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| 号     | 14      |
| ページ | 1-24    |
| 発行年 | 2013    |
| ISBN   |          |

URL
http://hdl.handle.net/2297/34588
A Pragmatic and Cognitive Approach to the Usage of *I mean*

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Abstract
In this paper, the usage of the discourse marker *I mean* is defined as a marker representing a violation of certain principles of conversation as well as the speaker’s will to follow it. Specifically, I define “certain principles of conversation” as Grice’s conversational maxims (Grice (1989)), *face-saving* strategies in the Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson (1987)), or *intersubjective* coordination between the speaker and hearer (Verhagen (2005, 2007)). In other words, *I mean* marks the speaker’s offense either to Grice’s maxims, the hearer’s *face*, or mutual understanding with the hearer. It also marks his willingness to follow the maxim, save face for a hearer who feels threatened, or to come to a better understanding with the hearer after *I mean*. Since the fact that the speaker can replace an utterance violating a principle with the utterance following it by using *I mean* without apology, it can be said that the speaker saves his own *positive face* by uttering *I mean*. The discourse pragmatic functions of the discourse marker *I mean* have been defined under the label of “modification” in previous literature (e.g. Schiffrin (1987), Tanaka and Ishizaki (1994), Fox Tree and Schrock (2002), Brinton (2008)), though nothing has accounted for why the speaker modifies the previous utterance using *I mean*. Due to the lack of focus on the speaker’s motivation in this literature, there is no reasonable explanation for how their functional categories are ordered. Here in this paper, the three usages of *I mean* indicated above are illustrated as interconnected categories, not as a list of independent categories, in terms of the theories from pragmatics (i.e. Grice’s Conversational Maxims and Brown and Levinson (1987)’s Politeness Theory) and cognitive linguistics (i.e. Verhagen (2005, 2007)’s intersubjectivity).

Keywords
Grice’s Conversational Maxims, Politeness Theory, intersubjectivity

*I mean*の用法について－語用論的・認知言語学的アプローチ

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要旨
本論文では、グライスの公理とポライトネス理論、およびVerhagen（2005、2007）における
間主観性の観点を利用して、話題標識I meanの用法を定義し、用法間の関係を理論的に裏付けることを目的とする。話題標識I meanの先行研究には記述的なものが多く（田中・石崎（1994），Fox Tree and Schrock（2002），Brinton（2008）など）。I meanはこれまで「修正」の機能として定義づけられてきたが、その中でカテゴリーや関係が明白でなく、背後にある認知的なプロセスは明らかにされてこなかった。本論文では、I meanの機能を「前日発話で何らかの会話の原理に逸脱していることを示し、それに適した形にする」ことを表すマーカーとする。具体的には、前日発話で話し手が「グライスの原理に逸脱したために会話に適した形にする」、「相手のフェイスを脅かす発話をしたために相手のフェイスに配慮した発話にする」、「聞き手の想定する程度と異なるために話し手自らが想定する程度になるように説得する」という、大きく三つの用法があることを示す。先行研究がI meanに本質的に付与してきた「修正」の機能とはつまり、I meanが出現する会話の背後に存在する語用論的、認知的なプロセスであるといえよう。用法間の関係は「I meanのターゲットは何か」という観点から語用論と認知言語学の理論を応用することで明白にする。また、「何らかの原理に逸脱した発話を適合する形にする」という行為を排除しに達成できるという事実から、I meanを発話することで「相手によく思われたい」という自らのポジティブ・フェイスを保持する機能があると結論づける。

キーワード
グライスの原理、ポリテネス理論、間主観性

1. Introduction

I mean is not a mere combination of the first person pronoun “I” and the verb “mean” but it is meaningful as they are conventionally combined as one. In previous studies, the discourse pragmatic functions of I mean have been researched on a large scale (Brinton (2008: 112)) and a number of classifications have been suggested. Although their classifications by means of various viewpoints well cover the usages of I mean, they still fail to show the motivation of the speaker and the relation between the categories. In this paper, these unsolved issues will be settled following the pragmatic and cognitive theories: Grice’s Conversational Maxims, the Politeness Theory, and the notion of intersubjectivity from Verhagen (2005, 2007). Focusing on the discourse before I mean in respect to Grice’s theory, there are two patterns in the usages of I mean: What-is-said level, in which the speaker does not follow one of the maxims in the content of propositional information before I mean and does follow it after I mean, and Implicature level, in which the implicature generated by a violation of one of the maxims before I mean is not what the speaker intends to convey and then the speaker replaces it with the implicature after I mean which is what he wants to convey. Since the speaker does not follow one of the Grice’s Conversational Maxims in both of the levels before I mean and does follow after I mean, it can be said that I mean signals the speaker’s offense to Grice’s Conversational Maxims before I mean in both levels. However, there are still a lot of examples that cannot be explained by Grice’s Conversational Maxims. The reason why the speaker does not follow the maxims is to save the hearer’s positive or negative face. By using I mean, the speaker sometimes repeats
the same word or phrase before and after *I mean* such as "... big, *I mean*, big" and "... rich, *I mean*, rich". Although the repetition of the same words can be explained as the violation of the Grice’s maxim of Quantity, it does not fully account for the cognitive process involved in the repetitions of the same words (Nakamura (2010: 438)). According to Nakamura (2010), the speaker rejects the hearer’s supposition by repeating the same words. In case of the repetition before and after *I mean*, on the other hand, the speaker tries to adjust the gap between the extent of what the speaker and the hearer thinks. This kind of negotiation of information between what the speaker thinks and what the hearer thinks is not just the matter of the speaker’s violation of the maxim, nor of face saving. This interpersonal negotiation of information between the speaker and hearer is called Intersubjective Coordination. As will be discussed in the following chapters, the speaker replaces the previous discourse by *I mean* is because the speaker offends a principle of conversation. By uttering *I mean*, the speaker declares that he is going to follow the principle after *I mean*. The purpose of this paper is to bring the hidden process behind the label of “modification” to light and show the relations of the usages of *I mean*.

