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1 Introduction

The present paper is concerned with the qualitative analysis of the use of the English discourse marker *I mean* in Spanish and Portuguese online discourses. The examples such as (1) and (2) are retrieved from the *Corpus del Español* (Web/ Dialects) as well as the *Corpus do Português* (Web/ Dialects) and were found in online fora and blogs or represent user comments on websites:

(1) sp. […] My Little Pony y las Power Puff Girl) y además notas relacionadas. **I mean**: esto es bueno. MUY BUENO. Si hay algo que […]

(2) pt. Achas que cá em Portugal vai ter o mesmo impacto? **I mean**, nos USA há gente terrivelmente obesa.

The definition of discourse marker applied in the present study is, above all, related to functional criteria: The discourse marker *I mean* as in examples (1) and (2) is used to signal "coherence relations" (Aijmer/ Simon-Vandenbergen 2006: 2; cf. also Martín Zorraquino/ Portolés 1999: 4062-4064), imposing

> […] a relationship between some aspect of the discourse segment they are a part of, call it S2, and some aspect of a prior discourse segment, call it S1. In other words, they function like a two-place relation, one argument lying in the segment they introduce, the other lying in the prior discourse [<S1.DM+S2>]. (Fraser 1999: 938; cf. also Schiffrin 1987: 328)

However, the study reveals that, if found in other syntactic positions (cf. also Degand/ Simon-Vandenbergen 2011: 288), i.e. right-peripherally as in example (3), *I mean* may also fulfil a discourse-marking function, namely a specifying, corrective or concluding function, that is, an anaphoric function (cf. also Imo 2006):

(3) sp. Uno más del montón, del montón de los guapos, **I mean**. Sin embargo he de reconocer que […]

Hence, I agree with Torres (2002: 65) "that discourse markers contribute to the coherence of the discourse by signaling or marking a relationship across utterances", independent of their syntactic position, even though the sentence-initial position is regarded as the most usual one (cf. Schiffrin 1987, Brinton 1996 or Fraser 1999 above).[1]

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[1] In some studies on discourse markers, the term 'utterance-initial' (instead of 'sentence initial' is used). I prefer the label 'sentence-initial' because in my view, an utterance may be made up of more than one sentence. In other

In detail, the aims of the study are threefold: First, I briefly discuss the notion of discourse marker, especially paying attention to *I mean* as a discourse marker. Second, I discuss the different designations for the phenomenon under survey such as code-switching (mostly intrasentential; Kebeya 2013) or borrowing (cf. Pfaff 1979, Myers-Scotton 1992 or Lipski 2005). In doing so and in applying the *Markedness Model* (Myers-Scotton 1993, 1998), I also reflect on the reasons of using English discourse markers in Spanish and Portuguese discourses, also respecting the different Spanish and Portuguese varieties. Third, I analyze the different discourse-marking functions of *I mean* in Spanish and Portuguese online communication and compare the uses with the functions they fulfil in English discourses (cf. Fox Tree/ Schrock 2002 and Imo 2006).

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Discourse markers

2.1.1 Brief discussion of the notion of discourse marker

As Schourup (1999: 241) notes, no definition of discourse marker "seems likely to win universal acceptance in view of the unresolved theoretical differences and varying background assumptions that inform these definitions" (cf. also Jucker/ Ziv 1998: 1). The notion of discourse marker still "has different meanings for different groups of researchers" (Fraser 1999: 932) so that the whole "field of discourse marker research is far from being homogeneous or unified" (Lenk 1998: 37). It is, hence, no surprise that it can be regarded as "standard in any overview article […] on [discourse markers] to state that reaching agreement on what makes a [discourse marker] is as good as impossible, be it alone on terminological matters" (Degand/ Cornillie/ Pietrandrea 2013: 5; cf. also Mroczynski 2012). Therefore, I will briefly summarize in the following which understanding of discourse marker is taken as a basis in this paper.

Blakemore (2004) explains that discourse markers are characterized by the fact that they operate on the discourse level and that the meanings of discourse markers "must be analyzed in terms of what they *indicate* or *mark* rather than what they describe" (Blakemore 2004: 1; cf. also Blakemore 1987 where she uses the term "discourse connective"). These "phonologically short items that are not syntactically connected to the rest of the clause" (Brinton 2008: 1) should only be analyzed in discourse since they "serve pragmatic or procedural purposes" (Brinton 2008: 1) instead of having clear conceptual meaning.

In studying various English discourse markers or rather items that may fulfil the function of a discourse marker like conjunctions and adverbs such as *and*, *but*, *now* and *so* or phrases such as *you know* and *I mean*, Schiffrin (1987: 328) regards sentence-initial position as one of

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words, *utterance* is a more 'encompassing' notion. So, comparing the following two structures (a) [DM+sentence1.sentence2. …sentenceX = utterance] and (b) [sentence1.sentence2.DM+sentence3. …sentenceX = utterance], only the structure (a) contains an utterance-initial use of a discourse marker, while in the structure (b) the discourse marker is used sentence-initially. This, in turn, means that I do not use the label 'utterance-initial' at all because also structure (a) can be termed 'sentence-initial' so that 'sentence-initial' describes all uses of a discourse marker in front position.

the central features of discourse markers. Front position is also mentioned by Brinton (1996: 33-35), who lists the following properties of discourse markers in total: Discourse markers are

- relatively short and usually phonologically reduced so that they form a separate tone group,
- more frequently used in oral than in written discourse,
- often evaluated negatively because they are stylistically stigmatized,
- optional (their insertion is not obligatory),
- items carrying little or no conceptual (propositional) meaning,
- multifunctional (they may serve different functions),
- not part of the syntactic structure in the sense of that they do not serve clear grammatical functions,
- often restricted to sentence-initial position.

For Degand/ Simon-Vandenbergen (2011: 288), sentence-initial position is not an 'absolute must' for discourse markers: "[…] although front position is characteristic and frequent with discourse markers, they can also be very versatile and occur in medial as well as final position".[2]

Even though the insertion of discourse markers is optional, the lack of their insertion would result in an unnatural discourse (Brinton 1996: 35) since discourse markers serve certain procedural purposes, which are, above all, important for the hearer. In other words, discourse markers guide the interpretation for the interlocutor (cf. also Lenk 1998: 203). For instance, in *The movie was over so we didn't bother going to the theater* "the presence of *so* signals that the discourse segment following the *so* should be processed as an effect or a conclusion following from the preceding segment" (Fraser 2006: 24). Even though the example provided illustrates the notion of procedural meaning well, *so* should in this case be described as a conjunction (instead of a discourse marker).[3] However, Fraser outlines (at least) four different meanings of *so*, providing the following examples (Fraser 2006: 27):

(a)　**consequential**: Jack was forced to work overtime. **So** he quit his job.
(b)　**logical-inferential**: He likes sweets, **so** he has to like chocolates.
(c)　**contextual-inferential**: The movie was over **so** we didn't bother hurrying.
(d)　**purposeful**: She shut the door **so** the cat couldn't get out.

