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DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

"The Use of so as a Discourse Marker in ELF
Conversations: a VOICE-based study"

Verfasserin

Riccarda Reiter

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, 2013

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 190 344 299

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

UF Englisch UF Psychologie und Philosophie

Betreuerin:

Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Barbara Seidlhofer

Acknowledgements

First of all, I want to thank Professor Barbara Seidlhofer for her words of encouragement and very helpful advices, which were essential for this thesis. Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Barbara Seidlhofer for her interesting seminars, which aroused my interest in English as a lingua franca.

Moreover, I would like to thank Mag. Ruth Osimk-Teasdale for enabling me to access a preliminary testversion of VOICE POS Online, which was of great help for my analysis.

I would particularly like to thank my family who supported me in every way possible.

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List of abbreviations

ELF..... English as a lingua franca

ENL..... English as a native language

VOICE..... Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English

VOICE POS..... VOICE part-of-speech tagged version

1 Introduction

My decision for the topic of this thesis was based on several considerations which will be explained in more detail in the following.

Being convinced of the important role of English as a lingua franca in our world, I soon decided to focus on an aspect of ELF. ELF has an important role considering it bringing together people of different language and cultural backgrounds. Thus, ELF contributes to the communication between people from all over the world.

Seidlhofer (2011: 17) addresses both the widespread use of ELF and its implications:

ELF, English as a lingua franca, is guided by quite different needs and wants. It is spreading in various and varied manifestations and adapted to the needs of intercultural communication, in settings such as a business meeting in São Paulo with participants from Brazil, China, Germany, and the USA, or a press conference with participants with over 20 different first languages at the EU Commission in Brussels, perhaps with speakers switching to and fro between English and French.

Thus, ELF is necessary in a wide range of contexts. Due to the fact that English is taught in most schools all over the world, it can be expected that the status of ELF will not change in the near future. This situation indicates that the native speaker norm does not have the status it once had. For a long time nearly all non-native speakers strived for sounding like a native speaker. This is not of so much relevance anymore and its relevance will probably still decrease in the future.

Seidlhofer (2011: 7) points that as globally users of English as their mother tongue numerically have a disadvantage in ELF situations, they can be assumed to only have little effect on standards in such a situation.

This shift is currently happening and, thus, especially fascinating. Although ELF has reached such an extraordinary status, it is still often not seen as being so important, however. This lack of acknowledgement of the role of ELF motivated me to find out more about ELF and contribute a bit to the research on ELF. Also my personal experience concerning ELF had an effect on my decision to study an aspect of it. I have experienced the important role of ELF for international groups

of friends, for instance. Thus, it is a particular personal interest of mine to find out more about ELF communication.

Having come to this decision, I knew that I was going to use the VOICE corpus. I had already used the VOICE corpus for an analysis in the context of a seminar. Thus, I knew about the possibilities it offers. Considering its uniqueness, I feel privileged having the opportunity to use the VOICE corpus. It provides transcriptions from the kind of conversations I am particularly interested in: The settings of the conversations are very different in the sense that they are set in different places but also the subjects of the conversations and the relationships between the speakers vary a lot. This allows for an analysis of a language aspect without being restricted to specific types of conversations, i.e. only conversations concerning work or private life, for instance.

A feature which made the use of the VOICE corpus very interesting for this thesis was that the size of groups in the conversations varies.

Lastly, I decided for one aspect of ELF: discourse markers. Similarly to ELF, most speakers of English are not aware of the power and importance of the use of discourse markers. They are rather unconsciously used and I assume that most speakers are not aware of how important their use is for the hearers in order to understand what the speaker intends to communicate.

I myself have not been aware of the effect of discourse markers before reading literature on the subject. However, one reason for choosing the subject of discourse markers was that I have become more and more aware of my own use of discourse markers in the course over the course of my studies in the sense that I use certain discourse markers particularly often.

Discourse markers have been studied in detail by a large number of scholars (Schourup 1985, Schiffrin 1987, Fraser 1988, Watts 1988, Milagros del Saz Rubio 2007, Mullan 2010, Urgelles-Coll 2010, to just name a few). Most studies focus on the native speaker use of discourse markers. Others concentrate on a comparison of their use by native and non-native speakers (Lee 2004, Müller 2005, Siepmann 2005, Prodromou 2008).

Besides the fact that discourse marker use in ELF has hardly been touched upon in the literature, it is also striking that so has not been studied by a large number of scholars in comparison to other discourse markers. This thesis aims at changing this situation to some extent and providing a detailed analysis of the use of so as a discourse marker in ELF.

In the following, I will present an outline of this paper. The overall aim of the study is to investigate the use of the discourse marker so in ELF. I focus on its use in conversations and in particular on its functions. Thus, this study is mainly a qualitative analysis of the discourse marker so. I only provide little information concerning quantitative results.

Moreover, the study is corpus-based as has already been mentioned. In the course of the analysis of the functions of so in the conversations, I also analyse the surrounding discourse of the individual uses of so as the context is of great importance when trying to understand the intention of the speaker.

The second chapter of this study aims at providing the reader with information concerning discourse markers. To be more precise, different definitions of discourse markers and different terms used to describe discourse markers are discussed. I also explain my decision to use the term *discourse marker* and provide my working definition. Also characteristics and functions which are attributed to discourse markers in the literature are provided. The functions are of primary importance here because my analysis of the use of the discourse marker so also focuses on its functions.

In the third chapter the reader is informed about ELF. Again definitions of ELF are in the focus. Differing definitions are discussed and contrasted. The terminological situation concerning ELF is explained as well. The discussion of the different definitions and terms aims at clarifying that they also reflect different views on ELF. Also recent trends in ELF research are presented. As the analysis focuses on the use of a discourse marker by ELF speakers, also information concerning ELF speakers is provided, partly comparing ELF and ENL speakers. As this study is corpus-based, also corpora of ELF usage are presented.

Chapter four concentrates on the data used for the analysis. It focuses on a description of the VOICE corpus and an explanation concerning which particular

part of it is used as data for the analysis. Moreover, the influence of the availability of a new version of the VOICE corpus on my analysis is described. Also the reason for selecting the discourse marker *so* for the analysis is explained. The chapter further includes an explanation of how I differentiated between discourse marker use and non-discourse marker use. Lastly, challenges faced in the course of the analysis of the discourse marker *so* are dealt with in this chapter.

Chapter five comprises two parts. In the first part of the chapter descriptions of *so* in the literature are presented. These include descriptions of *so* in dictionaries, grammar books and literature specifically on *so* as a discourse marker. Thus, *so* is described in terms of its meaning(s), grammatical properties and functions. The presentation of these different aspects of *so* also clarifies how the meaning and grammatical properties of *so* are connected with its functions as a discourse marker. Outlining these descriptions before the presentation of the results of my own analysis enables the reader to compare the findings of this study with the descriptions of *so* in the literature.

Following this outline of descriptions of *so* in the literature, the results of my analysis are presented in the second part of chapter five, which is the main part of it. To begin with, the functions identified in my data are presented. Having explained which discourse marker functions were identified, each of the functions of *so* in my data is described in detail. The description is supported with examples from the VOICE corpus which demonstrate different aspects of the functions. The order in which the functions are presented reflects which functions are similar. For instance, discourse structuring functions are presented one after another. Furthermore, frequent co-occurrences of *so* and *okay* and *so* and *because* are investigated. This investigation involves a discussion concerning how these expressions can intensify their respective functions. The last part of the chapter is concerned with tendencies of speakers regarding their use of *so* as a discourse marker.

In the conclusion a summary of the findings is provided. It is further discussed whether the findings concerning *so* confirm statements on the use and functions of discourse markers in general and *so* in particular in the literature, which considers native speaker use of discourse markers only in most cases, or if they (at least partly) contradict them. Thus, the conclusion investigates whether my assumption

that the use of *so* in my data does not differ much from the statements on its use in the literature is confirmed by my analysis or not. The conclusion also provides ideas for future research in the area of discourse markers in ELF.

2 Discourse markers

2.1 Definition

Before focusing on the specific aims of this paper, some general information concerning discourse markers will be briefly discussed. To begin with various definitions of discourse markers which have been suggested by linguists will be presented and critically discussed.

Not one definition of discourse markers is universally accepted. According to Stenström (1998: 132), they are defined in various ways. Also Brinton (1996: 30) points out that they are not even similarly defined. It may be asked why such a variation of definitions persists. Brinton (1996: 30) suggests that this diversity is caused by different views on “which of the several pragmatic functions of the markers is seen as primary”.

Before presenting my own definition of discourse markers, I will give an overview of the definitions which have been put forward by linguists up to now. In this way, the variety of definitions will become apparent.

A definition which combines many aspects concerning discourse markers is put forward by Siepmann (2005: 43):

[...] discourse markers can be defined as linguistic expressions of varying length which carry pragmatic and/or propositional meaning, occur in both speech and writing, and facilitate rather than disrupt discourse.

In this definition he does not address a certain aspect which is made obvious by discourse markers but he more generally addresses the function of facilitating discourse. I argue that this facilitation results from discourse markers helping the hearer or reader in his/her interpretation of the utterances by the speaker or writer.

