DISCOURSE MARKER SO: A COMPARISON BETWEEN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND ENGLISH-DOMINANT SPEAKERS

by

Jessica Jiwou Lim

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Jessica Jiwou Lim 2016
Discourse marker so: A comparison between English language learners and English-dominant speakers

Jessica Jiowu Lim
Master of Arts
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
University of Toronto
2016

Abstract

This thesis investigates how English language learners (ELLs) use the discourse marker so, in comparison to (Canadian) English-dominant speakers (EDSs). The data were collected from audio recordings of 20 one-on-one sessions with ten EDSs, five Korean ELLs, and five Japanese ELLs. Overall, the ELLs employed so in a very similar fashion to the EDSs. The results, however, revealed a notable anomaly in the use of one of so’s functions in the ELL data. Overall, the ELLs were found to employ Move so more frequently in comparison to the EDSs. Moreover, an examination of a related Korean and Japanese discourse marker demonstrated the role of L1 transfer in the acquisition of an L2. It was also discovered that greater English-learning experience abroad and self-declared awareness of some of so’s functions did not necessarily result in the learners using the discourse marker in a similar manner to the EDSs in the study.
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to all those who have made it possible for me to complete this research project. This has been an incredible and unforgettable journey that I will forever cherish.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Julie Kerekes, and my committee member, Dr. Katherine Rehner, for their ongoing guidance and support. Their constructive and insightful comments were tremendously helpful, and for that I am deeply grateful. I would also like to extend my appreciation to my friends who have graciously agreed to participate in my study. And to my family, thank you for your constant love and invaluable support. I truly could not have done it without you.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................................. iii
Table of Contents ................................................................................................................................. iv
List of Tables ........................................................................................................................................... vii
List of Appendices ................................................................................................................................. viii
Chapter 1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
Chapter 2 Discourse Markers ............................................................................................................... 3
  2.1 Defining Discourse Markers ........................................................................................................ 3
  2.2 Past Studies of So’s Functions ..................................................................................................... 5
  2.3 Past Studies of ELLs’ Use of DMs ............................................................................................... 7
  2.4 Past Studies of DM Acquisition by L2 Learners ......................................................................... 11
  2.5 The Present Study ....................................................................................................................... 12
Chapter 3 Methodology ......................................................................................................................... 14
  3.1 Functions of So in This Study .................................................................................................... 14
  3.1.1 Non-discursive functions of so. ............................................................................................ 14
  3.1.2 Discursive functions of so...................................................................................................... 15
    3.1.2.1 Spectrum of so’s Functional Categories .......................................................................... 15
  3.2 Participants ................................................................................................................................... 18
  3.3 Data Collection ........................................................................................................................... 19
  3.4 Data Analysis .............................................................................................................................. 20
Chapter 4 Results .................................................................................................................................. 22
  4.1 Main Topic So .............................................................................................................................. 22
    4.1.1 New topic .............................................................................................................................. 25
      4.1.1.1 EDS analysis: New topic .............................................................................................. 25
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1.2</td>
<td>ELL analysis: New topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.1.3</td>
<td>Introducing subtopic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2</td>
<td>Main topic continuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.1</td>
<td>EDS analysis: Then/So then.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.2</td>
<td>ELL analysis: Then/So then.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.3</td>
<td>EDS analysis: Elaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2.4</td>
<td>ELL analysis: Elaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3</td>
<td>Return to main topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.3.1</td>
<td>Analysis: Return so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.4</td>
<td>Main topic so: Recapitulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Summary and Restatement/Rewording So.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Summary so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Restatement/Rewording so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3</td>
<td>Summary and Restatement/Rewording so: Recapitulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Speech Act Marker So</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>Speech Act Marker: Opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>Speech Act Marker: Question/Request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2.1</td>
<td>Question/Request: EDS/ELL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2.2</td>
<td>Question/Request: Interviewer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3</td>
<td>Speech Act Marker so: Recapitulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Reason/Result So</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1</td>
<td>Analysis: Reason/Result so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2</td>
<td>Reason/Result so: Recapitulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Elliptical So</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1</td>
<td>Elliptical so: Turn-final position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2</td>
<td>Elliptical so: Turn-medial position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3</td>
<td>Elliptical so: Stand-alone position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.4</td>
<td>Elliptical so: Recapitulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Move So</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.1</td>
<td>EDS analysis: Move so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.2</td>
<td>ELL analysis: Move so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.3</td>
<td>Move so: Recapitulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>So, Kulenikka, and Dakara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.1</td>
<td>Kulenikka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.2</td>
<td>Dakara.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Discourse Marker Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 5 Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Range of Functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Comparison of Frequencies and Functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>L1 Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Awareness vs. Actuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 6 Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Conclusion and Implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Limitations and Future Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1: Functions of so .................................................................................................................. 15
Table 2: Spectrum of so’s Functional Categories ......................................................................... 16
Table 3: Raw Scores of DM so ..................................................................................................... 23
Table 4: Legend of the Headings of Table 3 .................................................................................. 23
Table 5: Rate of Frequency .......................................................................................................... 24
Table 6: DM so Frequency Averages ............................................................................................ 24
Table 7: Percentage of Function’s Occurrence over Total DM so .................................................. 25
List of Appendices

Appendix A: Symbols Used in Transcriptions ................................................................. 120
Chapter 1
Introduction

Many studies have investigated the field of sociolinguistics and pragmatics, and the study of English discourse markers within these domains seems to be gaining momentum in a wide range of branches in recent years. For example, Norrick (2001) concluded that discourse markers such as well and but have specialized functions in oral narratives and are employed by the speaker to signal a return to the main theme of the narrative and are also used by the hearer to express organizational problems. Some other studies on discourse markers include Macaulay (2002), Levey (2003), Fox Tree (2006), Schourup (2011), Sakita (2013), Kim (2013), Schourup (2001), Müller (2004), Defour (2008), Innes (2010), Marcus (2009), Fox Tree & Schrock (1999), Fuller (2003), Polat (2011), Fox Tree & Schrock (2002), and Hellermann & Vergun (2007). Discourse markers in other languages, such as Korean (e.g. Park, 2003; Im, 2011; Ahn & Yap, 2013; Lee, 2014), Japanese (e.g. Kimura Philips, 1998), Spanish (e.g. Montolío Durán & Unamuno, 2001; Zavala, 2001; Hernández, 2011), French (e.g. Rehner, 2002; Vlemings, 2003; Pellet, 2005; Prevost, 2011), Portuguese (e.g. da Silva, 2006), German (e.g. Barske & Golato, 2010), Dutch (e.g. Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2003), and Slovenian (e.g. Verdonik, Žgank, & Peterlin, 2008) have also been explored. Moreover, discourse markers are found not only in “native speakers”' speech, but also in language learners’ speech (e.g. Iglesias Moreno, 2001; Romero Trillo, 2002; Fuller, 2003; Zarei, 2012; Bu, 2013; Asik & Cephe, 2013).

There are two levels on which people can communicate: “one level conveys particular words and a second level conveys how those words should be interpreted” (Fox Tree, 2010, p. 270). Language learners need to be able to work with both levels of communication. In order to be able to cue one’s communicative intention and/or decode another speaker’s communicative intention, speakers must be familiar with the functions of discourse markers (DMs), such as so. Despite the rising interest in this domain, there is still a lack of literature on the use of English discourse markers, particularly by English language learners (ELLs). Moreover, personal motivations have

---

1 As I do not agree with the term “native speaker,” all instances of “(non-)native speaker” in the present paper should henceforth be understood as being the cited author’s terms. There is a good deal of controversy with this term, as it implies an easy and clear-cut distinction between the terms, native speaker and nonnative speaker, which simply does not exist. See Rampton (1990) and Kachru (1992) for further discussion on the problems of its use.
driven me to pursue this area of research. Being surrounded by many ELLs, I grew very conscious of their speaking styles. Discourse markers especially stood out to me during our interactions, as it seemed as if the ELLs were using them more than I was. This revelation incited me to further explore this area. This paper will contribute to the research on discourse markers by investigating the following research question: How do English language learners use the discourse marker, *so*, in comparison to (Canadian) English-dominant speakers (EDSs)? L1 backgrounds were also briefly examined to explore the possible influence of one’s L1 on the acquisition of an L2. Moreover, in order to determine how aware participants are of the existence of discourse markers, DM interviews were conducted.

After the description of discourse markers and an overview of past studies of discourse markers and their acquisition by ELLs in Chapter 2, participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis will be outlined in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 will then present the results and analysis of the participants’ use of the different functions of *so* that occurred in the study. The close resemblance of the corresponding Korean and Japanese discourse markers to the English discourse marker *so* and the results of the discourse marker interview will also be explored in this chapter. Chapter 5 will provide the discussion of these results, and Chapter 6 will present the concluding remarks and future directions of this study.
Chapter 2
Discourse Markers

2.1 Defining Discourse Markers

Although I will refer to elements such as *so* as a “discourse marker,” there seems to be a lack of consensus on the terminology. These markers have been called “discourse markers” (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1990; Jucker, 1993; Schourup, 1999; Fuller, 2003), “discourse particles” (Schourup, 1985; Aijmer, 2002), “discourse connectives” (Schiffrin, 1987; Blakemore, 1987), “pragmatic markers” (Redeker, 1990; Fraser, 1990; Brinton 1996), and “pragmatic particles” (Östman, 1981; Holmes, 1990), to name a few. The classification of discourse markers is also not unanimously agreed upon. Schiffrin (1987) includes *oh, well, now, then, you know, I mean, so, because, and, but, and or* as discourse markers, while Fraser excludes *oh* because it can occur on its own as an interjection and it does not signal a discourse relationship (Fraser, 1990). *Y’know* is excluded because he classifies it as a parallel marker and because it signals “a speaker attitude of solidarity[,]” (Fraser, 1990, p. 392) rather than a sequential discourse relationship. And whereas Schiffrin (1987) includes the literal uses of *I mean* and *you know* in her definition of discourse markers, Redeker (1991, cited in Schourup, 1999) does not.

Fraser (1999) defines discourse markers as follows:

> [Discourse markers are] a pragmatic class, lexical expressions drawn from the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbials, and prepositional phrases. With certain exceptions, they signal a relationship between the segment they introduce…and the prior segment. They have a core meaning which is procedural, not conceptual, and their more specific interpretation is ‘negotiated’ by the context, both linguistic and conceptual. (p. 950)

Discourse markers are “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk” (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 31) that simultaneously look forward and backward and are actually very meaningful linguistic expressions that signal for the hearer how he or she should interpret the connection between the following utterance and a foregoing one. These markers are drawn from various grammatical categories, including conjunctions (e.g. *but, or, so, since, because*), adverbs (e.g. *consequently, then*), prepositional phrases (e.g. *as a consequence, after all, on the other hand*),
idiomatic phrases (e.g. still and all), verbs (e.g. look, see), and interjections (e.g. well) (Fraser, 1990; 1999), and are categorized as discourse markers because of their pragmatic function. The relationships that discourse markers signal fall into two classes: those that relate messages – contrastive markers, elaborative markers, and inferential markers – and those that relate topics – topic change markers. Furthermore, discourse markers have procedural meaning and not representational or conceptual meaning: “An expression with a conceptual meaning specifies a defining set of semantic features, as is the case with boy and hypothesis. On the other hand, an expression with a procedural meaning specifies how the segment it introduces is to be interpreted relative to the prior” (1999, p. 944). As discourse markers do not carry propositional meaning and are optional (Fraser, 1990; Fraser, 1996; Fraser, 1999; Schourup, 1999), their absence does not affect the propositional content of either the foregoing segment or the following segment (although the removal of the discourse marker may obscure the relationship between the two segments).

The core pragmatic meaning is defined as “a meaning separate from any content meaning of the homophonous form” (Fraser, 1990, p. 395). Sentence meaning is composed of two parts: the propositional content and what Fraser (1996) refers to as “pragmatic markers”. Whereas the propositional content is simply the content meaning of a sentence, pragmatic markers are defined as “the linguistically encoded clues[,] which signal the speaker’s potential communicative intentions” (Fraser, 1996, p. 168). Pragmatic markers encompass “basic markers,” “commentary markers,” “parallel markers,” and “discourse markers” (Fraser, 1996). The first three types of markers have representational meaning. Basic markers signal the basic message, commentary markers comment on the basic message, and parallel markers signal a message that is separate from the basic message. However, as the focus of the present study is on discourse markers, I will not elaborate any further on these other pragmatic markers. Discourse markers, on the other hand, have procedural meaning (the core pragmatic meaning), thereby “signal[ing] the relationship of the basic message to the foregoing discourse” (p. 169). Fraser posits four major categories of discourse markers: topic change markers (e.g. by the way, incidentally), which signal that the following discourse is “a departure from the current topic” (p. 187); contrastive markers (e.g. but, nevertheless, regardless, yet), which signal that the following sequence contrasts with the foregoing sequence; elaborative markers (e.g. besides, further(more), moreover, indeed), which signal that the following discourse expands on the preceding
discourse; and inferential markers (e.g. after all, so, then, therefore), which signal that the following segment is a conclusion from the foregoing segment. However, there are many who do not concur with Fraser’s definitions and framework. Despite proposing a very broad, and, therefore, “too inclusive” (Schourup, 1999, p. 239) definition of discourse markers, he omits certain markers that others (e.g. Schiffrin, 1987; Müller, 2005; Ko, 2013) have included in their definitions of discourse markers: well, oh, I mean and y’know.

In order for an occurrence to be considered a discourse marker, it must meet the following three requirements: connectivity, optionality, and non-truth-conditionality (Schourup, 1999).

Discourse markers connect textual units for coherence (Schiffrin, 1987; Lenk, 1998; Schourup, 1999; Fraser, 1999) and also relate the propositional content of the current utterance and that of a preceding utterance (Blakemore, 1987). They are also syntactically optional because a discourse marker’s absence does not affect the grammaticality of the utterance in which it appeared (Brinton, 1996; Schourup, 1999); the removal of a discourse marker simply means that the connection it signals is implied. Moreover, discourse markers do not affect the truth-conditions of the propositional content, unlike content words, such as surprisingly. While there are four other loosely established characteristics of discourse markers that have been proposed – weak clause association, initiality, orality, and multi-categoriality – these attributes are not necessary for an occurrence to be considered a discourse marker.

2.2 Past Studies of So’s Functions

There has not been a great deal of research conducted on the discourse marker, so, despite its popular usage in speech. Like other discourse markers, a unanimous opinion or definition of so has yet to be settled. Matzen (2004) proposed that its core function is marking the main topic of the discourse, while Schiffrin (1987) described so as a turn-transition device that carries a result meaning and functions at the local and global levels of discourse. Very close to so’s non-DM function as a conjunction, so is known for “denoting a consequence with respect to a cause or reason expressed in a previous clause or sentence” (van Dijk, 1979, p. 453). The only real distinction between so as a conjunction and so as a discourse marker indicating this consequential relationship is the level of discourse on which it acts. When so functions on a local level of discourse, “only one event is being causally related” (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 203) to the proposition following so. In other words, the local so defines its conjunctive function as a non-
DM in my study. When *so* functions on a global level of discourse “over a wide range of talk” (p. 203), multiple events are being connected to the cause of the reason or result in the second proposition. Blakemore (1988) also supports the idea that *so* signals an inferential connection between two propositions and that the hearer is the one to determine the nature of this relationship. The stand-alone *so* was explored by Raymond (2004) and Local and Walker (2005). This discursive function of *so* manages “the multiple, overlapping units of organization that any turn at talk participates in simultaneously” (Raymond, 2004, p. 210) and motivates relevant action from the hearer; it can “be produced by a participant after their own talk or after or during talk by another participant” (Local & Walker, 2005). Local and Walker (2005) not only explored the sequential organization of the stand-alone *so*, but also examined how its phonetic design would change depending on its position within a sequence.

The prosodic properties of *so* were also analyzed by Matzen (2004), based on its functions outlined by Schiffrin (1987). Matzen (2004) defined four main functional categories for *so*. The first function of *so* marks the main topic of discourse. It can be used to either indicate the beginning of a new topic or the return to the main topic after a deviation. When marking a new topic, *so* usually appears turn-medially; however, when *so* functions to mark the return to the main topic, it can occur turn-initially and turn-medially. *So* was also found to mark a summary. The second function indicates the end of one’s turn, which was often followed by a long pause, and appears alone in a turn. The third functional category marks a request for information and occurs at the beginning of a turn. In this function, *so* can either appear in a direct question where the speaker is seeking unknown information (from the interlocutor), or it can be used to confirm the speaker’s inference. Finally, the fourth function of *so* is employed to present the result or reason for an event or action that is being performed. Matzen (2004) discovered that at times, it was difficult to limit an instance of *so* to only one category. Although she concluded that “prosodic features can distinguish multifunctional tokens of *so* from those performing only one function” (p. 86), it seems that categorizing *so* into its various functional categories based on its length is questionable, as the boundaries between “Short,” “Medium,” and “Long” length categories are not well-founded: “tokens of *so* performing the same discourse marking function can fall into different length categories” (p. 86). Matzen (2004) was able to distinguish some of the categories from each other prosodically, but she also recognized the lack of distinction between some categories, particularly between marking the main topic and requesting
information, and suggests that this shortfall may be attributed to “an inaccurate organization of
the functional categories themselves” (p. 90).

So as a marker of “emergence from incipiency” (p. 977) was also explored by Bolden (2009).
Bolden (2009) used conversation analysis to examine telephone and face-to-face authentic
interactions in American English. Her study concluded that there is a so that signals that “the
upcoming course of action is emerging from incipiency and has been on the interactional agenda”
(p. 996). So functions as a connective by prefacing “new (or previously abandoned) topics” (p.
977) and is influenced by two important factors: the upcoming discourse segment does not
necessarily follow from the foregoing utterance, and “this course of action is analyzable (by
participants and academic onlookers) as having been delayed and, therefore, pending” (p. 977).
To clarify, so is employed to return to an interrupted talk or to address the “pending interactional
agenda” (p. 982). This can happen during story-telling when the main narrative is interrupted and
is put on hold to address an aside or digression before going back and advancing the main
narrative. Furthermore, Bolden (2006; 2009) suggested that so is an “other-attentive” (p. 988)
discourse marker, meaning that its usage demonstrates the knowledge the speaker has about the
interlocutor and demonstrates that “communication is not purely informational but a medium for
social action” (Bolden, 2006, p. 681) as well.

2.3 Past Studies of ELLs’ Use of DMs

There has also been some research conducted on the use of discourse markers by English
language learners. Buysse’s (2007) study examined how Flemish university students used so at
the end of a sequence in three basic structures of question-answer sequences. He discovered that
almost half of all instances of so in question-answer sequences occurred as “final” so and posited
that “if so were not present, the interviewees might have been less confident about their ability to
signal the end of their answer structure and the end of their turn” (p. 93). Bu (2013) conducted a
study on the acquisition of English discourse markers, such as like, yeah, oh, you know, well, I
mean, right, ok, and actually by Chinese learners of English, comparing their use based on
gender and on the activity (interview and classroom discussion). Overall, the Chinese learners of
English made use of a lot of the discourse markers used by native speakers, but their use was
limited to only certain functions. They were also found to favor different functions of discourse
markers from the native speakers. The study revealed variation in frequency, gender, and style among the ELLs.

In comparison to EDSs, studies have found that ELLs do not employ all of the functions of L2 discourse markers, and their frequency rate also differs. Some studies have shown that their use is more frequent, while others have demonstrated their use to be less frequent than EDSs. Müller (2005) explored the functions and use of the discourse markers, *so, well, you know,* and *like* by native speakers and German non-native speakers of English, taken from the Giessen-Long Beach Chaplin Corpus. She discovered that within each DM, some functions were employed by only the German participants, while some were employed by only the native speakers. In the case of *so,* for example, the German participants were found to mark result, summarize, or reword less frequently than their counterparts. Meanwhile, Asik and Cephe (2013) compared discourse marker usage of Turkish non-native speakers of English and native speakers of English. In addition to concluding that the non-native speakers used fewer types of discourse markers and with a lower frequency, they also emphasized the need for natural speech to raise awareness about these markers. Fung and Carter (2007) also reached a similar conclusion. Discourse markers that were common in the British corpus, such as *right, well, so, you know,* and *actually,* and *see,* occurred much less frequently in their Hong Kong data. In particular, the learners of English demonstrated “a very restricted use of markers to mark shared knowledge and to signpost attitudes and responses” (p. 436). Liao (2008) explored the use of English discourse markers by Chinese L1 graduate students in TA-led discussions and sociolinguistic interviews. Similar to Bu’s (2013) conclusion, Liao’s (2008) participants seemed to only have obtained partial acquisition of the discourse markers’ individual functions. It was also discovered that stylistic differences were greater than gender differences. The participants preferred certain discourse markers depending on the context of the discourse. Fuller (2003) also found that discourse marker usage depends on context. While it was concluded that native speakers differentiated between contexts, the non-native speakers in the study did not. For example, *well* and *oh* were common in the speech of native speakers during conversations with family and friends, whereas *y’know, like,* and *I mean* occurred more frequently in the interview. Non-native speakers did not differentiate between contexts in quite the same manner. While the non-native speakers employed similar functions of the discourse markers as those used by the native speakers,
discourse markers were less frequent in the non-native speakers’ speech and there were more individual differences among the non-native speakers.