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[2] Cf. also the volume edited by Loureda Lamas/ Acín Villa (2010) on various studies of discourse markers in Spanish. The notion of discourse marker is used here as a synonym for *partícula discursiva* and is also understood as a comprehensive or superordinate term for 'modalizers'. Jucker/ Ziv (1998: 1) also mention a variety of terms used to refer to discourse-marking elements: for example, 'discourse particle', 'pragmatic particle', 'pragmatic marker', 'pragmatic expression' or 'connective'.

　　The volume edited by Ghezzi/ Molinelli (2014) focuses on diachrony and contains studies that concentrate on the emergence of discourse markers in various Romance languages. The first part of the volume deals with the so-called pragmatic markers which have their origin in verbs such as sp. *o sea*. The second part consists of papers studying the use of adverbs that fulfil the function of discourse markers such as fr. *déjà* or pt. *aliás*.

[3] In the NGLE (2010: 595) it is also pointed out that "[m]uchos conectores discursivos eran analizados como conjunciones en la tradición gramátical". According to my view, Fraser (2006) does the opposite when he describes a (formal and functional) conjunction as a discourse marker. However, as the NGLE (2010: 595) formulates, "[s]e mezclaban o se confundían de esta forma los elementos de un paradigma sintático (conjunción, adverbio, etc.) con unidades establecidas a partir de criterios discursivos o textuales".

In each sentence, *so* signals how the following segment is to be understood; in example (a) quitting the job represents the consequence, in example (b) *so* introduces the logical inference that somebody who has a passion for sweets must also like chocolates, and so on.[4]

In any case, it can be agreed upon that procedural meaning "does not contribute any concept but rather provides a constraint on or indication of the way in which certain aspects of pragmatic inference should proceed" (Huang 2007: 197). To put it differently, procedural meaning "constrains the inferential phase of comprehension by indicating the type of inference process that the hearer is expected to go through" (Ifantidou 2001: 198; cf. also Blakemore 1987: 144, 2004: 82-83 and Bezuidenhout 2004: 125-126).

Summarizing, the notion of discourse marker dealt with in the present study is related to, above all, functional criteria. A discourse marker is expected to relate a prior segment to the following one, whereby the notion of 'relation' must be relativized because a discourse marker can also be used to cause a discursive 'cut', and then it serves a more disconnecting function than a relating one (cf. the use of *I mean* as a cut-marker according to Imo 2006). Furthermore, from a syntactic perspective, discourse markers are considered versatile elements, even though front position may be the most usual syntactic position.

2.1.2 The discourse marker *I mean*

The status of *I mean* as a discourse marker is not to be debated here. As a phonologically short structure, it serves procedural purposes if it is used as a discourse marker (cf. also Schiffrin 1987 or Erman 1987). According to Schiffrin (1987: 296), the marking of expansions of the speaker's ideas is one of the most important functions of *I mean*. Adopting an interpersonal perspective, *I mean* is used to maintain the attention of the interlocutor: it signals the hearer that he*she should "continue attending to the material of prior text in order to hear how it will be modified" (Schiffrin 1987: 309; also 299). This description implies the corrective or specifying function of *I mean* when it is said to be used to modify material which has already been introduced into the discourse. Fox Tree/ Schrock (2002) and Imo (2006) list additional different functions of *I mean*:

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[4] Admittedly, Fraser sets a slightly different focus in this paper (2006). His aim is to show that linguistic elements can have both conceptual and procedural meaning. According to him, the four meanings of *so* represent conceptual meanings, and the common procedural meaning that all uses of *so* demonstrate is "that the second segment follows from the first" (Fraser 2006: 27). But be that as it may, *so* is an element that can assume different meanings.

Fox Tree/ Schrock (2002: 741-742)	Imo (2006: 16, 21-26)
- interpersonal (politeness strategy) - monitoring (forewarning upcoming adjustments) - turn management (especially in initial position: speaker's adjustment to preceding turn)[5] - organizational (organizing in the sense of introducing a comment, justification, modification or topic shift) - repair (similar to adjustment; most frequent function)	- cut-marker (interrupting ongoing flow of utterances) - introducing conclusions, final comments, evaluations, explications, specifications[6] - marking change of perspective regarding the content - framing quotes - hesitating function in the context of taboo topics (reformulation, disfluency) - self-repair

In any case, it can be stated that the discourse marker *I mean* is an element that can obviously fulfil various "conversational functions" (Pons 2018: 357).

Lipski (2005) studies the insertion of *so, but, anyway, you know* and *I mean* in discourses of Spanish-English bilinguals (in the United States). This phenomenon cuts "across the entire spectrum of bilingual abilities, from Spanish-dominant speakers through balanced bilinguals, to highly English-dominant 'semi-speakers' of Spanish" (Lipski 2005: 3). However, as his study is sociolinguistically oriented, Lipski (2005) does not focus on the different functions of *I mean*, which will be investigated in the present paper. In detail, Lipski (2005) documents

> […] la inserción e integración de marcadores del inglés en el español de hispanohablantes estadounidenses. […] dicho proceso no solo refleja el grado de uso del inglés en la vida del individuo bilingüe, sino también su nivel de suficiencia lingüística en español: un mayor uso y dominio del inglés concomitante con un menor grado de competencia en español lleva a la tendencia a usar (exclusivamente en algunos casos de hablantes de la tercera y la cuarta generación) marcadores del inglés como *like, I mean, you know* y *so*. […] **este proceso se distingue del cambio de código** por el hecho de que el uso de tales marcadores no sirve para hacer la transición de una lengua a otra en un mismo discurso, sino para "puntuar" un discurso realizado enteramente en español y, **en muchos casos, el hablante ni siquiera es consciente de que ha insertado un elemento del inglés**. (Klee/ Lynch 2009: 273-274; cf. Lipski 2005: 13) […] mientras que **en los casos de cambio de código [el hablante] si tiende a ser consciente de su uso del inglés**. (Klee/ Lynch 2009: 256; my emphases)

While Fox Tree/ Schrock (2002) and Imo (2006) are concerned with *I mean* in English conversations, Klee/ Lynch (2009), relying for example on Lipski (2005), also refer to the use

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[5] Similarly, turn-medial *I mean* may indicate that the speaker will adjust what the speaker just said, and turn-final *I mean* may indicate that the speaker means something else, but will leave the adjustment off record" (Fox Tree/ Schrock 2002: 742).