### 2. Preceding Studies

In this chapter, three works will be introduced: Schiffrin (1987), Brinton (2008), and Fox Tree and Schrock (2002). The first work introduces the term *discourse marker* (cf. Schourup (1999: 228–230) for further discussion of the terminology) and classifies *I mean* into two categories in relation to the origin of the two meanings of the predicate *mean*. While the two categories by Schiffrin (1987) schematically provides an explanation for the functions of *I mean*, Brinton (2008) classifies it into nine categories which are helpful to grasping the whole picture of *I mean* in that each title of the category shows how *I mean* works in conversation. Unlike Schiffrin (1987), which focuses on the speaker’s orientation of *I mean*, Fox Tree and Schrock (2002) brings up the function of *face saving* in respect to the social relation between the speaker and the hearer. Given several functions of *I mean* in the latter two previous studies, they are very helpful to grasp how the discourse marker *I mean* works in conversation, though they do not show how each category relates to one another. Moreover, in all of the three previous studies, the motivation for using *I mean* and what is replaced in the previous discourse by *I mean*, is ignored. Their focus is especially on the superficial relations between the two propositional information before and after *I mean* and also between the speaker and hearer. To solve the problems raised above, I will pay attention to the inner pragmatic and cognitive processes of the speaker using *I mean*. The inner process helps to clarify how each category relates to the others at the end of this paper.

### 3. Analysis from Grice’s Conversational Maxims

All the conversations I quote here are made in cooperative fashion in which the speaker and hearer follow what Grice (1989) called the Cooperative Principle. In this chapter, I discuss that *I mean* helps the speaker to be cooperative. By uttering *I mean*, the speaker indicates "I have just offended Grice’s Conversational
Maxims so let me amend the previous discourse in order to follow the maxims”. What is amended in the previous discourse is either what is said or what is implicated. I call the functions of *I mean* What-is-said level and Implicature level respectively. Although before uttering *I mean* the speaker believes that he follows the maxim, the speaker realizes that he in fact is not following it. Therefore he signals it by saying *I mean*.

3.1. Grice’s Cooperative Principle and the Four Maxims

In conversation, people do not have to say everything literally when they have a message to convey to another. Grice, in his literature, *Studies in the Way of Words* (1989), calls the given utterance what is said and calls the message of what the speaker conveys to the hearer what is implicated/implicature. Grice supposes that there is a shared rule of conversation called the Cooperative Principle. According to Grice, if there were no such rule, people would never try to find out what is implicated when they hear that the speaker means (in his sense of *meaning*ₙₙₙ”) something different from what is said, such as metaphors and ironies. Grice (1989) separates the principle into 4 maxims: maxim of Quantity, maxim of Quality, maxim of Relation, and maxim of Manner. Those maxims describe how the hearer attempts to find meaning in the speaker’s implicatures. Grice gives four cases when the speaker does not follow the maxim; the speaker violates, opts out, and flouts a maxim, and two maxims clash with each other⁴. There are two types of implicature: generalized conversational implicature and particularized conversational implicature. The former implicature is generated in all contexts and the latter one is generated in only the specific context when the speaker exploits the maxims.

Now we are going to see the process of how the speaker generates the two kinds of implicatures. The first maxim that Grice raises is the maxim of Quality⁵:

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

For example, the speaker lets the hearer guess what is implicated by giving less information than is required as shown in the example (1).

(1) A: Have you guys been to Australia before?
   B: He has.

There are three participants in this conversation (A, B, and C). Instead of saying “I have not been to Australia”, the speaker B implicates it by flouting the maxim, in other words, by mentioning only about C’s (C corresponds to “He” in B’s utterance) experience. Grice explains tautologies such as “War is war” and “A promise is a promise” as flouting of this maxim (Grice (1989: 33)).

The second maxim is the maxim of Quality.

Under the category of Quality falls a supermaxim—“Try to make your contribution one that is true”—and two more specific maxims:

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Metaphorical and ironical expressions can be
explained also as flouting of this maxim. By uttering what he does not believe to be true, the speaker can implicate something different from or even opposite of what is said. Since the speaker sometimes conveys what the same expression literally means, the implicature generated in metaphors and ironies are always dependent on context and therefore this implicature is an instance of particularized conversational implicatures. The following example, on the other hand, has another type of implicature called generalized conversation implicature, which is independent of the context.

(2) a. Mary is engaged.
   b. The speaker should have concrete evidence for Mary’s engagement.

When the example (2a) is uttered in any context, (2b) is generated as a generalized conversational implicature. When the speaker uses predicative expressions, it is not surprising for the hearer to conclude that his utterance is well-grounded.

The third maxim is called the maxim of Relation.

Under the category of Relation I place a single maxim, namely, “Be relevant.”

There are not so many cases in which the speaker clearly violates this maxim (Grice (1989: 35)). If any, it will be the case when a participant of a conversation suddenly utters something unrelated to the previous discourse to change an ongoing topic. Imagine that three people (let me call them A, B, and C) are talking in A’s house and B starts insulting C. When the speaker A said out of the blue “Would you guys like to have some sweets?,” it can be said that A’s utterance is meant to change the topic or to stop the quarrel. Even though A’s sudden suggestion sounds irrelevant and violates the maxim of Relation, the hearers try to find out what is implicated by supposing that the speaker follows the Cooperative Principle on a deeper level.

The last among the four maxims is called the maxim of Manner.

Finally, under the category of Manner, which I understand as relating not (like the previous categories) to what is said but, rather, to how it is said is to be said, I include the supermaxim—“Be perspicuous”— and various maxims such as:

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly.

Grice raises the following example as flouting of the maxim:

(3) Miss X produced a series of sounds that corresponded closely with the score of “Home Sweet Home.” (Grice (1989: 37))

Instead of saying “Miss X sang ’Home Sweet Home’”, the speaker is intentionally being verbose and implicates that Miss X’s singing was terrible.

3.2. What-is-said Level

As is shown in the following examples, the speaker amends the previous discourse because he does not follow one of the maxims and then he follows it after I mean in what-is-said level, meaning he uses I mean when he does not follow one of the maxims in the
propositional information before *I mean*.

(4) **JA:** Do Isabella and Connor come down to Nashville a lot?

**NK:** No, they don’t. They’re not crazy about Nashville. They’re so grown up now. *I mean*, they’re adults.

(COCA²)

In the example (4), the speaker NK replaces the phrase “grew up” with “adults”. It is because one who is “grown up” is not necessarily mature in terms of age but he may be a teenager who just looks mature. NK’s replacement of “adults” represents that Isabella and Connor are mature in terms of both age and mentality. It can be explained by the flouting of the maxim of Manner since the part of the utterance before *I mean* “grown up” is ambiguous in this context. After *I mean*, the speaker follows the maxim and gives more concrete word “adult”. While the speaker replaces a word or phrase in what-is-said level because of its ambiguity in the example (4), the replacement by *I mean* is because of its insincerity in the following example.

(5) “I’ll see you in the morning.” She laughed. *I mean, afternoon.*

(FLOB², quoted from Brinton (2008: 115))

In the example (5), the speaker replaces the previous word “morning” with “afternoon”. The previous discourse is not what he believes to be true since the time when “she” is going to meet “you” is in the afternoon but not in the morning. Therefore, this usage of *I mean* can be accounted for as follows: “I have just violated the maxim of Quality so let me correct what I have just said to follow the maxim”.