Hellermann & Vergun (2007) examined the use of *well, you know, and like* by learners of English who had no prior formal English language instruction and concluded that the more proficient the learners are and the more contact they had with authentic English speech and its culture, the more they incorporated discourse markers into their speech. In a study comparing the use of *so* by native speakers to non-native speakers of English, Buysse (2014) described two types of non-prefatory functions of *so* that appeared in his data. The elliptical *so*, found in question-answer sequences, “serves as an instruction to the hearer to recover a ‘result’ or ‘conclusion’ from the shared background (either the prior co-text or the wider context).” (p. 27). This *so* indicates that the “inference [is] self-explanatory and hence readily retrievable for the interlocutor,” (p. 27) thereby signaling to the hearer that the speaker wants to relinquish the floor to the interlocutor. The other type of *so* functions as a turn-yielder and it occurs in a transition-relevant place. Buysse (2014) also provided four possible positions in which non-prefatory *so* can occur. *So* can appear in what he refers to as a ternary structure, which, for example, includes an affirmative response to a question, a justification for that response, and then a restatement of the initial response. This *so* “prompts the hearer to recover an obvious inference, because the implied proposition is already incorporated in the first segment of the turn” (p. 34). Non-prefatory *so* can also be placed after a *so*-prefaced proposition, signaling the potential end to the speaker’s turn. Unlike the aforementioned *so* in a ternary structure, the third segment of this second non-prefatory *so* position is not a reiteration of the first segment. In the example provided by Buysse (2014), the speaker strayed from the original question and brought the turn to a close by employing the non-prefatory *so*. Non-prefatory *so* can also follow an afterthought. *So* in this case indicates that the afterthought was relevant to the turn and that the hearer may now take the floor. Finally, non-prefatory *so* can occur in non-turn-final positions. Non-turn-final *so* is employed because the speaker intended to give up the floor but ultimately decides to hold on to it, or it is used to signal the end of an aside, for example, within a turn. Buysse (2014) concluded that non-prefatory *so* was employed much more frequently by the two learner groups in the study than the native English-speaking group. This difference was statistically significant, and Buysse (2014) proposed three possible explanations. First of all, the learners may have wanted to ensure that their discourse was coherent by using a frequently occurring English discourse marker they
were already familiar with (i.e. so). Second, the learners’ knowledge of discourse markers may have been very limited, causing them to employ so more frequently, compared to the native speakers. Finally, he suggested that their frequent use of so could be associated with the corresponding discourse marker in their mother tongue, Dutch.

Similarly, the learners in Aijmer’s (2011) study, overall, made frequent use of the focus discourse marker. While they often used well for speech management functions, especially when they needed more time to plan their talk, their use of well to express attitudes and emotions was less frequent, and, therefore, would be less likely to understand its use in native-speaker interactions. Iglesias Moreno (2001) examined interactions between native speakers and non-native speakers of English. The results concluded that the non-native speakers did not use discourse markers, such as well, as much as the native speakers did. Romero Trillo’s (2002) corpora study explored how non-native speakers of English developed two categories of discourse markers, involvement markers (e.g. you know, you see, well, I mean) and operative markers in their speech, in comparison to native speakers of English. Meanwhile, Fuller (2003) compared how native speakers and non-native speakers of English use discourse markers in three different contexts. She found that the learners used the discourse markers similarly to the native speakers, but that there were differences in their rates of use and in their use across the three contexts. Furthermore, the discourse markers oh and well were used similarly to the native speakers because their functions are “more specific to [the] speech context of a conversation” (p. 206); in Zarei’s (2012) data, oh and well were found to be the most frequently used discourse markers.

Examining the literature as a whole, there seems to be too much of a gap between discourse marker production by English-dominant speakers and English language learners to attribute these differences to only identity. It seems that students are lacking instruction in this area, and a combination of formal instruction (both explicit and implicit) and sufficient L2 exposure (both language and culture) is imperative for the development of discourse marker production and, thereby, L2 pragmatic competence. Hence, let us examine a few studies that have explored discourse marker acquisition through L2 exposure and explicit and implicit training.
2.4 Past Studies of DM Acquisition by L2 Learners

The exploration of the effects of instruction and language exposure in the following studies verified the importance and need for discourse marker instruction and L2 exposure, in order for language learners to develop the knowledge and ability to better employ them in their speech.

Katayama’s (2012) study demonstrated that both implicit and explicit instruction of Japanese discourse markers, *n desu* and *n desu ka*, were immediately effective. Improvement was only found to occur in the posttest, however, and not in the delayed posttest. Citing Robinson (2001), Katayama (2012) concluded that this positive effect was brief because “the instruction did not involve cognitively demanding tasks,” (p. 85) and “increasing the cognitive demands of a task [would have] resulted in more attention to input, which [would] promote longer-term retention of the input” (p. 82). The fact that there was some kind of positive change, no matter how short-lived, indicates that implicit and explicit instruction is beneficial for the learners as both types of instruction drew students’ attention to the discourse markers, allowing for intake. In addition, the results indicated no statistically significant difference between the two types of instruction.

Rehner’s (2002) study of the learning of discourse markers by advanced learners of French as a second language indicated that the range of discursive functions fulfilled by the learners’ use of French discourse markers generally mirrored the range of functions available for the equivalent discursive expressions in English (the learners’ first/dominant language). She noted that the learners did not use these markers to fulfill discursive functions that were not features of the English equivalents, or did so only infrequently. Rehner also documented a correlation between greater L2 exposure and more frequent use of those French discourse markers with English equivalents. Students’ use of *là* (a marker meaning ‘there’ that has no English equivalent discursive expression), however, did not increase with greater curricular and extra-curricular exposure. This points to the role of L1 transfer in the development of L2 pragmatic competence and suggests that while L2 exposure is beneficial to a certain extent, additional methods of training may be necessary for areas that diverge substantially from the learners’ L1s. Formal instruction may be needed to help students move beyond their reliance on their L1s during the development of discourse marker use.

Pellet’s (2005) study demonstrated that acquisition of discourse markers does not only rely on formal instruction. Formal instruction was only found to be effective in students’ use of *alors*. 
The use of *döñc* after formal instruction, on the other hand, was still limited. Students were also found to use *döñc* differently from native speakers of French: the higher proficiency language learners employed the cognitive processing function of *döñc* to keep the floor, whereas the native speakers of French employed it to yield a turn. She also attributed learners’ ability to make use of the referential function of *döñc* to positive L1 transfer, as it shares functions with the English DM, *so*. However, language learners cannot simply rely on the positive L1 transfer of DMs.

Pellet’s (2005) reasoning for the learners’ limited use of discourse markers is that while “they are able to transfer their L1 pragmatic knowledge,…their pragmatic L2 repertoire is limited, and they are[, therefore,] confined to one or two discourse markers (in addition to formal connectives such as *mais* and *parce que*)” (p. 238). Moreover, while some positive L1 transfer can occur, no matter how similar the two languages, Pellet (2005) demonstrated that positive transfer does not easily take place. She therefore stressed the necessity of formal instruction in the development of L2 pragmatic competence, specifically, in discourse marker production. Despite stating earlier that it does not necessarily lead to acquisition, some instruction is imperative to help students notice – at the least – their existence. Furthermore, abroad francophone experience did not necessarily lead to a learner’s greater and correct use of *döñc*. *Döñc* appeared frequently even in the speech of those who had not spent time abroad, while some learners who had spent time abroad produced very few to no instances of *döñc*. It seems that a combination of L1 transfer, formal instruction, and L2 exposure needs to operate. Among these, providing students with formal instruction seems to be the most efficient method in ensuring that they will acquire the ability to use DMs, as this method allows students to notice and recognize these forms.

### 2.5 The Present Study

The present study will attempt to describe the use of *so* by a group of ELLs who come from L1s that have rarely been examined in the past. I will explore whether Korean and Japanese ELLs use an English DM differently from ELLs of prior studies. Moreover, a study examining the many different functions of a common English DM, *so*, and comparing their use between ELLs and EDSs, is lacking. This comparison is necessary for instructors and researchers in the field to better understand the DM acquisition and development process by ELLs in order to adjust English curricula for ELLs. Previous studies have also rarely compared one or more corresponding L1 DMs to the English DM under focus. Investigating the Korean and Japanese equivalent of *so* may help determine if (positive and/or negative) transfer occurs in the
acquisition of L2 DMs. Furthermore, while many studies have concluded that awareness of these discourse markers is necessary for learners to acquire the ability to use them, very few studies, if any at all, have compared ELLs’ awareness or knowledge of DMs such as *so* to their actual production of the marker. Therefore, the present study will attempt to fill these gaps.
Chapter 3
Methodology

This chapter will present the functions of so, and will outline the procedures for data collection and analysis for this study.

3.1 Functions of So in This Study

The functions of so that were employed in the present study, which have been taken from past research on the DM, have been separated into ten categories. However, only eight of these functions are analyzed, as 2 of the 10 functions are non-discursive functions of so: conjunctive so and adverbial so.

3.1.1 Non-discursive functions of so.

Two non-discursive functions occurred in the data: so as a conjunction and so as an adverb. The following excerpt is an example of an adverbial so as the DM describes just how small the suitcase is.

*Excerpt (Non-discursive so: Adverb)*

(1) Hana: and then he tried to pack his luggage (...) and then at first time he=

(2) =put all things in his suits (...) but (...) it turns out to be the suitcase=

(3) =is so: small (...)

The excerpt below demonstrates two instances of conjunctional so. They are non-discursive because they do not act on a global level of discourse. Both so in line (1) and so in line (3) introduce the reason directly stemming from the immediately prior utterance. There is no more slavery in the kingdom because she (the queen) freed the slaves, and she has a lot of advisers because she does not yet have much knowledge (about how to rule).

---

2 Only instances of so that are representative of the function under analysis in the excerpt are bolded.
Excerpt (Non-discursive so: Conjunction)

(1) Lara: she um started off trying to free all the slaves (. \textit{so}: there’s no=

(2) =more slavery in her kingdom and it’s interesting because she’=

(3) =young and she’s really she doesn’t know much \textit{so} she has a lot=

(4) =of advisers

These two non-discursive functions of \textit{so}, however, will not be further analyzed in this study, as the focus of the paper is to examine the use of DM \textit{so} by ELLs and EDSs.

3.1.2 Discursive functions of \textit{so}.

The eight discursive functions of \textit{so} that will be analyzed in this study are illustrated below in Table 1.

Table 1: Functions of \textit{so}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive Functions</th>
<th>Non-discursive Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Topic</td>
<td>Adverbial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restatement/Reworded</td>
<td>Conjunctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Act Marker: Question/Request</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Act Marker: Opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason/Result</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliptical so</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.2.1 Spectrum of \textit{so}’s Functional Categories.

For the present study, I propose a spectrum (shown below) that outlines the different possible operations one can carry out in spoken discourse. These operations are referred to as “Functional Categories” on the spectrum. Furthermore, the spectrum depicts the relation each functional category has to each of the three principle functions of \textit{so}. 
The three principal functions of *so* have been placed at the top of the table and make up the columns, while the functional categories are listed on the left-hand side, making up the rows of the spectrum. *So* has three principal functions: Marking Main Topic / Narration Development, Connective, and Resultative. All of the functional categories, with the exception of Move *so*, carry these meanings to a certain extent. In other words, certain functional categories may strongly convey one or more principal functions, but to a lesser extent for the other(s). This variation in degree of relevance to a principal function has been marked with shades of gray; the darker the shade, the stronger the relation is between the functional category and principal function. Van Dijk (1979), Schiffrin (1987), and Blakemore (1988), among others, have concurred with the idea that *so*’s core function is resultative or connective, while Matzen (2004) highlighted *so* as a discourse marker relating the main topic. Therefore, they are illustrated as principal functions of *so* on the spectrum. While marking the main topic or indicating a result has different degrees of relevance to the functional categories, *so*’s connective function is uniform throughout all of the functional categories, including Move *so*, for one of the requirements of a DM is connecting discourse.

Main Topic, Restatement/Rewording, and Summary focus on relating the main topic of the conversation, while both Speech Act Markers of *so*, Opinion and Question/Request, strongly indicate the main topic as well as the result. Giving one’s opinion is, of course, based on what has been said up until Opinion *so* is deployed, but it also suggests that the opinion is a result of all of these prior units. Similarly, requesting something from the hearer or asking a question is associated with the main topic of conversation, but it also prompts a response as a result of the question. Summarizing and rewording also have a resultative quality, but their roles focus on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functional Categories</th>
<th>Marking Main Topic / Narration Development</th>
<th>Connective</th>
<th>Resultative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Topic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restatement/Rewording</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Act Marker: Q/R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Act Marker: Opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason/Result</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliptical <em>so</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
developing the narration; hence, shading is darker for Marking Main Topic / Narration Development than Resultative. While Reason/Result so does not necessarily have to signal a reason/result that concludes the talk, Elliptical so focuses on concluding the talk. Elliptical so forces the hearer to assume a conclusion. Again, both categories signal the main topic, but the resultative quality of so is most prominent in these two. Finally, Move so does not function in the same way as the other functional categories of so; hence, shading for Marking Main Topic / Narration Development and Resultative have been left white to indicate an undetermined relation. Let us look at the following excerpt:

Excerpt (Move so)

(1) Int.: yeah like what is the story about? what is the show about?
(2) Taro: it’s like a not love story it’s kind of love story and everyone is=
(3) =trying to (.) so trying to get girlfriend and (..) so it was so=
(4) =(mixed) so complex thing and (..) so there are the story was on=
(5) =the another character comes out and (….) so it’s so (…) so: yeah=
(6) =fantastic [and=]
(7) Int.: [mhmm
(8) Taro: =wonderful for me

As the three occurrences of Move so in line (5) demonstrate, Move so does not indicate result and it does not relate to the main topic of discourse, unlike the other functions of so on the spectrum. All three instances above only attempt to push the conversation forward with no actual development in the story. Taro tries to describe the TV show in question; however, after he explains that it is kind of a love story and that the storyline is complex, no further details are provided during the period in which Move so is employed. Taro’s uses of so in line (5), along with the longer pauses, depict hesitation and is a speaker’s method to indicate to the interlocutor that he or she is not yet ready to give up the floor. Moreover, Taro not only used Move so, he
repeated it twice, suggesting that at that moment, he was not making any developments in the narration.

A detailed explanation of the functional categories will be provided in Chapter 4 (Results), as each functional category has a more specific role as a discourse marker in speech. The results and analysis in the coming chapters will demonstrate how so can be used to indicate different parts of discourse/narration while also comparing and contrasting the use of these functions by ELLs and EDSs.

3.2 Participants

Data for the present study were collected from two speaker groups, ten English-dominant speakers and ten English language learners, during prearranged one-on-one sessions with the researcher. Five female participants and five male participants make up each speaker group and both the ELL group participants and the EDS group participants were friends or acquaintances of the researcher. All EDS participants attended university or were attending English-speaking Canadian universities at the time of the one-on-one sessions, and received most, if not all, of their schooling in English-speaking Canadian or American schools. ELL participants were friends of the researcher and were foreign adult students recruited from one English language school in Toronto. The ELL participants were enrolled in one of the two highest levels of the English program (high-intermediate or advanced) at the time of the session. While no specific L1 background of ELL participants was sought, it just so happened that an even number of Korean L1 and Japanese L1 students (five participants each) took interest in participating in the project. The Japanese students attended most of their schooling, if not all, in Japanese institutions and were taught in Japanese. One participant studied abroad in the United States for eleven months during his senior year of high school, while another spent a month in the Philippines to learn English. The teacher was not a native speaker of English. The Korean ELL participants attended most of their schooling, if not all, in Korean institutions and were taught in Korean. One participant studied English in the Philippines for three months, while another spent a total of four months in Italy learning English – three months at thirteen years and one month the following year. The other student with study abroad experience had studied in Canada for two weeks in 2009 and for one week in 2013, in addition to the three months in New Zealand and three months
in San Francisco, when he was still an elementary school student. The other two Korean ELL participants are studying English abroad for the first time.

3.3 Data Collection

The data were collected during one-on-one sessions between the researcher and participant in a classroom. Each session consisted of three parts: a recounting of a video clip, a question/answer interview, and a language background and discourse marker interview. During the semi-monologue, the participant was asked to watch Act 3 of “Mr. Bean Rides Again” from the television series Mr. Bean. As the Mr. Bean series has very little dialogue, it would allow participants to tell the story using their own words and without being influenced by a television script. Müller (2004) did a similar task, where her participants watched a silent Charlie Chaplin film, The Immigrant, and later retold the story. Participants were then asked to recount the scene to the researcher in as much detail as possible. During the second portion of the session, participants were asked to describe the plot of one of their favorite TV shows, movies, or books, explain why the chosen title is one of their favorites, describe a character of choice from the same title or a different work, and finally, participants were asked about their abroad experiences. In the last portion of the session, a language background and discourse marker interview was conducted to determine participants’ use of languages and to examine their awareness of their use of discourse markers.

The length of the recording sessions ranged from 30 minutes to 50 minutes. Therefore, only a portion of each interview was analyzed. An attempt was made to extract an equal number of minutes from the beginning of each interview question, but even this was impractical as sometimes a question was skipped over because the participant had already responded to it on his/her own, or sometimes the participant did not meet the designated amount of time that was to be extracted from each question. Nonetheless, an attempt was made to extract the following fractions of time: the first two minutes of the Mr. Bean Retelling, the first two minutes of the participant’s favorite TV show/movie/book, the first two minutes of the participant’s reason for the chosen story being one of his/her favorites, the first two minutes of the description of a character, the first five minutes of the participants’ experience with culture shock, and the first three minutes of the discourse marker and L1 background interview. Whereas the amount of time that was kept with the prior topics was not long before the talk digressed into different topics of
conversation, the interlocutors managed to prolong the conversation for the last two sections; hence, more time was extracted from the last two sections. Although these are the questions that were asked to every participant, the questions were often adjusted midway to accommodate the participant’s needs, and, therefore, proceeded in different directions. If the participant was having trouble responding, it was necessary to alter the question(s). In other cases, the conversation naturally deviated into different topics. Furthermore, the beginning of each question was analyzed for consistency.

Sessions were casual in nature, as most of the questions elicited conversations that would transpire between friends or acquaintances and were held in a classroom at an educational institution. Audio recordings of the sessions were transcribed and portions of it were analyzed for the occurrence of so. Although participants were aware they were being audio recorded and that the research would analyze their speech, the focus of the study—discourse marker so—was not revealed until after the discourse marker interview, in order to minimize the effect of Observer’s Paradox (Labov, 1972), as a researcher’s “goal is to observe the way people use language when they are not being observed” (p. 61).

### 3.4 Data Analysis

After transcribing the interviews, the functions of all the occurrences of so, within the timeframes mentioned above, were coded. As ten different functions (including non-DM so) of so were discovered in the present data, ten categories were formed to describe each of its functions. The functions employed by the ELLs were then compared to those employed by the EDSs. Occurrences of so were also calculated per 100 words and the averages for every participant and speaker group were computed for comparison. The categories of so presented in this study depict the functions of so that were employed by the participants. It should also be noted that there were a few instances of functional overlap for discursive so, meaning that the DM corresponded to two different functional categories. In these cases, so’s count was doubled so that the frequency took into account both functional categories.

Furthermore, a small portion (15%) of the data was coded by both the researcher and a graduate student in a related field, who was given detailed instructions and relevant training. Any discrepancies between the researcher’s and the volunteer coder’s codes were resolved and a unanimous agreement was reached. In addition, a corresponding Korean discourse marker,
*kulenikka*, and Japanese discourse marker, *dakara*, were briefly examined to investigate their similarities to *so*.

This chapter has introduced the functions of *so* and the Spectrum of *so*’s Functional Categories, which will be further analyzed in the following chapter. The participants’ past English language-learning experiences, in addition to an overview of the data collection and analysis procedures have been discussed. The amount of prior experience in the English language by ELLs varied. Furthermore, data were collected from one-on-one sessions with the participants and the examination of participants’ discursive *so* use was analyzed mostly qualitatively, but also quantitatively.
Chapter 4
Results

The present chapter will review the speaker groups’ use of each of the eight functions of discursive so. The outcomes of the comparison between so and the Korean and Japanese DM equivalent, along with the discourse marker interview, will also be examined. The discussion of the results of this study will be explored in the following chapter.

4.1 Main Topic So

Main Topic so focuses on the development of the talk. No matter which of the eight functions so is signaling in a given instance, there is always a trace of this main-topic-marking attribute beneath it. Hence, it makes up one of the three principle functions of so. Classifying so as one particular function depends on which functional aspect of the discourse marker is the most salient in that specific context.

According to Brinton’s (1996) definition of pragmatic markers, they “mark a boundary in discourse, that is, [they] indicate a new topic, a partial shift in topic (correction, elaboration, specification, expansion), or the resumption of an earlier topic (after an interruption)” (p. 37). These form the three subcategories of Main Topic so in my study: (1) New Topic, (2) Main Topic Continuation, and (3) Return to Main Topic. The first subcategory, marking New Topic opens the narration (both the main topic and the subtopic), while Return so brings the attention of the hearer back to the main story after a departure from it. Meanwhile, Main Topic Continuation so maintains the focus of the hearer on the main topic.

While nearly every participant used so to mark the main topic (only two ELL participants did not employ this function), the three different subcategories were employed differently by the two speaker groups. Although both EDSs and ELLs used so to introduce a new topic, only the EDSs used the discourse marker to present a subtopic, or an aside. If an ELL participant deviated from the main topic, he or she did not utilize so to indicate this departure. To mark the main topic, both speakers employed so to indicate so’s sequential function (to bring up the next event in a series of events) and to elaborate on the main story by providing the hearer with more details on
previous statements. Finally, the return function of Main Topic so only occurred in the EDS data. The results of the study are presented in the following tables:

Table 3: Raw Scores of DM so

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nara (ELL)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seojun (ELL)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hana (ELL)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kota (ELL)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaho (ELL)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatsuki (ELL)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troy (EDS)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lina (ELL)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyuri (ELL)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mey (EDS)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linus (EDS)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jodi (EDS)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella (EDS)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liv (EDS)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil (EDS)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo (EDS)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara (EDS)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil (EDS)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taro (ELL)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nori (ELL)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Legend of the Headings of Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box Number</th>
<th>Heading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Main Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Elliptical so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Move so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Restatement/Rewording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Speech Act Marker: Question/Request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Speech Act Marker: Opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reason/Result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Total Instances of DM so</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: Rate of Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>DM/100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nara (ELL)</td>
<td>0.212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seojun (ELL)</td>
<td>0.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hana (ELL)</td>
<td>0.331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kota (ELL)</td>
<td>0.386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahe (ELL)</td>
<td>0.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatsuki (ELL)</td>
<td>0.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trecy (EDS)</td>
<td>0.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lina (ELL)</td>
<td>1.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyuri (ELL)</td>
<td>1.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May (EDS)</td>
<td>0.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linus (EDS)</td>
<td>0.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jodi (EDS)</td>
<td>0.609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella (EDS)</td>
<td>1.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liv (EDS)</td>
<td>1.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil (EDS)</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo (EDS)</td>
<td>0.831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara (EDS)</td>
<td>1.233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil (EDS)</td>
<td>2.492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taro (ELL)</td>
<td>5.451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nori (ELL)</td>
<td>5.419</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: DM so Frequency Averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>DM/100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDSs</td>
<td>1.1611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELLs</td>
<td>1.6059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Korean ELLs</td>
<td>0.6328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Japanese ELLs</td>
<td>2.579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL EDSs &amp; ELLs</td>
<td>1.208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.1 New topic.