[6] According to Butt/ Benjamin (2004: 478), many discourse markers are said to introduce "afterthoughts". In my opinion, this is a very suitable term to summarize a multitude of functions assumed by *I mean*. If, for example, something is reformulated or specified, then it is at the same time a later thought, an "afterthought", that is expressed.

of *I mean* in conversations of bilingual speakers, adopting a sociolinguistic perspective. According to them, bilingually raised speakers do not (always) consciously alternate the code so that the authors explicitly distinguish this language alternation from code-switching. Whether or not the code change is conscious or unconscious, this leads us to the phenomenon of code alternation itself, which will be treated briefly in the following.

2.2 The phenomenon of code alternation

2.2.1 (Insertional) code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing

The analysis of conversations of bilingual speakers represents a very important field of research for sociolinguistics, which is why there is now a list of terms to describe the phenomena given by language contact or language change.[7] Among them are the concepts of code-switching, code-mixing (cf. McClure/ McClure 1975, Wentz/ McClure 1977 or Muysken 2000) or borrowing (cf. Pfaff 1979, Myers-Scotton 1992 or Lipski 2005), which will briefly be dealt with here.

In their analysis of language alternation in chat conversations, Androutsopoulos/ Hinnenkamp (2002) explain that code-switching is generally a phenomenon of face-to-face communication, but that the code can also alternate in a written text: the speaker or writer changes the code within a conversation or text; or also the other way around: everything that the participants in the communicational situation (not only the speaker and the receiver, but also the writer and reader) perceive as diverse series of variables constitute the different codes (cf. Androutsopoulos/ Hinnenkamp 2002: 4). Therefore, one speaks of code-switching in "those cases in which the juxtaposition of two codes ([typically] languages) is perceived and interpreted as a locally meaningful event by participants" (Auer 1999: 1; cf. also Flores Ohlson 2008).

Code-switching can also occur when the knowledge of the 'inserted language' (language B) is very limited, i.e. when the competence of language B is significantly weaker than the competence of language A which is the 'main conversational language' (cf. Auer 1999: 3). When an element of a B language is inserted into the conversational language A, it is interesting to observe whether this code change takes place within the sentence or after the end of the sentence. Therefore, a distinction is made between intersentential and intrasentential code-switching (cf. for example, Zirker 2007 or Kebeya 2013). The intersentential code change occurs when a speaker switches "from one language to another between different sentences" (Kebeya 2013: 228). On the other hand, intrasentential code-switching occurs when speakers switch from one language to another within the same sentence. Thus, "a sentence will be made up of two or more languages" (Kebeya 2013: 229). However, for the analysis of the use of *I mean* in Spanish and Portuguese (online) discourses, the concept of *insertional* code-switching seems to be relevant, as Auer explains: "In this type of switching, a content word (noun, verb, rarely adjective/adverb) is inserted into a surrounding passage in the other language" (Auer 1999: 5). Insertional code-switching is characterized by the fact that the element coming from

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[7] For this theoretical part on code alternation, cf. also Hennemann (2018).

another language is relatively small and does not influence the language of the conversation or endanger it (cf. Auer 1999: 21).

In his study of code-switching of immigrants living in the United States who have a good knowledge of English, Lipski (2005) found out that intrasentential switching represents the most prominent code change. Usually, some (minor) elements of English are used in the Spanish discourse in order "to achieve pragmatic ends such as foregrounding, ethnic solidarity, persuasion, and the like" (Lipski 2005: 1). In analyzing these conversations, he observes "cases involving insertion of non-assimilated L2 functional elements – particularly conjunctions – in the midst of L1 discourse" (Lipski 2005: 2). Thus, among some English elements or conjunctions such as *but* or *anyway* that are inserted with some kind of pragmatic function in Spanish discourses, the insertion of *you know* and *I mean* represents a widespread linguistic phenomenon. 'Widespread' in the sense of affecting bilinguals of different bilingual skills, ranging from Spanish-dominant speakers, bilinguals who know both languages equally well, to Spanish 'quasi-speakers' who are extremely fluent in English (cf. Lipski 2005: 3). For the examples analyzed in the present study, it should also be highlighted that it is not possible to determine what type of bilingual competence the speakers possess. Furthermore, it is not assumed that the analyzed text passages were written by bilingually raised speakers (even though it may be possible). Instead, a heterogeneity of the degree of bilingual competence (Spanish-English and Portuguese-English) is assumed, i.e. that Spanish and Portuguese native speakers also speak English, although no statement can be made about the level of English.

However, what about the concept of borrowing? In explicitly differentiating between code-switching and borrowing, Pfaff (1979: 295-296) explains:

> 'Borrowing' may occur in the speech of those with only monolingual competence, while 'code-switching' implies some degree of competence in two languages. Thus most investigators […] find it appropriate to distinguish between the two. There has been, however, little agreement as to how the distinction is to be made.
> Commonly, single words are classified as borrowing rather than switching […]
> Switches, however, are characterized […] as beginning at 'clearly discernible syntactic junctures' and 'having their own internal syntactic structure'.

While example (a) represents a case of code-switching, example (b) illustrates (spontaneous) borrowing (cf. Pfaff 1979: 296):

(a)   **Yo sé**, **porque** I went to the hospital to find out where he was at
(b)   Los están **bussing** pa otra escuela

Hence, following Pfaff (1979), the insertion of *I mean* – seen as a fixed expression which could be compared to a 'single word' – should be seen as a case of borrowing instead of switching.

Relying on McClure/ McClure (1975) as well as on Wentz/ McClure (1977: 706), the notion of code-mixing might also be 'successfully' applied to the phenomenon discussed in the present study, as code-mixing "occurs because an L2 word or expression is more salient or unknown in L1, the language of discourse; it takes place within constituent boundaries, and results in sentences which belong fundamentally to L1" (Pfaff 1979: 298). If we assume that

Spanish and Portuguese indeed represent the L1, the L2 expression *I mean* is – for some reason – more prominent than the Spanish/ Portuguese equivalent. However, why should *I mean* be more salient than *quiere decir/ quer dizer* or *digo* to Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking natives (provided that they are really *not* raised bilingually)? The answer may be that the use of *I mean* is linked to the communicative situation – to online communication, and influenced by the communicative surrounding (the web), the 'cool and hip' discourse marker *I mean* might be more prominent. Of course, it is assumed that these speakers also use this discourse marker in 'real-life' oral conversations.[8]

Although especially the concept of code-mixing (Pfaff 1979), insertional code-switching (Auer 1999) – even though a discourse marker cannot be regarded as a content word – or borrowing (Pfaff 1979) may be assigned to designate the use of *I mean* in Spanish and Portuguese discourses, it should be emphasized that the concepts discussed here are related to bilingual (in the sense of raised bilingually) speakers (cf. Pfaff 1979, Torres 2002 or Lipski 2005), i.e. with speakers who have a certain level of bilingual competence (who have been studied on the basis of recordings of oral conversations). This kind of switching treated here does not necessarily require "fluent bilinguals" (Lipski 2005: 1). Finally, it should be mentioned that in the present study, it is not assumed that most of the speakers in the examples are Spanish or Portuguese immigrants, but (only) native Spanish or Portuguese speakers with (at least sufficient) knowledge of English who insert or use English elements in their Spanish and Portuguese discourses.