This role of discourse markers is also reflected in the second definition to be presented. It is by the author of the standard work in terms of literature on discourse markers. (It can be called that as it is one of the most comprehensive works on discourse markers and it also forms the basis of later literature on the topic.) Schiffrin (1987: 40-41) describes discourse markers as follows:

I define markers at a more theoretical level as members of a **functional** class of verbal (and non-verbal) devices which provide contextual coordinates for ongoing talk.

However, this is not the only definition by her. In another definition Schiffrin (1987: 31) describes “markers as **sequentially dependent** elements which bracket units of talk”, i.e. “propositions, speech acts, tone units” (Schiffrin 1987: 35). Schiffrin (1987: 36) also explains her definition: she suggests that it is useful to include the linguistic places where such marking expressions are used.

Another definition which is centred about the role of discourse markers making obvious the relations between parts of discourse is put forward by Fraser (2006: 193) who defines a discourse marker “as a lexical expression that signals a relationship which exists between adjacent discourse segments”.

Other definitions of discourse markers do not focus so much on the relations between utterances which are revealed by discourse markers. For instance, Mosegaard Hansen (2006: 25) defines discourse markers as follows:

The role of markers is, in my view, to provide instructions to the hearer on how to integrate their host utterance into a developing mental model of the discourse in such a way as to make that utterance appear optimally coherent.

It can be concluded from this definition that being connective is a characteristic which all marking expressions have in common (Mosegaard Hansen 2006: 25). It can be said that the marking expressions are defined in a way which focuses more on the functions than on formal criteria (ibid.: 25). She centres her definition around the function of discourse markers with respect to the hearer. The instructive role of them, which she addresses, is another way of describing what I name making obvious how units of discourse relate to each other. Thus, it facilitates the interpretation of the utterances by the speaker or writer, which is, as I argue, the most important aspect of discourse markers.

This concept of discourse markers instructing the hearer has also been in the focus of definitions by other scholars (Jucker & Smith 1998: 197):

[...] discourse markers are a way for conversationalists to negotiate their common ground. They do not convey information directly but they issue instructions and provide advice as to how information is being processed or is to be processed. Such attempts grow out of the

speaker's attempt to reconcile both her own state of knowledge with information provided by her interlocutor and her model of what he already knows with the state of knowledge she hopes to create in him.

As presented above there are numerous different definitions of discourse markers. The references indicate that it is different functions or properties which seem to be of greatest importance to the various linguists. The discussion concerning a broadly accepted definition of discourse markers has remained unsolved until now. However, one aspect which can be found in all the presented definitions is the role of discourse markers of making obvious what the speaker intends to communicate. I argue that this is the defining aspect of discourse markers.

According to my own understanding of discourse markers, it is the support they offer to the listener or reader in order to understand the meaning of what is said or written by another person which is the major function of discourse markers. This concerns both the kind of relation of one utterance to another and the relevance or role of an utterance within the speech act which can be marked in order to be more obvious to the hearer or reader. Furthermore, discourse markers have an important role in structuring discourse. Again discourse markers make obvious what might otherwise not be realised by the listener or reader. Especially their function to structure discourse can help somebody interpret more easily how one piece of information is related to another. All in all the particularity of discourse markers is based on their power to reduce the probability of misunderstandings as they help the listener or reader understand what the speaker or writer intends to communicate.

This very complex description of my understanding of discourse markers is the basis of my working definition of discourse markers. I define discourse markers as lexical expressions which help the hearer or reader understanding the intention of the speaker or writer but are not necessary syntactically.

2.2 Terminology

I will now turn to the issue of terminology. Urgelles-Coll (2010: 23) draws attention to the fact that only a few terms for marking expressions are widely accepted. Different reasons for this situation have been found. One reason suggested is the following (Jucker & Ziv 1998: 1):

The different terms also reflect different attitudes to the question of the uniformity or fuzziness of the class of discourse markers.

According to Kryk-Kastovsky (1998: 48), it is rather the other way round: The variety of terms has caused an excess concerning the variety of how discourse markers are defined. So which terms other than *discourse marker* are used? Terms which are used by many linguists besides *discourse marker* include *pragmatic marker* and *discourse particle*. Schourup (1985: 1) gives a more comprehensive overview of the terms used, naming “‘discourse particles’, ‘interjections’, ‘discourse markers’, [...] ‘hesitations’ or ‘fillers’”. Brinton (1996: 30) names additional terms:

While both the terms *discourse* and *pragmatic* are suitably broad, suggesting that the items denoted function on a level above the syntax of the individual clause, and not ascribing to the items denoted a particular function, which may be inaccurate, such as *connective* or *initiator*, nor a lack of function, such as *filler*, *pragmatic* better captures the range of functions filled by these items, as will be discussed below. Finally, the term proposed does not have the pejorative connotation of words such as *fumble* or *gambit*.

It has to be noted that the terms named in the above quotation, except for the terms *discourse marker* and *pragmatic marker*, describe sub-categories of what I call *discourse markers*. Problems arise again because it is not agreed on which term is appropriate in which situation. The reasons named in the above quotation are also crucial to my decision not to use any of the mentioned terms which are rather restrictive in meaning but to use the term *discourse marker*.

Pavlidou (1991: 153) addresses a difficulty concerning the variety of terms used in the literature, remarking that

[...] it is rarely the case that the relations holding among concepts like ‘particle’, ‘illocutionary force indicator’, ‘discourse marker’, ‘hedge’, etcetera, are made explicit.

This makes it even more difficult to compare studies on what I call *discourse markers* because, before being able to draw a conclusion, the definitions by the respective linguists have to be studied in detail.

After having introduced a wide range of terms, I will now focus on the terms which are rather widespread. Watts (1988: 242) expands on the terms “‘particle’ and ‘discourse marker’ [which] must be understood in two fundamentally distinct ways”, which he explains by pointing out a great difference concerning the respective approaches. For example, it has been suggested that the use of either the term *discourse marker* or the term *discourse particle* can help indicate a crucial difference. Schiffrin (2006: 336) explains this more fully, stating that by using these terms “the difference between displaying (markers) and creating (particles) meaning” can be made obvious. Thus, my choice of the term *discourse marker* suits this differentiation of hers. As my definition of discourse markers focuses on their support regarding the interpretation of the utterances by the speaker or writer, I agree with Schiffrin’s description of discourse markers in contrast to discourse particles. I further agree with the way she contrasts discourse markers and discourse particles because it is my understanding that discourse markers are not needed to create meaning. A scholar (Schourup 1985: 1) who uses the term *discourse particle* explains his decision as follows:

The term discourse particles [...] is intended as a neutral label for these items that avoids a priori judgments on their function or grammatical classification but does indicate that they are primarily discourse phenomena.

Considering the way Schourup describes the term *discourse particle* only, I would also agree to his decision of choosing this term. However, I question the addressed neutrality of the term *particle*. In my understanding, it restricts the range of expressions which fall into this category. Considering my definition of discourse markers, I could not simply substitute the term *discourse marker* by the term *discourse particle* as the latter only describes some of all expressions which can be discourse markers according to my definition.

According to Fraser (1988: 21), “discourse markers are one type of commentary pragmatic marker”. Brinton (1996: 30) explains her use of the term “pragmatic

markers”, arguing that it expresses best that these marking expressions fulfil not just one function.

Concerning the term of my choice, it has to be said that (Jucker & Ziv 1998: 2):

[...] it seems to be the one with the widest currency and with the least restricted range of application [...].

This is also an important reason for my decision to use the term *discourse marker*, as mentioned previously. Lastly, a linguist will be quoted who uses the term *discourse marker*. Siepmann (2005: 37) gives the following reason for his use of the term:

A simple, albeit methodologically invalid, reason for using the term ‘discourse marker’ may be the desire not to add to the flood of terminology threatening to submerge language science.

Siepmann seems to criticise using the term *discourse marker* for this reason. However, he also criticises that a large number of many different terms are used. Being confronted with a wide range of terms in the literature can indeed be confusing. Nevertheless, it is the right and also the duty of everyone who writes about these elements widely known as discourse markers to intensely think about which term seems most suitable for the respective definition of discourse markers. If the terms *discourse marker* or *pragmatic marker*, which are the terms most often found in the literature, are not compatible with the specific understanding of these elements these terms should not be used.

Lastly, my use of the term *discourse marker* will be explained. It is simply the term which makes most sense to me when trying to describe these great helpers of speaker and listener (or writer and reader). One reason is that the term *discourse marker* makes clear that these items mark what a speaker or listener wants to communicate. Another reason why I prefer this term is that it leaves open which functions discourse markers have in particular. This is essential to such a term. Discourse markers have various functions. Thus, the term itself should not pick out one of them and leave out others. *Pragmatic marker* is also a legitimate term in my understanding as it stresses the functional aspect of the elements referred to. I mainly prefer the term *discourse marker* because to me it is most characteristic of the respective elements that they have great influence on discourse. *Discourse particle* seems not to mirror the power of these perhaps seemingly irrelevant

lexical expressions which are of great importance to any communication. Yet other terms also imply too much of a restriction, as was also mentioned above when quoting linguists writing about this matter.