*So* was often found to initiate discourse (Brinton, 1996) or to introduce a new course of action (Matzen, 2004; Bolden, 2009; Lam, 2010). This occurred in two ways: *so* either introduced the main topic, a response to the interviewer’s question, or the DM presented a subtopic. While *so* was used as a method of initiating the speaker’s response by both EDSs and ELLs, only the EDSs employed the discourse marker to introduce a subtopic (or new topic).

4.1.1.1 *EDS analysis: New topic.*

Every EDS participant employed the New Topic marker function, especially when they were beginning their response to the interviewer’s question and/or marking the beginning of a story. In response to the question about what happened in the Mr. Bean scene, nearly all of the EDS participants presented their response with *so*. The following are some examples:

*Excerpt 1 (EDS)*

(1) Troy: okay *(.)* **so**: it starts off with him walking into the room *(.)*=

(2) =suitcase was open [and he’s=

(3) Int.: [mhmm

(4) =packing *(.) then he had some baked beans that he had in there…

Table 7: Percentage of Function’s Occurrence over Total DM *so*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Function’s Occurrence / Total DM <em>so</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.T.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mov.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Res./R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q/R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rea./R.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Excerpt 2 (EDS)

(1) Linus: okay **SO** (. ) we see (. ) Rowan Atkinson (. ) in what appears to be= 
(2) =(. ) a small apartment

Excerpt 3 (EDS)

(1) Jodi: sure (. ) **so** Mr. Bean is packing (. ) **u:m** to go somewhere (. ) I= 
(2) =think he’s in a small apartment

Excerpt 4 (EDS)

(1) Phil: all right (. ) **so** it starts out with Mr. Bean trying to uh (. ) get some= 
(2) =stuff into his suitcase

Excerpt 5 (EDS)

(1) Lara: okay (. ) **so** a man is packing Mr. Bean is packing for his vacation= 
(2) =(. ) and he realizes that he has too much stuff in his suitcase

In all the above examples, the participants indexed “the transition of a topic” (Fung & Carter, 2007, p. 421). In these cases, the transition marked by tokens of agreement, “okay,” “sure,” or “all right,” along with **so**, signaled the end of the interviewer’s turn and/or the beginning of the participant’s turn and topic, the topic being the narration of the scene. The agreement tokens did not only establish that the speaker has understood and agreed to the interviewer’s request, but they also helped **so** “project the discourse forward” (p. 421) to begin this new topic. The agreement tokens prepared the hearer and demonstrated that the speaker is preparing to begin the
main topic shortly. Troy and Phil actually used the word “start” to further support that so has just presented the hearer with an introduction to a story.

4.1.1.2  **ELL analysis: New topic.**

Although not used by every ELL participant, the main-topic-marking function was still employed by some of the ELL participants. It was often used at the beginning to introduce a response to a question the interviewer just asked. In *Excerpt 6* and *Excerpt 7*, they introduced their retellings of the Mr. Bean scene (new topic) with a *so*. Kintsch (1977, cited in Segal et al., 1991) suggested that “macroconnectors” denote boundaries in a story. In these first two examples, *so* marks the very beginning of the story; it is the first word that the participants utter in response to the interviewer’s request for them to narrate the Mr. Bean scene they had just watched.

*Excerpt 6 (ELL)*

(1) Int.:  all right so can you tell me what happened in the scene?

(2) Kyuri: u::h (.) so he just thinks (.) thinks about (…) the situation =

(3) =he (..) u:h faced just right now?

(4) Int.:  mmmm

*Excerpt 7 (ELL)*

(1) Int.:  could you tell me what happened in that scene? (.) in as much =

(2) =detail as you can

(3) Tatsuki:  so he (.) tried to pack everything in a small (.) like a (.) garbage =

(4) =no not garbage (.) like carry case

(5) Int.:  mmmm
4.1.1.3 *Introducing a subtopic.*

Another way a new topic was introduced was by initiating talk on a subtopic, or a topic related to the main topic; this new topic was considered a digression from the main course of talk. Consider the following:

*Excerpt 8 (EDS)*

(1) Liv: I actually read the Robert Galbraith ones [so the ones under her=

(2) Int.: [oh yeah yeah

(3) Liv: =pseudonym

(4) Int.: yeah

(5) Liv: um I loved them . cause they’re kind of like mystery .=

(6) =detective kind of fiction and I think . so I’ll read some um=

(7) =heavy-duty . British or American novel like classics *To Kill a=

(8) =*Mockingbird [all those=

(9) Int.: [yeah

(10) Liv: =different ones that I maybe didn’t read in high school=

(11) Int.: mhmm

(12) Liv: =or didn’t like I wasn’t that wasn’t one of the ones that I was told=

(13) =to do so I’m kind of going back and doing reading some of the=

(14) =ones that I know have been classics forever . so every once in=

(15) =a while I’ll throw in . you know . one of hers or a different=

(16) =one=
Instead of continuing her talk about Robert Galbraith’s novels or mystery novels, Liv took a different but related path about book genres, and began a new subtopic with so preceding it. She briefly paused and employed so before introducing the next segment about how she reads British or American classics, such as To Kill a Mockingbird. The so actually functions to soften the abruptness of this subtopic. A crucial hint that indicates the so in line (6) is marking a subtopic or new topic is supported by the Return so in line (14). The latter so initiates the resumption of the main topic. She returned back to her original utterance that she read Robert Galbraith’s novels, the so in line (14) returning to relay one of the reasons she reads books like Galbraith’s; she reads them because they act as buffers to the more heavy-duty British and American novels (line (6)).

Excerpt 9 presents another example where the speaker introduces a new topic or subtopic:

Excerpt 9 (EDS)

(1) Leo: and it’s (.) it’s a genius TV show because like it takes you=
(2) =through the strata of how the drug business works=
(3) Int.: okay
(4) Leo: =and you start off with the people that sell on the street (. ) and=
(5) =it’s crack=
(6) Int.: yeah
(7) Leo: =and then you go on to the hitters like you know the people=
Leo was explaining the plot of a TV show, *Breaking Bad*, from line (1) to (7), when he thought that it was important for the hearer to know exactly how the process of selling (drugs) works. Therefore, he put the plot-talk on hold and digressed slightly to introduce this new topic about the process of selling drugs from line (8) to (12): the seller who owns the corner the drugs are sold in has a boss who owns the entire site, and this boss also has another boss. Leo then returned to the main topic to illustrate that powerful/important people, such as politicians, are intertwined in this business. The reason this *so* is treated as a marker of a subtopic and not an elaboration is because he took this utterance out of the context of the TV show’s plot by directly addressing the audience. Despite having used the pronoun, *you*, countless times leading up to line (8) with *so*, this line could also be interpreted as the speaker directly informing the hearer about how drugs are sold. The opposing argument, of course, could be that Leo, especially, constantly includes the
hearer or audience by incorporating the second-person pronoun. Rather than using a third-person pronoun or subject that is not directed at the addressee, like *it* or *the audience*, Leo used the personal pronoun *you*, including the hearer, from the beginning of this excerpt. Hence, line (8) seems like a personal aside directed at the hearer, as he diverged from the original plot trajectory to initiate a slight deviation in order to enlighten the interviewer about the business of selling drugs, before returning to the original course of action in line (14).

**4.1.2 Main topic continuation.**

At times, indicating the main topic, or expressing the continuation of the main story, could be confused with introducing a new one. However, marking the main topic is equivalent to moving forward in the storyline. There is a progression in the plot and the speaker elaborates on this main story. New information is often introduced when we speak, but it does not necessarily mean a new topic is being presented. This function sees the speaker developing the main topic.

There are two ways that *so* falls under the Main Topic Continuation subcategory. Firstly, the *so* signals the next event or action in the progression of a story. Although not always interchangeable, *so* in these situations could be seen to function similarly to *then*, indicating the succession of a series of “subprojects” (Clark, 1996) of the main story. *So* signaling the next event in a sequence is also exhibited by the combination, “so then” in the present study.

**4.1.2.1 EDS analysis: Then/So then.**

Troy narrates the Mr. Bean scene and uses *so* in this example to indicate Mr. Bean’s succeeding action.

*Excerpt 10 (EDS)*

1. Troy: =u:m (. ) afterward what else did he have? (. ) it was tough um (...)=
2. =the swim shorts (…….) hm ((unintelligible)) remember (. ) okay=
3. =that he had (..) his OH he had the bunch of shirts out and he was=
4. =trying to randomly pick which one he wanted=
5. Int.: mhm
(6) Troy: =and he kept picking this one shirt (…) even though he didn’t=
(7) =want that one shirt eventually he switched to the shirt that he=
(8) =actually wanted=
(9) Int.: mhmm
(10) Troy: =got it (.) looked to the side (.) saw another shirt and then=
(11) =switched it (.) u:m afterwards (.) he had to put in his u:h his=
(12) =toothbrush and toothpaste (.) uh went over (.) he (.) snapped his=
(13) =toothbrush [so then (.)] then he had his toothpaste (.) he rolled it=
(14) Int.: [mhmm
(15) Troy: =all up so there’s a little bit left…

His so in combination with then, defined as “indicating the action or occurrence next in order of time” (“Then”, n.d.), emphasizes the main-topic-marking feature of so. The next action in a series of events is further highlighted when he follows this “so then” combination with another then. Troy is in the middle of retelling the happenings of a video clip and then is used to help so project or push the story forward, eventually toward the conclusion of the account.

Consider another “so then” combination in a narration:

Excerpt 11 (EDS)

(1) Leo: [he has these Hawaiian shirts=
(2) Int.: [yeah
(3) Leo: =and he has five shirts I remember (. ) and then he’s trying to like=
(4) =pick one of them [and he’s like=
(5) Int.: [yeah

His so in combination with then, defined as “indicating the action or occurrence next in order of time” (“Then”, n.d.), emphasizes the main-topic-marking feature of so. The next action in a series of events is further highlighted when he follows this “so then” combination with another then. Troy is in the middle of retelling the happenings of a video clip and then is used to help so project or push the story forward, eventually toward the conclusion of the account.
(6) Leo: =doing the eenie meenie miny moe?=

(7) Int.: yeah

(8) Leo: =but then he already likes one shirt (.) [so then he realizes=

(9) Int.: [yeah

(10) Leo: =that he does (.) so he just like shifts things around? (.) [and then=

(11) Int.: [yeah

(12) Leo: =he picks this like (.) pinkish sort of like (.) what do you call=

(13) =them like clothes that get like (.) not stained but the color runs=

(14) =out of them? [like that shirt=

(15) Int.: [yeah

(16) Leo: =and then he’s like [he doesn’t want it=

(17) Int.: [yeah

(18) Leo: =no more so he gets like the red shirt=

(19) Int.: yeah

(20) Leo: =and then he puts that in (.) and he cuts his pants (.) [and=

(21) Int.: [mhmm

(22) Leo: =he realizes that he does have a good pair of shorts=

(23) Int.: mhmm

(24) Leo: =the::n (.) oh yeah (.) so the:n yeah then he thinks of cutting his=

(25) =teddy bear and he doesn’t cut the teddy bear
In *Excerpt 11*, Leo describes the scene where Mr. Bean is deciding on which shirt to pack. He used the “so then” combination to mark the next event in a series of events. In this case, Mr. Bean picks a shirt by utilizing a counting rhyme, he already has a shirt that he likes (which is only apparent to the audience at this point), and finally, he realizes that he already has a shirt in mind (now Mr. Bean is aware). Once he has reached this realization, Mr. Bean shifts the arrangement that the shirts were in when he was using the counting rhyme so that the counting rhyme lands on the shirt that he wants selected. Leo introduced this next step with another *so*. This time, instead of explicitly uttering the adverb *then*, he implied it here. Moreover, the purpose of the *so* in line (10) would not change even if Leo had added it to *so* or simply replaced *so* with *then*; both would be implying that the speaker is narrating the next happening in the story. Later, in line (24), *so* is surrounded by *then*, which is evidence that “so then” is indicative of the next affair in a sequence. The repetition of *then* and the marker of realization, *oh*, demonstrate the speaker’s thought process; here, he continues to think about how to explain the following event and/or remember Mr. Bean’s next actions.

### 4.1.2.2 ELL analysis: Then/So then.

Although “so then” combinations did not occur in my ELL data, there were a few cases where “then” was implied. As we will see below, *Excerpt 12* illustrates an ELL participant using *so* in a similar fashion to the EDS in the previous example.

*Excerpt 12 (ELL)*

(1) Lina: =mmm ah the guy is divorced (.) is kind of divorced with (…) his=

(2) =wife=

(3) Int.: okay

(4) Lina: =because (…) his wife is cheating on him [and (.)= 

(5) Int.: [mhmm

(6) Lina: =and he beat (.) he beat the man=

(7) Int.: mm
Lina responded to a question the interviewer asked about one of her favorite movies. In Excerpt 12, she briefly describes the plot of the movie, Silver Linings Playbook. The male protagonist divorced his wife because he finds out that she is cheating on him. He then beat the man with whom his wife cheated and has to go to a rehabilitation center. She recounted the next event in the story with so to explain that he returns home and meets the female protagonist of the film. Although then is not an explicitly uttered word by Lina, in this case, so can be seen to replace then, as it did in line (10) of Excerpt 11. If so is replaced by then, the purpose of Lina’s so remains unchanged. In a more grammatical sentence, her utterance would read, “…he beat the man and has to go to rehab. So/Then, when he returns home, he meets the woman…” As mentioned earlier, then does not replace so in all of its senses, but employing then instead of so in this context demonstrates that so is indexing the next part of the narration.

4.1.2.3 EDS analysis: Elaboration.

The second way that so can be categorized as a Main Topic Continuation marker is by demonstrating elaboration. The difference between signaling a sequential action and elaborating on a previous utterance is very subtle. When so is used to elaborate, the DM expands on something that was said immediately prior to the uttering of the so. With then, the focus is on the next action, rather than on a prior one. In the present study, the elaboration feature of the Main Topic Continuation subcategory was more prominent than its sequential feature.
It was discovered that the boundaries between elaborating on a main topic and introducing a new subtopic were, at times, obscure. *Excerpts 14 and 15* both illustrate this ambiguity and at the same time attempt to draw a line between the two functions of *so*.

*Excerpt 13 (EDS)*

(1) Int.: could you pick a character (.) it could be an ape um from the=

(2) =book and describe his or her personality?

(3) (. ) wait do the apes (. ) they talk in the book?

(4) Linus: no not really (. ) only the ape that he tried to make more human?= 

(5) Int.: yeah

(6) Linus: =she like learns to speak over time (. ) but they they don’t really=

(7) =talk they’re just pretty much wild

(8) Int.: but that was the human?

(9) Linus: yeah they were they WERE human OH you mean the apes (. )=

(10) Int.: [the actual apes yeah yeah

(11) Linus: =[the literal apes

(12) Linus: sorry yes they talk [they can speak yeah

(13) Int.: [oh they do?

(14) Linus: they can speak

(15) Int.: [in English?

(16) Linus: [they don’t speak English=

(17) =he had to learn their language=
(18) Int.: oh okay

(19) Linus: yeah (.) for quite a while the main character was in a cage in a= laboratory with other apes being experimented human apes=

(20) =being experimented on and through listening he figured out how=

(21) =to speak to them=

(22) Int.: oh okay

(23) Linus: =because he’s intelligent (.)

(24) ah it’s hard to remember these characters (.). maybe I’ll=

(25) =just talk about the ape human that he fell in love with

(26) Int.: okay

(27) Linus: so he discovers her first wandering around their landing site? (.)=

(28) =on the planet (.) so they find out that the planet has (.). like an=

(29) =atmosphere similar to earth’s so they take off their gear they=

(30) =can breathe=

(31) Int.: okay

(32) Linus: =and like in the bushes and whatnot (.). they find all these wild=

(33) =humans running around (.). there’s some wild human that’s very=

(34) =beautiful so (.). he catches she catches the main character’s eye?

Linus elaborated on the immediately preceding utterance in line (28). At first, it may seem like an introduction to a subtopic where he talks about the atmosphere of this new planet, but in fact, it is not an aside because he provided more details regarding the landing site. The habitability of
this planet is described precisely because he mentioned the landing site immediately before. *So* indicates to the hearer that the speaker is going to expand on something he previously said, which in this case was the necessary description of the landing site. The talk pertains to the main topic and is directly relevant to the main story. He goes on to describe the atmosphere and environment of this new planet where he finds the female ape human in lines (33) and (34). It is not an aside because this information was an essential part of the main narration, informing the hearer about the state of this new land, where the protagonist found the ape human with whom he fell in love.

In another example, Ella continued to talk about the plot of a TV show, *Arrested Development*.

*Excerpt 14 (EDS)*

(1) Ella:  u::m (...) okay uh one of my favorite TV shows is Arrested=

(2) =Development

(3) Int.:  okay

(4) Ella:  yeah

(5) Int.:  and um (.) what is the plot of that TV show?

(6) Ella:  uh it’s about a family? (.) a rich family um (.) who’s (.) like the=

(7) =patriarch of the family gets arrested I think it was for=

(8) =embezzling [or fraud or something and then u:m (.) so basically=

(9) Int.:  [yeah

(10) Ella:  =once he’s in jail all their funds get fro- are frozen and they=

(11) =basically have to (.) deal with being normal people

(12) Int.:  yeah
It is slightly unclear if the segment following *so* is a new subtopic very closely related to the show (after all, she talks about how the father’s arrest for embezzlement leads to their funds getting frozen). The detail about their funds being frozen can be interpreted as a brief aside that provides the foundation for this TV show. Digressions do not have to be completely unrelated to the main story. As evident from these examples, digressions are often prompted by an earlier segment, which justifies its close connections to the main topic. On the other hand, one can argue that their funds being frozen is the reason for their current state of living, and the basis for this TV show. Therefore, the *so* in line (8), along with the segment that follows, expands on the main topic of conversation: the plot of *Arrested Development*. The embezzlement and the father’s funds being frozen led to a whole TV series about their lives, meaning that their funds being frozen is directly related to the main plot and Ella is elaborating on this main story. The speaker needed to have stated that their funds become frozen in order for the hearer to know that because they don’t have money (or as much as they used to), they are forced to give up their once glamorous and elegant lifestyle and adapt to the more common living conditions of most people in America.

*Excerpt 15* depicts a clearer example of elaboration:

*Excerpt 15 (EDS)*

(1) Phil: and uh I had to go get soil

(2) Int.: oh

(3) Phil: cause they have to repot some plants

(4) Int.: oh okay

(5) Phil: and they’re just like hey can you help us repot?

(6) Int.: oh is that what you’re doing today? that sounds like fun

(7) Phil: yeah (...) the forestry department or faculty made these pots right?

(8) Int.: yeah
Phil: and a lot of the pots (..) that you buy like from Home Depot or=
(10) =whatever=
(11) Int.: yeah
(12) =are actually sealed with a petroleum-based substance but this is=
(13) =actually forest-derived so: um these (.) they’re like uh you know=
(14) =those papery pots you can buy?
(15) Int.: e:y
(16) Phil: not the ceramic ones
(17) Int.: papery
(18) Phil: yeah
((some lines excluded))
(19) Phil: so those are actually like sealed with a (.) um petroleum-based=
(20) =substance=
(21) Int.: oh
(22) Phil: =so it’s not the best right?
((some lines excluded))
(21) Phil: yeah (.) so they’re (…) it’s (.) kind of (.) it’s leaving the lab=
(22) =they're still doing some experiments though

Phil further defines or expands on the pots in question. Before providing the hearer with a more
detailed description of these pots, he confirmed with the hearer to see if she had understood the
kind of pots he is talking about. After identifying the pots as “papery” and not ceramic or plastic,
he introduced the details with *so*—that they are sealed with a petroleum-based substance—before continuing on the main topic trajectory.

4.1.2.4  **ELL analysis: Elaboration.**

The following excerpts from two of the ELL participants depict cases where *so* elaborates on the main topic by moving it forward, toward an eventual conclusion.

*Excerpt 16 (ELL)*

(1) Int.: what are other differences that you can think of?

(2) Kota: the food

(3) Int.: food okay

(4) Kota: I (. .) I was (. .) I was worried about food [before I came here

(5) Int.: [yeah

(6) Kota: u:h *so* I like Japanese food (. .) and then I have some experience= 

(7) =when I go to New York= 

(8) Int.: mhmm

(9) Kota: =for (. .) for a while (. .) for one week I didn’t eat Japanese food

“I like Japanese food” in line (6) is an elaboration or expansion of his earlier utterance in line (4), “I was worried about food before I came here”; he was worried about the food in Canada because he likes Japanese food and he was unsure if there is authentic Japanese food in Canada. Kota employed *so* to introduce further details regarding his preceding statement in line (4). In other words, he answered the question the hearer would ask herself, “why was he worried about food?” on his own, in line (6) after *so*. He continued to further expand on this question by explaining that he had some experience in New York, where he had to go without Japanese food for a week.
Excerpt 17 illustrates a similar case:

**Excerpt 17 (ELL)**

(1) Kaho: oh Anpanman Doraemon [or something]

(2) Int.: [okay]

(3) well what what is that (.) what are they about? (.) what is that=

(4) =show about do you know?