2.2.2 The *Markedness Model*

In addition to the question of how the linguistic phenomenon treated in the present study is best described, another question which should be answered is: *Why* are not the Spanish and Portuguese equivalents of *I mean* such as *digo* or *quer dizer* (cf. Macário Lopes 2014) used in the respective discourses? Could it be that the Spanish and Portuguese expressions do not transmit the same content as the discourse marker *I mean*? What may be the reasons 'behind' (consciously) using the English discourse marker instead of the Spanish or Portuguese ones?[9]

At first glance, in all the conversations shown in the examples analyzed in the present study, we deal with a kind of code change (insertional code-switching, code-mixing or borrowing): it is a speaker who speaks or has knowledge of two languages (Spanish and English or Portuguese and English). From the sociolinguistic point of view and starting from the theory of the *Markedness Model* of (conscious) language choice, developed by Myers-Scotton (1993, 1998), it is assumed that the change of code is a conscious choice on the part of the speaker. As already indicated by its name, the model is based on the dichotomy of unmarked and marked variants (of codes). In detail, the *Markedness Model*

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[8] Unfortunately, much has to be assumed in the context of the present study, and yet some things remain uncertain. Future studies could carry out concrete speaker surveys asking why and when the English discourse marker is inserted.

[9] Cf. also Böhm/ Hennemann (under review).

claims that in any given situation some linguistic variety is Unmarked (i.e., neutral), whereas others are Marked and their use in particular situations carries what Myers-Scotton has elsewhere termed "meta-messages". These terms Unmarked and Marked are borrowed from Prague School linguistics […] (Herbert 1998: 251)

Thus, the speaker chooses to alternate his*her language, register or style in his*her communicative act in order to (additionally) communicate a meta-message, that is, a message about the message. Choosing a code

conlleva una serie de derechos y obligaciones. Es decir, un tipo de conversación determinado, en una comunidad específica, presenta una serie de características situacionales. Estas características situacionales varían entre las comunidades e, incluso, entre los diferentes tipos de conversación dentro de una misma comunidad [...] (Flores Ohlson 2008: 84; cf. also Myers-Scotton 1993: 84-90 and Myers-Scotton 1998)

These facts are 'recognized' by Myers-Scotton's *Markedness Model*. It "has become one of the dominant models used to explain code-choice and switching (CS) in conversation" (Herbert 1998: 251). Applying the theory of conscious language choice, i.e. the *Markedness Model*, to the topic of the present paper, it is to assume that English as 'a resource available for chatters of different origins and mother tongues' is consciously used 'for specific types of action and interaction' (Androutsopoulos/ Hinnenkamp 2002: 32; cf. also Dorleijn/ Nortier 2009). Generally, the use of English marks 'participation in the global chatter community' (Androutsopoulos/ Hinnenkamp 2002: 32). So, besides demonstrating bilingual competence, the meta-message in the case of inserting *I mean* in Spanish and Portuguese discourses would be to signal belonging to a certain community.[10] Furthermore, the use of English as a resource in computer-mediated communication is generally certainly related to the desire for social recognition or belonging to a peer group (cf. also Hennemann 2018), maybe also "impresiona[ndo] a otros participantes haciendo gala de sus habilidades lingüísticas" (Appel/ Muysken 1996: 179).

3 Corpus analysis of *I mean* in Spanish and Portuguese online discourses

3.1 The characteristics of the data

As already mentioned in the introduction, the examples analyzed in the present study are retrieved from the Web/ Dialects-part of the *Corpus del Español* and the *Corpus do Português*, i.e. text passages which were found in online fora and blogs or represent user comments on websites. Even though the language analyzed represents medial writtenness, it is mostly conceptually oral (cf. Koch/ Oesterreicher 1985; cf. also Dürscheid 2003, Androutsopoulos

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[10] The paper by Flores Ohlson (2008) demonstrates that conscious code change can also be a strategy for expressing distance towards the interlocutor. For example, if the speaker expects that the interlocutor is not so familiar with a certain language (or even has comprehension problems), the speaker might switch to that language in order to signal distancing (cf. Flohres Ohlson 2008: 93).

2007 or Kailuweit 2009) so that it could be described as written orality. Furthermore, the examples are reproduced here exactly as they were found in the corpora, or rather, in the internet, that is, no grammatical or orthographical corrections are made. "Dass der Sprachgebrauch in diesen Kommunikationsformen öffentlich-institutionellen Normen des 'korrekten' schriftlichen Ausdrucks vielleicht nicht entspricht, ist eine typische Feststellung der linguistischen Internetforschung" (Androutsopoulos 2007: 72). According to Schmitz (2006: 192), the examples analyzed in the present study represent cases of 'secondary writtenness'. This kind of writtenness is characterized by incorporating elements which are known from orality, i.e. the use of multiple vowels to imitate sound stretching etc. (Schmitz 2006: 192; cf. also Androutsopoulos 2007: 81-83). Of course, the degree of orality, or rather, secondary writtenness varies according to the specific texts realized in online discourses, where communication may also be (relatively) formal, less formal as well as informal and so on (cf. Kailuweit 2009: 3-4).[11] For example, a blog written for a special readership might be less oral – and stylistically more elaborated – than a discussion about a certain topic in a chat.

The corpus analysis is of qualitative character, respecting the different syntactic positions and related functions of *I mean*, which are mentioned by Fox Tree/ Schrock (2002) and Imo (2006).

3.2 Qualitative analysis

As mentioned by various authors (for example Schiffrin 1987, Brinton 1996 or Fraser 1999), the sentence-initial use is the most usual position of a discourse marker, and front position is sometimes even mentioned as a decisive criterion. According to Degand/ Simon-Vandenbergen (2011), by contrast, discourse markers may also be found in other syntactic positions. Taking these things into account, I consider the sentence-initial position as characteristic for the canonical use of a discourse marker. In these cases, the discourse marker fulfils a clarifying, specifying, adjusting function (cf. Imo 2006):

(4) sp. […] hay que poner el culo porque todas lo hacen??????? querida C, olvidale. **I mean**, si èl no es lo que tu esperabas que iba a ser, alguien lo serà.
(http://www.nadaimporta.com/consultorio-nada-importa-cap3-%C2%BFprefiere-a-sus-amigos/; Spain)

(5) sp. Es mejor respetar nos nosotras, ya que ellos no lo hacen. 4 comentarios: Estimado anónimo de Nina: El hecho de no comentar explica sólo una cosa: somos jevas ocupadas y enfocadas en la vida. **I mean**, una puede, tranquilamente, tomarse unos tragos con Nina y terminar de ser solidarias.
(http://ninarancel.blogspot.com/2011/10/el-hecho-de-que-solo-haya-dos-comments.html; Venezuela)

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[11] For the problem of categorizing or adequately describing the different forms of online communication between orality and writtenness, cf. especially Dürscheid (2003).