### 3.3. Implicature Level

The speaker amends not only what he actually said in his previous discourse but also what is implicated. *I mean* also signals that the speaker does not follow the maxims, however, the target of *I mean* is not what-is-said, but implicature.

In the following example, the speaker B flouts the maxim of Quantity, but the speaker B’ follows the maxim before *I mean*.

(6) **A:** Have you guys been to Australia before? (cf.(1))

**B:** He has, *I mean*, I am going to visit there next year though.

**B’:** I haven’t, *I mean*, I’m going to visit there next year though.

As is discussed earlier, the speaker B implicates that “I have not been to Australia” by flouting the maxim of Quality. This is why the speaker talks about himself after *I mean* by which he is able to follow the maxim of Quantity. It may sound unnatural if the speaker still talks about him after *I mean* like “?He has, *I mean*, he went there last year”. When the speaker follows the maxim before *I mean* as in the utterance B’, it does sound like a highschool student in that he uses *I mean* just to keep his turn in the conversation, according to my informants. The speaker does not follow the maxim of Quality before *I mean* and does follow it after *I mean* in the next example (7) as well.

(7) **JEREMY:** I remember seeing a picture of him before. I was going through some old photographs, cleaning out a closet. Amy said it was an old boyfriend.
BOOTH: Hmm. They keep in contact?

JEREMY: No. I mean, uh, she would have told me. Why? You don't think that—did he kill her?

(IMSDb)

This conversation is between the FBI agent named Booth and the victim’s (Amy) husband Jeremy. Booth suspects that Amy’s old boyfriend killed her. After Jeremy utters "No" in his second turn of the conversation, he raises a reason why he said so. When he uttered “No” before I mean, it was not one hundred percent certain for him that they did not have contact, which is obvious from his reasoning after I mean. Therefore, in this case, it can be said that the speaker Jeremy flouts the maxim of Quality in implicature level, in that the generalized conversational implicature (“I have concrete evidence to prove negative”) generated by the previous discourse "No" is not what he believes to be true.

The following example shows how I mean signals the flouting of the maxim of Relation in the previous discourse and also the speaker’s desire to replace it with an utterance which follows the maxim.

(8) DOYLEY: Last time I found him, he was assigned on to a Liberian Oil tanker bound for Tibet del Fuego.

ANGELA: Oh, okay. That narrows it down. He’s a sailor, he’s maybe Brazilian, and he’s named after a flute.

HODGINS: You know what else narrows it down. He’s a titan—half man, half god. I mean, I can see why...why you’ve....

ANGELA: Hodgins, stop it. (IMSDb)

Angela and Hodgins meet with Doyley, the private investigator who is looking for Angela’s husband. Doyley asks Angela if she married a guy without knowing his name and Angela tells him that it was Fiji and she was on vacation (so yes). Since Hodgins longs for marriage with Angela, they seriously search for the mysterious sailor to get him to sign the agreement of divorce. In the last turn of the conversation, Hodgins flouts the maxim of Relation in that he voices what he thinks about Angela’s “husband” with very unusual words not typically used to describe a person. After I mean, however, Hodgins tries to make a point of why he describes the “husband” with such a series of unrelated words (“I can see why...why you’ve...” (ex. fallen in love with him)), but he fails (“Hodgins, stop it.”).

While a series of words irrelevant to describe a person are listed in the previous example, a series of events, though related, are unnecessarily listed before I mean in the following example.

(9) Jesse: I don’t hate you, alright? Come on, it’s no big deal, alright? I flew all the way over there, you blew the thing off, and then my life has been a big nosedive since then, but I mean it’s not a problem.

Céline: No, you can’t say that!

Jesse: No, I’m kidding. I’m kidding.

(Before Sunset, 2004/7 movie)

It has been nine years since an American young man Jesse and a French young woman Céline first met in Paris. Now their reunion
has occurred thanks to Jesse’s book tour in Paris. Although they promised to reunite a half year after they first met, Céline could not make it because of her grandmother’s funeral. By listing what Céline did badly to him in his first turn of the conversation, Jesse tried to make her feel that she has a debt to pay. However, the list before *I mean* is too long to just say that she owes him. Moreover, he actually does not have to blame her so strongly since it is obvious that he does not care about what she did to him from the discourse after *I mean*. Therefore, it can be explained as follows: *I mean* signals that the speaker flouts the fourth sub-maxim of the maxim of Manner, or “Be brief” and also that he amends it to follow the maxim.

While it is discussed that *I mean* signals an offense to Grice’s Cooperative Principle, there are cases of *I mean* in which the speaker violates the maxims after *I mean* due to aspects of the social interaction between the speaker and hearer. In the following chapter, I will discuss the usages of *I mean* in relation to the notion of *face work*. Just as *I mean* signals an offense to Grice’s maxims, the usages of *I mean* in the following chapter signals a face-threatening in the utterance before *I mean*.

4. Analysis from the Politeness Theory

From Grice’s Conversational Maxims, it is observed that *I mean* signals that the speaker did not follow one of the maxims in his previous discourse and that he is going to follow the maxim after *I mean*. As is shown in the following example, however, there are usages of *I mean* in which the speaker does not amend the previous discourse to follow the maxim.

00 “Yes, but sir…”
01 “Yes, Willoughby?”
02 The CO’s smile was really very pleasant.
03 “It’s what you joined to do, isn’t it?”
04 “No, sir. I mean Yes, sir. I mean, I’m an actor, sir”
05 He gulped and went rushing on.
06 “I have to start rehearsal on Monday, I’ve got a new job to go back to.”
07 “Sorry about that. You’ll have to let them know you’ve been called up.”

(BNC)

These exchanges take place during a cocktail party at a military training camp. The commanding officer (CO) is telling Willoughby to go up to the front line. When Willoughby is asked if fighting in the front line was his purpose for joining the training, he first answered in the negative and then he replaced his answer in the positive. Since it is obvious that Willoughby does not want to go to the front line, he should have been honest in his utterance before *I mean* (“No, sir”). His positive answer is rather what he is supposed to answer. In other words, he answered positively since the question (“It’s what you joined to do, isn’t it?”) is phrased in such a way as to suggest the desired answer, namely “Yes, sir”. In respect to Grice’s maxim of Quality, this example shows that *I mean* does not signal an offense to the maxim, in that Willoughby’s flouting of the maxim occurs after *I mean*. As will be discussed below, the question of why the speaker replaces the previous discourse in which he follows the maxim deals with politeness. Briefly speaking, *I mean* signals that the speaker does not save either hearer’s negative face in the previous discourse and also that he is going to give a
less face-threatening utterance after *I mean*.