2.3 Characteristics of discourse markers

The characteristics of discourse markers will be explained in more detail in the following. The characteristics are various and not all discourse markers share all characteristics which are discussed here. I will explain which characteristics are defining characteristics of discourse markers and which are optional according to my definition. A very general characteristic which does not have to be explained in more detail is that markers are used very frequently (Brinton 1998: 12, Schourup 1985: 1). This may indicate that discourse markers play an important role in discourse.

Although mainly spoken language has been in the focus up to now when discussing discourse markers (Siepmann 2005: 38), that does not necessarily mean that they are only used in spoken language. Linguists have commented on that aspect in different ways. Siepmann (2005: 37) claims that the use of the term is not restricted to oral or written language. It may be asked if there is still a tendency regarding where they are more likely to occur. Brinton (1998: 12) says that discourse markers are typical of spoken language. Müller (2005: 7) confirms that, saying that discourse markers are rather characteristic of spoken language but she also adds that their use is not restricted to it. Thus, discourse markers are used both in spoken and written language but are said to be more frequent in spoken language by some linguists. According to my understanding of discourse markers, it is not a defining criterion of them to be only used in spoken discourse. However, there might be a difference regarding which discourse markers in particular are preferred in spoken language and in written language.

The syntactic position of discourse markers will be discussed in the following. Blakemore (2002: 166) says that they only occur in initial position at times. Urgelles-Coll (2010: 24), Mullan (2010:45) and Brinton (1998: 12) note that they are commonly used initially, though. Their views differ in that Urgelles-Coll and

Brinton refer to an initial position in sentences only and Mullan to an initial position in sentences and utterances alike. However, this does not mean that this is the only place to find discourse markers. The possibility of finding discourse markers in final position or even in another position within a sentence should not be excluded. Fraser (1988: 24) argues that the initial position is the most frequent position of discourse markers but he also mentions the possibility of discourse markers appearing in medial or final position whereby he claims that the final position is the least frequent one. The validity of the mentioned statements, claiming that the initial position is of primary relevance, will be further discussed when analysing so. Anyway, the exact syntactic position is not a defining criterion of discourse markers, in my understanding, as positions in which a lexical expression can function as a discourse marker cannot be generalised.

Characteristics of discourse markers mentioned by Yang (2006: 283) are that they are short and lexically restricted. Also Urgelles-Coll (2010: 24) says that brevity and phonological reduction are typical of discourse markers, characteristics which are named by Brinton (1998: 12) as well. Brinton (1998: 12) further says that discourse markers form a tone unit of their own whereas Milagros del Saz Rubio (2007: 91) stresses the independence of this tone group. Returning to the brevity of discourse markers, a linguist whose view differs from the ones already mentioned is Siepmann (2005: 43): He argues that discourse markers can be short but rather long as well. This is also a view on which I can agree as my definition of discourse markers does not exclude short or long expressions: the length of words does not matter according to that definition. Thus, again I argue that the named characteristic is an optional criterion.

Views on the scope of discourse markers will be presented in the following. Both Mosegaard Hansen (2006: 25) and Mullan (2010: 73) claim that the scope of discourse markers varies whereas Andersen (2001: 42) remarks that the scope of discourse markers depends on the specific marker. Consequently, it cannot be claimed that all discourse markers either have narrow or wide scope but this varies very much from discourse marker to discourse marker. A narrow or wide scope is also not a defining criterion according to my understanding of discourse markers.

A matter on which different opinions have been formulated is the semantic content of discourse markers. According to Lewis (2006: 44), they have such in the sense

of “conventional or coded meaning”. However, Brinton (1998: 12) claims that discourse markers are without such content. Thus, the property or non-property of semantic content is still to be further discussed and perhaps also a question of defining what exactly is meant by semantic content. Anyway, I argue that it is not a defining criterion of discourse markers to be without semantic content.

In the following, the characteristics will be described which are defining criteria of discourse markers, according to my definition of them.

One defining criterion is the syntactic independence of discourse markers, which will be addressed next. Brinton (1998: 12), Travis (2006: 230), Milagros del Saz Rubio (2007: 91), Caffi (2010: 192) and Urgelles-Coll (2010: 41) agree that, syntactically, they are not tightly connected to the structure taking into account that Travis (2006: 230) also adds that the addressed circumstance “facilitates their marking large, often indeterminate, segments of text”. Similarly, Fraser (1988: 22) remarks that, regarding a grammatically correct sentence, discourse markers can be seen as independent attachments to it. However, Fraser (1988: 25) warns the reader not to draw wrong conclusions, noting that this independence does not mean that discourse markers should be understood as sentences of their own. Müller (2005: 6) argues that it is important to check whether an expression is grammatically optional for knowing if a lexical expression is really used as a marking expression or not. This aspect is also of great importance to my definition of discourse markers as throughout my analysis I realized how decisive this aspect is. This defining criterion of discourse markers simply facilitates the distinction between discourse markers and their non-marking twins which would otherwise often be rather unclear.

Very generally it can be stated that discourse markers ease discourse (Siepmann 2005: 43). This is a defining criterion in my understanding as I define discourse markers as making obvious the intention of the speaker or reader. The background details which allow for this view have to be explained in more detail though. Schiffrin (1987: 318) explains how discourse markers function according to her:

I suggest that markers **select** a meaning relation from whatever potential meanings are provided through the content of talk, and then **display** the relation. This means that whatever meaning inheres in the

marker itself has to be compatible with the meanings of the surrounding discourse.

Siepmann (2005: 45) claims that this is the major purpose of discourse markers. It is definitely a very important function of discourse markers but if one function can be picked out and called central is questionable. The needed compatibility, which Schiffrin addresses, seems obvious as the use of discourse markers does not make sense if their function cannot become obvious to the hearer or writer. Schiffrin (1987: 314) further remarks that the needed compatibility is not only a restriction:

The meanings conveyed by markers not only **restrict** the discourse in which they can occur, but also influence the overall meaning of that discourse.

This is a quite striking statement thinking of the fact that many linguists say that discourse markers may be left out without rendering a sentence unintelligible. Then again, if it changes the meaning of the communication, it is questionable if a sentence can be really understood no matter if discourse markers are included or left out. Milagros del Saz Rubio (2007: 35) remarks that discourse markers denote how individual units within discourse are related to one another but these relations are not made by discourse markers. Furthermore, Milagros del Saz Rubio (2007: 35) says that the relations also exist without discourse markers. Fraser (2006: 195) agrees that discourse markers never establish relations but help reveal the intention of the conversational partner. Lewis (2006: 46) remarks that

[...] the types of arguments that can be related by a particular marker are constrained by the relation associated with that marker, i.e., the marker's semantics.

Thus, not all discourse markers are able to relate any kind of discourse. What is more startling about this quotation, however, is that the way the sentence is formulated would suggest that discourse markers build the relations and do not simply display them. This view differs strongly from that of most linguists as can be concluded from the other references given before. Siepmann (2005: 41-42) notes that agreeing to the marking of relations, it may be suggested that also a headline can have the function of a discourse marker although it is not a linguistic aspect of the respective discourse itself. Hereby, he provides a new perspective to me, as I have never thought of discourse markers as headlines before. However, I do not

want to exclude this possibility as Siepmann's explanation for his suggestion is very reasonable. An aspect which would be indicative that his suggestion may be true is that headlines usually can also be left out without making the discourse incomprehensible which is a very important distinctive characteristic of discourse markers in my understanding.

Schiffrin (1987: 29) claims "that discourse markers have a role in accomplishing the integration needed for discourse coherence". This would suggest that discourse markers are necessary in order to achieve a coherent conversation. Also Andersen (2001: 71) points out that it is typical of discourse markers to indicate the way details and context are connected. This information is needed when aspiring to smooth communication without misunderstandings which is probably the most important reason for using discourse markers as has been suggested by some (Aijmer et. al 2006: 109):

[...] pragmatic markers exist to counteract metacommunicative interruptions by providing a way to communicate implicitly, deictically, on possible diverging stances with regard to particular communicative dimensions.

In this quotation the result of what I call making clear the intention of the speaker or writer is addressed, namely that misunderstandings are less likely to occur.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that the characteristics listed are those which have been listed by a high number of linguists. As was already mentioned, these characteristics are not shared by all discourse markers. However, depending on how many characteristic features an element of a language shows, it is a more or less prototypical example of a discourse marker (Jucker & Ziv 1998: 2-3). Considering my own definition of discourse markers, the following characteristics are optional criteria: use in oral discourse, in a specific syntactic position, shortness of the lexical expression, a specific scope and no semantic content. On the other hand, defining criteria of discourse markers are: syntactic independence, facilitating discourse and warding off misunderstandings.

An aspect which is of particular relevance to this study is commented on by Andersen (2001: 39): He says that a discourse marker can only be successfully used if the person uses it in his/her mother tongue and has the knowledge of a mother-tongue speaker, respectively. In my opinion, speaking a language on such

a high level is not required in order to be able to use discourse markers in an effective way. However, it is not very likely that speakers, who have not yet reached a rather high level of language proficiency, use certain discourse markers anyway. Some may be familiar to them in which case they probably also use such discourse markers in a way which does not evoke misunderstandings but rather help keeping up a smooth conversation.

2.4 Functions of discourse markers

As the main aim of this thesis is to analyse the functions of so, the functions of discourse markers named in the literature are of high relevance.

