bank of English.

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[46] *Ibidem.*
[47] *Ibidem.*
[48] *Ibidem.*

I MEAN FUNCTION & POSITION, ERMAN 1987	
INITIAL	TURN-TAKING DEVICE
MEDIAL	BACK TO THE PREVIOUS ARGUMENT
FINAL	CONFIRMATION-SEEKER TURN-YIELDER

Table 3. 'I mean' Turn Position and Function in Erman[49].

Comparing spontaneous and movie conversation, 'I mean' displays similar features in terms of frequency, utterance/turn position, and function within the utterance/turn position. The occurrence of the DM 'I mean' lies at approximately 3% in the USBoE. Similarly, in the AMC its occurrence is low in terms of percentage, at about 0.1%[50]. As for the occurrence of 'I mean' related to its utterance/turn position, both the data from the USBoE (cf. Table 2) and those from the AMC (cf. Table 4) show that 'I mean' occurs mostly in mid position (418/497 occurrences or 84.1% in USscBOE and 23/37 or 62.16% in AMC) and is rare in final position. Movies also have a rather high percentage of occurrences of 'I mean' in initial position, which is a less frequent feature in spoken conversation: 12/37 occurrences, i.e. 32.43% in the AMC versus 56/497 i.e. 11.26% in the USBoE.

I MEAN FUNCTIONS & UTTERANCE POSITIONS in the AMC				
FUNCTION	**INITIAL**	**MEDIAL**	**FINAL**	**TOTAL**
TELLING FUNCTION	2	2		4
CLARIFYING FUNCTION	8	17		25
SHARED KNOWLEDGE MARKING	1			1
TIME STALLING	1	4	2	7
TOTAL	**12**	**23**	**2**	**37**

Table 4. 'I mean' Function and Turn Position in the AMC.

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[49] *Ibidem.*

[50] This low number of occurrences in movies may be due to the size of the corpus, or perhaps to the fact that 'I mean' does not occur much in movies, or else occurs mostly in comedies (indeed, in this corpus of four genres there is only one comedy, which has the highest number of occurrences).

Another similarity with spontaneous conversation is the kind of function 'I mean' has when it occurs in mid-position, namely, the 'clarifying' one (cf. Table 4). Unlike spontaneous conversation, instead, when 'I mean' occurs in initial position it does not occur with the 'telling function', but with the 'clarifying' one.

3. *'I mean' in original and dubbed movie conversation*

Functional translation, non-translation and compensation are the three possible processes that the occurrences of 'I mean' seem to undergo when dubbed into Italian. These strategies are illustrated by examples 7a/b-9a/b ('a' being the original and 'b' the dubbed version) respectively. More specifically, example 7b displays a functional translation of 'I mean' in which its Italian counterpart 'voglio dire' (which is also a literal translation of 'I mean') introduces an utterance that rephrases the previous statement like the 'clarifying' 'I mean' does in the original:

(7a) Link: Yes, sir, I will, sir. 'I mean', I do, sir. [clarifying function, TMR]

(7b) Link: Sissignore. Lo farò, signore. 'Voglio dire', già è così. [clarifying function, TMR]

Example 8b, instead, illustrates the non-translation of 'I mean': the dubbed version loses the function present in the original movie not only because the discourse marker is not translated, but also because there is no other device which compensates for the original 'clarifying function'.

(8a) Rusty as Peck: Let me ask him something else. You searched this scumbag, booby traps on this person? 'I mean', really searched not just for weapons. [clarifying function, O's11]

(8b) Rusty as Peck: Voglio farle un'altra domanda. Ha perquisito questo bastardo per vedere se aveva bombe trappola? L'ha perquisito a fondo non solo per le armi? [not translated, O's11]

Finally, example 9b illustrates the compensating strategy: in the original version (example 9a), 'I mean' works as a 'time staller' in that the speaker does not know how to say what he has in mind and evidently prefers not to explicate his thoughts; conversely, in the translated text (example 9b), he does not stall for time, indeed, 'I mean' is compensated for with an expression (which literally means 'I don't know whether you see what I mean') which changes the function of the utterance, transforming it into a 'turn-dealing' DM.

In other words, the speaker still uses an avoidance strategy so as not to have to make his thoughts clear, but passes the turn to the listener:

(9a)   Frank: And ideally speaking, we all should wear gloves to go to bed... but I found out that would be a little interference with my social agenda... 'you know'... 'I mean'... [time stalling function, O's11]

(9b)   Frank: In linea di principio dovremmo metterci tutti i guanti prima di andare a letto, però ho capito che avrebbe creato qualche piccolo disguido nella mia... vita di relazione... 'non so se mi spiego'... [turn dealing function, O's11]

Quantitatively, there are two tendencies which need to be emphasized (cf. Table 5): a loss in translation (11/37 occurrences of 'I mean' are not translated in the Italian version) and a change in functions types (some functions are translated with non-equivalent functions, and a new function, the 'turn-dealing' one, which was not present in the original movie, is introduced). These results broadly confirm Chaume's results[51], which maintain that "in general, there is no one-to-one correspondence between two languages in the field of discourse markers: most of the time their correlates in the target language have not the same pragmatic meaning, constituting a usual pitfall in translation".