### 4.1. Face, Politeness Strategies, and Face Threatening Acts

#### 4.1.1. Face

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), everybody taking part in an interpersonal relationship has two kinds of desires called *face*: *negative face* and *positive face*. They are basic desires of adult members of a society, both of which they wish to satisfy in conversations. The former kind of face is the desire not to be interrupted by others and the latter face is the desire to be well thought of by others. Speaking of face work in conversations, the speaker saves the hearer’s negative face when he selects an expression as a result of trying not to hurt the hearer’s negative face and the speaker saves the hearer’s positive face when the speaker’s choice of an expression is a result of his intention to not hurt the hearer’s positive face. The choice of language by the speaker, as a result of his consideration for the hearer’s negative/positive face, is called *politeness*. The politeness which prevents the hearer’s negative face from being threatened is called *negative politeness* and the one which protects his or her positive face is called *positive politeness*.

#### 4.1.2. Politeness Strategies

As mentioned in the previous section, the speaker’s consideration of which expression to choose so as not to hurt the hearer’s negative/positive face is called politeness. While the definitions of *face* (originally from Goffman (1967)) and *negative/positive politeness* are not very transparent, *strategies* of negative/positive politeness, which define what the speaker does in conversation to prevent the hearer’s positive face from being threatened, are quite specific. Brown and Levinson (1987) raises 15 positive politeness strategies. The following examples represent the first strategy “Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)” and the sixth strategy “Avoid disagreement”.

1. *Goodness, you cut your hair!* (...) By the way, I came to borrow some flour.
   (Brown and Levinson (1987: 103))
2. A: That’s where you live, Florida?
   B: That’s where I was born. (ibid. 114)

In the example (11), the speaker saves the hearer’s positive face by remarking on the change of the hearer’s hair style. Also in the next example (12), the speaker B saves the hearer A’s positive face in that B did not say “No” directly, but rather, he “implicates” it in Grice’s sense. Though B could say, “No. I live in ...(ex. Boston)”, he did not, since this directly threatens the hearer’s positive face. The reason why B flouts Grice’s maxim of Quality is attributable to positive politeness. Another series of politeness strategies used to keep the hearer’s negative face from being threatened are called *negative politeness strategies*. The following quote explains the fifth strategy “Give deference”, showing that the speaker selects the second word of each pair so as not to threaten the hearer’s negative face.

In English the second member of pairs like *Snuggs/Dr. Snuggs, eat/dine, man/gentleman, give/bestow, bit/piece, book/volume* and so on encode greater respect to the person, activity or thing.

(2) By using the second expression (*Dr. Snuggs* instead of just *Snuggs, eat* instead of *dine, and*
so on), the speaker shows his respect to the hearer, effectively saving the hearer’s negative face.

4.1.3. Face Threatening Acts

Although it is favorable for the speaker to hold a conversation without threatening his own face nor the hearer’s face at all times, some speech acts inevitably threaten the speaker’s or hearer’s face when they are uttered. Such acts are named as Face Threatening Acts (FTA). Below is a table which illustrates the relationship between different kinds of FTA and face which are threatened by these speech acts.

For example, a criticism threatens the hearer’s positive face.

03 It usually takes me less than an hour to read a paper in English, but 3 hours for your thesis!

Imagine this is uttered by a professor and that the thesis mentioned is no more than 50 pages (double spaced). The hearer is criticized for his unreadable thesis. His positive face (i.e. a desire to be well thought of by others) is threatened (or destroyed, I would say) in that the professor does not like the student’s thesis at all. Another example is of the speech act of apology. It threatens the speaker’s positive face.

04 A: Oh my god ... Who spilled coffee on my thesis?
B: Um... I’m sorry, it’s me.

In the example (14), the speaker B admits his responsibility for the big brown spot on A’s thesis. In facing the one who did something harmful to you, nobody will feel good. Therefore, admitting fault leads the speaker to lose his own positive face.

4.2. Usages of I mean to Save Hearer’s Face

Even though there are speech acts by which the speaker inevitably threatens the speaker/hearer’s face, it is impossible to avoid them in conversations. To redress the force of FTA, Brown and Levinson (1987) raises 15 strategies for saving the hearer’s positive face and 10 strategies for their negative face. Here it is illustrated that the discourse marker I mean represents the speaker’s redress for FTA. In other words, it signals “I have just given an utterance which threatens the hearer’s positive/negative face, so let me replace it with something less threatening”. The first example shows that I mean signals that the speaker’s utterance has threatened the hearer’s positive face.

05 PROF ENO: That’s enough! It does appear to be a poem, though. Hmmm ... “time to die, you stupid bald git/Your conceptual ambient albums don’t mean shit/Your teaching methods of meaning are bereft/And Roxy Music were only good when you left”. Is this about me, by any chance?

ICE-T: Yes, I mean, no! It’s about ...
Erm ... it’s about George
This conversation is between a teacher (PROF ENO) and a student (ICE-T). When the teacher asked if "you" mentioned in the student's poem was the teacher himself, the student said "Yes" first and then changed it to "no" after I mean. The student's answer "Yes" threatens the hearer's positive face in that the content of his poem is unfavorable to the hearer at all. After I mean, the speaker tries to cancel the force of the FTA by denying that "you" refers to the hearer. The speaker's utterance after I mean does not threat the hearer's positive face because it is what the hearer expected to hear in answer to his question "Is this about me, by any chance?". Therefore, it can be said that I mean when used in between the two utterances works to signal that the speaker has just threatened the hearer's positive face and he is going to replace the previous discourse with a less threatening one.

Although I mean in the following example (16) (= (10)) functions the same way as the previous example (15), in that the speaker replaces his previous discourse with the utterance which is expected by the hearer, the speaker saves the hearer's negative face.

(16) "Yes, but sir..."
"Yes, Willoughby?"
The CO's smile was really very pleasant.
"It's what you joined to do, isn't it?"
"No, sir. I mean Yes, sir. I mean, I'm an actor, sir"
He gulped and went rushing on.
"I have to start rehearsal on Monday, I've got a new job to go back to."
"Sorry about that. You'll have to let them know you've been called up."