Mosegaard Hansen (2006: 24) points out a very problematic aspect:

An important problem for any approach to the meaning and functions of discourse markers is, of course, how to constrain the range of possible distinct functions [...] given that no two concrete contexts of use are entirely identical, it would in principle be possible to claim that any use of a given item was functionally distinct from any other use.

According to this, it would actually not make sense at all to discuss functions of discourse markers as the list would be endless. However, many linguists have found certain functions to be characteristic of discourse markers and these will be presented in the following.

A greatly important aspect concerning the functions of discourse markers is the question if discourse markers are multifunctional. This aspect has been pointed out by many linguists (Siepmann 2005: 44). For instance, Travis (2006: 220) says that they have several functions:

For example, they can be used to mitigate an utterance, to highlight an utterance, to seek listener agreement, to move on to a new topic, to close a topic, to reformulate an utterance, and so on.

Lewis (2006: 49) claims that markers do not have several functions by accident, a proposition which she justifies by mentioning “the regularities observable in their development of subjectification from lexemes of certain kinds”. Frank-Job (2006: 360) suggests a reason for the multifunctionality of certain discourse markers, pointing out the various layers in which communication is worked up at the same

time. Frank-Job (2006: 372) also notes that discourse markers are multifunctional because they are used in oral language which is characterised by being very dynamic. Naming the nature of communication as a reason for the multifunctionality of discourse markers may not seem too surprising as this is simply the environment in which discourse markers are used. However, this idea should be dealt with in more depth: Is it perhaps the speakers who make discourse markers multifunctional over time? Or is it the other way around? Is it the multifunctionality of discourse markers which makes the dynamics of communication even possible? These questions will be left unacknowledged for now but should be kept in mind throughout. Siepmann (2005: 45) submits that on the one hand the multifunctionality of discourse markers could lead to misconceptions but on the other hand the context helps to prevent such misconceptions. All these references imply that multifunctionality is definitely typical of discourse markers but it is not a necessary aspect of all discourse markers. I also argue that multifunctionality is not a defining criterion of discourse markers. The relevance of the aspect of multifunctionality in my data will be discussed further in the empirical part of the paper.

Possible ways of classifying the functions of discourse markers will be in the focus in the following. Redeker (2006: 340) differentiates discourse markers into those which influence how a sentence is interpreted and others which structure communication, adding that some discourse markers have both functions. However, it can also be distinguished between the levels of text, attitude, cognition and interaction (Jucker & Ziv 1998: 4).

Frank-Job (2006: 360) notes that discourse markers play a crucial role in how the communication partners understand what is said by each of them. Similarly, Andersen (1998: 151) remarks that they help the listener to realise what the speaker wants to communicate. Examples of intentions which may be marked with discourse markers are named by Mullan (2010: 47), who says that they help making clear to communication partners that one wants to continue talking or that one has said everything he/she wanted to say or that one wants to start talking.

Another function mentioned by Andersen (2001: 81) is marking how the listener is related to what is said according to the person speaking. Andersen (2001: 99) says that this involves the expression of assumption and realisation of common

feelings and notions, for instance. This implies that conversation partners use discourse markers in that function when trying to find a common base which is probably often the case in communication and can ease communication. According to Andersen (2001: 71), this function is especially important regarding the dynamics of communication which means that what the communication partners think each one of them knows always changes throughout communication. Frank-Job (2006: 372) notes that this dynamic aspect is a defining aspect of the field of linguistics in which discourse markers are used.

According to Andersen (2001: 81), another function of discourse markers is to indicate how utterances are related to each other in the understanding of the person speaking. Siepmann (2005: 44) provides another description of this function, saying that they mark either that utterances are connected or that utterances are not interrelated. Brinton (1996: 40) explains how the textual function of discourse markers is realised in a more general way, saying that they mark how communication is structured. Similarly, according to Schiffrrin (1987: 326), “markers provide [...] textual coordinates”. Diwald (2006: 405) rather focuses on the aspect that discourse markers function in a way that makes the listener understand how a sentence is related to its context which is especially important for organising dialogues, according to her. Thus, the textual function helps the communication partner get an overview of a communication, in the sense that it gets understandable how certain parts of communication correlate.

As a result of the many different functions of discourse markers, specific terms have been established to indicate the primary function of particular discourse markers (Jucker & Ziv 1998: 1):

[...] discourse connectors, turn-takers, confirmation-seekers, intimacy signals, topic-switchers, hesitation markers, boundary markers, fillers, prompters, repair markers, attitude markers, and hedging devices.

Lastly, the relation between the specific discourse context and the functions of discourse markers will be discussed. Travis (2006: 220) suggests that the functions of discourse markers have different characteristics: some are bound to a particular position within a communication whereas others are not. Travis (2006: 220) concludes from that circumstance that one should be aware that the analysis of the functions of discourse markers should not be influenced by the

consideration of where the discourse marker occurs. According to Frank-Job (2006: 360), “DMs only function in real communicative contexts”. It may be asked what is meant by that. Frank-Job (2006: 361) explains the statement, saying that it is essential to know what was said/written before the utterance in which a discourse marker is used as otherwise it might not be understood what certain discourse markers should mean. I agree with Frank-Job in this point as the context is often necessary to understand which function a discourse marker fulfils.

It can be concluded from the different statements on the functions of discourse markers that the importance of one or another function is seen differently by linguists. However, some functions could be said to be agreed on although they might be named differently. These are, in general terms, interactional and textual functions.

3 English as a lingua franca

3.1 Definition

Before going into more detail concerning definitions of ELF, I will shortly illustrate what is meant by lingua franca.

Kaur (2009: 9) defines lingua franca as follows:

Simply put, a lingua franca is a language that is used as a medium of communication between people of different first language backgrounds to facilitate communication.

Thus, it is defined as a tool the necessity of which evokes when people with distinct mother tongues meet.

ELF then is “English, when used to facilitate communication between linguistically diversified populations” (Kaur 2009: 9). As can be concluded from this statement, ELF is “a lingual medium that enables communication to take place” (Kaur 2009: 9). It suggests a role of ELF as a supplement to English as a native language (ENL). Seidlhofer (2011: 80) mentions such a notion of ELF as well:

My experience, especially but by no means only in Europe, is that in international encounters the fluidity and flexibility highlighted in descriptive ELF research as a quality that strengthens the communicative robustness of intercultural interactions, with norms negotiated ad hoc depending on specific participants’ repertoires and purposes, is clearly seen as an asset – a further language existing side by side with the pretty much taken-for-granted national languages. ‘Lingua franca’ thus conveys a sense of a liberating additional means of communication, increasing the repertoire of languages that speakers rely on to function effectively in all areas of their professional and private lives.

This also relativizes the seemingly upcoming competition between ENL and ELF, for example in the discussion concerning which approach should be chosen in teaching English. The image of ELF being a supplement to other languages is fitting indeed. In my understanding, this is also how ELF should be seen. It should be appreciated as a helpful further way to communicate, the competence of which is clearly needed in some situations.

Another definition of ELF focusing on its role as a means is the following (Jenkins et. al 2011: 304):

ELF is a means by which English is continually being re-enacted and reinvigorated through the inventiveness of its speakers as they respond to their immediate communicative and expressive needs.

In this definition the speakers and their reactions to a situation are in the focus. It further stresses the speakers' influence on the nature of ELF.

Seidlhofer (2011: 7) explains how she understands ELF:

I [...] prefer to think of ELF as *any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option.*

Seidlhofer (2011: 81) also says that it can be understood as a tool which enables people with different cultural background to communicate and is not connected with a specific country or ethnicity.

Both Seidlhofer and Kaur acknowledge in their definitions of ELF its use in any group of people who want to communicate with each other but lack a common mother tongue. Whilst Seidlhofer goes into more detail, Kaur restricts his definition of ELF to the just described usage of it. I appreciate that the focus in both definitions is on the reason for using ELF and thereby also on the people who use ELF because it is people who are responsible for the existence of ELF anyway and they most definitely do not use it for no reason. The definition by Jenkins et. al describes the speakers of ELF as having a more active role in the constitution of ELF which promotes a positive image of ELF speakers.

In contrast to the definitions already presented, a rather simplistic definition is given by Walker (2010: 6), who explains that by ELF he principally understands "interaction between non-native speakers". Hence, comparing this definition to the ones cited before, it becomes clear that there is disagreement concerning the question if English mother-tongue speakers are included in the group of possible ELF speakers or not. This is a quite precarious aspect of ELF as it seems that most researchers interested in ELF focus on speakers for whom English is a foreign language. It should not be forgotten, however, that also in a communication between an English mother-tongue speaker and a person who has another mother tongue English functions as a lingua franca. This situation is also addressed by Walker (2010: 6) who says that also people whose mother tongue is English can be included in ELF communication. Walker (2010: 6) remarks that it is

simply more likely that no people whose mother tongue is English are participants “of ELF interactions”.

Maybe the following has become clear to the reader already by comparing the definitions of ELF presented: Kirkpatrick (2010: 67) comments rather generally on the current situation of ELF definitions, saying that “there is currently controversy over the definition and existence of English as a lingua franca”.