(6) sp. O sea, esa gente psicótica que daña directamente su medio ambiente y la gente alrededor de manera casi consciente - **I mean**, no soy psicóloga, pero hay gente que está chiflada, sabe que está chiflada y no hace nada por mejorar su situación sino que por el contrario, se aferra a su estado y espera que todos la entiendan.
(http://estigia.net/2007/04/16/tres-cosas-tres-2/; Mexico)

While in examples (4)-(6) *I mean* is syntactically used correctly in the sense that it is followed e.g. by a comma, also other sentence-initial uses can be determined, which appear rather 'non-native speaking'. This is the case, for instance, in the following example, where the discourse marker is followed by a colon. However, *I mean* clearly relates the preceding sentence to the following one, and it serves the function of introducing the speaker's personal opinion (evaluation):

(7) sp. [...] lo que parece un corto basado en el juego Lego Batman, Super Best Friends Forever escrito por Lauren Faust (de My Little Pony y las Power Puff Girl) y además notas relacionadas. **I mean**: esto es bueno. MUY BUENO. Si hay algo que la empresa ha venido haciendo maestramente son sus películas/serie/cortos animados (okey, salvo algunas excepciones).
(http://lacomiquera.com/2011/11/video-el-comercial-de-dc-nation-en-lo-que-podria-ser-lo-mejor-de-la-editorial/; Chile)

The sentence-initial use of *I mean* is not only found in the Spanish varieties but also in Brazilian and European Portuguese. The discourse-marking function is obvious, even though it sometimes seems difficult to differentiate between the exact functions mentioned by Fox Tree/ Schrock (2002) and Imo (2006). In every single case it forewarns an adjustment, whereby the kind of adjustment is to be specified. In example (8) *I mean* introduces a further explication on how the preceding sentence should be understood in detail ('você só gasta com comida mesmo, *which means that*, vai pagar...'):

(8) pt. Porque esses aps já tem tudo o que você precisa, e no preço sempre está incluído TUDO, você só gasta com comida mesmo. **I mean**, vai pagar um x por mês que vai incluir todas as contas da casa, mais internet, telefone pra chamadas locais, tv a cabo e por aí vai.
(http://www.buenosairesparachicas.com/2012/08/quanto-custa-morar-na-capital.html; Brazil)

In the following text passages, the discourse marker is used to introduce evaluations, explications or specifications, as outlined by Imo (2006). While in example (9) it is clearly an evaluation when the speaker designates something as *grave*, in examples (10) and (11) *I mean* introduces a (further) explication in order to 'complement' the preceding sentence(s):

(9) pt. [...] mas este ano, tive de rever isso pois tenho as pernas "brancas" e os braços escuríssimos. **I mean**, isto é GRAVE e capaz de ser a causa de todos os males mundiais.
(http://cartasafilosofia.blogspot.com/2011/07/esta-sim-e-minha-vida-em-fotos.html; without specification)

(10) pt. É como me tenho sentido e não creio que isso vá mudar assim tão rapidamente. **I mean**, posso andar feliz uma tarde, mas isso não significa que as coisas estejam resolvidas... (http://divagacoesdumgay.blogspot.com/2013_08_01_archive.html; Portugal)

(11) pt. Deve haver uma visão holística do problema, e encaminhar para os profissionais mais competentes -- Psiquiatras, Psicólogos, Psicanalistas, Psicoterapeutas, Enfermeiros de saúde mental e psiquiátrica, whatever. **I mean**, se eu tiver uma dor de dentes, tomo um analgésico e passa mas, se não for ao Dentista tratar o problema base [...] (http://forum.menshealth.com.pt/showthread.php?t=11377; Portugal)

Considering the context, in the following two examples *I mean* can be said to serve an interpersonal function; it is used as a politeness strategy (cf. Fox Tree/ Schrock 2002). In (12) a book is evaluated, and *I mean* is used in a concessive context because the speaker regards the book as good but he*she makes a reservation ('The book's cool, but... *I mean*, it is very good, but I think it is far from being divine, or a masterpiece, especially considering the rest of the work of this writer'), downgrading his*her own original evaluation (and maybe the opinion of the cyber-society) a little bit:

(12) pt. O livro está porreiro, mas meh. **I mean**, é muito bom, mas acho que está longe de ser divinal, ou uma obra-prima, especialmente tendo em conta o resto da obra deste escritor. (http://livrosimples.blogspot.com/2012/12/the-hobbit.html; Portugal)

In example (13) another person is clearly addressed, and the subject discussed seems to be slightly delicate. This means that *I mean* cannot only be assigned an interpersonal function, but also the hesitating function (cf. Imo 2006) in the context of topics which provide difficulties in formulation ('So maybe this is not the right man for you. *I mean*, what you just described is no big deal'):

(13) pt. As mulheres têm muito a mania do homem isto e aquilo. Então secalhar esse não é o homem certo para vós. **I mean**, o que tu acabaste de descrever não é nada demais. (http://amelhordasintencoes.wordpress.com/2009/06/11/estamos-namorando/; Brazil)

In the following text passages, *I mean* follows a previously asked question. This creates the impression that the sentence introduced by the discourse marker is a kind of justification by the speaker – why he*she raised this question, what it implies for him*her or rather, what he*she actually wants to say with it (instead of asking). In (14), *I mean* is even followed by *eu acho que*, which introduces the speaker's personal opinion:

(14) pt. Estou no 2º ano de psicologia e queria transferir para os EUA. Vc acha que vale a pena? **I mean**, eu acho que as oportunidades ai são melhores, me identifiquei muito com a cultura [...] (http://brasilcomz.wordpress.com/2011/11/28/homologar-diploma-eua/; Brazil)

(15) pt. Agora não tenho visto, mas ainda vi alguns episódios de diferentes temporadas. Achas que cá em Portugal vai ter o mesmo impacto? **I mean**, nos USA há gente terrivelmente obesa. Que tipo de concorrentes teremos por cá?
(http://o-meu-reino-da-noite.blogspot.com/2010/12/biggest-loser.html; Portugal)