As I mentioned before, the speaker in the example first utters "No, sir", which is his honest answer to the question, but then replaces it with "Yes, sir", which is what he is supposed to say to his superior officer (the CO in this case). In other words, saying "Yes, sir" is more respectful to the superior than "No, sir" in the military. This seems to be a special case of the negative politeness strategy "5: Give deference". Obviously, Willoughby is not trying to get close to the CO by saying "Yes sir", but is rather trying to keep up a formal relationship with him. Hence, I mean in the example (16) signals that the speaker threatens the hearer's negative face in his previous discourse and that he is going to replace it with a more formal answer which is less threatening to the hearer's negative face. So far, two examples of I mean showing a replacement of "Yes" with "No" and vice versa are given, and they both have been categorized under the same label "repair" (e.g. Tanaka and Ishizaki (1994), Fox Tree and Shrock (2002), Brinton (2008)). However, they are categorized as different usages here; I mean leading a positive politeness strategy, and I mean leading a negative politeness strategy.

4.3. Usages of I mean to Save Speaker's Face
It just does not sit right with me that the speaker corrects his previous discourse by I mean without admitting or apologizing for his mistake. One may conclude, then, that the original meaning of the predicate mean scarcely remains in today's usage of I mean. However, this does not explain why the speaker
sometimes puts the apologetic phrase "I'm sorry" before I mean but not at other times. Here the question of why the speaker can correct the previous utterance by I mean will be examined in terms of the speaker's face saving of his own.

Although it is only the hearer's face that Brown and Levinson (1989) assume as being a target of politeness, I believe that the speaker chooses his expressions not only to save the hearer's face but also to save his own face, or even both. A Japanese discourse marker "zyan", is extended to obtain the usage of saving both speaker's and hearer's positive face and even so far as to save the speaker's positive face only (Fukuharu (2010: 171)). Unlike "zyan", the discourse marker I mean seems to extend to not just the usages of saving both the speaker's positive face and hearer's negative face but also saving both the speaker's positive face and the hearer's positive face. The following examples show that the usage of I mean fundamentally works to save both the speaker's and hearer's positive face, as it is more favorable to apologize his mistake explicitly before I mean when he uses I mean in front of the one who is socially distant from him such as a stranger or a professor.

(7) a. (to a stranger) Excuse me, may I borrow your pen? I'm sorry, I mean a pencil.
b. (to a stranger) Excuse me, may I borrow your pen? I mean a pencil.
c. (to your close friend) Hey, can I borrow your pen? I mean a pencil.
d. (to your close friend) Hey, can I borrow your pen? I'm sorry, I mean a pencil.

08 a. A professor: Do you remember what time your appointment is?
A student: Yes. I'm afraid it's at 2 o'clock today ... I'm sorry, I mean it's at 3.
b. A professor: Do you remember what time your appointment is?
A student: Yes. I'm afraid it's at 2 o'clock today ... I mean it's at 3.
c. (between friends)
A: What time is the Celtics' game tonight?
B: From 7, I mean it's from 8.
d. (between friends)
A: What time is the Celtics' game tonight?
B: From 7, I'm sorry, I mean it's from 8.

According to my survey of native English speakers, the utterances (a) and (c) sound more natural than (b) and (d) in both examples. This can be explained by looking at the face work between the speaker and hearer. In the examples (17a-b) and (18a-b), it is considered suitable to apologize for his mistake first when the speaker talks with the one who is socially distant from himself. After the speaker first saves the hearer's negative face by the speech act of apologizing ("I'm sorry") , he saves his own positive face by I mean. In the examples (17c-d) and (18c-d), on the other hand, it sounds proper when the speaker does not apologize for his mistake before I mean. Without an apology the speaker can save his own positive face even though he threatens the speaker's negative face at the same time. When I asked to the native speakers why they do not have to say sorry for their mistakes as in the examples (17d) and (18d), they said there was no need to apologize as they were
casual mistakes. For one of my informants, "I'm sorry" in (18d) was so outstanding that it sounded even cynical or sarcastic to her as in the following example.

How is your husband doing? **I'm sorry, I mean** your ex-husband14.

The fact that the mistakes that the speaker made in the previous two examples (17) (18) are casual ones leads to the conclusion that **I mean** in casual speech works to save the hearer's positive face, as well as the speaker's own positive face. Replacing the utterance by **I mean** without apologizing would be the same as saying "It is just a small mistake so it is actually unfriendly if I apologize for such a small thing between us". **I mean** has been discussed in relation to face saving acts in the previous literature:

...**I mean** may be linked with positive politeness because using it reminds conversational participants of more casual talk. At the same time, it may be linked to negative politeness by decreasing face threat; saying **I mean** may be like saying "I'm not committed to what I just said and will adjust if you are offended."

(Fox Tree and Schrock (2002: 741))

However, this explanation cannot be applied for all of the usages of **I mean**. For example, the speaker in the examples (17a) and (18a) saves neither hearer's positive face or negative face but only saves his own positive face by **I mean**. The face work around using **I mean** deserves more detailed examination.

Since the speaker can replace the previous utterance without apologizing his mistake before **I mean**, it can be said that **I mean** commonly works to save the speaker's own positive face. This might be the reason why the speaker needs an apology before **I mean** when the speaker is in the situation that the hearer's face cannot be threatened such as in a conversation with somebody who is socially distant from the speaker.

In this chapter, it is posited that one of the usages of **I mean** can be defined in terms of Politeness Theory; **I mean** signals that the previous discourse threatens the hearer's positive or negative face and it is going to be replaced with an utterance which prevents the face from being threatened. In addition, by investigating the face work in each example, it is clear that the basic usage of **I mean** is to save the speaker's own positive face in that the speaker does not have to apologize for the mistake he made in his previous discourse.

5. Intersubjectivity

So far, the relationship between the speaker and the hearer has been discussed in terms of conversational implicature and face work; the speaker amends the previous discourse by **I mean** since he does not follow Grice's maxims or does not consider the hearer's face before **I mean**. However, in the following example, the usage of **I mean** cannot be explained by an offence to Grice's maxims nor face saving.

"In her last season on television, Oprah wants to model for her audience of millions the art of coming to grips with the uneasy business of repairing torn relations." Fans are lapping it up. "I really thought someone like Oprah, with all her money and fame, wouldn't care if people
were mad at her or didn’t like her. **I mean,** she’s Oprah,” says Audrey Mason, 33, a private nurse from Cleveland, Ohio.