One similarity in all the definitions just presented can be found, however. None of them defines ELF as a variety of English. It has been questioned if such a classification makes sense (Jenkins et. al 2011: 296).

The reasonableness of speaking of a variety when referring to ELF is commented on in the following (Jenkins et. al 2011: 304):

Empirical evidence for the way English is spoken in ELF interactions has clearly shown that, although the use of English in lingua franca communication is a global phenomenon, this has not brought about the emergence of a single lingua franca variety – it has, in fact, led some ELF scholars to challenge some of our conventional assumptions about language varieties.

It's my understanding that the addressed use of ELF all over the world is rather the reason for not having one variety called *ELF* as also local factors play a role in ELF and these differ a lot comparing different parts of the world.

My own definition of ELF is clearly influenced by all definitions I just referred to. Still, I tried to find a formulation which explicates best what ELF means to me personally. In my understanding, ELF is any use of English serving as a connector of people with distinct mother tongues who would struggle to communicate without the use of ELF.

3.2 Terminology

Walker (2010: 6) describes the history of the use of the term *lingua franca*:

The term ‘lingua franca’ was first used to denote the **pidgin** that was employed for commerce in the ports of the eastern Mediterranean during the Middle Ages.

So Walker explains that the term was also used to describe a certain kind of language use more than 500 years ago. The lingua franca referred to in the citation was influenced by various languages, including “Arabic, French, Greek, Spanish, and Turkish” (Walker 2010: 6). But this was not the first lingua franca. Walker (2010: 6) says that “[b]efore that, Latin had acted as a lingua franca throughout the Roman Empire”. Walker (2010: 6) remarks that lingua francas also exist in parts of the world other than Europe and draws a conclusion from the just named facts:

In East Africa, Swahili has been a lingua franca for traders and commerce for over 200 years now. English, then, is by no means the world’s first lingua franca, but it is the first language to be used for global communication, and its rapid spread means that it is the first time that a language is being used by far greater numbers of non-native speakers than native speakers.

It seems quite astonishing that already such long time ago a lingua franca came into being. However, people from all over the world have already been connected before the 20th/21st century. Of course, it is much easier to get into contact with or to travel to someone who maybe lives on another continent nowadays. Still, travelling is not a new invention but it has been used ever since for trade and there communication is vital. Thus, lingua francas have been needed for a long time and up to now. Reading about how over time many different languages served as a lingua franca also reflects which areas of the world and which cultural groups had most power or were the strongest economically at the time. It also makes obvious that there is not only one language which functions as a lingua franca but that several may exist next to each other. However, ELF really has a very special status as a large number of people all over the world are able to speak English. As a consequence, ELF can be called the dominating lingua franca of the 20th/21st century at least.

Many different terms are used to describe English in its outstanding role in the world as is pointed out by Walker (2010: 6):

English as a Lingua Franca, English as an International Language, English as a Global Language, or Global English: all of these names have been used up to now in order to refer to the new role of English.

Kaur (2009: 9-10) provides an alternative list of terms used:

The literature on what, up to this point, has been referred to as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) offers a range of cover terms to choose from: English as an International Language (EIL), English as an International Auxiliary Language (EIAL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), to name a few.

The variety of terms might be confusing. However, they cannot be substituted for each other. They all are concerned with the international use of English but they focus on different aspects. In my understanding, *ELF* is the most suitable term for what I aim to discuss in depth in this study. My own definition of ELF cannot simply be put under the heading of any other one of the terms listed above. It's my understanding that the other terms mentioned indicate that the focus is on other aspects than on which the term *ELF* focuses. *ELF* best reveals the function of English being used by people from different cultural and language backgrounds in order to be able to communicate with each other. Some of the other terms mentioned rather create the impression of denoting a variety of English of minor quality or of only marginal importance and are, thus, not suitable according to my understanding of ELF.

Seidlhofer (2011: 17) points out that “‘English as a foreign language’ (EFL) and ‘English as a lingua franca’ (ELF)” are connected with distinct necessities. Comparing these two terms is very important in order to make clear that they should not be confused as they do not denote the utterly same. As far as I am concerned, *EFL* has a slightly negative connotation as it seems to focus on the speaker not being a native speaker. It further seems to convey the image of a sharp distinction between native speakers and non-native speakers. *ELF*, on the other hand, is not a discriminating term but one which describes the function in which English is used.

3.3 General characteristics

Kirkpatrick (2010: 67) says that “the possibility of describing English as a lingua franca is in itself controversial”. Another reason given for questioning the practicability of describing ELF is the following (Jenkins et. al 2011: 295):

ELF involves not only the frequent systematic use of certain forms (lexicogrammatical, phonological and so on) that are not found in native

English, but also a range of pragmatic on-line processes that determine which particular forms are utilized at any particular point in a given interaction.

This suggests that ELF is a quite complicated issue to describe. I agree to that but this circumstance makes it even more interesting. Some of the descriptions of ELF in the literature will be presented in the following.

However, first the lacking acknowledgement of ELF has to be addressed. According to Seidlhofer (2011: 70), the “refusal to take ELF and ELF speakers seriously” is not understandable. I agree in this point. It simply cannot be ignored anymore which important role ELF plays in our modern world. Seidlhofer (2011: 74) further explains why this lacking acknowledgement of ELF is so astonishing:

I have argued that in ELF we see the same process of natural appropriation and adaptation that occurs in post-colonial settings. In these settings, the process results in ‘World Englishes’ and is assigned legitimacy. In the case of ELF, legitimacy is usually withheld. It is relevant to ask why this should be so.

Regarding the specific European situation, Seidlhofer (2011: 79) notes that “the dominant discourse is one of overcoming the linguistic monocultural mindset associated with 19th century nation states”. This implies that, although this mind-set originates from two centuries ago, it is still of relevance nowadays. Kayman (2009: 95) compares this mind-set with “ELF [which] effectively transfers the cultural values it ascribes to the global vision onto the language”. This means that the time influences language and ELF is characterized by the 20th and 21st century and its incredibly important role in the whole world.

It seems, thus, that the attitude of Europeans concerning languages is still strongly shaped by the past. Also Europe, however, faces the presence of ELF as a communication means. It could be argued that it is even especially important in Europe as so many different languages meet on this continent.

According to Guido (2008: 21), “[i]t is a truth universally acknowledged that English is today’s global ‘lingua franca’ for international communication”. This is probably the characteristic of ELF most scholars agree on, some stating that “ELF is simultaneously the consequence and the principal language medium of” globalisation (Jenkins et. al 2011: 303). Globalisation evokes the need of a lingua franca which is now English. It has to be noted that “[t]he current transformations

that English is undergoing [...] are part of wider global trends” (Jenkins et. al 2011: 304). Reasons for the speed of such processes are, for instance, the technical possibilities of the 20th and 21st century (Jenkins et. al 2011: 304):

The increased cultural flows of our digitized world have given rise to an intensification of innovative language practices, and these are especially prominent in ELF interactional settings.

Also Kayman (2009: 100-101) addresses an influencing aspect, saying that “ELF has clearly performed an important service that reflects [...] the developing universe of English language use”. Thus, ELF is influenced by developments concerning communication and by the increasing importance of English. ELF serves people for sure and focusing on that aspect might cause a milder judgement of ELF in the sense that one does not ascribe low quality to ELF but rather sees the great possibilities ELF offers.

Different aspects concerning norms in ELF have been named. Before going into more detail, it should be noted that “ELF proficiency levels [...] are derived from ELF speakers themselves” (Kirkpatrick 2010: 68). According to Walker (2010: 51), “ELF has its own standards”. I would not call them standards because, in my understanding, this contradicts the concept of ELF. However, there are competencies which are aimed at by all ELF speakers like using English effectively in communication. Regarding norms, Seidlhofer (2011: 18) notes that

[...] it would be interactionally counter-productive, even patently absurd in most cases, for speakers to (strive to) adhere to ENL linguacultural norms when no ENL speakers may even be present.

Concerning the presence of mother-tongue speakers, Walker (2010: 6) says that often an ELF communication seems to be negatively influenced by the joining up of people whose mother tongue is English. Probably this is not only the case when English native speakers join up a conversation but always when a new member of the conversation joins up. Anyway, all the other communication partners have to be kept in mind by every one of the communication partners.

Giving a few examples, Seidlhofer (2011: 17) illustrates how distinct the circumstances (especially the communication partners) can be in which ELF is used. Björkman (2008: 119) suggests that ELF distinguishes itself in this mutability. According to some researchers, however, “the features of ELF are

relatively similar regardless of the setting” (Björkman 2008: 107). Björkman (2008: 119) says that in particular the mother tongues and the linguistic surrounding of the concrete setting of an interaction at least do not influence all ELF characteristics. It is possible that some characteristics may be existent in ELF no matter in which setting the communication takes place. However, the characteristics will probably vary to a certain extent from setting to setting. Thus, people involved in an ELF communication should always be aware of the circumstances of the particular communication because these aspects influence how the communication partners best make sure to communicate clearly. Going into more detail concerning ELF communication, Seidlhofer (2011: 18) says that “participants are typically focused on co-constructing a viable *modus operandi* to achieve a communicative goal”. This aim is one of the most characteristic features of ELF.