(16) pt. se eu pudesse obrigava toda a humanidade a ler, especialmente os rapazes gostosos! ahahah, fizeste-me rir. a sério que isso é um turn off pra ti? **I mean**, claro que ler é mt importante e valorizo isso, acho mesmo bronco quando alguém diz que não tem paciência para a ler.
(http://indecentementeinocente.blogspot.com/2012/04/biggest-turn-offou-corta-tesao-ou-corta.html; Portugal)

The following two examples also contain sentence-initial uses of *I mean* but instead of being followed by a comma, the discourse marker is followed by three dots, which are usually found in written communication to indicate 'thinking'. *I mean*... underlines the fact that the discourse marker is especially used to introduce a reformulation:

(17) pt. não te preocupes que mesmo daqui a uns anos pegas nelas e sentes-te bem na mesma. **I mean**... Quão sexy não é sair de a praia com jardineiras e o bikini...;))
(http://xanalicious.blogspot.com/2013/06/and-all-of-sudden.html; Portugal)

(18) pt. Afinal, merdas sempre acontecem. será que falta mais contato humano em algumas dessas (outras) empresas? **I mean**... os suporte técnico dalgumas empresas parecem muito robotizados.
(http://blog.fabioseixas.com.br/archives/2006/08/sinceridade_e_t.html; Brazil)

I mean is also found to be used in sentence-initial position to introduce a question. In these contexts, it also acts as a cut-marker (as mentioned by Imo 2006) because the speaker uses *I mean* to interrupt himself*herself and then formulates a question. Even though not having worked explicitly quantitatively, this use was more found in the Spanish varieties than in the varieties of Portuguese:

(19) sp. No todo es para todos.. siempre buscar algo que te vaya bien a ti, no? y súper básico creo que el cinturón nunca puede faltar.. **I mean**, por algo el pantalón tiene presillas no?. No sé si estoy en lo correcto pero soy fanático de los cinturones..
(http://fashionblogmexico.com/tips-moda-hombres/; Mexico)

(20) sp. A principios de año, alguien me defendió en twitter diciendo que jany... ser feliz no es un sentimiento ni un esfuerzo, es una DECISION! pero cómo decides eso? **I mean**, qué implica esa decisión? Para mi, estar feliz es sinónimo de estar tranquilo y en paz [...]
(http://luisenrique82.blogspot.com/2013/08/felicidad.html; Mexico)

(21) sp. Para ser sincero, estaba esperando que Jormungand no me gustara cosa de poder droppearla sin sin remordimientos. **I mean**, ¿quien necesita OTRA serie de 26, por mas que piensen dividirla con un trimesto de intermedio?
(http://crystal-energy-kai.blogspot.com/2012/04/jormungand-0103-her-name-is-koko-and.html; Peru)

(22) pt. Mas desde de a sua "festa de lançamento" que cresceu tudo em proporções ridículas que nada a nada se devem da qualidade do blog mas sim ao facto da Cristina ser famosa. **I mean**, quem é que faz uma festa de lançamento dum blog?
(http://www.love-other-drugs.com/2013/06/daily-cristina-e-minha-opiniao.html; Portugal)

Of course, due to 'creativity in punctuation', which may be part of the so-called 'secondary writtenness' or written orality, in the following instance, *I mean* is used intersententially because it is followed by a full stop. However, this might only be due to a typing error:

(23) sp. Creo que no debió decir que fue lo que leyó. Más bien parece que le dejaron un par de sagas sueltas sobre la mesa y el eligió al azar. **I mean**. ¿La muerte de Superman?
(http://salondelmal.com/2013/04/22/conoce-las-nuevas-fotos-de-man-of-steel-y-los-comics-que-inspiraron-a-henry-cavill/; Mexico)

In the following examples *I mean* is found to be used in a parenthetical position, but it also introduces a question. It is thus not used in front position of a sentence. The discourse marking function, however, cannot be denied. It interrupts the ongoing discourse so that it fulfils a cut-marking function and serves as an 'introducer' of the preceding question (cf. Imo 2006):

(24) pt. É de todas a menos provável a dar para o torto, **I mean**, quem é que vem ver se estamos mesmo doentes? pelo menos nunca ninguém me veio tirar a temperatura quando estava "com febre" [...]
(http://toughtbubble.blogspot.com/2012/04/um-guia-de-mas-maneiras-e-optimas.html; Portugal)

(25) sp. mal que me cae! A mí me ha pasado hasta con actores, **I mean**, que posibilidad hay que yo en vida conozca a Jim Carrey??
(http://copinapitli.blogspot.com/2009/04/puede-caer-mal-alguien-sin-conocerlo.html; El Salvador)

In the following three examples *I mean* precedes the adjusted or corrected material. It has a very small scope. In example (26) *copago* is corrected by *repago* and in (27) *donas* is corrected by *esposas*. *I mean* can thus be said to initiate self-repair (cf. Fox Tree/ Schrock 2002 and Imo 2006):

(26) sp. Después consiguieron que todos los medios de comunicación elucubraran semanalmente con el copago (**I mean**, repago) de moda más ocurrente que pudieran concebir.
(http://medicocritico.blogspot.com/2011/12/dejad-que-los-pobres-se-vayan-de-aqui.html; Spain)

(27) pt. Os representantes do primeiro grupo já foram conquistados e reconhecem quem são suas donas (**I mean**, esposas), enquanto os felinos precisam ser conquistados sempre.
(http://diariodoisgatos.wordpress.com/2012/10/16/como-conquistar-um-gato/; Brazil)

In text passage (28) the use of *I mean* is more explicating than correcting because it refers to the elements inserted (*dos bigatos*) into an already mentioned phrase *primeira vista ao veterinário*. Hence, existing material is repeated and modified:

(28) pt. Como educar gatos (e outras dúvidas / dicas sobre felinos) O post Saiba como educar seu gato, publicado depois de minha primeira visita ao veterinário (**I mean**: primeira visita dos bigatos ao veterinário) é um hit neste blog.
(http://diariodoisgatos.wordpress.com/2012/07/15/como-educar-gatos-e-outras-duvidas-sobre-felinos-2/; Brazil)

Similar to (28) is the following example (29) because an information already mentioned (*Uno más del montón*) is repeated and specified by a supplement (*de los guapos*), but *I mean* is postposed. It is used in sentence-final position and serves an anaphoric function:

(29) sp. Era sostenible, ni agorero 'malthusiano' ni especialmente optimista. Uno más del montón, del montón de los guapos, **I mean**. Sin embargo he de reconocer que, desde hace unos años, el tema me ha ido tocando la fibra sensible.
(http://diarioecologia.com/mas-mierda-y-menos-agua-el-mundo-que-heredaran-nuestros-hijos/; Spain)