(COCA)

The lady named “Oprah” in the example above is one of the most famous and wealthiest TV personalities in the U.S. Audrey, the speaker, thought that someone who has a lot of money and a high reputation would not care about what other people say, and the reason why Audrey thought so is that the very lady she mentioned is Oprah, but not just some other women. In this case, the speaker does not offend one of Grice’s maxims in the previous discourse, but rather flouts the maxim of Quantity after **I mean** in that the fact that “She’s Oprah” does not supply any more information in addition to the previous discourse. Nor does the speaker save the hearer’s face by flouting the maxim, since Audrey’s utterance after **I mean** does not redress the FTA from her previous discourse. The failure of the explanations from Grice’s Conversational Maxims and the Politeness Theory can be ascribed to the fault which is immanent in those theories; in other words, the cognitive process of human beings is not reflected in those theories. According to Grice (1989), the speaker generates implicatures by exploiting the maxim and the hearer understands what is implicated by backtracking the process. However, the process is not exactly what speaker does in his mind since we all can implicate something without knowing Grice’s theory. Also, although the Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) supplies a persuasive reason why the speaker does not follow Grice’s maxims, face-saving is not the only reason why the speaker does not follow the maxims as is shown in the example (20). I strongly believe that the notion of intersubjectivity by Verhagen (2005, 2007) well supports the aspect of conversation which Grice’s Conversational Maxims and the Politeness Theory fail to explain, in that his idea is based on a mankind’s basic cognitive process of entertaining the other person’s point of view and also his challenge aims at describing what is going on in the speaker’s mind by making use of the idea of mental space (the term is originally from Fauconnier (1994)). In this chapter, I would like to show the usages of **I mean** in which the speaker amends the previous discourse as a result of reading what the hearer thinks by entertaining the hearer’s point of view. The usage of **I mean** in the example (20) can be described as follows: the speaker (conceptualizer 1) rejects the viewpoint of the hearer (conceptualizer 2) by **I mean**.

5.1. Intersubjectivity in Verhagen (2005, 2007)

According to Verhagen (2007), all the linguistic expressions can be located in between maximally objective and highly subjective expressions. Maximally objective expressions are, for example, common nouns such as *lamp* and *tree* and highly subjective expressions are interjections such as "Hi" and "Sorry". Their construal configurations are depicted as follows (Verhagen (2007: 61–62)):

Object of conceptualization:

Subject of conceptualization (Ground):

Figure 1: Construal configuration in maximally objective expressions
Object of conceptualization:

Subject of conceptualization (Ground):

Figure 2: Construal configuration in highly subjective expressions

I have furthermore suggested that the basic construal configuration should be seen as involving a relation of intersubjective coordination, reflecting the typically human cognitive ability to identify with conspecifics, and thus to conceive of things from other points of view. (Verhagen (2007: 62))

As it is said above, the coordination relationship between the two conceptualizers presupposes our cognitive ability; entertaining the other's point of view. The two cases above are mere exceptions so all the other linguistic expressions will be located in the middle of them in terms of conceptual configuration. For example, when the speaker puts a determiner before a common noun as "the lamp", the element at the level of ground will be profiled in that the speaker and hearer need to identify which lamp is "the lamp". After the two conceptualizers identify "the lamp", they need to see the exact lamp mentioned in the utterance. Since the two conceptualizers pay attention to the same material, the way of construal is also called joint attention. Therefore the vertical line will be profiled in the expression "the lamp". Here I would like to show the basic frame of the construal configuration from Verhagen (2007: 60) and then identify its elements (numbers in circles and emphasis are added by the author):

Object of conceptualization: ①

Subject of conceptualization (Ground): ②

Figure 3: The construal configuration and its basic elements
Table 2: Elements of the construal configuration

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Level of subject of conceptualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Level of object of conceptualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>First event represented in an utterance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Second event represented in an utterance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The relation between the two events (3 and 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Joint attention or the way of construal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Conceptualizer 1 (the speaker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conceptualizer 2 (the hearer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Coordination relationship between the two conceptualizers (=intersubjective relationship)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the elements in the construal configuration are represented by two kinds of lines/circles; bold lines/circles are for profiled, and dotted ones are for non-profiled elements.

As there is not enough space to introduce every single specific linguistic phenomenon from Verhagen (2005, 2007), only two related linguistic phenomena would be introduced here. The first example is the causal connective because. The following examples are quoted from Sweetser (1990: 77):

a. John typed her thesis because he really loves her.

b. John really loves her, because he typed her thesis.

c. What are you doing tonight? Because there’s a good movie on.

According to Verhagen (2007), these three usages of because can be differentiated by the construal configuration:

... because (here (21a)) profiles a causal relationship as part of the object of conceptualization; ..., it (here (21b)) construes an element of the object of conceptualization (the fact that John typed her thesis) as an argument for the addressee to accept the conclusion that John’s love for her must also be part of the object of conceptualization ... , it (here (21c)) justifies an element of the ground itself, namely, the speech act of asking. (Verhagen (2007: 70))

As they are different in the elements profiled, their construal configurations will be depicted as follows:

![Figure 4: Construal configuration for (21a)](image)

![Figure 5: Construal configuration for (21b)](image)

![Figure 6: Construal configuration for (21c)](image)

In the example (21b), the speaker tries to convince the hearer to accept that "John loves her" by raising the reason why he thinks so, namely "he types her thesis". Since both the speaker and hearer jointly focus on the propositional information of the speaker’s reasoning, "he types her thesis", the speaker,
the hearer, and joint attention are profiled. In the example (21c), on the other hand, the speaker gives a reason why he asked the question, “What are you doing tonight?”. As the speaker’s explanation for asking takes place between the speaker and the hearer, only the elements in ground are profiled. Looking at Figure 4 through 6, there is a shift of profiling from the level of object of conceptualization to the level of subject of the conceptualization. This is what Verhagen calls *subjectification*.

The second example is the complement-taking predicate *I think*. As it is known broadly, *I think* is used both as a main clause and an epistemic marker;

1. **I think** he will arrive on time, but I am not sure/ but John is skeptical.  
   (Verhagen (2007: 71))
2. (talking about a photo collage on the wall) 
   TERRY: I think it’s cool.  
   ABBIE: it i = s cool.  
   MAURREN: it i = s great.  
   (Verhagen (2005: 92))

In the former example, *I think* is strongly connected with its adjunct clause “he will arrive on time”, in that the speaker’s epistemic stance leans more toward what is said in the adjunct clause but less towards the hearer. On the other hand, *I think* in the latter example does not refer to what is said in its following clause. Rather, it is the hearer that the speaker wants to convey his epistemic stance to, in that he is trying to convey his lack of confidence to the hearer. Verhagen illustrates the construal configurations for the examples as follows (Verhagen (2007: 69–71)):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object of conceptualization:</th>
<th>Subject of conceptualization (Ground):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 7: Construal configuration for (22)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object of conceptualization:</th>
<th>Subject of conceptualization (Ground):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8: Construal configuration for (23)**

While the speaker’s epistemic stance is toward what is said when *I think* is used as a main clause, it is toward the hearer when *I think* is used as an epistemic marker. Therefore the elements of object of conceptualization are more profiled in Figure 7, whereas the ground’s elements are more profiled in Figure 8.