I MEAN FUNCTIONS IN American MOVIE LANGUAGE			
FUNCTION	ENG	FUNCTION	ITA
CLARIFYING FUNCTION	26	CLARIFYING FUNCTION	21
TIME STALLER	6	NOT TRANSLATED (LOST)	11
TELLING FUNCTION	4	TIME STALLER	3
SHARED KNOWLEDGE MARKING	1	SHARED KNOWLEDGE MARKING	1
		TURN DEALING	1
		~~TELLING FUNCTION~~	0
TOTAL	37	TOTAL	37

Table 5. 'I mean' Functions in Original Movies (ENG) and in Dubbing (ITA).

Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that although the dubbed versions present fewer occurrences and a change in function, there is an overall tendency to keep the most frequent function (i.e. the 'clarifying' one) in the dubbed movies. The present data show three main compensating devices developed to keep this balance in dubbing:

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[51] F. Chaume, *Discourse markers*, p. 843.

a) supplying what is missing when possible, for instance, by translating in the next utterance what was not translated in the corresponding dubbed one, as in example 10:

(11) Hal: Uh 'I mean' are you out of your mind? = Ah __sei fuori di testa? [SH]
What do you weight = 'Cioè' quanto pesi? [SH]
110, 115 pounds = 55, 57 Kg? [SH]

b) in case of redundancy, not translating what has already been expressed somewhere else: among the non-translated functions, for example, the most frequent is the 'clarifying' one, which is also the most frequent translated function; this shows that to keep things balanced, the loss often involves what is redundant so as to avoid losing unique features. This tendency to avoid translating what has already been expressed/translated elsewhere and to avoid redundant translation may be considered evidence of simplification (cf. Ulrych[52], Pavesi[53]);

c) employing literal translations (cf. also Pavesi[54]) such as *voglio dire* and *cioè* which are strictly linked to the literal meaning of 'I mean' and are thus more likely to convey clarification. Interestingly, this tendency to use expressions that are literal translations of 'I mean' and which express functions close to its literal meaning provides initial evidence of cross-contact between the languages involved: when the target and source language share similar features, there is a preference to use them (cf. Ulrych[55], Pavesi[56]).

4. *Conclusions*

The preliminary results from the spontaneous corpus, the USBoE sample, have confirmed the 'clarifying', 'telling/commenting, and time stalling' functions usually illustrated by the literature (cf. Crystal and Davy[57], Erman[58], Fox Tree and Schrock[59], and Brinton[60]), but have not confirmed the 'turn-dealing' and 'emphasizing' functions reported respec-

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[52] M. Ulrych, *Locating universal features of translation behaviour through multimedia translation studies*, in *La traduzione multimediale: quale traduzione per quale testo?* Atti del convegno internazionale: la traduzione multimediale, R.M. Bollettieri Bosinelli *et alii* ed., CLUEB, Bologna 1998.
[53] M. Pavesi, *La traduzione filmica. Aspetti del parlato doppiato dall'Inglese all'Italiano*, Carocci, Roma 2005.
[54] *Ibidem.*
[55] M. Ulrych, *Locating universal features*.
[56] M. Pavesi, *La traduzione filmica*.
[57] D. Crystal – D. Davy, *Advanced conversational English*, Longman, London 1975.
[58] B. Erman, *Pragmatic expressions in English*.
[59] J.E. Fox Tree – J.C. Schrock. *Basic meaning*.
[60] L. Brinton, *I mean.*

tively by Erman[61] and Brinton[62]. Even though a relative multi-functionality of 'I mean' has emerged, there is a clear preference of occurring with the 'clarifying function', as maintained by Forchini[63], which suggests a pragmaticalization rather than grammaticalization of 'I mean'. The evidence of this has also been found in movie conversation, which has been demonstrated to have 'I mean' occurring mostly in mid position and displaying preferably a 'clarifying function' like in spontaneous conversation. This offers further evidence of the claim that movie language reflects face-to-face conversation[64], more than is generally recognized.

The picture which has emerged from the comparison between the original and dubbed movies of the AMC has confirmed the general tendency observed by Chaume[65], i.e. that there is no one-to-one correspondence between two languages in the field of DMs. However, despite the loss and changes in function, the data have also shown a tendency to achieve internal balance by keeping the most frequent functions, by supplying what is missing when possible, by not translating what has already been expressed elsewhere, and by using literal translations of 'I mean' which, in much the same way as the DM analyzed in the corpus of original movies, provides functions close to its literal meaning.

The data also provide some evidence of cross-contact between English and Italian and of simplification (cf. Ulrych[66], Pavesi[67]): the former can be ascribed to the tendency to use similar features (e.g. literal translations of 'I mean'), when the target and source language share them; the latter can be seen in the tendency to avoid translating what has already been expressed somewhere else and to avoid "redundant" translations.

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[61] B. Erman, *Pragmatic expressions in English*.

[62] L. Brinton, *I mean*.

[63] P. Forchini, *"Well, uh no. I mean, you know"*.

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