(5) Kaho: u:h both animation (..) mm in uh Anpanman and Doraemon helps=

(6) =someone?

(7) Int.: okay

(8) Kaho: so Doraemon always help Nobita (.) to do something [and=]

(9) Int.: [mhmm]

(10) Kaho: =Anpanman help children (.) (hh) or and battle (.) with=

(11) =Baikinman (hh)

(12) Int.: (hh) okay

Kaho used so to further expand on what she said in lines (5) and (6). She briefly spoke about the main plot of two Japanese cartoons, only stating that both shows involve characters helping others. After a backchannel, “okay,” from the interviewer, she continued to provide more details about whom it is exactly, that these characters help using so. In lines (8) and (10) she reveals that Doraemon always helps a boy, Nobita, and Anpanman helps children or fights his enemy, Baikinman.

**4.1.3 Return to main topic.**

The Return subcategory refers to cases of so that serve as a signal that the speaker is returning to the conversation that had been temporarily put on hold (Matzen, 2004; Müller, 2005; Bolden,
This digression can be a short one, where the speaker deviates from the main course of action after “[presenting] a subtopic” (Matzen, 2004, p. 77), or it can be from an extended digression that was put on hold in a conversation that happened before the beginning of the current one. Bolden (2009) refers to the return function as the incipient-marking so. So can preface a topic that may not have been prompted by the immediately foregoing talk, “but by some outstanding conversational agenda” (p. 977). In other words, this so prompts a discussion that had been suspended before coming to a proper close; a talk that has been “delayed and, therefore, pending” (p. 977). Since the conversations that took place between the participants in my data were in a semi-formal, partly structured interview and not spontaneous talk, it did not provide the appropriate context for either of the interlocutors to resume a pending talk that was left unfinished prior to the interview. However, talk that was put on hold during the interview was sometimes returned to with a so.

4.1.3.1 Analysis: Return so.

As the following two examples will demonstrate, the return function of so often occurs in storytelling to return from a “parenthetical background segment” (Bolden, 2009, p. 981) and advance the main story or topic. Furthermore, Clark (1996) noted that when the speaker returns from the digression to continue the talk that was left incomplete, “[he or she] also reinstate[s] [his or her] attention to the common ground required by that project” (p. 346), allowing the speaker to resume the main topic as if there had never been an interruption. The following samples only show occurrences in the EDS data, as the ELL participants did not make use of this function in their speeches.

Excerpt 18 (EDS)

(1) Troy: =u:m (.) currently watching this anime [it’s called Hunter x=
(2) Int.: [okay
(3) Troy: =Hunter u:m (.) it's about 148 episodes approximately=
(4) Int.: woah [how many minutes each?
(5) Troy: =[the prem=
(6) =how many minutes (.) it’s about twenty [(.) minutes=

(7) Int.: [okay

(8) Troy: =I can’t invest an hour into TV shows=

(9) Int.: [yeah

(10) Troy: =[my life is just gonna go away if I watch that=

(11) Int.: =really?

(12) Troy: YEAH I’ve commitment issues when it comes to [TV shows

(13) Int.: [okay okay

(14) Troy: so premise behind it [is that there’s this boy (.) his name is Gon=

(15) Int.: [okay=

(16) =(.) and=

(17) Troy: =he’s (.) out on the mission to find his father (.) [his father left a=

(18) Int.: [okay

(19) Troy: =long time ago he’s trying to find em (.) u:h so: his father was a=

(20) =hunter (.)=

(21) Int.: mhmm

(22) Troy: =and in this particular universe you have to get a hunter license to=

(23) =become a hunter (.) in order to do that you need to get a you=

(24) =need to take a hunter exam

(25) Int.: okay
Troy spoke about a show that he is currently watching, but he presented a new subtopic not long after when he started to talk about the length of the series. This elicits the interviewer to inquire about the number of minutes per episode. The interviewer did not only ask a question in the middle of the speaker’s description of the story, she overlapped his talk. Troy was about to talk about the premise of the show when this interruption occurred and had to place this talk on hold to address the interviewer’s question and digress from the main topic. Finally, to bring this deviation back on track, he used so and he returned to the unfinished business by beginning to talk about the plot of this TV show as if there had never been a digression in the first place. There are no pauses, hesitations, or any sign of confusion or memory loss in line (14) when he returns to the premise of the show.

Another instance of a return occurs in the following example:

*Excerpt 19 (EDS)*

(1) Int.: could you pick a character (. ) it could be an ape um from the=

(2) =book and describe his or her personality?

(3) (. ) wait do the apes (. ) they talk in the book?

(4) Linus: no not really (. ) only the ape that he tried to make more human?=

(5) Int.: yeah

(6) Linus: =she like learns to speak over time (. ) but they they don’t really=

(7) =talk they’re just pretty much wild

(8) Int.: but that was the human?

(9) Linus: yeah they were they WERE human OH you mean the apes (. )=

(10) Int.: [the actual apes yeah yeah

(11) Linus: =[the literal apes

(12) Linus: sorry yes they talk [they can speak yeah
(13) Int.: [oh they do?]

(14) Linus: they can speak

(15) Int.: [in English?]

(16) Linus: [they don’t speak English=

(17) =he had to learn their language=

(18) Int.: oh okay

(19) Linus: yeah (.) for quite a while the main character was in a cage in a=

(20) =laboratory with other apes being experimented human apes=

(21) =being experimented on and through listening he figured out how=

(22) =to speak to them=

(23) Int.: oh okay

(24) Linus: =because he’s intelligent (.)

(25) ah it’s hard to remember these characters (.) u:m (..) maybe I’ll=

(26) =just talk about the ape human that he fell in love with

(27) Int.: okay

(28) Linus: so he discovers her first wandering around their landing site? (.)=

(29) =on the planet (.) so they find out that the planet has (.) like an=

(30) =atmosphere similar to earth’s so they take off their gear they=

(31) =can breathe

(32) Int.: okay
The topic that the interviewer originally suggested the participant speak about was immediately interrupted with a somewhat unrelated question to this new topic (it was, however, prompted from the prior talk when the participant spoke about the plot of one of his favorite books). Therefore, before beginning his talk on the main topic, he addressed this side question first. The main topic had been left on hold until finally he employed so to bring the hearer and speaker back to the response of the original question. Before this, however, he stated that he will begin his response to the main topic question. This statement prepares the hearer that he will begin his response and his so supports this introduction to his response because the hearer is pre-prepared from his statement in lines (25) and (26). So, then, finally “resume[s] [the] interrupted action trajectory” (Bolden, 2009, p. 982) or the talk that has been pending or on the “interactional agenda” (Bolden, 2009), lines (1) and (2), at line (28).

4.1.4 Main topic so: Recapitulation.

The Main Topic so saw some differences between the two speaker groups. In the subcategory of introducing a new topic, both ELLs and EDSs employed so to introduce a new main topic, but only the EDS group introduced a new subtopic. Accordingly, it was only the EDSs that returned to the main topic with a so after the digression. In the Main Topic Continuation subcategory, while both speaker groups’ so indicated sequential continuation and elaboration, no ELL explicitly uttered “then” or “so then” to signal the next action in a sequence. Overall, Main Topic so was the most common function used by the participants (39.05% of total discourse marker so) and the most used function by the EDSs (26.67%), but it was only the second most frequent function employed by ELLs (12.38%) after Move so.

4.2 Summary and Restatement/Rewording So

Summary so and Restatement/Rewording so function in a similar fashion, as both functions are used to emphasize or clarify a point made during the narration, and, therefore, are focused on the main topic.

The idea that so’s functions are related to the main topic is shared by Matzen (2004), for example, as she even assigns Summary so under the Main/New Topic category. So’s functions are represented by the spectrum, and so is categorized depending on which function is most prominent in a given context. In particular, marking ongoing talk is Main/New Topic so’s most
salient feature for some functions, while presenting a consequence or result is the most dominant characteristic of others, such as Reason/Result so and Elliptical so. Müller (2005) also found cases of Summary so in her study and combined summary, giving an example, and rewording all into one category. Providing an example has been excluded from Summary so because it is associated with elaborating on the main topic, and, therefore, falls under the Elaboration subcategory of Main/New Topic. Summary so and Restatement/Rewording so, on the other hand, are being classified as main classes of so.

Summary and Restatement/Rewording are similar functions because they both focus on the prior utterance(s), but one of them is frequently associated with conclusions (Summary) and the other is not (Restatement/Rewording). However, it is crucial to note that even though the summary function (Buysse, 2012) can also be the conclusion of a story or series of events, a conclusion is not necessarily a summary. Moreover, to distinguish summarizing from rewording, Summary so takes “an idea originally expressed in more than one intonation unit,” (Müller, 2005, p. 78) thereby acting on a more global scale than Restatement/Rewording so, and then condenses it into a single intonation unit. On the contrary, Restatement/Rewording so takes a preceding utterance and paraphrases that utterance, usually for emphasis or clarification. In other words, the latter function operates on a local level of discourse.

4.2.1 Summary so.

Including both speaker groups’ results, Summary so occurred less frequently than Restatement/Rewording so. 1 ELL (0.32% of total discourse marker so) employed Summary so while no ELLs used so to introduce a restatement or rewording. However, 3 EDSs summarized previous talk (0.95% of total discourse marker so) while 6 EDSs reworded prior utterances (1.90% of total discourse marker so). Restatement/Rewording so was the only functional category where a speaker group did not use a function at all.

Both Lara and Liv employed Summary so to neatly sum up the Mr. Bean video clip in line (18), and lines (8) and (9), after they had already retold the scene in more detail from lines (1) to (17) and lines (1) to (7), respectively. The difference between these two, however, is that Liv’s summary also incorporates a commentary, where the speaker both condenses the story into one unit and makes an assessment of Mr. Bean’s actions.
Excerpt 1 (EDS)

(1) Lara: okay (. ) so: a man is packing Mr. Bean is packing for his vacation=

(2) =and he realizes that he has too much stuff in his suitcase so: he=

(3) =takes everything out and starts all over and he kind of reduces=

(4) =everything that he has but in while reducing the number he=

(5) =starts of reducing the number of things but then also ends up=

(6) =reducing the items that he also has to take with himself (. ) so (. )=

(7) =u: m first he starts off with his baked beans he keeps as many

(8) =cans as he can trying to figure out how many cans he’ll need for=

(9) =I guess the certain amount of time he’s there then he um decides=

(10) =to choose the smaller items instead of the larger ones such as=

(11) =like a smaller pair of um swimming shorts which (turns into) a=

(12) =Speedo instead of larger boxers I guess then he yeah he chooses=

(13) =one pair of underwear instead of a whole packet of underwear=

(14) =and keeps the bar of soap I guess to keep it clean and then um=

(15) =yeah so he reduces the number of items instead of just packing a=

(16) =pair of shorts he cuts his pants and then realizes that he has=

(17) =another pair of shorts lying around so he packs that as well (. ) so=

(18) =yeah one by one he just um his items get like reduced and that=

(19) =way and then he’s trying to pack a book which just won’t fit
Excerpt 2 (EDS)

(1) Liv: (.) um Mr. Bean had a small suitcase and he tried to get all of the=

(2) =things that he wanted for presumably some sort of trip and (.)=

(3) =made everything significantly smaller (.) or made decisions to=

(4) =try and cut things out or make them smaller even if it was=

(5) =wasteful (.) uh just to be able to fit it in the suitcase and then he=

(6) =realized he had a bigger suitcase (.) and gave up on everything=

(7) =and threw it all in the bigger suitcase

((some lines excluded))

(8) =so he takes (.) a real-life situation and is able to twist it into a=

(9) =way that makes it (.) comical

As the two samples have demonstrated, so marked the end of their story and also functioned as a conclusion. While Liv’s conversation ends after line (9), Lara actually continues to retell the scene (not shown in the excerpt). Nonetheless, so still functions to introduce a summary because she captured everything she has said up until this point with one unit. In other words, she recapitulated the points that have been made thus far, possibly for both the hearer’s and speaker’s convenience, but she has not yet reached a final conclusion to close this conversation.

The following is an example of Summary so by the 1 ELL participant.

Excerpt 3 (ELL)

(1) Int.: all right so can you tell me what happened in the scene?

(2) Kyuri: u:h (.) so he just thinks thinks about the situation he (.) faced just=
(3) =right now?

(4) Int.: mhmm

(5) Kyuri: so he doesn’t think about the what will happen after they after he=

(6) =went somewhere [he go somewhere

(7) Int.: [mhmm

(8) Kyuri: yeah so and and so he’s a little bit (..) not little bit he’s stupid (hh)

(9) Int.: (hh) yeah

(10) Kyuri: yeah so (..) and even if he got a he have he had a big suitcase

(11) Int.: mhmm

(12) Kyuri: yeah (..) so mm he doesn’t think about what he had [(.).] and he has

(13) Int.: [right

Kyuri began her response with a straightforward remark about Mr. Bean’s character: he does not carefully weigh his options or reflect on the current situation. From this comment until her Summary so and subsequent summarization, she elaborated on this proposition. Finally, she made the deduction that Mr. Bean, in fact, does not think before he acts. As Torres and Potowski (2008) proposed, so’s conclusion-marking function “occur[s] at the end of a turn containing several propositions, and for which the use of the discourse marker appear[s] to be offering a concluding marker” (p. 270). In other words, so sums up the preceding propositions, even if this conclusion does not close the main story.

4.2.2 Restatement/Rewording so.

While no ELLs employed this function, 6 of the EDSs used so to restate a preceding utterance. In Excerpt 4, Liv is talking about a run that both she and the interviewer were involved in.

*Excerpt 4 (EDS)*
(1) Liv: I was in the like the red corral

(2) Int.: I don’t know what the red corral is

(3) Liv: that’s the first corral

(4) Int.: oh [oh oh okay

(5) Liv: [so I was in the first heat

The interviewer had been helping out with the event and Liv explained where she was that day because they did not end up seeing each other. The interviewer did not understand what Liv meant by the red corral in line (1), so she explained that the red corral was the first corral. In addition to this clarification, she paraphrased once more in line (5), introduced by the Restatement/Rewording so to ensure that the hearer understood what she meant.

Excerpt 5 represents a very similar situation.

Excerpt 5 (EDS)

(1) Neil: =um (...) I mean even just like one of those obvious things=

(2) =always with cultures is food (.) and [so

(3) Int.: [yes

(4) Neil: =people having very different cuisine

Neil talked about some differences in cultures and noted that food is one of the most obvious differences among cultures. He repeated himself in line (4), but instead of saying that different cultures have different food, he used “cuisine” to replace “food.” He has restated his utterance from line (2) in line (4) with so to present this reiteration.

4.2.3 Summary and Restatement/Rewording so: Recapitulation.

Rewording is restating the immediately preceding utterance, which can be thought of as a summary on a more local scale (as it only deals with the immediately preceding proposition). In my data, this function also has an element of emphasis. Rewording a prior utterance draws
attention to that portion of the talk and indexes its importance to the main topic. Besides the fact that no ELL made use of this latter function, the one instance where the ELL summarized her points with so is comparable to its appearance in the EDSs’ talk.

### 4.3 Speech Act Marker So

Müller (2005) described two kinds of speech-act-marking functions of so: one that precedes opinions, and another that precedes questions or requests. The questions that so prefaces are not only related to the main topic or at least asked in order to assist progression of the talk, but the act of asking a question is also requesting a result. In addition, stating one’s opinion is in direct relation to the main topic and the way one feels or thinks, for example, is a consequence of the points in the talk up until this expression of the speaker’s opinion. To reiterate, both of these functions develop the narrative and have a resultative element. Furthermore, they are prompted by foregoing intonation units in the discourse or by the broader context of the discourse and they occur at a transition relevant place.

#### 4.3.1 Speech Act Marker: Opinion.

Sometimes when so precedes an expression of opinion, the speaker makes this clear by accompanying so with expressions such as, “I think” or “I guess,” while other times the speaker’s opinion is implied (Müller, 2005). In addition, Opinion so was also discovered to be employed to express the thoughts and beliefs held by characters in stories (Segal, Duchan, & Scott, 1991).

Both speaker groups used so to introduce an opinion explicitly, with an expression such as “I think,” and implicitly. Consider this first example:

**Excerpt 1 (EDS)**

(1) Liv: =but: uh: (.) if I were to go really far back it would be like Irish=

(2) =Scottish [English=

(3) Int.: [oh okay

(4) Liv: =kind of=
(5) Int.: okay

(6) Liv: (.) background so it would be really cool to see that (. ) [and my=

(7) Int.: [yeah

(8) Liv: =husband’s Scottish so=

(9) Int.: oh okay

(10) Liv: =well (. ) his family roots are Scottish he’s (. ) born here

(11) Int.: Canadian

(12) Liv: yeah

(13) Int.: that’s so cool

(14) Liv: yeah so I think that would probably be (. ) be where I would want=

(15) =to go

Liv explicitly uttered that she is stating her opinion with “I think” in line (14). She thinks that she would want to travel to Scotland, since her husband is Scottish and her own ancestors are Scottish, Irish, and English.

As Liv did in the excerpt above, Taro also used fixed expressions to communicate his opinions.

Excerpt 2 (ELL)

(1) Taro: mm why mm mm (…) so the reason why I tried to watch that is=

(2) =uh I wanna improve my English so I guess I can I can get the=

(3) =vocabulary from there talking
Excerpt 3 (ELL)

(1) Int.: [you didn’t feel any culture shock in Canada?]

(2) Taro: yeah but [when I was talking about talking to the other country’s= people(.) so I feel that some kind of the different perspective= something(.) so it is culture shock]

He “guesses” in Excerpt 2 that he will be able to improve his vocabulary if he watches English language TV shows, and he “feels” that he experienced culture shock when he conversed with other foreigners in Excerpt 3. So in line (3) of the latter excerpt is not functioning as a conjunction because so does not grammatically connect the immediately preceding utterance, “when I was talking about talking to the other country’s people,” to “I feel that some kind of the different perspective something.” “So I feel that…” is actually the beginning of a new, but related, topic. He briefly paused before he uttered the discourse marker, cutting off the utterance before it and leaving it as an incomplete sentence. Even though Taro “feeling a different perspective” is actually a result of “speaking with other international students,” the unit that so presents is not a direct result of line (2) in that the units are not grammatically bound. Moreover, the abrupt termination of the first utterance supports the idea that he is beginning a new and somewhat unrelated thought. It almost seems as if he is attempting to restart his turn or correct the first utterance because he felt that it was not exactly what or how he wanted to say it.

The following excerpts depict implied opinions.

Excerpt 4 (EDS)

(1) Int.: uh well why do you like this book so much?

(2) Linus: hm first I think perhaps it did a really good job of explaining the= scientific ideas behind this(.) so that was fun it was a creative=

(3) =way to interpret some of these things=

(4) (5) Int.: mhmm
Linus responded to a question about why he enjoyed *Planet of the Apes* so much: he felt that the science behind the story was realistic. Therefore, his opinion of the book was that it was “fun.” He could have said, “so I think that was fun,” which is identical in meaning to simply stating that it was “fun.” Moreover, there is most certainly a resultative element here, as the book being “fun” is a result of the story being scientifically real. However, as Linus has stated his opinion, *so* is functioning as a speech act marker.

*Excerpt 5 (EDS)*

1. Lara: =it’s like really crazy though cause they’ll be wearing like (.)=
2. =okay so it's all covered like this full scarves and their faces are=
3. =completely covered but then you can just see their eyes [right?=]
4. Int.: [yeah
5. Lara: =and they like do their eyes SO nicely like it looks like you have=
6. =no idea it’s just like the most beautiful eyes ever you know?=  
7. |=like they’ll=
8. Int.: [really?
9. Lara: =you know they’ll have the nicest colors and crazy makeup and=  
10. =like their eyebrows are so on point=
11. Int.: yeah
12. Lara: =and then it’s really cool cause they also let loose some of their=  
13. =hair for the front=
(14) Int.: yeah

(15) Lara: =so it’ll be like styled from here and then completely covered=

(16) =from everywhere else (.) so that was really (.) it was cool but it=

(17) =wasn’t like a shock because I mean I know about Muslims and=

(18) =Muslim and it’s never been like oh my god what’s going on?==

(19) Int.: yeah

(20) Lara: =so (..) yeah it wasn’t I wasn't shocked by it but it was just a cool=

(21) =experience

(22) Int.: yeah okay that is really like I’ve seen full coverage here too but=

(23) =like I don’t maybe I’ve never looked into their eyes

(24) Lara: yeah it’s different here=

(25) Int.: they don’t seem like [I didn’t think so

(26) Lara: =[they don’t do that here=

(27) =I think it’s just a Dubai thing they are SO it’s ridiculous man=

(28) =like their eyes are just like the most beautiful thing=

(29) =(.) so it’s like WOAH WHAT is under that?

Lara in Excerpt 5 also implied her opinion in line (29), when she expressed how surprised she was to discover that the Muslim women in Dubai do their hair and face beautifully under their hijabs. Lara’s expression of opinion is different from Linus’ where he described his feeling that the book was fun. Lara, on the other hand, used an exclamation, “woah,”—and uttered it in a louder tone—to convey her emotions at the time of this revelation.

An ELL participant also expressed her emotions with an exclamation:
**Excerpt 6 (ELL)**

(1) Kaho:  =supermarket=

(2) Int.:  yeah

(3) Kaho:  =or clothes shop=

(4) Int.:  yeah

(5) Kaho:  =is little dirty=

(6) Int.:  yeah?

(7) Kaho:  =than Japan [such mess=

(8) Int.:  [no I agree=

(9)  =it is a mess

(10) Kaho:  yes so (.) wow oh my gosh

Kaho’s so preceded two exclamation markers, “wow” and “oh my gosh,” to express how she finds the supermarkets and clothing stores in Toronto not as clean and tidy as they are in Japan.

**Excerpt 7** is similar to Linus’ **Excerpt 4** where there is an obvious element of result, although the cause is not explicitly stated.