### 5.2. Intersubjective Coordination in the Usages of *I mean*

As for the investigation of other linguistics expressions, I believe the notion of intersubjectivity to also be one of the very important aspects for the usage of *I mean*, since the speaker uses *I mean* to replace the previous utterance with other words, reading what the hearer thinks. Here the example raised in the first part of this chapter will be examined from intersubjectivity.

3. “In her last season on television, Oprah wants to model for her audience of millions the art of coming to grips with the uneasy business of repairing torn relations.” Fans are lapping it up. "I really thought someone like Oprah, with all her money and fame, wouldn’t care if people were mad at her or didn’t like her. I
mean, she’s Oprah,” says Audrey Mason, 33, a private nurse from Cleveland, Ohio.

(COCA)

In the example (24) (= (20)), although the speaker adds the information after I mean, the fact that, “she’s Oprah”, is not additional information, in that the speaker said, “someone like Oprah”, in his previous discourse. Therefore, this usage of I mean does not refer to what is said in the speaker’s previous discourse like the usage of I think in the example (23). It is more reasonable to conclude that the speaker rejects what the hearer thinks by I mean in that the speaker’s repetition of the person’s name “Oprah” results from the speaker’s emphasis on Oprah her referring to and not anybody else. The usage of I mean in this example may be paraphrased by “you may think that someone like Oprah having a lot of money and fame would care, but she is different.” This kind of intersubjective coordination between the speaker and hearer will be seen in the following examples too.

SIMON: He owns his own record label, clothing line and movie production company, generating almost $500 million a year in sales. It’s no coincidence that he named his record label Roc-A-Fella. It’s an amazing achievement for a man who grew up in one of New York’s toughest housing project. He’s living the 21st century version of the American dream, straight out of the hood. Fifteen years ago, if somebody had come up to you in the projects and said, you know, you’re going to be rich and I don’t mean rich. I mean rich!

JAY-Z: Right!

(COCA)

“You knew him round the halls, didn’t you?”


“Where did he come from?”

“Poland, I think, originally. His parents come over in—I don’t know—early twenties, I suppose. When Marius was about fifteen. He done all kinds of things in the business. I mean all kinds. Wrestling promotions, girlie shows, Variety. I think he even been on the boards himself in the early days.”

(BNC)

In the examples above, there are repetitions of word(s) before and after I mean: “rich” and “all kinds”. I mean in (25) and (26) can be described as “my sense of richness is way above from yours” and “you may think that ‘all kinds’ is an exaggeration but it is not” respectively. What the three examples share is that the speaker, by entertaining the hearer’s point of view, rejects what (the speaker thinks) the hearer expects. The construal configuration for this usage of I mean will be depicted as the following:

Object of conceptualization:

Subject of conceptualization

(Ground):

Figure 9: Construal configuration for intersubjective usages of I mean

In addition to the intersubjective coordination relationship between the two conceptualizers,
joint attention is also profiled in Figure 9 since the speaker invites the hearer to comprehend what the speaker said in the previous discourse. Sadly, however, the construal configuration has not yet been a perfect distinguisher in that Figure 9 for *I mean* forms exactly the same as Figure 7 for *I think* as an epistemic marker despite their lack of interchangeability. Although this suggests that the horizontal line in the level of ground needs to be developed, any further discussion is outside the scope of this paper.

As I mentioned in the first part of this chapter, the interpersonal coordination discussed above cannot be explained by either Grice’s Conversational Maxims or the Politeness Theory. One may analyze this usage of *I mean*, however, as a flout of the first sub-maxim in Grice’s maxim of Quantity, “Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange)”. In fact, by taking the utterances before and after *I mean* as a whole, the speaker flouts the maxim of Quantity in that the speaker serves less information than is required by repeating the same word(s) twice before and after *I mean*. Like tautologies, the usage of *I mean* explained as the intersubjective coordination can be analyzed as an implicature generated by flouting the maxim of Quantity. I agree that Grice’s Conversational Maxims account for both tautologies and this usage of *I mean* though Grice’s theory still fails to explain the actual cognitive process taken place in the speaker’s mind. Nakamura (2010) points out the commonality between the mental process of tautologies: the speaker rejects the viewpoint of the hearer. Moreover, Nakamura suggests that the interpersonal coordination cannot be completely explained by Grice’s Conversational Maxims (Nakamura (2010: 438)). As he continues, moreover, the notion of intersubjectivity from Verhagen supports the existed theories of pragmatics in respect to human’s cognitive ability.

There is one more differentiation determined by intersubjectivity, which has been categorized as “causal meaning” (e.g. Tanaka and Ishizaki (1994), Brinton (2008)). This states that the utterance after *I mean* is considered to be the reason for the utterance before *I mean*. Although *I mean* in the examples under this category are all interchangeable with “because” or “I said that because”, they are different from the speaker’s mental process, in other words, the elements profiled in construal configuration. The following examples show that it is possible to illustrate at least three different construal configurations.

* "Did you see her in the ambulance?"
  "Only a quick look. *I mean*, it pulled it away that fast. She wasn’t moving though. She were just laid there, dead still" (BNC)

* "Only sometimes. Mostly, I feel so inadequate that I think almost anyone could do the job better than I, *I mean*.
Karen’s trained and Edna’s had a lifetime experience." (BNC)

* RANDY: Well, let’s get back into the party and see what everyone is doing.
KYLE’S FATHER: Hey, nothing changes between us, right? *I mean*, we are still friends.
RANDY: Um… Yeah yeah sure sure." (IMDb)
*I mean* in those three examples above can be paraphrased by "because" or "I said that because" but the target of *I mean* is different in each example: the speaker tries to establish the causal relationship between the propositions before and after *I mean* in the example (27), the speaker tries to convince the hearer to believe "almost anyone could do the job better than" her by giving the reason after *I mean* in (28), and the speaker wants the hearer to know the reason why he asked, namely the speech act of asking in (29). The construal configuration for the three examples can be illustrated as follows:

Object of conceptualization:  
Subject of conceptualization (Ground):  

*Figure 10: Construal configuration for (27)*

Object of conceptualization:  
Subject of conceptualization (Ground):  

*Figure 11: Construal configuration for (28)*

Object of conceptualization:  
Subject of conceptualization (Ground):  

*Figure 12: Construal configuration for (29)*

While *I mean* in those examples has been classified under one category named "causal meaning", three different usages are found in terms of the profiled elements of the construal configuration. As the elements in subject of conceptualization are more profilled in (29) than in (27) or (28), the extension of the usages of *I mean* from (27), via (28), to (29) can be called subjectification in Verhagen's sense.