I mean in (30) is also used sentence-finally. However, no material is repeated and modified. It is postposed to an entirely new sentence. Considering the context and relying on Imo (2006), *I mean* is obviously used in connection with a topic which is somehow 'delicate' because the speaker has an opinion which is, according to him*her, not shared by the majority of the society so that it can be said to fulfil a hesitating function:

(30) pt. Eu já namorei um moço cego, sabe? É uma coisa bem simples, ao contrário do que a sociedade pensa. Conviver com uma pessoa que não enxerga, **I mean**. Aliás, como todos os meus amigos [...]
(http://milarga.blogspot.com/2012/05/mas-que-falta-de-abuso-ca-familia.html; Brazil)

In example (31), *I mean* is also found in sentence-final position but at the end of a question. This use really seems to be non-native. From a functional perspective, and considering that the

speaker mentions a *maljodido*, the discourse marker seems to function as a hesitator (*Abtoenung*):

(31) sp. Un fuerte abrazo, Nick... ¿Julián Bluff es el mismo que con mirada canallesca y pose de duro firmaba como Noséqué Blum en lo del Lector Maljodido? (¿qué fue de aquel fulano, el maljodido, **I mean**?) Más divertida: bueno, vale […]
(http://patrulladesalvacion.com/2013/06/15/teatro-efimero/; Spain)

In the following examples *I mean* has a small scope because it only refers to a single adverb (32), a single adjective (33) or a noun phrase (34). It seems to be corrective, or rather, clarifying. Especially in (34), *I mean* specifies that the speaker expects good news (and not just news itself). As *I mean* follows the modified material, it is anaphoric. Furthermore, it is not semantically bleached as the sentence-initial use of the discourse marker *I mean*, for instance. In other words, it could also be translated as *digo*:

(32) sp. Mardito el día que dije basta. Pero como lo dije, me aguanto. Además, ahora que no fumo, viendo lo chungo que lo tienen los que fuman (públicamente **I mean**), acabaría pegándome con todo el mundo.
(http://amparoland.blogspot.com/2006/10/que-ganitaaaas-tengoooo-de-fumaaaaaaar.html; Spain)

(33) sp. Siento muchísimo que tengàis que escuchar cosas así, más aún cuando se trata de un hijo. ¡Vaya autocontrol! Besos Flipo con la gente. Ladecuatro tiene una compañera china. Adoptada, **I mean**. Me llevo muy bien con su madre y por mi condición de persona discreta nunca pregunto nada pero me encanta que me cuente su aventura.
(http://muchmorethaniam.blogspot.com/2013/05/cosas-que-no-nos-gusta-escuchar-los.html; United States)

(34) pt. [...] e 2013 começou, e cá estou eu ainda a esperar respostas, porém, com algumas novidades. Boas novidades, **I mean**. Há mais ou menos uma semana eu recebi um e-mail feliz que me perguntava se ainda tinha interesse em trabalhar para a Emirates.
(http://omundoemeuquintal.blogspot.com/2013/01/reconfirmacao-de-interesse.html; Portugal)

If used parenthetically, *I mean* also seems to fulfil a clarifying function, or rather, it is used to reformulate the preceding material, which is done because the speaker aims to clarify his*her earlier words:

(35) sp. Las fuerzas armadas tienen que ser independiente del gobierno y de partidos políticos, **I mean**, en una verdadera democracia.
(http://lageneraciony.com/?p=7267&cp=all; United States)

(36) sp. […] pero igualmente termina siendo más divertido salir un poco de lo usual, pero igual, claramente saldría a cualquier lado con lo que pongo, **i mean**, voy y me vuelvo en colectivo del baf jajaja, xoxo.
(http://rockingstyle.blogspot.com/2013/08/no-son-disfracessoy-yo.html; Argentina)

(37) pt. O assunto era a incapacidade das moça da minha geração na minha família de reproduzirem. Incapacidade psicológica, **I mean**, que ninguém tá tentando.
(http://milarga.blogspot.com/2011/12/na-hora-foi-engracado.html; Brazil)

(38) pt. Ele não descerá a isso. É um problema, mas não foi ele quem broxou, foi o Antônio Maria, **I mean**, a oposição partidária.
(http://veja.abril.com.br/blog/augusto-nunes/feira-livre/cartas-na-mesa-um-artigo-de-fernando-henrique-cardoso/; Brazil)

While the previous examples of *I mean* could be classified syntactically well (sentence-initial, sentence-final, parenthetic etc.), the uses of the discourse marker in the following text passages are not clearly assignable. This is also due to 'creativity in punctuation' and which represents a feature of 'secondary writtenness' or written orality.

In example (39) *I mean* is used as a reformulating strategy. The relatively abstract clause (*que tu y yo iniciemos una campaña para exigir que este tema siga siendo analizado*) is reformulated or clarified in the following segment, and this, in turn, is introduced by *I mean*:

(39) sp. ¿Total? Si la vida real se inicia en mi imaginación, la imaginación se inicia en... Alejo, propongo que tu y yo iniciemos una campaña para exigir que este tema siga siendo analizado, **I mean** que tu batiprima no se salga tan olímpicamente por la tangente (¿ sabes qué significa esto cierto?)
(http://porquetengolarealidadenlacabeza.blogspot.com/2013/07/si-las-peliculas-y-los-cuentos-no-son.html; Colombia)

In the following two examples *I mean* seems to be used as a cognitive particle. In other words, *I mean* is not inserted in order to structure the discourse and to relate the preceding segment and the following one. It rather seems to be used to signal the speaker's thinking, in order "to structure the speaker's thoughts" (Hennemann 2016: 99), which is underlined by the dots preceding (40) or surrounding (41) *I mean*:

(40) sp. Otra cosa, a pesar de que se lo bueno que es Don Omar como cantante, no me gusta tanto porque siempre quiere ser controversial... **I mean** y que es esa vaina tirandole a Héctor el Father después de tantos discos que han grabado y todas las coloboraciones que se han hecho mutuamente?
(http://nuevayores.blogs.com/remolacha/2006/12/reggaeton_menos.html; Dominican Republic)

Another interpretation of the use of *I mean* in (40) could be that it introduces the question (even though not to be identified immediately as a question because of the missing interrogation mark

and the missing accent on *que*). Furthermore, it is followed by *y* and not directly by the interrogative word.