**Excerpt 7 (ELL)**

(1) Taro:  =and he tried to shorten everything and (. ) so it is it is kind of=

(2)  =ridiculous for others and (. ) so and (. ) so: during the movie I can=

(3)  =get the what happen next so the video was (on) and (. ) so I=

(4)  =should say details of the stuff?=  

(5) Int.:  no whatever you can remember anything that you wanna say
(6) Taro: okay and **so** I was impressed at the the pants

The implication is that Mr. Bean is ridiculous, which resulted in Taro being “impressed” with Mr. Bean when he cuts his pants to convert them into shorts. Moreover, Taro being impressed is an opinion, meaning that *so* in line (6) is not acting as a conjunction, but instead, it is introducing a speech act.

4.3.2 Speech Act Marker: Question/Request.

4.3.2.1 **Question/Request: EDS/ELL.**

When *so* precedes a direct question, the DM “highlight[s] the desired information” (Matzen, 2004, p. 79) and they “support and stimulate further narrative” (Johnson, 2002, p. 108) from the hearer. Unlike *so*-prefaced opinions, as the following examples will demonstrate, *so* occurs at a transition relevant place that results in a change of speaker when it precedes a question.

The *so*-prefaced question that requests something from the addressee occurs in the EDS data (*Excerpt 8* and *Excerpt 9*) and in the one ELL participant’s data (*Excerpt 10*). The following two EDS examples demonstrate two slightly different kinds of *so*-prefaced questions. Whereas the *so* in *Excerpt 8* presents clarification, the *so* in *Excerpt 9* is utilized for acceptance or agreement.

*Excerpt 8 (EDS)*

(1) Int.: that’s near the end of the series

(2) May: exactly (. ) **so** what do you mean the first season with

(3) Int.: I know but the first

Here, May is requesting the addressee clarify an earlier statement that the interviewer had made. As May did not understand the first time, she asked the interviewer to re-explain what was said before.

The other *so*-prefaced question that was used by the speaker occurs when he sought approval from the hearer:
Excerpt 9 (EDS)

(1) Phil: so: um these they're like uh you know those papery pots you can=
(2) =buy?
(3) Int.: eey
(4) Phil: not the ceramic ones
(5) Int.: papery
(6) Phil: yeah
(7) Int.: I know plastic I know ceramic do they just like temporary ones=
(8) =you mean?
(9) Phil: yeah
(10) Int.: oh okay yeah
(11) Phil: so those are actually like sealed with uh um petroleum-based=
(12) =substance=
(13) Int.: oh
(14) Phil: =so it’s not the best right?
(15) Int.: yeah

This is the same excerpt from earlier (Excerpt 15 in the “Elaboration” portion of so’s Main Topic function section), but I have included it here for convenience. Phil is describing the material from which these papery pots are made. They are sealed with a petroleum-based substance and he believes that this kind of material is not so good. In a desire to confirm if the hearer also shares his opinion, he employed the speech-act-marking so to introduce this confirmation in line (14). There was only one occurrence of this function, but it is likely due to the conditions of the data collecting process. As we have seen from this study, interviews do not provide an opportune
context for the speaker or interviewee to ask for agreement and/or confirmation from the addressee or interviewer.

Only one ELL used this function of so. Taro used so to confirm if he should be detailed in the retelling of the Mr. Bean scene.

*Excerpt 10 (ELL)*

(1) Taro: =and he tried to shorten everything and (.) so it is it is kind of=

(2) =ridiculous for others and (.) so and (.) so: during the movie I can=

(3) =get the what happen next so the video was (on) and (.) so I=

(4) =should say details of the stuff?

(5) Int.: no whatever you can remember anything that you wanna say

Taro’s so does not prompt agreement from the interviewer because he is not asking if the hearer shares his feelings; instead, so signals a request for a clarification of the present task.

4.3.2.2 *Question/Request: Interviewer.*

This function was also often used by the interviewer to prompt/motivate talk from the interviewees in both the EDS and ELL interviews. So-prefaced questions occurred in the interviewer’s data in two ways. They were used to encourage a response from the interviewee, as in the following example:

*Excerpt 11 (Interviewer)*

(1) Int.: okay (..) *so* what happened in that scene?

(2) Leo: Mr. Bean was going on vacation

*So* is used here to introduce a question and a new topic. *So* also has an element of resuming the main topic because the interviewer is beginning an action that was temporarily put on hold. Both interlocutors are well aware that in an interview, the interviewer is expected to ask questions and the interview is expected to answer them. Therefore, the next most obvious step is to carry out a
task related to this first activity, which in this case, is a question asking the interviewee to retell the scene. Moreover, the interviewer already knows that the next task on the list is to inquire about the scene, meaning that so is prefacing anticipated talk or seeking a response from the interlocutor.

The other reason the interviewer employed so-prefacing direct questions was to motivate further talk from the interviewee or to seek confirmation. By introducing the question with so, the interviewer was able to obtain more information or details from the participants.

Excerpt 12 (Interviewer)

(1) May: we had to drive out to the nearest uh Tim Hortons we had to=
(2) =drive out to the nearest store which was like
(3) Int.: like grocery store?
(4) May: USED clothing store I don’t even know WHERE the grocery=
(5) =store was [there was a convenience store ish slash grocery store=
(6) Int.: [there’s no grocery store?
(7) May: =but it was like ten minute walk or something like that
(8) Int.: so there’s no grocery store near
(9) May: not that I know of
(10) Int.: so you couldn’t get food except from your caf
(11) May: yeah and everyone had meals in the

In Excerpt 12, May describes how isolated it was when she participated in a French program in the suburbs of a Canadian province. Through so-prefacing, the speaker is seeking for both verification of the interviewer’s assumptions that there are no grocery stores nearby and that the only place May could find food was in her school’s cafeteria. These so-prefaced questions not
only attempt to acquire confirmation from the hearer, as in Excerpt 9, they simultaneously induce additional information.

Excerpt 13 demonstrates another example of the interviewer seeking confirmation.

Excerpt 13 (Interviewer)

(1) Kota: first I came here=

(2) Int.: yeah

(3) Kota: =I was so happy=

(4) Int.: okay

(5) Kota: =to do some to do many things=

(6) Int.: yeah

(7) Kota: =to do everything=

(8) Int.: mhmm

(9) Kota: =but now I’m so bored

(10) Int.: okay so you want to go back to Japan?

(11) Kota: yes now

Kota is talking about how he is bored in Toronto, as he has now been here for a while and feels that he has experienced everything he wanted to. Since the interviewer deduced that Kota now wants to return to Japan, she validated her supposition with a so-prefaced question in line (10). The interviewer seeks not only verification of her inference from the participant’s prior utterances, but also employs a so-prefaced question with the intention to stimulate more talk from the interlocutor.
4.3.3 Speech Act Marker so: Recapitulation.

The ELLs employed Opinion so both explicitly and implicitly, just as the EDSs did and there were no major differences between the two speaker groups. Opinion so was one of the least used functions by both speaker groups (3.17% of total discourse marker so for ELLs and 2.54% of total discourse marker so for ELLs). Similarly, Question/Request so was the second least frequently employed function within the respective speaker groups (0.32% of total discourse marker so among the ELL group and 1.27% of total discourse marker so among the EDS group). Despite the lack of appearances, EDSs employed both kinds of so-prefaced questions, seeking clarification and confirming mutual agreement between interlocutors. On the contrary, the one ELL who prefaced his question with a so once only solicited for a clarification of the present task. Question/Request so was also a function that was often used by the interviewer to support the progression of the interview.

4.4 Reason/Result So

So is also used to mark reason or result. Undoubtedly, the reason or result of performing an action is related to the main topic, but its principal aim is to provide an outcome of multiple preceding units. However, indicating reason or result does not necessarily mean that the talk or topic of conversation has come to an end; the reason or result of an action can occur in the middle of the narration.

Reason/Result so is very closely related to conjunction so, defined as “[f]or that reason, on that account, accordingly, consequently, therefore” (“So”, n.d.). In order to distinguish the two, Schiffrin (1987) suggested two different levels of discourse: local and global. As mentioned earlier, when so operates on a global level of discourse, the cause of the reason or result is attributed to multiple events. This latter function of so describes the definition of Reason/Result so in this study. Others have described so as introducing the reason for or result of an event or action (Matzen, 2004) or that the second proposition is “a direct consequence of the previous statement” (Torres & Potowski, 2008, p. 269), which does not differentiate between the discourse marker so and the non-DM so. Knowing then, that so functions to connect the preceding segment(s) to the following, the upcoming excerpts will demonstrate that so marks the consequence of the previous utterances, that generally follow a chronological sequence, depicting continuity or demonstrating a “temporal flow of story time” (Segal et al., 1991, p. 46).
4.4.1 Analysis: Reason/Result so.

In Excerpt 1, Linus is describing the plot of the novel, *Planet of the Apes*.

*Excerpt 1 (EDS)*

(1) Linus: the book (. ) I think the book is about basically what the movie is=

(2) =about? there’s this um (. ) this like experiment for intergalactic=

(3) =travel and um (. ) the book does a really good job of explaining=

(4) =the science behind it so it’s actually a really cool piece of=

(5) =science fiction=

(6) Int.: mhmm

(7) Linus: =and it explains how (. ) there’s a viable planet with life perhaps=

(8) =somewhere and they want to explore it (. ) but to get there and=

(9) =the way time is distorted when you travel at really high speeds=

(10) =(.) they’ll end up arriving hundreds of years into the future (. )=

(11) =[so they]=

(12) Int.: [okay

(13) Linus: =need human candidates who are willing to leave everything=

(14) =behind (. ) and one of these people is the journalist (. ) who has=

(15) =no family (. ) and another I think is a (. ) some sort of scientist

In line (11), *so* is strategically deployed to indicate the result, “they need human candidates who are willing to leave everything behind.” One’s impression, at first, may be that *so* acts as a conjunction to connect the immediately preceding utterance in line (10) as the cause of the result in line (13). However, this occurrence of *so*, like other instances of result-marking *so*, acts
globally and involves multiple ideas that lead to the outcome. In this case, the following ideas operate together (global level of discourse) to reach the result in line (13):

1. scientists have made an experiment for intergalactic traveling;
2. scientists have discovered a viable planet, perhaps with life;
3. scientists want to explore this potentially viable planet;
4. space-traveling means that time gets distorted;
5. and whoever space travels, will be arriving on this new planet hundreds of years into the future.

First of all, the implication that is associated with these ideas is that the individual who takes part in this experiment must give up everything they have on Earth. All of these sequential causes contribute to the ultimate result that those conducting this experiment need a human who is capable of throwing away everything he or she has for the sake of science and discovery. To reiterate, the cause of the aforementioned result does not stem from the previous utterance in line (10), or even from one of the five events, but is attributable to all of them.

The ELL speaker group also saw very little usage of this function. Only three participants used so to indicate a result on a broader scale and it was employed in a similar fashion to the EDS participants.

*Excerpt 2 (ELL)*

(1) Int.: yeah like what is the story about? (.) what is the show about?

(2) Taro: it's like a (.) not love story (.) it’s kind of love story and everyone=

(3) =is trying to (. ) so (. ) trying to get girlfriend and (..) so (. ) it was=

(4) =so mixed so complex thing (.) and (..) so (.) there (.) and (.) the=

(5) =story was on the (.) another character comes out and (…. ) so it’s=

(6) =so (…) so: yeah fantastic [and=

(7) Int.: [mhmm
Taro is describing the plot of a TV show in *Excerpt 2*, and eventually concludes that he finished watching the series that day. The fact that he finished watching the show is the conclusion of his story but it is also the result that was a consequence of the following: (1) the show is fantastic, and (2) the story is captivating. After having attempted to explain the plot from lines (2) to (10), another new information is presented, “shift[ing] the psychological focus to the consequence” (Braunwald, 1985, p. 523). It was because the show had an intriguing story and good drama, and, therefore, causing him to be absorbed in the show’s plot that led him to completing a TV series.

4.4.2 Reason/Result so: Recapitulation.

Despite only three ELLs employing Reason/Result so, compared to the nine EDSs that use this function, and the low rate of use by ELLs (2.86% of total discourse marker so instances), compared to the EDSs’ (9.52%), the ELLs nonetheless used so in the appropriate context and no visible differences in use between speaker groups were detected. Furthermore, as so is known for being a connective, it is surprising that this function was not more frequent in the data. However, because it is so similar to the conjunctive non-DM so, so’s connective function is still frequent in the data if we consider both its local and global functions. As a conjunction, so made up 18.34% of all occurrences of so (discourse marker so and non-discourse-marker so), which is the third most frequent function that occurred in my data.

4.5 Elliptical So

Elliptical so, or what Schegloff and Sacks (1973) refer to as “pre-closing,” functions to convey a result. Despite the lack of an explicitly stated result segment following so, Elliptical so, or what Müller (2005) referred to as “marking implied result,” prompts an obvious, self-explanatory result or conclusion that the interlocutor is able to deduce based on the shared background knowledge (that was either discussed in the prior sequence or that was put on hold from a separate talk that happened in a past context) he or she has with the speaker (Schiffrin, 1987).
The connection to the main topic is that the result that is implied by the *so* comes from an understanding of all the points that have been made by the speaker until this point. However, its first and foremost purpose is to signal a conclusion, and a conclusion often appears at the end of a story. In the case of trailing (Torres & Potowski, 2008) or stand-alone *so* (Raymond, 2004), it operates in the same way, encompassing everything that the speaker has said from the beginning to the implied result, except that the *so* makes up the entire unit.

In my data, the Elliptical *so* can occur in three different positions: turn-finally, turn-medially, and as a unit of its own. Notice how none of its positions are in the beginning of a narration. The Elliptical *so* is also often accompanied by a falling intonation (Raymond, 2004; Müller, 2005; Buysse, 2014), which is further indication that the speaker wishes to not necessarily relinquish his/her turn, but to close this topic of conversation (Buysse, 2014). In the upcoming excerpts, all instances of *so* as an ellipsis in all three positions, turn-finally, turn-medially, and on its own, had a falling intonation, which supports its role as a marker implying a result without actually having a result segment following it.

4.5.1 Elliptical *so*: Turn-final position.

In the following excerpts, the turn-final *so* is a point of closure and it is the interviewer that begins a new topic.

*Excerpt 1 (EDS)*

(1) Leo: =and then uh (..) after that he grabs the teddy bear [and (. ) he puts=  
(2) Int.: [mhmm  
(3) Leo: =it in the luggage and then he has a book (. ) a [diary or something=  
(4) Int.: [mhmm  
(5) Leo: =that he doesn’t like (. ) like pack in=  
(6) Int.: mhmm  
(7) Leo: =and he’s like (. ) he puts it into the big (. ) like bag=


(8) Int.: yeah

(9) Leo: =but then he realizes he has a big bag=

(10) Int.: yeah

(11) Leo: =and he’s lazy so he just puts the little bag inside the big bag=

(12) Int.: right

(13) Leo: =and then (. ) he’s (. ) going on vacation somewhere in England I=

(14) =assume? I have no idea [or maybe Europe=

(15) Int.: [all right

(16) Leo: =who knows but then he’s on a train now so.

(17) Int.: great thank you all right (. ) you know Mr. Bean (. ) [you said=

(18) Leo: [yeah I love=

(19) =Mr. Bean

(20) Int.: =you’re a big fan (. ) did you watch it like on TV or

The so implies that Mr. Bean could be headed anywhere as a result of his being on a train. The speaker actually implied a repetition of what he said in the prior utterance with this turn-final so. Leo had just said that Mr. Bean could be going on a vacation to somewhere in England or Europe. Furthermore, rather than adding new talk, he repeated himself, which supports the idea that he would now like to close his turn and pass the floor onto the hearer. Appropriately, the hearer began her turn with an acknowledgment that Leo’s wish to close his turn has been received, “great, thank you,” ending this topic about what happened in the Mr. Bean video clip, and beginning a new, but related topic about his feelings regarding the character.

The following is an excerpt of a sequence between an ELL and the interviewer:
Excerpt 2 (ELL)

(1) Int.: how much contact do you have with native speakers of English?

(2) Kaho: u:::h my roommate is native (.) speaker? (. ) so.:

(3) Int.: oh okay (.) so everyday (.) okay

The question simply asked how much contact Kaho has with native speakers of English. There are, of course, many different responses that can come from a question like this. However, the participant felt that her indirect response, “my roommate is native speaker” was sufficient enough to make up her answer to the question, terminating her turn with an Elliptical so. First of all, by telling the hearer that her roommate is a native speaker, the interviewer assumes that she means that her roommate is a native speaker of English and she assumes that they come into contact very often due to their living situation. Of course, just because one has a roommate does not necessarily mean that the roommates are friends and/or interact with one another frequently. It is quite possible that the roommates do not get along very well and have very little interaction. However, as the speaker’s response is simply that her roommate is a native speaker, the most suitable assumption one has to make from this response is that the question is a little absurd to her because her current living situation involves a native speaker of English, whom she interacts with on a regular basis. Therefore, the interviewer asking her about how much native-speaker-contact she has is slightly ridiculous from her perspective. Another possibility is that she could have thought ahead about what the interviewer would have asked her if she had responded saying that she regularly makes native-speaker contact, and felt that it would be redundant to say that and say that it is because her roommate is a native speaker of English. In order to avoid this “extra talk,” Kaho may have felt that her response in line (2) was sufficient to cover who she has contact with and imply how much contact she has with this individual. Similar to the EDS example above, the interviewer acknowledges that she has understood the interviewee’s turn-final so by explicitly interpreting its meaning with, “so everyday,” and ends this talk.

4.5.2 Elliptical so: Turn-medial position.

There are also cases where so does not occur turn-finally and still functions to mark an implied result. These instances of so occur turn-medially because of a failure to close the turn with so,
either because the speaker decides to extend his/her turn to add some relevant afterthought (Buysse, 2014), or because the hearer does not claim the floor as expected.

In one instance, an EDS decides to ultimately provide an afterthought:

*Excerpt 3 (EDS)*

(1) Int.: Mindy yeah (.) have you seen her in anything else?

(2) May: nope (.) no I probably have (.) I don’t really watch I don’t know

(3) Int.: the Office? did you watch the Office?

(4) May: u:h [no

(5) Int.: [she’s very annoying

(6) May: oh okay (..) that’s why I don’t (.) that’s why I don’t (.) like I’ve=

(7) =only seen her in that (.) so (.) and it’s her show

It seemed that the participant was going to terminate her turn after *so* by implying that she does not know what else to say in regards to why she likes the actress, Mindy Kaling, other than the fact that she is funny, since she has only seen her on *The Mindy Project*. However, she quickly decided that she would like to hold the floor a little longer and add more information before coming to a close; despite her being an annoying character, her justification for watching the show is that it is Mindy’s show.

In another instance, an EDS ultimately continues her turn, potentially because the hearer fails to take over the floor:

*Excerpt 4 (EDS)*

(1) Int.: her accent was really thick? [you can’t understand?

(2) Ella: [well it was just cause that it was=

(3) =like jetlagged and like
(4) Int.: yeah

(5) Ella: and we just got off (.) so: u:m (……) like (.) after that I didn’t=

(6) =find it (.) hard to understand really?

(7) Int.: oh okay you just got used to it

(8) Ella: yeah (.) yeah a lot of people don’t have that thick of an accent=

(9) =either (.) so.

There are pauses and a hesitation marker, *um*, that surround *so*, which is indication that the speaker may have wanted the interviewer to move onto a different topic or question. In particular, the three-second pause that follows *so* can suggest Ella’s desire for the interviewer to take the floor and end the long silence. However, as the hearer did not take over her turn, Ella decided to further elaborate on her reason why she was unable to understand the Scottish accent when she had first arrived in Scotland. Since turn-medial positions are **potential** loci for shifting responsibility from speaker to hearer, *so* has a built-in flexibility when it is used to mark such shifts: if a hearer does not take the option (does not take a turn, answer a question, introduce a topic), the speaker may him/herself continue. (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 225)

The following excerpt demonstrates an ELL’s use of turn-medial Elliptical *so*.

**Excerpt 5 (ELL)**

(1) Int.: all right so can you tell me what happened in the scene?

(2) Kyuri: u::h (.) so he just thinks (.) thinks about (…) the situation= he (.)

(3) =he (.) u::h faced just right now?

(4) Int.: mhmm

(5) Kyuri: so he doesn’t think about the (.) what (.) will happen after=

(6) =they (.) after he went somewhere [he go somewhere
After briefly describing the Mr. Bean character, she concluded that he is stupid. The interviewer responded with a laugh and produced an agreement token, which is then met by an acceptance of the agreement token from the interviewee. Her intended action may have been to close her turn as so is followed by a one-second pause, but she decided to provide, or suddenly remembered, more details about the scene she had just watched. When so is followed by and, and especially when there is a pause between the two, it displays that the speaker was headed in one direction (closing her turn with so), but ends up moving in another (keeping the floor). This is also why this Elliptical so occurs in the middle of her turn, rather than in other positions.

4.5.3 Elliptical so: Stand-alone position.

The third position that Elliptical so can occur in is by itself. This “stand-alone so” (Raymond, 2004) is produced when the foregoing turn is thought to have come to an end and is either followed by a pause or the hearer has followed up on the speaker’s last turn. Its most distinctive feature according to Raymond (2004) is “that speakers start a TCU but do not complete it” (p. 210). The stand-alone so not only “invokes the continuing relevance of [a prior action]” (Raymond, 2004, p. 210), it also implies a result, and “that it will not be produced” (p. 211). Whereas in an adjacency pair, where the second segment is expected to be produced, and, therefore, its absence is seen as a failure, the lack of a stated upshot after a stand-alone “so” is not considered a failure in the same way. As a matter of fact, there is no sequence after so because the speaker intended it and “its completion by the same speaker reflects a missed opportunity for collaboration and possibly even a failure” (p. 211). According to Raymond (2004), the stand-alone so is meant to convey an appropriate action from the hearer. The
expectation is that the hearer will “solve what the so might be prompting them to acknowledge or do” (p. 211).