While the analysis in the previous two chapters focuses on the relationship between the speaker and what is said and also the social relationship between the speaker and hearer, the mental process of how the speaker replaces the previous discourse by *I mean* is identified in this chapter. Due to the concept of intersubjectivity from Verhagen (2005, 2007), there is another usage of *I mean* in which the speaker rejects the hearer's expectation. Also, it is clarified that the usages of *I mean* can be differentiated in terms of what elements are profiled in the construal configuration. When the speaker replaces the previous discourse because of what is said, elements of object of conceptualization are more profilled. On the other hand, elements of subject of conceptualization are more profilled when the speaker replaces the previous discourse because of the hearer. As Verhagen states that all the linguistic expressions can be located in the middle part between maximally objective expressions and highly subjective expression, the usages of *I mean* also locates somewhere between them as is shown in Figure 10 through 12.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, the usages of *I mean* have been examined in respect to pragmatic and cognitive theories, i.e., *I mean* represents an offense to the principle of conversation and also the speaker's will to follow it. This characteristic of *I mean* schematically defines
the usage of *I mean*. Specifically, *I mean* signals an offense to Grice’s Conversational Maxim and to the face of the hearer and the speaker’s intention to follow it after *I mean*. Likewise, *I mean* signals that what the hearer thinks in the previous discourse betrays what the speaker thinks, and therefore the speaker negotiates the meaning of the previous discourse with the hearer to make the hearer think as the speaker does. These specific usages of *I mean* are related to each other. As Schiffrin (1987) pointed out, they are derived from the original two meanings of the predicate *mean*. The relation of the usages of *I mean* can be depicted as the following:

![Diagram](image)

Figure 13. The relation between the usages of *I mean*

Since the predicate mean in the usages of *I mean* in What-is-said level is used in natural senses, it can be said that it is derived from the original meaning of *mean*, namely, “to signify”. The usages of *I mean* in What-is-said level extend even to intersubjective usages in that the speaker replaces the previous discourse by *I mean* for the sake of the hearer.

Brenda: Juno? Did you happen to barf in my urn? Mac, you know that nice urn in front of the front door, the one I got up in Stillwater? I found some weird blue shit, *I mean* stuff, gunk, in there this morning.

Juno: I would never barf in your urn, Brenda. Maybe L.B. did it.

(*Juno, 2007/12 movie*)

In the example above, the speaker replaces “shit” with “stuff, gunk” because she thought that it’s improper to have used such a curse-word in front of a little girl (L.B.). The speaker replaces the previous discourse for the hearer, but she does not care about the hearer’s face. Therefore, the example (30) in which the speaker is aware of the hearer will be located between “What-is-said level” and “Face saving” in Figure 13. The usages of *I mean* in “Implicature level”, on the other hand, derives from the other original meaning of the predicate *mean*, in that the predicate *mean* in *I mean* is used in nonnatural senses, in other words, in the sense of, “to intend”. While the target of *I mean* is the propositional information from the previous discourse in what-is-said level, it is the speaker’s intention in implicature level. In other words, the target of *I mean* is what is implicated in the previous discourse. The usage of *I mean* in “Implicature level” is also extended to gain intersubjective usages as well. In the intersubjective usages of *I mean*, the speaker does not refer to what is said or use implicature. Instead, he negotiates the meaning of the previous discourse with the hearer. Specifically, the speaker rejects what the hearer thinks. The final phase of the synchronic usages of *I mean* is face saving. While *I mean* in the intersubjective usages refers to the coordination of information between the speaker and hearer, it refers to
the social relationship between them. This usage of *I mean* is to save the hearer’s positive or negative face. Nevertheless, face saving of the speaker’s own positive face is common in all of the usages of *I mean*, in that the speaker can replace the previous discourse by *I mean*, without apologizing for the mistake he made before *I mean*.

NOTES

1 Schiffrin’s (1987) two categories are meta-linguistic usage and meta-communicative usage. In the former category, the speaker uses *I mean* to expand the propositional information of previous discourse, while in the latter category, the speaker uses it to clarify what he intends to convey to the hearer by the utterance before *I mean*.

2 Brinton (2008) classifies the functions of *I mean* into nine categories including main categories and subcategories, as follows: "full" meaning of ‘intention,’ appositional meanings (repair, reformulation, explicitness, and exemplification), causal meaning, expressions of speaker attitude (evaluation and sincerity), and interpersonal meaning (ibid. 114). According to Brinton (2008), those extended pragmatic meanings can be explained as invited inferences from Grice’s maxim of Manner: the speaker flouts the maxim of Manner by repeating similar information before and after *I mean*, and therefore, the hearer understands the meaning by backtracking the process, or the "hearer will make the inference that the same information is not simply being restated but that some additional information is being presented (ibid. 129).” However, this does not explain why *I mean* in a specific context necessarily evokes the corresponding pragmatic meaning.

3 Grice suggests that the predicate *mean* has two usages: natural and nonnatural sense. "MeaningNN" is the abbreviation of the meaning of nonnatural sense. He introduces some methods to distinguish the two usages. As will be discussed later in this chapter (see also example (11)), for example, for all the sentences with mean used as the natural senses "an approximate restatement can be found beginning with the phrase ‘The fact that ...’" (Grice (1989: 214)), but not for the sentences with mean used as the nonnatural senses in that the original sentence and restatement are different in meaning.

4 When the speaker violates the maxim, it will be done only in a way that is not expected by the hearer (Grice (1975: 49)). About the other cases in which the speaker does not follow the maxims, Grice describes as follows: "... He may OPT OUT from the operation both of the maxim and of the CP; ... He may say, for example, I cannot say more; my lips are sealed. ... He may be faced by a CLASH: He may be unable, for example, to fulfill the first Maxim of Quantity without violating the second maxim of Quality. ... He may FLOUT a maxim; that is, he may BLATANTLY fail to fulfill it." (Grice (1975: 49))

5 The explanations of the four maxims are from Grice (1989: 26–27).

6 The process of how the speaker generates implicature is observed not only in implicature level but also in what-is-said level. On the process of how the content of what is said is formed, Levinson (2000: 186) writes: “Grice’s account makes implicature dependent on a prior determination of ‘the said’. The said in turn depends on disambiguation, indexical resolution, reference fixing. ... But each of these processes, which are prerequisites to determining the proposition expressed, may themselves depend crucially on processes that look indistinguishable from implicatures. Thus what is said seems both to determine and to be determined by implicature.”

7 Corpus of Contemporary American English (http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/)

8 Freiburg-LOB Corpus
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