Seidlhofer (2011: 143) mentions an important aspect of research into ELF, namely that researchers are mainly interested in which function of ELF can be found and not so much in formal aspects.

Here Seidlhofer relates to what is in the focus in research on ELF. As also the definitions of ELF suggest, its function is in the focus. ELF is not just another kind of use of English but it is simply needed in today's world.

3.4 Misunderstandings and difficulties of comprehension in ELF

According to Guido (2008: 122), misunderstandings can arise because “the participants’ native experiential conceptualizations are to some extent transferred into the ELF structures”. Similarly, Kaur (2009: 43) remarks that some say that the communicating of non-native speakers being characterised by trouble comprehending each other results from the variety of origins of the speakers. Also Kirkpatrick (2010: 124) argues that because of the diversity of roots of ELF participants it can be expected that misunderstandings arise or that they even have to stop communicating after a while and, thus, develop certain ways of coping with these circumstances. Kaur (2009: 45) says that it is not likely to happen often that communication partners make obvious that they do not

understand details if they still understand the overall meaning. The behaviour commented on by Kaur is a quality of ELF speakers which prevents disruptions and is probably only adopted after having gained some experience in communicating in ELF. Kaur (2009: 44) points out that “the popular belief that NNS interaction in English is rife with misunderstanding and non-understanding” is currently challenged by people involved in ELF research.

So it seems that ELF is associated with problems in comprehension by a considerable number of people and it is most often supposed that the lack of a common background is the reason for this. The different mother tongues may be a cause for problems in comprehension but I argue that it is especially the different cultural knowledge every speaker has which might cause misunderstandings. Also the danger Guido points out definitely exists in ELF. However, this does not mean that it is frequently the case that ELF speakers use structures from their native language which then cause misunderstandings. Especially people who are used to communicate in an ELF setting can be expected to be sensitive to what the communication partners are able to understand and as a result only use phrases or structures which are also understandable to people who have a different mother tongue or have another cultural background.

3.5 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is an aspect of ELF which has not been in the focus of many scholars but of course also this aspect is worth considering when thinking about spoken ELF. Is there an ELF pronunciation? Walker (2010: 53) says “that there will be variation in ELF accents, just as with native speakers”. This would actually be quite astonishing as people with so many different native languages are ELF speakers. Accents and pitch accents which derive from the mother tongues of the communication partners are not forbidden in ELF (Kaur 2009: 10). This addresses an aspect of ELF which is also central to my understanding of ELF, namely that ELF should not impose prohibitions. Szczepek Reed (2012: 68) reveals that emphasis in pronouncing varies: many researchers have prioritised comprehensibility whereas others have prioritised precision. These two nearly seem to be opposites. In ELF the former named priority is of much more

importance than the latter named one in my understanding. I state that because comprehensibility is of course necessary while precision rather is only a bonus which is appreciated as it can make comprehensibility easier but is not so important by itself. Szczepek Reed (2012: 68) also mentions another point of view which prioritises the ability to achieve interaction. This is probably the most appropriate priority as the main reason for using ELF is that people try to communicate with each other.

Walker (2010: 72) takes a different perspective, saying that “[a] skill [...] which is central to pronunciation for ELF is that of accommodation”. For example, communication partners are very sensitive to other participants when pronouncing words in the sense that they adjust themselves appropriately (Walker 2010: 72). I have mentioned this quality a few times already throughout this chapter. Walker stresses this quality as being special to ELF. Adjusting oneself to the other communication partners should probably be part of any communication, including native speaker communication. However, I agree that in ELF adjusting is of special importance in order to make communication even possible.

3.6 ELF community

Walker (2010: 7) states that “ELF represents a community of users of English”. According to Prodromou (2008: 246), the members of this community who may be native or non-native speakers have their roots in various, possibly conflicting, cultures and languages. These conflicting aspects can cause misunderstandings or even insults resulting from not knowing about the cultures other communication partners derive from.

Before expanding on the relation between the ELF community and the ENL community, it has to be mentioned that the focus usually lies on the differences between ENL and ELF and that ENL norms are not automatically valid in ELF as well. Prodromou (2008: 246), however, addresses an aspect which might not come to one’s mind immediately when thinking of ELF. Prodromou (2008: 246) says that “ELF is, in essence, different from the speech communities of territories where English is a second language” and, thus, questions whether the two will

start to assimilate. Although I highly appreciate that Prodromou brings up that aspect, I do not agree with him in this point. They may be different but these two communities do get in touch and, thus, will automatically assimilate to a certain degree. Also Prodromou (2008: 248) makes clear that “ELF cannot be insulated from ENL”. Both are English after all and luckily there are no fences which dictate where the ENL community has to be located and where the ELF community has to be located. ELF and ENL share a number of characteristics but they also have characteristics which are specific to them and which set them apart from each other. It does not make much sense to discuss if ENL or ELF is more important. They are both important but for different purposes. Thus, also no community can be said to have more rights. As Prodromou (2008: 248) notes, “there is no place for undisputed L1 authority over the English language(s)”. I agree to the point Prodromou makes. Walker (2010: 7) warns that also people whose mother tongue is English may “join the ELF community, [but] they can only do this by respecting ELF norms”. This again describes the generally appreciated behaviour of being aware of who the communication partners are and, thus, accommodating to it. Walker (2010: 7) also says that “[w]hat native speakers cannot do in ELF contexts is to impose their particular set of native-speaker norms”. To do so would be egoistic and obstructive regarding the communicative goals of an ELF conversation. Walker (2010: 7) states that it cannot be required of participants in ELF interactions to adapt to standards of mother-tongue speakers. Some argue that they do not need to do so anyway. It is rather the case that non-native speakers are “highly skilled communicators who make use of their multilingual resources in ways not available to monolingual NSEs” (Jenkins et. al 2011: 284). Native speakers of English, in contrast, rather focus on accuracy which might in the end hinder them from communicating effectively (Jenkins et. al 2011: 284). It is questionable if it is easier for one of these two groups to communicate in an ELF setting. It is clear, on the other hand, that they both need to focus on the ability of communicating effectively. In summary it can be said that all ELF communication partners no matter if they are native or non-native speakers of English have to make concessions in order to be able to communicate successfully.

Finally, the wide spread opinion that ELF speakers have less competency than native speakers of English needs to be elaborated on. Seidlhofer (2011: 98) points out that “ELF users too are seen to be language users”. Seidlhofer (2011: 98)

describes ELF speakers as using all possibilities English offers, being very concerned in communication, concentrating on the content-related and social aims of a conversation and being very sensitive to what is needed at present.

Seidlhofer (2011: 98) explains in more detail what is meant by the addressed needs:

These requirements have to do with the message speakers want to convey as well as a host of other factors impinging on the accessibility and acceptability of what is said in terms of clarity, time constraints, and on-line processability, memory, available repertoires, social relationships, and shared knowledge.

Many needs have to be considered, thus. To sum up, it can be said that ELF speakers use English in a very thoughtful way and do not simply choose the easiest way to communicate but take all the factors being relevant in any concrete conversation into account and use English according to what is appropriate in the situation. It could be argued that this is even more difficult in ELF because also the mind-set of every speaker, for example, might differ in more aspects than among people communicating who share their mother tongue.

3.7 Corpora

A few ELF corpora are already available but also many corpora include a subpart which comprises ELF data. One example is VOICE (Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English): “VOICE is a computer corpus of audio recordings and transcriptions of spoken ELF interactions” (Seidlhofer 2011: 23). Seidlhofer (2011: 24) gives an overview of it, saying that “VOICE comprises over one million words [...] of naturally occurring, non-scripted face-to-face interactions via ELF”. As VOICE is also the corpus which is made use of for this study, it will be described in more detail later when the data used will be presented.

A very specialized corpus is described by Björkman (2008: 106-107):

The ELFA (English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings) corpus work from Finland [which] is the largest work on ELF usage in academic contexts and is very influential.

These corpora are the basis for comprehensive empirical research.

4 Data and Methodology

4.1 The corpus

The corpus which I used for my analysis is “**VOICE**, the **Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English**, [...] a structured collection of language data” (VOICE-Homepage 2013c). Using VOICE for an analysis means using ELF data and thereof only spoken data. Its significance for studies on ELF cannot be overrated as it is the first corpus of its sort, meaning the first which is readable for computers. The corpus was “compiled at the Department of English at the University of **Vienna**” (VOICE-Homepage 2013c). In order to get an impression of the dimension of VOICE, I will present an impressive number: 1000000 words were transcribed for it. (ibid.)

On the homepage of VOICE (VOICE-Homepage 2013c) the goal of it is explained as follows:

It is the ultimate aim of the VOICE project to open the way for a **large-scale** and **in-depth linguistic description** of this most common contemporary use of English by providing a corpus of spoken ELF interactions which will be accessible to linguistic researchers all over the world.

The corpus “comprises transcripts of **naturally occurring, non-scripted** face-to-face interactions in English as a lingua franca (ELF)” (VOICE-Homepage 2013a). Some of these interactions are also available as audio files (ibid.).

Visitors of the homepage describing VOICE get informed about the speakers (VOICE-Homepage 2013a):

The speakers recorded in VOICE are experienced **ELF speakers** from a wide range of first language backgrounds. So far, VOICE includes approximately 1250 ELF speakers with approximately **50 different first languages** (disregarding varieties of the respective languages).