Raymond (2004) also suggests that there are two different kinds of stand-alone so: one indicating sequence expansion and another indexing sequence closure. When two instances of stand-alone so occur in a sequence of turns regarding the same topic of conversation, the first so, like all the other occurrences of Elliptical so, is meant to introduce a new topic, but the hearer “reopens” the supposedly terminated talk, and, therefore, the speaker fails to close the matter. Once the sequence is further expanded on, the speaker uses a second stand-alone so, this time to finally close the sequence. There were no instances in my data where stand-alone so occurred twice to indicate expansion and closure.

The stand-alone so was only found in the EDS data. ELLs did not use Elliptical so alone, as a complete grammatical unit (Raymond, 2004). The following two excerpts demonstrate instances of stand alone so. In all the occurrences of “stand-alone so,” the interviewer responded with an appropriate action that expressed an understanding of the speaker’s intention with his/her one-word TCU.

*Excerpt 6 (EDS)*

(1) Jodi: =she’s like (. ) can’t you see they’re gypsies?=  
(2) Int.: o:h  
(3) Jodi: =and I’m like (. ) and I’m like no:? and she’s like you can totally=  
(4) =you can’t tell? (. ) like she’s like disgusted by me=  
(5) Int.: right yeah  
(6) Jodi: =I’m like (.) o:h but like they weren’t like (. ) you know they=  
(7) =don’t like (. ) they’re not doing anything [they’re just kids=  
(8) Int.: [yeah  
(9) yeah
Jodi had been talking about an experience she had where a friend she met in Europe was being very racist against the “Gypsies,” which shocked her. As she was a traveler and in need of a place to stay, she described how she would not be able to tell the friend that she is racist and then ask if she could stay at her house for a night. This so relates to the prior talk about the speaker not being able to confront her friend about her beliefs and also ask for shelter. Furthermore, there
is no indication of Jodi wanting to say anything more in regards to this topic. Her desire to terminate her turn is met when the interviewer immediately followed her so up with an expression of mutual agreement, “exactly,” and then brought up a separate, but related matter by discussing how one would be able to recognize a “Gypsy.”

Although the stand-alone so in the previous excerpt was not elongated, Schegloff and Sacks’ (1973) description of its main role (they referred to these markers as “pre-closing” markers) can also apply to so that has not been lengthened:

[Its purpose is] to indicate that [the speaker] has not now anything more or new to say, and also to give a ‘free’ turn to a next, who, because such an utterance can be treated as having broken with any prior topic, can without violating topical coherence take the occasion to introduce a new topic, e.g., some heretofore unmentioned mentionable. AFTER such a possible pre-closing is specifically a place for new topic beginnings. (p. 304)

There were also cases where the hearer’s or interviewer’s response after the speaker’s stand-alone so was followed by the speaker’s acceptance of the hearer’s action, as Excerpt 7 (EDS) illustrates:

*Excerpt 7 (EDS)*

(1) Int.: what's the Shomi service?

(2) Neil: it’s like Netflix but it’s the [Rogers one

(3) Int.: [O:H

(4) is it online or on

(5) Neil: no it’s on the TV

(6) Int.: oh okay

(7) Neil: just on the on demand services=

(8) Int.: okay okay
(9) Neil: =so.

(10) Int.: oh cool

(11) Neil: yeah

Just like the prior examples of Elliptical so, the so in line (9) of Excerpt 7 (EDS) is indication that the speaker has finished speaking on this topic. The question about what the Shomi service is has been appropriately answered and Neil has nothing more to say about it. The interviewer’s response, “oh cool,” is a reply to not only the so, but this entire sequence about what this service does. The stand-alone so has a slightly different function from Elliptical so in turn-medial and turn-final positions, where so presents a closure and the speaker does not necessarily expect an action from the hearer. So on its own, on the other hand, is produced with anticipation for some responsive action from the recipient. The interviewer responded to Neil’s so and he once again took the floor to accept my response as suitable in line (11).

4.5.4 Elliptical so: Recapitulation.

The results for stand-alone so indicated that there were some differences between the two speaker groups. While a mere 2.22% of all instances of discourse marker so was used by ELLs to signal a close, a slightly greater rate of 8.57% of all instances of discourse marker so was used by EDSs for this purpose. This disparity is mostly attributable to one EDS participant’s frequent use of this function in comparison to the rest of the participants in the data. 14 out of the 34 occurrences of Elliptical so were uttered by one EDS participant. That is almost half of all occurrences (41.18%) of this function.

There were no notable differences between the EDSs’ and ELLs’ use of the turn-final so. The turn-final Elliptical so contains a resultative meaning, suggesting “a point of potential closure for a discourse topic” (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 223) or a way to simply end the turn (Torres and Potowski, 2008; Matzen, 2004), and can prompt the speaker to begin a new topic or can prompt the hearer to take over the floor, deeming it a transition-relevant place. In my data overall, and not only for cases of Elliptical so, most topic changes were initiated by the interviewer; it was very rare for the interviewee to begin a new topic.
In Excerpt 3 and Excerpt 5, the turn-medial so was followed by a short pause and and before the respective speakers continued to hold onto the floor and added an afterthought. There were no major differences between the EDSs’ use of turn-medial Elliptical so and the ELLs’ use of turn-medial Elliptical so. One notable point is that the ELL participants made some grammatical errors in their speech, which complicated the classification process. The confusion with Excerpt 5 (ELL) is whether or not what followed so, the pause, and, and, is an upshot or a relevant afterthought. This so could have been categorized as a Move so if the segment following the marker had been thought to be the result of the prior segment. It was only after I had translated the segment following so from English into Korean that I was able to understand that this second segment was an additional comment relevant to the scene that Kyuri had just watched (main topic). It can be assumed that she meant to translate the Korean utterance, “ 큰 가방이 있었는데도”, which would correctly translate to “even though he had a big bag” in English, an afterthought, and not the result of the prior segment. It could be understood that Kyuri was trying to conclude that “Mr. Bean is stupid; he even had a big bag, in which he could have packed his belongings all along.”

4.6 Move So

So’s eighth discursive function, Move so (Torres & Potowski, 2008), does not signal any relation to the narration; it is not quite related to the main topic nor reason/result. Of course, Move so is employed in discourse; it simply does not connect to the story in the same way the other functions of so do. Move so may show some similarities to a “filler” (Bortfeld, Leon, Bloom, Schober, & Brennan, 2001; Clark & Fox Tree, 2002; Corley & Stewart, 2008; Gilquin, 2008), a “filled pause” (Goldman-Eisler, 1961; Kjellmer, 2003), or a “hesitation disfluency” (Bortfeld et al., 2001; Corley & Stewart, 2008). Fillers tend to be used when the speaker is uncertain about a word that will follow it (Corley & Stewart, 2008), and they are known to mark hesitation (Bortfeld et al., 2001; Corley & Stewart, 2008) and disturbance in the fluency of speech (Tottie, 2011). Corley and Stewart (2008) have also asserted that fillers are produced unintentionally; however, “speakers plan for, formulate, and produce [fillers] just as they would any word” (Clark and Fox Tree, 2002, p. 73). The same can be said of discourse markers such as so.

Despite their similarities, Move so is not equivalent to a filler. While fillers, such as “[u]h and um[.] are characteristically associated with planning problems” (Clark and Fox Tree, 2002, p.
75), they are also considered to be “planners” (Tottie, 2011) because they are used by speakers to plan what to say next. Planners also provide the hearer with some time to prepare himself/herself for what to come. This is not true for Move so. In my data, Move so was not necessarily used when there was a planning problem or when the speaker wanted more time to plan. Fillers are also often followed by complicated words (Kjellmer, 2003). Move so, on the other hand, does not necessarily precede difficult words. Turn-taking, turn-holding, turn-yielding, and highlighting, functions of fillers that Kjellmer (2003) outlined in his study, do not only apply to discourse markers in general, but also to Move so. Furthermore, while so seems to hold an element of hesitation, especially when it occurs with pauses or silence and fillers, such as um, it is not mostly found at the beginning of an utterance (Corley and Stewart, 2008). As for the placement of Move so, it can occur in a variety of positions, as will be demonstrated below.

4.6.1 EDS analysis: Move so.

The following is an example of an instance where the speaker used a pause, a filled pause, and elongation to hold her turn and to imply that she is thinking about what to say next.

Excerpt 1 (EDS)

(1) Int.: okay and could you pick a character from this show and describe=

(2) =his or her personality

(3) Ella: okay u:m

(4) Int.: one that you like or don’t like

(5) Ella: okay u::h so: (…) let’s say Buster

She was clearly using so as a “filler or delaying tactic (…) to sustain [the] discourse or hold the floor” (Brinton, 1996, p. 37) in order to come up with a character she was going to describe. In line (5), so is not only slightly lengthened, but it is also preceded by an elongated filler, uh, and followed by a pause. The lengthened uh indicates that (1) the speaker is “continuing a delay that is on-going at t(‘uh’)” (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002, p. 80) and that (2) the speaker is “initiating, at t(‘uh’), what [he/she] expect[s] to be a minor delay in speaking” (p. 80). Although Ella began with a filled pause, she ultimately inserted a pause as well, indexing her desire to keep the floor
to think, possibly to avoid excessively employing fillers, such as *ums* and *uhhs*, which could be distracting to the hearer.

Here is another example of Move *so* employed by an EDS:

*Excerpt 2 (EDS)*

(1) Int.: *do you speak any other languages?*

(2) Lara: *yeah um I speak Urdu [(.) so: um=*

(3) Int.: *=[okay*

(4) Lara: *=and then I also speak a little bit of Spanish*

The *so* in *Excerpt 2* may seem like an Elliptical *so* at first, as it does seem to end her turn since she did, in fact, respond to the interviewer’s question. However, it seems that she already had Spanish on her mind, but she was debating whether or not to say anything about it. The *so* would not really satisfy the conclusion element that Elliptical *so* holds. The only result that is interpreted from it would be that she has finished her turn; it does not insinuate any other result that should or could be taken away from it. Therefore, it is not an Elliptical *so*. It seems that *so* here is just taking up space in her turn. Instead of using another filler or a longer silence, the pause is replaced by *so*, acting to indicate to the hearer that she has more to say, but she needs a little bit more time to organize her thoughts.

4.6.2 ELL analysis: Move *so*.

Similar instances of Move *so* were discovered in the ELL data, such as marking hesitation and holding the floor (Kjellmer, 2003; Corley & Stewart, 2008). *So* was also found to indicate a progression in the narrative that “[did] not imply consequence, result, or conclusion” (Torres & Potowski, 2008, p.269) and it was often preceded or followed by *and* or *but*. Consider the following examples:

*Excerpt 3 (ELL)*

(1) Int.: *all right so can you tell me what happened in the scene?*
Excerpt 4 (ELL)

(1) Int.: so can you just tell me what happened in that scene?

(2) Nara: maybe Bean really want to go to vacation?=

(3) Int.: mhmm

(4) Nara: =for six days or five days [because he prepare=

(5) Int.: [okay

(6) =the (. ) three (. ) no six beans [canned and=

(7) Int.: [oh yeah yeah yeah

(8) Nara: =five shirts [so (. ) and he he will gonna vacation=

(9) Int.: [yeah

(10) Nara: =but (. ) he pack the baggage but the bag is so small=

(2) Kyuri: u::h (. ) so he just thinks (. ) thinks about (. . . ) the situation=

(3) =he (. ) u:h faced just right now?=

(4) Int.: mhmm

(5) Kyuri: =so he doesn’t think about the (. ) what will happen after=

(6) =they (. ) after he (. ) went somewhere [he go somewhere

(7) Int.: [mhmm

(8) Kyuri: yeah so (. ) and and (. ) so he’s a little bit (. ) ah not little bit=

(9) =he’s stupid (hh)
(11) so (. ) he (hh) minimize everything

Excerpt 5 (ELL)

(1) Lina: at first Pat missed his ex-wife=

(2) Int.: mhmm

(3) Lina: and the girl kissed him=

(4) Int.: yeah

(5) Lina: so (. ) but (. ) he he wanted (. ) reunite with his ex-wife=

(6) Int.: mhmm

(7) Lina: so but he he feels confused so when he get back to his=

(8) house (. ) he started to he starts to looking for he starts looking=

(9) for=

(10) Int.: mhmm

(11) Lina: wedding video

In Excerpt 3, so is followed by not one, but two ands. In Excerpt 4, so overlaps with the interviewer’s backchannel, “yeah,” but the speaker understood that the interviewer was not attempting to take over the floor, as she continued without hesitation or pause. Her so is not only followed by and, she also repeated the pronoun he, which is a sign of hesitation, in line with the Move so that just preceded it. There is another very similar instance in Excerpt 5 where so is followed by but and then a repetition of the pronoun he. These instances of so can be replaced with a filler, such as um or uh, as Ko (2013) has also suggested in her study, and it would not change the proposition of the utterance. In other words, so is being used “as a delay tactic for planning and time-stalling purposes” (Lam, 2010, p. 669).
Ko (2013) conducted a study on pre-service Korean English teachers’ speech to determine in what ways the participants were using *so* as a “discourse filler” problematically. She classified *so* as a discourse filler, or what I refer to as Move *so* in the present study, when it “[did] not sound either natural or appropriate in the context given” (p. 38). Many such cases occurred in my ELL data, albeit by only two of the Japanese speakers. For instance, Nori in *Excerpt 6* and Taro in *Excerpt 7* used *so* “without any specified meaning in the context” (p. 37).

*Excerpt 6 (ELL)*

(1) Int.: o:h okay okay=

(2) =so what kind of what is comedy in Japan? (.) what does it=

(3) =look like?

(4) Nori: u:h like (.) how can I say? like (.) u::h you know? (.) I I think=

(5) =I should show the pic the video

(6) Int.: okay

(7) Nori: I think (…) like (.) like (.) this is I think common comedy in=

(8) =American but I think (.) u:h no like talking we (.) we enjoy=

(9) =talking [with each other *so* and comedians=

(10) Int.: [okay

(11) Nori: =will *so* pick up the *so* personality like *so* funny talk or=

(12) =like *so* many *so* but the (.) like (.) Mr. Bean will *so* attend the=

(13) =like *so* funny action *so*
Excerpt 7 (ELL)

(1) Int.: yeah yeah in as much detail as you can
(2) Taro: okay (.) at first u:h the (. ) the person tried to pack something and=
(3) =the (. ) as much as they they can and (. uh) he can and (. u:h) all=
(4) =of stuff was so (. so (. ) so large large for him=
(5) Int.: mhmm
(6) Taro: =and he tried to shorten everything (. ) and (. ) so (. ) it is (. ) it is=
(7) =kind of ridiculous for others (. ) and (. ) so and (. ) so: during the=
(8) =movie (. ) I can get the (. ) the what happen next (. ) so the video=
(9) =was (on) and (. ) so (. ) I should say details of the stuff?=
(10) Int.: no uh whatever you can remember
(11) Taro: =okay=
(12) Int.: anything that you wanna say
(13) Taro: =and so I was impressed about the (. ) the pants?
(14) Int.: okay
(15) Taro: yeah he cut pants [and so (. ) it is it is my fair guess so I can=
(16) Int.: [yeah
(17) Taro: =understand what happened=
(18) Int.: okay
(19) Taro: =and (. u:h) finally (. ) he realized that he has a big one=
(20) =and (...) so (.) yeah so (.) because of that everyone is laughing

(21) Int.: mhmm

(22) Taro: and (.) and he (.) so (hh) (....) u:h I wanna say more=

(23) =I wanna say more but

Within one turn, Nori used Move so eight times, none of which established coherence or “deliver[ed] any relevant information to the previous” (p. 39) or succeeding utterances in the same way so does in other functions. The reason the so in “so pick up” does not function as an adverb to possibly mean “will definitely pick up” is because of the lack of elongation of the DM. So does not have to be elongated to function as an adverb, but there was no pause throughout his speech in line (11); the lack of pause and/or lengthening of the DM compel so to indicate a discursive function (Move), rather than a non-discursive one. The same applies to the so in “like so many.” So has not been lengthened and Nori briefly paused only after five productions of the DM.

Meanwhile, 5 out of the 8 instances of so that occurred in Taro’s turn, function as Move so. The repetition of so and the word that follows this repetition, “large,” in line (4) of Excerpt 7 and the “and so and so” sequence in line (7) are indications that Taro is hesitating and having trouble forming his thoughts and utterances. These are not the only words that have been repeated. The “and so” in line (15) of Excerpt 7 is followed by another repetition sequence, “it is it is.” These are signs that he is struggling with the language. Quite a few of the instances of Move so in Taro’s data appeared in combination with and and a pause. This composite demonstrates Torres and Potowski’s (2008) progression that does not actually signal an end or conclusion. The and helps so push the speech forward, but when a sequence is followed by pauses and so, in particular, the story does not actually progress. Furthermore, the instances of so do not indicate a continuation in the story because the main topic has already been introduced, and while so can be used to continue the story and to indicate that the segment that follows the so is related to the main story, so repeated so frequently is a disruption to the flow of speech (Ko, 2013) and can be interpreted as a distraction, instead of a tool to guide the hearer in the story. Move so in Nori’s speech occurred especially when he had to hold a longer turn. In situations where he was responding to a yes-no question or where the response was short, Move so was not used as often.
By filling the spaces/pauses with *so* and *ands* or *buts*, it makes it seem like the narration is being forced to move on in no particular direction. It may, at times, be difficult to distinguish this Move function from the Main/New Topic Marker function, but oftentimes, the former function of *so* merely “moves” the speech forward and does not advance the story.

### 4.6.3 Move *so*: Recapitulation.

The results indicated a few differences between the EDSs and the ELLs. First of all, only 4 EDSs used Move *so*. 6 out of the 315 occurrences of discourse marker *so* or 1.90% of the total instances of discourse marker *so* functioned as Move *so* by the EDSs. On the other hand, 7 ELLs used this function of *so* and 80 out of the 315 occurrences of discourse marker *so* or 25.40% of the total instances of discourse marker *so* functioned as Move *so* by the ELLs. This is the second-most frequent function between both speaker groups and is the most frequently used function by the ELLs. Evidently, the Move function was not so common among EDSs. Whereas, the ELLs made frequent use of this function—particularly by two of the Japanese L1 participants—not even half of the EDS group employed Move *so*. In addition, functions of Move *so* that were not presented in the EDS data were exhibited in the ELL group. Move *so* is most certainly a part of the narration, as it keeps the speaker’s talk *moving* in a forward direction. However, it only attempts to move the story along; it does not actually progress the storyline. In other words, there is no development in the talk.

### 4.7 *So, Kulenikka, and Dakara*

There are likely more than one Korean or Japanese discourse markers that have some similar functions to *so*, just as there is more then one English discourse marker that represents some of the same functions. *Kulenikka* and *dakara* were chosen as they are words frequently used in Korean and Japanese, respectively, that translate to *so* in English. *Kulenikka* and *dakara* are briefly explored to determine the degree of comparability between the functions of these two DMs and the functions of *so*. The similarities and differences may lead to positive and/or negative transfer to the acquisition of DMs, such as *so*, in the L2.

Korean and Japanese are head-final languages that both have SOV constructions, permitting the phenomenon known as Scrambling (Ross, 1967), “the rule which scrambles major constituents in a clause in so-called ‘free word-order languages’” (p. 104). Although Im (2011) uses Korean’s
characteristic of being a free word-order language for *kulenikka* not adhering to the initiality characteristic, initiality is not a strict prerequisite for discourse marker status, regardless, as neither *so* nor *dakara* (Mori, 1999) meets this attribute. *Kulenikka* can occur in initial, medial, and final positions, whereas *dakara* is also found in clause-internal positions. Despite English not being a free word-order language, *so* also appears in various positions. Im (2011) also reasons that characteristics of discourse markers that have been established for one language cannot apply to those of other languages since it would not yield comparable results. Therefore, the following discussion is simply a brief exploration of two equivalents of *so* in Korean and Japanese.

### 4.7.1 Kulenikka

*Kulenikka* (Choi, 2007; Im, 2011), one of many different kinds of *kule*-type discourse markers, such as *kulayse* (so, therefore), *kuelnikka* (so, since, I know, etc.), *kulemulo* (therefore), and *kuleni* (so) (Ahn, 1992, cited in Im, 2011, p. 27), expresses “cause/reason for the prior utterance” (Im, 2011, p. 31). Like *so*, *kulenikka* is very frequent in Korean speech (Im, 2011), but their similarities do not end here; it shares similarities to both the non-DM *so* and discourse marker *so*. *Kulenikka* has gone through the process of grammaticalization in the same way that it is believed that English discourse markers (Brinton 1996; Schourup 1999) have. As a non-DM, *kulenikka* translates to “as/since it is so” or “by doing in such a way,” while as a discourse marker, it translates to “so, that’s why” (Im, 2011).

Non-discourse-marker *kulenikka* or “semantic *kulenikka*” (Im, 2011) marks (retrospective) epistemic causality, “convey[ing] the reason/grounds for the speaker’s belief” (p. 91), and (prospective) speech act causality, where “the speaker performs a speech act (suggesting or ordering) based on the reason/grounds” (p. 92). The following is an example taken from Im (2011): in a conversation about GPAs, the mother explains to her daughter that she should not worry, because despite her mother being in the lowest tier, her father placed in the first.

(25) Queen of Housewives Episode 1 – Mother and daughter’s conversation

((some lines excluded))
4 → Ciay: kuken kulehcika anha. i emma-ka naysin 15 tungkup cwung-ey 15 tungkup-i-essketun. ney appa-n iltungkup-i-esskwu. kulenikka emma sayngkak-ey-n nen kiponcek-ulo 7 tungkup-un hal keya. ku cengto-myen 4 nyencey-nun ka.

‘No, that doesn’t work that way. Mommy was in the 15th tier our of a total of 15 tiers you see. And your dad was in the top 1st tier. So I think you will at least be within the 7th tier. That’s good enough to get you into a 4-year university.’

5 Cengwen: cincca?

‘Really??’

6 → Ciay: kulay~~ kulenikka yenge thukhwal kule-n ke ha-ci mal-kwu mak twuy-e nol-a.
Wuli cip-un ney-ka ilukhi-l key ani-la ney-ney appa-ka ilukh-yeya ha-ketun?