(41) sp. 6) hay, o hubo, otros rockeros (con conocimiento y concepto) en tv, pero no se dedicaron a informar sobre cuestiones rockeras, los primeros que me vienen a la mento son: Petti, Pipo & (no fuera de el rock) Horacio Fontova... **i mean**.... sentar se a comer empanadas y hacer cut & paste es una cosa.... sigo..
(http://frasesrockeras.blogspot.com/2009/03/se-mucho-mas-de-rugby-que-de-rock-de.html; Argentina)

The denomination of a cognitive particle is in these examples comparable to the description of a cut-marker provided by Imo (2006) because *I mean* as a cut-marker is said to interrupt the ongoing flow of the utterances. Indeed, from a syntactic perspective, the prior segment, which is interrupted by *I mean*, is not continued but 'cut off'.

In the following three text passages *I mean* can be regarded as being used sentence-initially. It explains or specifies what is mentioned before (cf. Imo 2006):

(42) sp. otra cosa es que ni siquiera nuestro gobierno las cumple, pero eso ya es harina de otro costal: los rusos tenían una frase qeu resumía esa situación: la dureza de las leyes se compensa con la no obligatoriedad de su cumplimiento **I mean**, en realidad nuestra isla se gobierna pro decretos.
(http://espaciodeelaine.wordpress.com/2009/06/28/crisis-politica-en-honduras/; Cuba)

(43) sp. también cuando te pusiste a "narrar la apertura de los juegos olímpicos y vos solito llenaste 3 páginas de twitter en un par de horas creo que se convierte en la forma" todavía más facil de ganar te un unfollow **I mean**, hay que equilibrar, ni tanto autobombo, ni tanto mensaje bombardeando a tus follower […]
(http://javieraroche.com/2008/08/22/la-forma-mas-rapida-para-que-te-den-unfollow-en-twitter/; Guatemala)

In example (44), *I mean* introduces the fact that Will 'was left behind alone', which explains why the speaker felt sorry for Will (*Me dio pena que Will haya quedado solo*). So, again, it serves an explicative function:

(44) sp. Me dio pena que Will haya quedado solo, **i mean** despues todos se fueron a celebrar y hasta ahi quedo su participacion.
(http://www.gleeklatino.com/t17101-que-calificacion-le-das-a-i-do; Mexico)

In some examples, such as in the following ones, *I mean* is not the only English element found in a Spanish or Portuguese text passage:

(45) sp. Gracias Ale e leido todas tus sugerencias y sabes no me habia dado cuenta **that** todavia tengo **some** culpa **i mean** me siento de ves en cuanto culpable y eso debo de superarlo. (http://www.extj.com/showthread.php?23665-Lo-que-me-ayudo-cuando-recien-sali-de-la-WT; Mexico)

(46) pt. Por acaso, também, estou indo para Koenigsberg, atual Kaliningrad, depois de deixar Paris **at midnight**... Deleitai-vos, com o documentário, **I mean**... Paulo Roberto de Almeida Nenhum comentário: [...] (http://diplomatizzando.blogspot.com/2011/11/woody-allen-tem-os-que-gostame-tem-os.html; Brazil)

In example (45) *i mean* introduces the segment which represents a reformulation of *tengo some culpa*. While the first segment means that the speaker (indeed) is to blame for something, the reformulated segment expresses that the speaker only *feels* sorry sometimes ('I feel so guilty from time to time and I have to get over it'). In (46), by contrast, *I mean* seems to assume the function of a cognitive particle or a cut-marker (cf. Imo 2006).

4 Conclusion and outlook

The phenomenon of inserting an English discourse marker into a 'surrounding passage' of Spanish or Portuguese was set into the theoretical framework, or rather model, of the so-called *Markedness Model* developed by Myers-Scotton (1993, 1998). In this model, it is assumed that it is a conscious language choice to change the code from Spanish or Portuguese to English when using *I mean*. The speaker consciously decides to alternate his*her language in order to (additionally) communicate a meta-message by inserting an English element. The use of English by non-natives certainly marks participation in the global chatter community, signals belonging to a certain peer group and expresses desire for social recognition. Hence, this use is regarded as a socially motivated phenomenon (cf. Böhm/ Hennemann, under review).

The qualitative analysis of the use of the discourse marker *I mean* in Spanish and Portuguese online communication has demonstrated that it is used in different syntactic positions, even though the sentence-initial use represents the most usual position. This is in line with the use of *I mean* in (original) English discourses. Furthermore, it could be seen that *I mean* assumes different functions. However, as the corpus data suggest, the most prominent function is to introduce an explanation, specification or reformulation. The function of framing a quote (as mentioned by Imo 2006) could, for example, not be found. In addition, if *I mean* is used with a small scope, it is not semantically bleached as the sentence-initial use, in other words, as in the case of a canonical discourse marker. When having a small scope, it can often be understood as literally meaning/ saying something.

Respecting the different varieties, the corpus data suggest that the insertion of the English discourse marker *I mean* is more usual in online communication of Peninsular and Mexican Spanish than in the other Spanish varieties. According to the data for European and Brazilian Portuguese, it seems that *I mean* is more used in Brazilian Portuguese, whereas in discourses of European Portuguese *I mean* is often part of expressions like *if you know what I*

mean or *I mean it* etc., that is, when it does not fulfil the function of a discourse marker and when it is used as a full verb in the sense of thinking:

(47) pt. É- me indiferente que isto seja politicamente incorrecto, mas até acho que um parto pode traumatizar um homem, com consequências em matéria de intimidade futura, **if you know what I mean**.
(http://mike-desconversa.blogspot.com/2009/03/ser-pai-e-mais-dificil-que-ser-mae.html; Portual)

(48) pt. A Kelly tem mais de 50.000 com uma página criada a a poucos meses.;) **You know what I mean?** Nem me vou estender para falar de a Mariana […]
(http://casadossegredostvi.blogspot.com/2013/09/6-gala-danca-com-as-estrelas-com-fanny.html; Portugal)

(49) pt. [...] e o problema é que estas páginas representam apenas 1 página de o plano. **See what I mean?** E depois nem sequer sei o que fazer!
(http://illusionarypleasure.blogspot.com/2013/05/tidy-friday-12.html; Portugal)

(50) pt. O problema de ele é mesmo ser o maior chorão de a história de o Porto (**I mean it**).
(http://fraglider.pt/forum/viewtopic.php?p=806988; Portugal)

Future studies should concentrate on working out (more) distinctions between the use of *I mean* in European and American varieties. Furthermore, the use of *I mean* could be compared to the insertion of other particles or expressions such as *I think* or *I guess*, even though (when) they do not fulfil the function of a discourse marker (cf. Hennemann 2018 on *I think* in Portuguese).

Furthermore, targeted speaker interviews/ questionnaires could reveal what causes speakers to use *I mean* in Spanish or Portuguese discourses (online communication), and whether they only do so in the 'cyber world' or even in 'real-life' communication. Besides, explicit substitution tests could ask for the meaning difference between *I mean* and *digo*, *quiere decir*, *quer dizer* etc.

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