It should be added that most of the speakers are from Europe but some are also from other continents. The interactions transcribed for VOICE “are classified into [...] **speech event types**”, ten in number (VOICE-Homepage 2013a). VOICE also offers a variety concerning domains, functions as well as relations between the speakers of the individual communications. (ibid.)

4.2 Chosen approach

As will be also mentioned in the chapter on the methodology of this study, I chose to first find out which functions of *so* as a discourse marker have already been named by scholars. I did not write down these functions to analyse the data using a fix scheme of functions. On the contrary, I started my analysis simply noting in which functions *so* was used in my data. In the course of the analysis I realised that it would be sensible to limit the number of functions so not to end up with a seemingly endless number of functions. At this point of my analysis, considering the classifications in the literature was helpful in order to decide how I could categorise all the functions found in my data.

Since I aimed at finding all functions of the discourse marker *so*, I analysed all cases of discourse marker use of *so* and did not restrict myself to finding a few interesting examples. I also did so with the analysis of the positions within the turns. To sum up, I basically used a bottom-up approach, not excluding the consideration of functions mentioned in the literature.

4.3 Selection of *so*

The discourse marker I chose to analyse is *so*. The main reason to choose *so* was that it is a very frequently used discourse marker. Also the fact that it is a discourse marker which can fulfil different functions played a role in my decision to choose *so* for my analysis.

So is not always used as a discourse marker which means that when aiming at an analysis of *so* as a discourse marker I have to define first in which cases it is used as a discourse marker and in which cases it is not. This adds another dimension to my analysis.

All the aspects mentioned above were decisive for me to choose *so* as the discourse marker for my analysis. Especially the different functions *so* can fulfil seemed to be a promising starting point for my analysis.

4.4 Methodology

I first decided to restrict my analysis to the speech event type conversation which meant that I restricted it to 36 conversations which are classified as belonging to five domains: the educational, leisure, professional business, professional organizational and professional research and science domains (VOICE-Homepage 2013b).

I then analysed all instances of *so* which were tagged as discourse markers. I did not simply follow the tagging, however. In some cases the tagging was not compatible with my definition of discourse markers. I listed these cases, which will be presented when I explain my distinction between discourse marker use and non-discourse marker use in more detail. To come back to the cases in which I agreed to the tagging as discourse markers, I wrote down these instances, adding the speaker number and the position within the turn. I did so to have more possibilities for my analysis.

Then I started to analyse the functions of the uses of *so* as a discourse marker. I first studied some literature on *so* as a discourse marker (Schiffrin 1987 and Müller 2005) to find out which functions of *so* as a discourse marker have already been identified. With this knowledge in mind, I then tried to identify the function of every use of *so* as a discourse marker. It turned out that some functions which were described in the literature were also functions in which *so* was used in my data. However, I classified the functions differently in some cases. My classification of functions also changed over time in the course of analysing uses of *so* as a discourse marker. The classification process proved to be complex due to the fact that every case of *so* in a marking function is unique as a result of the different contexts (Mosegaard Hansen 2006: 24). This paragraph describes my analysis using the preliminary version of VOICE POS Online 2.0. However, I had already started my analysis before using the tagged version of VOICE. Thus, I analysed each use of *so* (1743 uses) to find out if it was used as a discourse marker or not. As soon as I got the possibility to use the preliminary version of VOICE POS Online 2.0, I restarted my analysis, though. I compared my results then again with the official VOICE POS Online 2.0 version (VOICE. 2013. *The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English*. (version POS Online 2.0). (22 January 2013)).

The examples presented in this paper are drawn from the VOICE 2.0 Online version (VOICE. 2013. *The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English*. (version 2.0 online). (22 January 2013)) and presented in *voice-style*.

After the analysis of the functions of the discourse marker *so* I began to analyse how often each speaker used the discourse markers in a certain function or in a certain position within the turns.

4.5 Distinction discourse marker use/non-discourse marker use

I decided to distinguish between discourse marker use and non-discourse marker use by checking if in the concrete case *so* could be left out without making the utterance “ungrammatical and/or unintelligible” (Fraser 1988: 22). This distinctive feature is referred to as “privilege of absence” by Fraser (1988: 23), who is only one of a number of scholars, who see this aspect as a defining criterion of discourse markers. (This was discussed in more detail when presenting the characteristics of discourse markers.) According to this way of differentiating between discourse marker use and non-discourse marker use, for instance *so* is not used as a discourse marker when it is part of “fixed expressions” (Müller 2005: 70) or when “*so* [is used] as an adverb of degree or manner” (Müller 2005: 69).

As was mentioned earlier, I had the possibility of using a corpus version in which discourse marker use is tagged. Thus, it was much easier for me to find the discourse marker uses of *so* as I was not interested in its non-discourse marker uses. Although this helped me a lot when analysing the discourse marker uses of *so*, in some cases I did not agree with the tagging.

In the following, I will give a few examples of such cases to make clear what I understand by discourse marker use (and what not):

▼1174**S13**: <un> x </un> (.) i was really surprised the government gives er e:r (.) tents (.) because e:r (2) e:r last year <un> xxx </un> i don't remember (.) it was too cold some some people died (.) on the streets (.) so that now they give tents <3> for </3> those who don't have home
(Extract 1: VOICE EDcon521: 1174)

In this example *so* is part of the expression *so that*. Thus, in my understanding *so* cannot be left out as here *so* is an essential part of the utterance, making clear what the speaker wants to express.

▼471S5: it's okay (.) {parallel conversation between S4 and SX starts}<4> e:r (they are) just give me the coins so you (lose) the coins yeah because i gotta </4> (.)
(Extract 2: VOICE LEcon560: 471)

Here again *so* cannot be left out because the meaning of the utterance would not be clear without it. In this case, *so* has the meaning of *so that* but *that* is not expressed in contrast to the first example quoted. Also in the next example *so* is not used as a discourse marker.

▼1828S1: <3> just </3> say you're taking a picture please er so i don't get that <4> stupid (.) <@> yeah </@></4> @@ (2)
(Extract 3: VOICE LEcon560: 1828)

This example resembles the one quoted before (both examples are also taken from the same conversation). Again, *so* has the meaning of *so that* and again only *so* is expressed in words. In both examples, the importance of *so* is very obvious as by leaving it out the relation between two propositions would not become clear.

▼211S3: <4><@><L1ger> suedtiroler {south tyroleans} </L1ger></@> @@ <@><L1ger> eh (.) {actually} </L1ger> so simple </@></4> @@ <5> @ </5>
(Extract 4: VOICE PRcon29: 211)

In this example, *so* refers to *simple* in my understanding and is, thus, used as an adverb. I cannot think of an explanation why *so* would be used as a discourse marker in this utterance.

▼254S3: yeah i think so (3) yeah in italy i (1) in italy (.) i e:rm (.) i li- i like to drink er red w- wine
(Extract 5: VOICE LEcon417 254)

So is part of the expression *I think so* in which it plays an essential role. Leaving *so* out, the hearer would not understand what the speaker tries to express.

The examples given illustrate all kinds of uses of *so* which are tagged as discourse-marker use in the corpus but are no discourse-marker use according to my understanding of discourse markers.

4.6 Difficulties

Analysing the functions I confronted some difficulties. One of them was that quite often speakers were interrupted, the result of which was that an utterance ended with *so* and, for instance, two lines later the speaker completed what he/she had intended to say. In such cases I classified the instance of *so* as marking what followed after the interruption. In some cases, however, the speaker repeated *so* when restarting what he/she had intended to say. Then I classified both instances of *so* as marking the same function. Obviously this can lead to a slight falsification when it comes to a quantitative analysis, which was never intended to be the aim of this study, however.

Another difficulty I faced in the course of the analysis was that I could not simply ask the speakers why they used *so* or which message they intended to get across in an utterance initiated or closed with *so*. I can only confirm that I tried my best to find out in which function the speakers intended to use *so*. Still, in some cases this seemed impossible to me. Examples of such cases are when a speaker did not finish what he/she had initiated with *so* or when the speaker was interrupted by another speaker. Also some words are tagged as unintelligible in the corpus. Thus, if *so* was used just before or after such unintelligible words, I could not decide for a function of *so* with certainty.

5 Analysis of so

5.1 So in the literature

Before going into detail concerning *so* as a discourse marker, its description in a dictionary will be provided. To illustrate the meanings and uses, respectively, I will also present examples from the VOICE corpus.

One of the meanings of *so* listed is “to such a great degree” (<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/so/>, 9 May 2013). The following example demonstrates such an adverbial use of *so*.

▼12**S2**: when i saw you first time you look so strict that i that i got afraid o:w what a (.)
(Extract 6: VOICE PBcon594: 12)

Another meaning of *so* can be the following: “very; extremely” (<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/so/>, 9 May 2013). As the next extract exemplifies, *so* is then used as an adverb.