‘Yes, of course~~ So don’t worry about things like taking extra English activity classes, and just go out and play. You see, this family is supposed to be set up by your father, not you.’

(from Im, 2011, p. 91)

This retrospective and prospective aspect of kulenikka also applies to so as a conjunction:
Excerpt 1 (ELL)

(1) Int.: okay so can you tell me what happened in the scene in as much=

(2) detail as you can?

(3) Seojun: u:h he tried to pack a bag=

(4) Int.: mhmm

(5) Seojun: =and the can it’s kind of space=

(6) Int.: mhmm

(7) Seojun: =so (.) and even he has a big bag but he tried to put the all stuff in=

(8) =little bag

(9) Int.: mhmm

((some lines excluded))

(10) Seojun: =and (he choose things) he cut the pants=

(11) Int.: mhmm

(12) Seojun: =and toothpaste and he tried to cut the bear’s neck=

(13) Int.: mhmm

(14) Seojun: =but he like the bear so he tried to keep it

So in line (14) indicates epistemic causality because Mr. Bean deciding to keep the teddy bear’s neck intact is a consequence of his cherishing it. Like kulenikka in (4), so was used to convey the speaker’s belief and reason/grounds.

The functions of kulenikka are divided according to the orientation and level the discourse marker is working at. There are 5 different levels: speaker-oriented textual level, speaker-oriented textual-interactional level, speaker-oriented interactional level, hearer-oriented textual-
interactional level, and hearer-oriented interactional level. Moreover, Im (2011) defines *kulenikka* based on Jucker and Ziv’s (1998) presentation marker and reception marker. As a reception marker functioning at the interactional level, *kulenikka* is used by the hearer as a response to the speaker’s speech. There are positive (agreement/alignment) and negative (disagreement/disalignment) reception markers. So did not function as a reception marker in my data and it was not used alone by the hearer to indicate agreement or disagreement with the speaker.

As a presentation marker, *kulenikka* is used “to communicate his/her information effectively and accurately. Functioning on the textual and textual-interactional levels, *kulenikka* is used for topic organization, including topic change/maintenance, indexing prior discourse, opening/closing the topic, and taking/holding the floor. Similar to Main Topic so, *kulenikka* also marks explanation, where its use introduces elaboration, exemplification, specification, approximation, reformulation, modification, repair (own/other), and quotation. The example below displays *kulenikka* introducing the explanation or response to the question in line 2, “why an acwumma?”

(3) *Acwumma* (summarization)

1 S:  
*Y-nun kunyang acwumma-ta...* (laugh)

   Y-TC just auntie-DC

   ‘Y is just an acwumma, haha.’

2 J:  
(laugh) *way acwumma-ya?!*

   why auntie-Q

   ‘Haha, why an acwumma?!’

3 → S: *ani kulenikka, Y-nin ay-tul-hakwe yaykiha-nun ke cohaha-kwu*

   no kulenikka, Y-TC other-PL-with chat-RL thing like-and
4  swul-twu  anmek-kwu yaykiha-nunke cohaha-kwu mak ile-nikka
   alcohol-also not eat-and chat-RL thing like-and really like this-nikka

5  kunyan acwumma-ta.. tto i tongney ce togney
   just auntie-PLN also this neighborhood that neighborhood

   story all know-and exist-you know kka auntie-PLN this-be-INT

(from Im, 2011, p. 122)

So in Excerpt 2 also introduces her response to the interviewer’s question:

Excerpt 2 (ELL)

(1) Int.: all right so can you tell me what happened in the scene?

(2) Kyuri: u:h () so he just thinks thinks about the situation he (...) faced just right now?

Comparable to Move so, kulenikka also functions as a pause-filler and is used to stall in order to search for a word. Kim used a shortened version of kulenikka (kka) to demonstrate its pause-filler, floor-holder, time-getter function, much like so in Excerpt 3.

(16) Men and asking for directions

1  Kim:  kka… kka… i-key eti-se nao-nyamyen
Excerpt 3 (ELL)

(1) Int.: okay so can you tell me what happened in the scene in as much=

(2)  =detail as you can?

(3) Seojun: u:h he tried to pack a bag=

(4) Int.: mhmm

(5) Seojun: =and the can it’s kind of space=

(6) Int.: mhmm

(7) Seojun: =so (.) and even he has a big bag but he tried to put the all stuff in=

(8)  =little bag

Im (2011) notes that speakers signal that they are in “search mode” by vocalizing this search. Move so was not employed by one of the Korean ELLs. Instead, she asked herself, “what is it?,” a method of holding the floor and searching for the word(s) on the speaker’s mind in Korean. In Korean, “what is it?” could translate to “kka mweci?,” which actually includes the Korean equivalent (albeit shortened form) of discourse marker so, kuleniikka. This could be a possible
indication of a delay in the acquisition of this discourse marker. Moreover, she ranked third least frequent in her use of the DM, further supporting my supposition.

Excerpt 4 (ELL)

(1) Hana: firstly (..) my intention is to learn English you know

(2) [it’s sometimes helpful to me=

(3) Int.: [great

(4) yeah

(5) Hana: =but secondly (….) I mean the (.) what is it (.). idea? the topic of=

(6) =the sitcom is so touching

Excerpt 5 (ELL)

(1) Hana: her behavior is gorgeous (.). ah when I see her how to deal with his=

(2) =kids=

(3) Int.: mhmm

(4) Hana: =it’s like he respect (.). her child=

(5) Int.: mhmm

(6) Hana: =and then he know how to (.). practically (…) what is it mmm

(7) (….) I mean he is wise (.). he’s clever

Excerpt 6 (ELL)

(1) Hana: another thing is so many homeless in here
(2) Int.: mm

(3) Hana: (. yeah [I thought their (. what is it (. economic status is=

(4) Int.: [okay

(5) Hana: =better than Korea

Excerpt 7 (ELL)

(1) Hana: no I know workout clothes (. it’s like (…) what is it (..)=

(2) =((unintelligible)) I don’t know (. the exact word it’s kind of a (.)=

(3) =it looks like lingerie but it’s a clothes

All of the above examples of Hana’s use of “what is it” displays floor-holding and searching. First of all, they are all surrounded by pauses. In Excerpt 4, she exhibits her confusion with the raised intonation after “idea” in line (5). In Excerpt 5, she takes a moment to think about what to say with “what is it” and then rephrases what she was going to say, “I mean…,” possibly because she was not satisfied with the way she began her thought, “he know how to practically.” In Excerpt 6, the words she was searching for is clearly “economic status,” since there is no rephrasing or self-questioning, and her initial utterance, “I thought their,” grammatically flows with “economic status…,” the succeeding sequence after “what is it.” Finally, Excerpt 7 demonstrates “what is it” initiating a search. Although she does not know what to call the piece of clothing, she does, ultimately, manage to describe it in line (3).

Other functions of kulenikka include presenting a request or confirmation of the speaker’s prior utterance and “mitigat[ing] any face-threatening acts on the speaker/hearer’s part, particularly by employing hesitation markers in the organization of their speech” (Im, 2011, p. 106).

4.7.2 Dakara.

Some research has been conducted on dakara as a discourse marker (Maynard, 1989; Sasamoto, 2008). Matsui (2002) suggested that dakara is comparable to illocutionary and attitudinal
adverbials, such as *frankly* and *unfortunately*, respectively, contributing to higher-level explicatures, but also comparable to English discourse connectives, such as *so*, encoding procedural information, rather than conceptual information (Blakemore, 1996). In other words, *dakara* shares quite a few similarities to *so*. In fact, every function of *dakara* that has been briefly explored in this section is equivalent to the functions of *so* that appeared in the present study. Matsui (2002, p. 868) supports five functions of *dakara* that have been often recognized by other scholars:

(i) logical implication  
(ii) cause-consequence relation  
(iii) premise-conclusion (epistemic-causal) relation  
(iv) speech-act causation relation  
(v) reformulation relation

The first four functions are causal relations that also apply to Reason/Result *so* ((ii) and (iii)) or Elliptical *so* ((i) and (iv)). The fifth function is a non-causal function of *dakara* (v), and is “interpreted as a reformulation of the previous utterance (cf. Hamada, 1997; Hasunuma, 1991; Maynard, 1993)” (Matsui, 2002, p. 868).

Yokobayashi and Shimomura (1988) provides the definition of *dakara*, the Japanese equivalent of *so*, which is similar to *so*’s Reason/Result function: “*dakara* expresses the speaker’s judgment that the fact or events occur as a natural result of the facts and events described in the preceding position” (cited in Matsui, 2002, p. 872). In other words, like *so*, *dakara* also connects two propositions and indicates a “cause/reason-result/consequence” (Maynard, 1993, cited in Matsui, 2002, p. 872) relation.

(2)  
[Mariko says to Taro]  
I don’t have the key. *Dakara*, we can’t get into the house through the door.

First of all, in English, *dakara* is not required for the hearer to understand the contextual implications encoded in the utterances. Two mental representations are related by *dakara* in (2):

(17)  
a. If the speaker doesn’t have the key for the door, she can’t open the door.

b. If she can’t open the door, they can’t enter the house through the door.
c. If they can’t enter the house through the door, then they have to break the window.

(Matsui, 2002, p. 876)

In short, the implied result the hearer can interpret from this utterance is that they are going to have to break the window. Replacing *dakara* in the above example with *so*, would not change any of the contextual implications of the contextual effect. This must mean that *so* and *dakara* share this function of expressing cause-consequence relations.

The segment following *dakara* also provides an explanation or justification of, or an elaboration on prior information (Maynard, 1998; Mori, 1999; Matsui, 2002), and also introduces a repetition of a previously-relayed piece of information, and, therefore, signals irritation (Matsui, 2002).

(7) [Mother always checks if her son is doing homework]

Mother: Are you doing your homework?

Son: *Dakara* (Can’t you see?) I am doing it now.

(Matsui, 2002, p. 870)

The mother asks this question hoping to receive a desirable response, which is to hear that her son is doing his homework. Matsui (2002) proposed that the son’s dissociative attitude towards his mother is represented in his use of *dakara*, as it implies that the son intuitively knew that his mother would ask him this question, most likely because she has asked him this before and he is, therefore, irritated by that. While *so* was not found to signal any irritation in my data, it was used by the participants to provide further explanations of an argument (Main Topic *so*). *So* has been
employed to present the opinions of the speaker or even a person or character about whom the speaker is discussing.

*Dakara* has also been likened to “that is” and “in other words” in English, which are two senses implied by *so*’s function as Summary *so* and Restatement/Rewording *so*. Moreover, its employability in non-linguistic contexts, or its disposability in situations where the prior proposition is implied, resembles *so*’s Speech Act Marker function preceding questions or requests. Although this function was not present in my data, *so* is used in contexts where the speaker may begin with *so* to initiate a topic that was on the pending agenda but not explicitly stated before the uttering of *so*.

Other functions of *dakara* include indicating a summary (equivalent to Summary *so*) or restatement (equivalent to Restatement/Rewording *so*) (Mori, 1999; Matsui, 2002). In addition, *dakara*’s function as presenting additional talk to repeat or reword opinions and clarify unclear segments (Mori, 1999), is much like *so*’s Opinion function, Restatement/Rewording function, and even Main Topic *so*. Just like Elliptical *so*, *dakara* also seems to imply a conclusion: it can “mark the end of the speaker’s turn in conversation” (Maynard, 1998, p. 65).

Although the fifth function Matsui (2002) identified, reformulation relation, has been considered a non-causal function of *dakara*, I would argue that there is an element of cause/reason. Let us examine the following example:

(10) President: I wasn’t there when the decision was made.

Chairman: What does that mean?

President: *Dakara* (It means) I am not responsible.

Matsui (2002, p. 871)

Here, *so* would be able to replace *dakara* and maintain the speaker’s original intention of his/her use of the Japanese DM. The meaning of the last line would be equivalent to “*so* (it means) I am
not responsible.” Both *dakara* and *so* introduce the result of the President not having been present when the decision was made: he is not responsible. At the same time, *dakara* functions very similarly to *so*’s restatement/rewording function. The President’s conclusion that he is not responsible was already implied when he said that he was not in attendance when the decision was made. Therefore, the President is, in a sense, rewording his earlier statement.

4.8 Discourse Marker Interview

The discourse marker interview explored participants’ awareness about discourse markers, such as *so*, and the ELL language background interview examined participants’ self-reported English language use and EDS contact and L1 use. Before the discourse marker interview, discourse markers were briefly defined for the participants orally so that they would know what the researcher was referring to when the participants were asked questions about DMs. Discourse markers are learned/acquired “naturally” if they are the speaker’s L1 discourse markers and if not, discourse markers of foreign languages are learned through access to authentic speech and dominant speaker interactions. All but two EDS participants said they had not formally learned how to use discourse markers in the classroom. One participant said she had looked them up on the Internet and the other said she was unsure. In addition, all but one participants’ response to the question, “How do you know how to use discourse markers?” indicated that they acquired the ability through interacting with others, hearing them in use by friends, parents, classmates, in the media, etc. The same can be said of the ELL participants. When asked how the ELL participants know how to use their respective L1 discourse markers, most responded that they learned them naturally or through interactions with others (friends, parents, etc.). However, their responses to how they learned to use *so* varied. One ELL participant believed she learned about written discourse markers in textbooks, while half of the ELL group said that they learned how to use them from hearing and interacting with English-dominant speakers and watching English TV shows, or searching the Internet, similar to the way they acquired the ability to use discourse markers in their L1s. Almost half of the ELL group was unclear about how they think they learned how to use *so*. Overall, all ELL participants had some native-speaker contact (classes, participating in school activities, etc.), but the amount differed depending on whether or not they were staying in a homestay and how much effort they put into interacting with EDSs.
From the discourse marker interview, it was discovered that some of the participants were relatively aware of three of the categories of *so* mentioned in the present study (Main/New Topic *so*, Elliptical *so*, and Reason/Result *so*). However, their awareness did not necessarily result in their use of the function during the one-on-one sessions, possibly because there were no opportunities for their use. While it was possible to ensure that the same questions were asked during the one-on-one sessions, the content and discourse trajectory varied. This may be one reason why some of the speakers did not employ certain functions of *so*, despite having knowledge of those functions. Before I discuss the results of the interview, it should be noted that the participants were unaware that *so* and other English discourse markers are called *discourse markers*. It was only after I had explained its function in speech and provided some examples that they recognized the form. In addition, the language used during the interviews was simplified from the technical language used by researchers in the field of linguistics and language education so that the participants could discuss the topic with the researcher.

Three of the EDS participants mentioned that *so* can be used to return to the original planned path of talk. Troy and Neil also mentioned *so*’s function as a way to bring up something that was brought up before but not terminated, or as a way to return to pending talk, such as when he is waiting for expected news. This is equivalent to *so*’s function as Main/New Topic *so* in the present study. The other function that Neil used frequently was, in fact, Main/New Topic *so*. Another participant mentioned that she uses *so* to introduce a story, as she did when she was introducing the plot of one of her favorite books, while a few others said that it is used to organize or prepare the statement or introduce the response. Neil seemed very aware of his use of *so*. In response to the question about how *so* functions, he replied that it can be used on its own. He used *so* alone quite a few times, in addition to the other functions of Elliptical *so* during the one-one-one session. In fact, Elliptical *so* was most frequently used by Neil, who made up 14 of the 34 (41.18% of all Elliptical *so* instances) occurrences of Elliptical *so*. Another EDS participant mentioned *so*’s ability to imply causality. Of course, all functions of *so* (whether as a discourse marker or not) has this underlying feature. The EDS also mentioned *so*’s function to imply a conclusion. *So* can indicate conclusion as Move *so*, Summary *so*, Restatement/Rewording *so*, and Reason/Result *so*. Among these categories, only Reason/Result was found in his data. In other words, he is suggesting that *so* is used to indicate that the speaker is wrapping up or concluding his turn/talk. Moreover, although there were three ELLs who
seemed to be aware of so’s resultative function, it is not entirely clear if they are only referring to so’s function as a non-discursive conjunction or also to discursive so. One category that was only recognized by two ELL participants was the Move function of so. They suggested that so was used to indicate that the speaker is thinking, which is one of Move so’s functions. In addition, three EDS and four ELL participants were quite unsure of its functions. However, they did mention that so can go in the beginning of an utterance, indicating some awareness about, at least, where to place the DM in an utterance. Other functions or additional features that were suggested by the participants, but were not covered in my analysis include using so to get the hearer to pay attention and to break the awkwardness between the interlocutors, which can also be considered to be a part of Main Topic so. Four participants also implied that so is used to weaken the force of FTAs (face-threatening acts). One individual believed that in situations where so could be used, its absence would seem aggressive. So can be used to make a statement less “blunt” or direct and it allows you to hesitate, think, prepare, and even make changes to your original plan of thought. Moreover, it can be used to approach a topic more cautiously, probably to protect either the hearer’s and/or speaker’s face. In addition, if the speaker does not know how to respond to a question, he or she could use so, which would mark hesitation.
Chapter 5
Discussion

This chapter will provide a discussion of the results reported earlier. I will explore the possible causes of the outcomes that were described and present the findings and deductions of this study.

5.1 Range of Functions

No one individual used all functions of discursive so. However, three EDSs used the greatest range of functions with 6 out of 8. The functions included in the range varied for each speaker. The majority of the ELLs employed either two or four functions, while the majority of the EDSs employed five or six functions. None of the ELLs employed Rewording/Restatement so, and the range of functions used by the ELLs was generally narrower than that of the EDSs in the present study, indicating that they have not yet fully acquired the ability to employ the discourse marker so. If this is true of such a common discourse marker, so, it can be expected that ELLs also lack the knowledge and ability to use a wide range of DM functions. Asik and Cephe (2013) concluded that the use of discourse markers, in general, by English language learners, is limited in both frequency and function in comparison to native speakers of English. Similar to the present study, so was more frequent in the speech of the native speakers. Out of the 79 occurring DMs in the learner data and the 104 in the native speaker data, so ranked third most frequent for both speaker groups, with a 0.54% occurrence rate by the non-native speakers and a 1.31% occurrence rate by the native speakers. The ELLs in Fung and Carter’s (2007) study also demonstrated a limited range of DM use and “unnatural” uses of DMs. The Hong Kong learners of English had a restricted use of some of the more frequently used DMs by the British EDSs, such as well and right. In addition, despite producing the same functions, some functions, such as “elaborative so” and “self-corrective so,” were found to be more prevalent in the speech of Buysse’s (2012) ELLs; however, he proposed that language learners “use more vague terms that require elaboration than their native peers, and [that] they are certainly more likely to require repair of their own utterances” (p. 1778). This limited range of functions also occurs in other languages such as French. Rehner (2002) discovered that the students’ use of the various functions of discursive alors was much more limited than the native speakers’ use of this French discourse marker, despite their speech having been recorded in the same circumstances and using
the same interview protocol. When comparing range of functions among speaker groups, we must take into consideration the structure and content of the interviews between the researcher and each participant. No session in my study was the same, meaning that conversations between some participants and the researcher may not have yielded an opportunity for some functions to occur.

5.2 Comparison of Frequencies and Functions

Whether it is a frequent or infrequent use of a discourse marker in comparison to EDSs, studies examining ELLs’ use of DMs have generally concluded that there is a discrepancy in ELLs’ production of discourse markers. Overall, the frequency of discursive so for both ELLs and EDSs was similar. So was employed 147 times out of 315 by the ELLs and 168 times out of 315 by the EDSs. Despite the comparable frequency of the DM, the analysis yielded other differences. Within each functional category, the EDSs had a higher frequency than the ELLs, with the exception of Move so and Speech Act Marker so’s opinion-presenting function. This contrasts with prior studies on the use of discursive so by language learners. Ko (2013) separated her data into so as a discourse marker and so as a discourse filler, which corresponds to Move so in my data. However, it should be emphasized that Move so in my data is what I refer to as a discourse marker, as I have stated earlier in the description of this function. Therefore, I will combine the frequencies of Ko’s (2013) discourse marker so and discourse filler so to compare the results with my study. Discourse marker so (269 instances) and discourse filler so (221 instances) usage by the Korean participants made up 490 occurrences, while discourse marker so (277 instances) and discourse filler so (106 instances) usage by the native speakers made up only 333 occurrences. Taking into consideration the total number of words, 12,389 words (or about 3.96% of the learners’ total word count) in the ELL learner data and 34,358 words (or about 0.97% of the native speaker’s total word count) in the EDS data, the Korean participants produced the discourse marker with a higher frequency by more than four times. Buysse (2012) also discovered that so was much more frequently used by the ELLs in his data than the EDSs; this difference was statistically significant between EDSs and both ELL groups, Commercial Science majors and English Linguistics majors.

The results of my data could be attributable to a variety of factors. First of all, the students in my study have two different L1s with only five students each. If the result is influenced by the
students’ L1s, the low number of participants in each L1 may have yielded an inaccurate representation of the speaker groups. In addition, due to the overall small size of this study, it is unknown whether the results are indicative of generalizable patterns. Buysse (2012) employed a learner corpus that consisted of 40 Flemish ELLs, while Ko (2013) had 11 pre-service Korean English teachers. More participants of each L1 are necessary to better reflect both ELLs’ and EDSs’ use of discursive *so*.

Other discourse markers, such as *well*, demonstrated a similar outcome to my study. Discursive *well* was hardly used by the ELLs in Iglesias Moreno’s (2001) study. In addition, where there were instances of the DM, they were often deemed “inappropriate” by the researcher. *Well* was also very rare in the speech of Bu’s (2013) ELLs. The DM was used by only 1 out of the 30 ELLs, who used it twice. Despite not being a study comparing the speech of ELLs to EDSs, the lack of discourse marker *well* production was noticeable. In contrast, the ELLs in Müller’s (2004) study were found, on average, to use *well* more frequently than the EDSs. Müller (2004) examined *well* on three different levels – local, structural, and dialog^3^ – and differences were statistically significant for some functions of *well*, but not all. Nonetheless, the disparity can be attributed to factors such as the context (Fuller, 2003) of the conversations and even the participants’ L1s.

Let us now examine each of the eight functions of *so* in greater detail. While marking the main topic was the most frequently used function by the EDSs (84 out of 168 total instances of EDSs’ DM *so*) and the only function employed by every EDS, there were only 39 instances (out of 147 total instances of ELLs’ DM *so*) in the ELL data. Due to the two ELL students who had a very high rate of frequency for Move *so* (a total of 80 instances by the ELL group), this function was the most frequently used function of *so* by the ELLs. The next most frequent function was marking the main topic. Both speaker groups demonstrated their ability to begin their responses with *so* to introduce a new topic, to return to the main topic, and to apply *so* to mark continuation/elaboration. The ELLs did not introduce a subtopic with *so*. The absence of this DM means the transition from one topic to another will seem more abrupt. However, since the nature of interviews is making frequent turns, ELLs in particular, may not have had the opportunity to

---

^3^ See Müller (2004, p. 1164) for a description of the three levels.
introduce a digression. Nevertheless, the fact that some of the EDSs were able to create such an opportunity underlines the discrepancy between the two speaker groups.

With the exception of the two subcategories (introducing a subtopic and returning to the main topic) under marking the main topic, Rewording/Restatement so was the only functional category that was not present in the ELL data. Summarizing and rewording are important not only in speech, but also in writing. Summarizing provides a review of all prior points, which will help ensure that the listener or reader understands everything that has come before. Similarly, rewording/restating is necessary to clarify an immediately preceding point to prevent confusion later on in the talk. So is needed to indicate a rewording of a prior segment in casual speech, since in other words, for example, is not often used in such contexts. Without Rewording/Restatement so or any other way of expressing a restatement, there may be a lack of clarity or disorganization later in the conversation. The fact that more than half of the EDS group employed this function is a testament to the significance it has in talk and the need for learners to acquire the ability to reword.

Speech Act Marker so’s opinion-presenting function is only one of two functions in which the ELLs’ rate of frequency was greater than that of EDSs. However, the difference was very slight with only two more occurrences by the ELLs. On the other hand, the rarity of Speech Act Marker so’s question-/request-prefacing function was expected in my data due to the nature of the conversations. It is often the interviewer asking the questions in an interview, so there would have been very few occasions where the interviewee would employ so to preface a direct question to the interviewer.

While so’s intrinsic function may be to indicate reason or result, the low frequency of Reason/Result so is not surprising. In order to distinguish non-discursive so from discursive so, it was necessary to differentiate the local from the global level of discourse. There were plenty of instances of non-discursive so (93 instances out of 507 total instances of both discursive and non-discursive so), indicating that so’s resultative function was frequently used. While neither speaker group made much use of this function, the EDSs’ rate of frequency of 9.52% was more than three times greater than the ELLs’ rate of frequency of 2.86%, illustrating the ELLs’ lack of discursive knowledge and pragmatic competence.
Elliptical *so* may appear to be much more frequently used by the EDSs, but the higher frequency is due to one particular EDS. This EDS’s high frequency of Elliptical *so* could be regarded as an idiosyncrasy, as none of the other EDSs used Elliptical *so* to this extent. This is a reminder that even among EDSs, there are differences in speech styles. Therefore, it is crucial that learners and educators remember that there are individual differences, and not all discrepancies between ELLs and EDSs should be attributed to ELLs’ learner status. In order to take this into account, speech in one’s L1 should also be examined to determine if one’s idiosyncrasies could have been transferred from the L1 to the L2, or are attributable to another of the countless possible explanations. Moreover, there were no instances of stand-alone *so* in the ELL data. Whereas turn-medial *so* indicates a failed attempt to close a turn, stand-alone *so* is an intentionally incomplete TCU. The absence of the stand-alone *so* in the speech of the ELLs indicates that they may have not yet acquired the ability to employ *so* as a single TCU. Speakers are constantly having to organize the talk by determining the next course of action and who needs to complete it. If stand-alone *so* “is [a] practice available to speakers for managing this range of contingencies,” (Raymond, 2004, p. 210) learners should also be capable of employing such a skill in their speech.

Move *so* is the only other function that had a higher rate of frequency in the ELL group than the EDS group. The fact that the ELLs as a group most frequently employed this function may indicate that they are struggling with not only pragmatic competence, but also, overall L2 communicative ability. The EDSs rarely made use of Move *so*, as indicated by their rate of frequency of 1.90%, in comparison with the ELLs’ rate of frequency of 25.40%. Nonetheless, the ELL group’s high rate of frequency being a result of two ELLs in particular cannot be overlooked. If instances of Move *so* produced by these two ELLs are removed from the data momentarily, a drastic change in frequency is evident. The total number of occurrences of Move *so* (80 out of the 147 total instances of discursive *so* by ELLs) is reduced to a mere 8 instances (total instances of Move *so* by the remaining eight ELLs). It is not much more than the total yielded by the ten EDS participants of six instances (out of the 168 total instances of discursive *so* by EDSs). That would produce a difference of only about 1.87% (5.44% for the 8 ELLs and 3.57% for the ten EDSs). The ELLs’ frequent use of this function in comparison to EDSs can be compared to the English learners of French in Rehner’s (2002) study, where the students’ use of discursive *comme* (*like* in English) significantly exceeded the rate of both the French native
speakers and immersion teachers in the study. Moreover, the two students who had repeatedly made use of Move so were both Japanese learners of English. Although the one Japanese student used this function once and the remaining two Japanese students did not use this function at all—a great contrast to the aforementioned Japanese ELLs—a larger study examining more Japanese ELLs’ use of Move so is necessary to make any significant conclusions about the repeated use of this function being a possibility of L1 transfer.

Language learners have been found to use functions of a DM that native speakers do not use. The ELLs in the present study, for example, frequently employed Move so. Even though the Korean L1 students may not have used it as much as the two Japanese L1 students, Move so was the most commonly produced or one of the most commonly produced functions in their respective interviews. The more frequent use of a discourse marker function by ELLs is also seen in other studies. Müller (2004) found that the difference in frequency between the native speakers of English and the ELLs for the continued answer function of discursive well was statistically significant; only ten German participants applied this function. Similar to the Korean teachers of English in Ko’s (2013) study, the “meaningless” repetitions of so in place of the Korean equivalent, kulenikka, is comparable to the results of the Korean L1 students in my data. Before I review the results, it should be said that I am not in complete agreement with Ko’s (2013) description of what I refer to as Move so. I would argue that they are an attempt, on the speaker’s part, to hold the floor and signal that the speaker is organizing his or her thoughts and speech. At first glance, it may seem that the students’ use of the function is rare, making up only 7 out of the 80 instances of Move so by ELLs. However, upon closer examination, the function was quite common among the Korean L1 students; all instances (2 out of 2) of DM so by Seojun represented Move so, half of Nara’s discursive so use functioned to move the talk (1 out of a total of 2 instances of DM so), and out of Lina’s total use of discursive so, 3 out of 8 instances functioned as Move so (this was one of the two most commonly used functions by the student). Liao (2008) also discovered a high rate of discursive yeah use by the non-native speakers, specifically as a self-repair “to resolve what was problematic or troublesome about the utterance” (p. 8); this function rarely occurred in the native speaker data. However, similar to the ELLs in the present study, some of the functions of yeah that the non-native speakers used were also used by the native speakers. Moreover, Torres and Potowski’s (2008) study compared the use of so and the corresponding Spanish discourse marker entonces by bilingual Spanish and English
speakers. The use of *so* and *entonces* “to move the text along” (p. 276) was found to be comparable among all generation groups. Based on this outcome and on the production of Move *so* by the present study’s ELLs, it seems that when an individual who has one or more interlanguages at one’s disposal has some difficulty in expressing one’s thoughts in the L2, one may resort to repeating a Move DM, such as *so* in English, or *entonces* in Spanish, rather than employing other DMs to indicate the struggle.

### 5.3 L1 Influence

The brief analysis of *kulenikka* and *dakara* demonstrated that many aspects of their discursive functions are quite similar to *so*. Rehner’s (2002) students’ frequent use of discursive *donc* and *alors* (which parallel the English discourse marker *so*) and their infrequent use of discursive *là* and *bon* (neither of which has an English discursive equivalent) demonstrate that the existence of an English equivalent for an L2 discourse marker is a helpful indicator of whether or not learners will employ the L2 discourse marker in their speech. This possibility seems applicable to my study as well, as the ELLs did employ their L2 equivalent, *so*, in many ways. Moreover, Pellet’s (2005) proposition that any positive L1 transfer is hindered by language learners’ lower proficiency level and lack of formal discursive instruction cannot be confirmed with the present study’s results. However, the idea that lower L2 proficiency does not necessarily lead to the use of DMs in the learner’s L1 was true of the ELLs in the present study, as they only made use of English discourse markers. Pellet’s (2005) results also indicated that language learners in the developmental stage may be more likely to make use of the L2 discourse marker that shares the functions of a discourse marker of the learner’s L1. It was found that all instances of *alors* could be compared to the English discourse marker, *so*. Since *so* was the only DM that was analyzed in the present study, it cannot be said whether or not this idea applies to other ELLs; however, it was discovered that *so* and the corresponding Korean and Japanese DMs share many functions and the learners did employ these functions in their speech. It is difficult to say with the present data whether or not there was any kind of transfer from the L1 to the L2 with respect to the use of discourse markers, as many of the functions of the corresponding L1 DM also apply to *so*. The functions of *donc* and *alors* used by the learners in Rehner’s (2002) study were equivalent to those functions fulfilled by the English discourse marker *so*. Rehner (2002) deduced that this demonstrates that L1 transfer has occurred and it underlines the important role one’s L1 has in the acquisition of not only the grammar, but also the pragmatics of a second language. The ELLs
in the present study, then, may have also demonstrated positive L1 transfer. Their similar use of *so* to the EDSs may be a result of the comparability of the respective L1 DMs. However, the degree of L1 influence on L2 DM acquisition is unclear. In order to make a conclusive deduction about the effects of one’s L1, a study examining the participants’ use of the corresponding DMs in interviews conducted in both the speaker’s L1 and the L2, English, is required. As the present study only examined the participants’ use of the English DM in an English interview, it would be inappropriate and inaccurate to make any assumptions on the possible transfer of one’s L1 DM knowledge and use to one’s use of the corresponding English DM.

5.4 Awareness vs. Actuality

Based on the discourse marker interview, it was discovered that almost all of the ELLs who were aware of at least one of discursive *so*’s functions employed it in their speech. Out of the ten ELLs, two students, Tatsuki and Seojun, did not employ the function of *so* they claimed they knew and two students were unsure of the functions of discursive *so*.

Tatsuki claimed that *so* means “so what,” or だから何 (*dakara*), which translates to “so what” in English. He actually defined “so what,” or essentially *so*, using the corresponding Japanese DM *dakara*. I interpreted “so what” to mean “as a result” as I understood “what” in the phrase to indicate the result that *so* introduces. Despite being aware of the resultative function of *so*, he did not employ Reason/Result *so* during his interview. He did, however, use conjunctive *so*, which still indicates reason or result – at the local level of discourse. Furthermore, Tatsuki had the greatest amount of abroad English-learning experience with a total of 12 months up until the time of the interview, but produced DM *so* with a lower rate of frequency than the EDS with the lowest rate of frequency. Seojun indicated that *so* has a resultative function, but he only produced DM *so* twice – its Move function. Seojun was 1 of 2 students who had spent a total of ten months abroad, yet he was 1 of 2 students who had the lowest rate of frequency. Nori claimed that *so* is used when the speaker is thinking or when the speaker would like to add a comment, both of which apply to the functions of Move *so*. His understanding of *so* may explain the reason for his high rate of frequency for this function. Kota understood DM *so* to signal a result, which he employed at both the local and global levels of discourse. His infrequent use of the DM, however, can be attributed to the fact that he was told by his teacher not to use *so* because it makes the speaker sound “unnatural.” Either the student did not completely
comprehend the functions of *so* in class, or his instructor has an inaccurate understanding of the functions of discursive and non-discursive *so* and their significance in speech. Hana claimed she uses *so* to stop a conversation or to introduce a conversation – in other words, to introduce a topic – and she actually employed both of these functions in her interview. The one time she utilized Elliptical *so* indicated she did so intentionally; she closed the talk below about what type of houses she had lived in with *so* in line (7).

*Excerpt (Elliptical so)*

(1) Hana: then I’m live in dormitory [in the school

(2) Int.: [yeah ahhh

(3) Hana: and then for u:h twenty years last twenty years I just live in=

(4) =apartment

(5) Int.: so you’ve never lived in a house (…) except (.) [here

(6) Hana: [except (.) mm=

(7) =here [(..) so

(8) Int.: [oh

Lina understood *so* to mean “cause and effect,” which I interpreted to mean signaling a reason or result. Although she did not produce *so*’s resultative meaning at the global level, she did employ its non-discursive, conjunctive function. Moreover, despite only claiming to understand *so*’s resultative role, she employed four of its discursive functions. Taro asserted that *so* functions to connect sentences, operates as an adverb, and, like Tatsuki, claimed that it means “so what”; he employed all of these functions in his speech. His belief that *so* connects sentences is accurate, albeit broad. Nevertheless, he seemed to understand that *so* is a connective, as he also employed the “so what” or resultative functions of *so*: as a conjunction and as a signal introducing a reason or result. Despite being 1 of 2 students who had the second least amount of abroad English-learning experience, he employed five of *so*’s functions. This could be attributed to his greater awareness of its functions. He did also, however, make frequent use of Move *so* (this function
made up 58% of all of his productions of DM *so*), like Nori, making him the ELL with the second highest rate of frequency. Similar to Nori, Kaho also claimed that *so* is used to indicate that the speaker is thinking. She did actually use Move *so* in her interview to signal that she wants to keep the floor and that she is thinking. Despite being unsure of the functions of *so*, two of the students, Kyuri and Nara, still produced discursive *so* in their speech. Kyuri managed to produce four functions of the DM and had the third highest rate of frequency. Nara was not only unsure of the role of *so* in speech, but she was also the other student who had the lowest rate of frequency. Not being able to explain its functions, however, does not necessarily result in a lower rate of frequency, as Kyuri demonstrated.

It can therefore be deduced that neither abroad English-language experience, as Pellet (2005) concluded, nor supposed awareness\(^4\) of *so*’s functions were determining factors of the DM’s use; neither factors necessarily resulted in a higher (or lower) use or a broader (or narrower) range of *so*’s functions.

---

\(^4\) I describe it as “supposed” awareness because these learners were not formally instructed in *so*’s use or functions, or in discourse markers in general.
6.1 Conclusion and Implications

Compared to previous studies, the ELLs and EDSs in this study employed the DM in similar positions and/or functions (e.g. Iglesias Moreno, 2001; Fuller, 2003; Aijmer, 2011), and the findings indicated that some discrepancies exist between ELLs’ and EDSs’ use of so. The range of functions was limited for ELLs, and they also had a lower rate of frequency. The subtle disparities may hinder the organization of ELLs’ talk, and the speech may come off as less pragmatically competent. This is especially true when a speaker makes frequent use of a particular DM or function, such as Move so, as its frequent repetition may seem distracting to hearers. For Main Topic so, the ELLs did not introduce a digression with so. The absence of this DM means the transition from one topic to another may seem abrupt and it does not prepare the hearer for what is to come. No ELL made use of Rewording/Restatement so. The fact that most of the EDSs used this function demonstrates its necessity in speech. Without the DM to clearly signal a restatement, the organization of the speaker’s talk may be abstruse. In addition, while Reason/Result so was not extremely common in either speaker groups, the EDSs made much more use of this function. ELLs’ lower rate of frequency is evidence of their lack of discursive knowledge and pragmatic competence. The fact that the ELL group most frequently employed Move so is further evidence of their lack of pragmatic competence. The two Japanese ELLs stand out, but to determine if their frequent use of this function is more of an idiosyncrasy or if it is attributable to Japanese speakers in general, a larger study examining more Japanese ELLs’ use of Move so is required. There was also an outlier among the EDSs, as one participant made frequent use of Elliptical so. Neil’s uniquely frequent use of this function is a reminder that individual differences must also be considered in language teaching and learning. In order to take individual differences of ELLs into account, speech in one’s L1 should also be examined to determine if one’s idiosyncrasies have been transferred from the L1 to the L2, are a result of being a language learner, or are a result of one of many other factors. Moreover, the rate of use of discursive so was almost evenly distributed, as there were members of both speaker groups that fell below and over the overall average rate of frequency of 1.208 (per 100 words); seven ELLs and seven EDSs had a rate of frequency below the overall average rate of frequency, while
three ELLs and three EDSs had a rate of frequency above it. The only notable detail about rates of frequency is that two Japanese ELLs’ use of the discourse marker so occurred more than four times more frequently than the overall average rate of frequency, as a result of their frequent use of Move so. As Move so is also a function employed by the EDS participants, it cannot be concluded that Move so is uttered only as a result of a lack of proficiency. Move so appears to be an outcome of elements, such as hesitation and filling the void, moving the talk in no particular direction.

Based on the DM interviews, it was deduced that ELLs’ awareness of discourse markers and their functions did not necessarily result in their use of the functions during the one-on-one sessions. This outcome may have been due to a lack of opportunity for their use. The analysis also demonstrated that kulenikka and dakara share many similar features with so and that there is a need to explicitly address the similarities and differences between the discourse markers of one’s L1 and those of the target language to ELLs in order to develop more “native-like” use of discourse markers and, therefore, pragmatic competence. Although no statistical conclusions can be made as there were not enough Korean and Japanese participants in the study, the results of the present data signal that the ELL participants generally used so in the same ways the EDS participants did. While their use of so in most functions can be an indicator of positive transfer from their L1s, this is not conclusive. To be more certain of such a transfer, an examination of their use of kulenikka and dakara in Korean and Japanese interviews, respectively, is necessary. One apparent discrepancy that could be related to the participant’s L1, and, therefore, indicate only partial acquisition of discourse marker so is the Korean ELL’s frequent use of “what is it” instead of so to index a search. “What is it” was not found in the EDS data, which demonstrates that it is not a phrase normally uttered by EDSs. This could, therefore, be a possible indication of negative transfer from one’s L1 to the L2. From the Japanese ELLs’ results, it seems that the participants are able to separate the functions of so and the functions of dakara. In particular, one of dakara’s functions, a reformulation marker, was not found in participants’ use of so in English. The analysis illustrated that similar discourse markers in their L1s that have different functions from the target language do not always seem to get transferred to the learning of a foreign language. However, a much larger study is required in order to make any overarching conclusions. Finally, based on the DM interview and the analysis of ELLs’ use of so, it was
discovered that neither abroad English-language experience nor participants’ supposed awareness of so’s functions were deciding factors of a speaker’s use of the DM.

To potentially resolve these differences between speaker groups, and for ELLs to be appropriately informed about pragmatics and its importance in language, it seems that a combination of formal instruction and L2 exposure is required (Rehner, 2002; Pellet, 2005; Katayama, 2012). The key is not only to create awareness of their existence in language learners, but learners must also understand their functions in speech. While the ELLs may have been aware of some of so’s functions, they may not completely comprehend its role in talk, which may lead them to use the DM differently from EDSs.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

There were a few limitations to this study. One limitation was its size; only five of each ELL group, making up a total of only ten ELLs, were recruited. A small-scale study meant that the results may not be conclusive and that the quantitative analysis would be restricted. There were not enough participants to conduct an analysis of variance, which would have made a valuable contribution to the results. There was also a major limitation that arose during the analysis of the ELL data. Despite recruiting participants from the more advanced levels of the language program, it was found that their English level in the classroom was not necessarily an accurate depiction of their proficiency level in spoken English. Although I was able to comprehend the general essence of the ELLs’ talk, the analysis of the discourse marker was complicated due to a lack of grammatical structure in their speech. It is, therefore, unfair to assign a function to the discourse marker with complete confidence as the concept or idea was obscured, at times, by fragmented grammatical structures. To compensate for or to overcome this complication, greater attention was given to the content of the talk for ELLs than EDSs when assigning functions to so. Another limitation of the study is that the effects of formal DM instruction on ELLs were not examined. Additionally, the amount of EDS interactions with the ELLs had varied; therefore, a fair comparison could not be made. All of the ELL participants had been attending a language school taught by EDSs in Canada, but not everyone took part in social events with EDSs or resided with English-dominant-speaking homestay families. In the future, a longitudinal study investigating the long-term effects of contact with EDSs should be conducted to measure and
assess the development of ELLs’ discourse marker use and, accordingly, their pragmatic competence.

Other future research should include an investigation of the effects of implicit and explicit instruction of DMs, along with L2 exposure (natural language and authentic culture) to firmly establish the benefits of formal instruction and its need in ELLs’ curricula. A larger study with more Korean and Japanese L1 participants and the investigation of other discourse markers is also required to obtain a more thorough analysis of the influence of one’s L1 on the acquisition of subsequent languages and their use of English DMs. Furthermore, to achieve a more accurate outcome regarding the effects of speakers’ use of their L1 discourse markers on their use of discourse markers in English, speech in the respective languages should also be examined.
References


Barske, T., & Golato, A. (2010). German so: Managing sequence and action. Text & Talk, 30(3), 245-266.


Levey, S. (2003). He’s like ‘Do it now!’ and I’m like ‘No!’. *English Today 73, 19*(1), 24-32.


http://www.oed.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/Entry/183635?rskey=rcQfb2&result=2#eid

http://www.oed.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/Entry/200325?result=1&rskey=QammEU&


## Appendices

### Appendix A: Symbols Used in Transcriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>Overlapping speech</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| =      | Continuation of an utterance  
(The turn continues where the next symbol is inserted. If it is inserted at the beginning of the second speaker's turn immediately following the first speaker's turn, it indicates that there is no break between the two speakers' turns.) |
| (.)    | Every half a second pause |
| ?      | Rising intonation (not necessarily a question) |
| :     | Falling intonation |
| CAPITAL LETTERS | Increased volume |
| (hh)  | Laughter |
| (unintelligible)) | Incomprehensible talk |
| ( )   | Unclear talk |
| …    | Suspension of talk (due to time constraints) |