▼565**S2**: but there is so much to see
(Extract 7: VOICE LEcon329: 565)

So is further “used to show the size, amount or number of something” (<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/so/>, 9 May 2013). Here again *so* is used as an adverb:

▼1395**S3**: HUGE it's such a huge country every time i look at a <fast> world map i think </fast> hh every time i see russia <fast> i think </fast> (.) <imitating> O:H MY GOD it's so big </imitating>
(Extract 8: VOICE EDcon521: 1395)

In cases in which *so* is “used to refer back to something that has already been mentioned” (<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/so/>, 9 May 2013) it functions as a substitute. In the following example *do so* refers to addressing specific aspects:

▼254**S1**: so if there are certain things you wish us to say before (.) <clears throat> you (leave) (.) <7> (we will of course do so) yah </7>
(Extract 9: VOICE POcon543: 254)

So can mean “also” (<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/so/>, 9 May 2013) or be “used to agree that something is true, especially when you are surprised” (ibid.) as well.

Furthermore, so can be “used [...] before adjectives and noun phrases to emphasize something that you are saying” (ibid.). This use is demonstrated in the next extract.

▼751**S4:** <un> xx xx </un> don't you like watching the news i must admit i am so not up to dates
(Extract 10: VOICE LEcon548: 751)

Other uses of so include “to say that what somebody says is not the case and the opposite is true” (<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/so/>, 9 May 2013) and “when you are showing somebody how to do something or telling them how something happened” (ibid.).

Thus, so has a wide range of meanings whereby it should be noted that the extracts presented all demonstrate non-discourse marker uses of so.

So is frequently named as an example of “connectives” (Haiman 1988: 25, Warner 1983: 1, 23). Thus, it can connect sentences. Warner (1983: 112) specifies this classification even more, remarking that so belongs to the class of “paratactic connectives”. Also Quirk et al. (1985: 442) note that as a connective “so [...] resemble[s] coordinators (coordinating conjunctions)”. The status of so as a connective, therefore, seems to be uncontroversial.

Fraser, in contrast, names so as an example of “subordinate conjunctions” (1990: 388). This means that so links a subordinate part of a sentence to the main part of it. So is even more specified as an example of “subordinators [which] may introduce finite clauses” by Quirk et al. (1985: 998). To be more precise, so can introduce “[f]inite clauses of purpose” (Quirk et al. 1985: 1107) and “finite clauses of result” (ibid.: 1108). Here Quirk et al. address two different types of clauses, which differ also regarding the discourse marker use of so. In case so introduces a clause of purpose, it is not used as a discourse marker. However, in case it introduces a clause of result, so does function as a discourse marker.

As Quirk et al. (1985: 648) remark, *so* has a variety of grammatical functions: “*so* can be an intensifying subjunct, a process adjunct pro-form, and a conjunct”. In all these roles “a central core of meaning remains constant: [...] ‘in that way’” (Quirk et al. 1985: 648). As will be seen, when *so* is used as a discourse marker, the meaning of consequence is of more importance, however. Furthermore, *so* can be “a predication substitute” (Quirk et al. 1985: 883).

The grammatical features are also relevant when considering *so* as a discourse marker. For instance, Schiffrin (1987: 191) says that the grammatical features of *so* have an influence on how it is used as a discourse marker. The extent of influence is variable, however. The addressed features are directly realized “[w]hen *so* [...] mark[s] idea units, information states, and actions” (Schiffrin 1987: 191). Schiffrin (1987: 191) contrasts such uses of *so* with situations,

[...] when *so* has a pragmatic use in participation structures, its grammatical properties are less directly realized [...].

Thus, the grammatical features of *so* are easier recognizable in some uses of it than in others, as will also be demonstrated in the extracts presented in the empirical part of this paper.

The marking of relations is an essential function of discourse markers in general and *so* in particular too. The relevant relations have been described by a number of scholars. For instance, Blakemore (2002: 166) mentions the possibility of thinking “of *so* [...] as encoding coherence relations”. This being a quite general statement, I agree with Blakemore in this point. Blakemore (2002: 161), however, goes into more detail, which is presented in the following:

Within coherence-based approaches, the classification of discourse connectives is often based on broad categories so that clusters of connectives are associated with a single type of relation. Thus for example, the connectives *so*, *hence* and *therefore* are linked to a causal relation, while the connectives *however*, *but*, *yet* and *still* are associated with an adversative or contrastive relation.

The marking of causal relations is often put in the centre when referring to *so*. Undeniably, *so* is often used to mark a causal relation, but it can also be used in other functions. It can be further differentiated between various types of causal relations: For instance, Schiffrin (1987: 203) distinguishes between “fact-based [...], knowledge-based [...] and action-based [...] causal relations”. Considering

this differentiation, I mainly understand *so* as marking fact-based causal relations (as marking the consequence of a given fact can be seen as the prototypical use of *so* as a discourse marker in my understanding) and knowledge-based causal relations. According to Warner (1983: 28), the order of effect and cause plays an important role: “[i]f effect follows cause, the relation is realized as so”, for instance. Therefore, Warner does not only associate *so* in general with marking a causal relation but also specifically with cases in which the cause is followed by the effect. The number of quotes indicates that many scholars agree on *so* marking causal relations. However, this should not lead to the wrong conclusion that *so* always marks causal relations. Blakemore (1987: 80), for instance, says that “there are cases in which *so* is evidently not expressing a relation of causal consequence”. I agree with Blakemore that *so* is not restricted to expressing such a relation.

Regarding the scope of *so*, it can be said that *so* is not restricted to a narrow or wide scope. Schiffrin (1987: 194) says that “*so* can have a narrow or wide scope in explanatory discourse”. In other words, “*so* [...] can function either locally (narrow scope) or globally (wide scope)” (Schiffrin 1987: 196). I agree with Schiffrin in this point.

As the main aim of this paper is to identify the functions of *so*, I will focus on the functions listed in the literature in the following. As Müller (2005) provides an especially comprehensive description of the functions of *so*, I will mainly refer to her work. The first function named by Müller (2005: 71) is “the marking of result or consequence”. This is “the primary function of *so*” according to Brinton (1996: 197). Müller (2005: 75) compares this function to another one, saying that also „*so* as a main idea unit marker relates two propositional ideas”. A difference is, however, that in one case *so* links the cause and what results from it and in the other case *so* marks a piece of a narrative (Müller 2005: 75). The comparison emphasises an important aspect of *so* in these functions, namely the marking of a relation in general. The marking of main idea units is also an example of the influence of the grammatical properties of *so*. In order to illustrate this, Schiffrin (1987: 191) compares *so* with *because*:

So and *because* are grammatical signals of main and subordinate clauses respectively, and this grammatical difference is reflected in their discourse use: *because* is a marker of subordinate idea units, and *so* is a complementary marker of main idea units.

Considering concrete examples of the use of *so* marking a main idea unit, Müller (2005: 75) points out that in discussions *so* is sometimes used for “leading back to an opinion [...] or a topic [...] mentioned before”. In an example provided by Mullan (2010: 112) *so* is also used to lead back to the main idea which is at the same time “a concluding remark”.

Other functions of *so* described are “summarizing, rewording and giving an example” (Müller 2005: 76). Also Mullan (2010: 118) provides an example of a speaker using *so* to mark a summary. Furthermore, *so* has a “sequential function” (Müller 2005: 79).

So may be made use of “as a boundary marker” as well (Müller 2005: 81). This is a structuring function, meaning that *so* breaks up discourse into kinds of discourse (ibid.: 81). Müller (2005: 89) adds that in her study she found out that *so* mainly indicated a dividing line “between instructions for the experiment given by the researcher and the fulfillment of these instructions”.

So can also function “[a]s a speech act marker” (Müller 2005: 81). Müller (2005: 83) notes that in case *so* functions as such “often, though not always, *so* occurs at a transition relevance place”. Müller (2005: 89) draws a distinction between *so* marking a question or a request or a personal point of view. In each of these cases, however, an aspect of consequence is involved (Müller 2005: 84). I doubt that every case of *so* marking a question or personal point of view really involves an aspect of consequence. It is my understanding that it may be involved in some cases but not in all.

Müller (2005: 86) also names the function “of *so* marking a transition-relevance place”. Similarly, Schiffrin (1987: 217) says that “[s]*o* functions in the organization of transitions in participation framework”. Schiffrin (1987: 312) names “turn-taking formats” as an example of specific contexts in which *so* occurs. Schiffrin (1987: 218) then goes into more detail, saying that “*so* is a turn-transition device which marks a speaker’s readiness to relinquish a turn”. It is probably more likely that *so* is used to mark the wish to relinquish a turn. However, it may be the case that *so* is used to indicate the wish to take the turn but is not perceived as such because other functions seem primary (for example, *so* functioning as a speech act marker). Schiffrin (1987: 218) found out that after *so* “explicit turn-transition

phrases” are used in case potential following talkers miss taking the turn. If such are not used, the current talker may proceed with talking in case no other person takes the turn (Schiffrin 1987: 219). This is possible because “so has a built-in flexibility” (ibid.: 225). Therefore, especially in case a person only reads a transcribed conversation not being a participant of it, it may not be comprehended that *so* marks a speaker’s wish to relinquish the turn because the speaker continues to talk when no other speaker takes the turn. However, such a misunderstanding can also arise among active participants of a conversation. If no other speaker takes the turn, it could be the case that the speakers do not want to take the turn but it could also be the case that they do not understand that the current speaker wants to relinquish the turn. Also other transitions are associated with *so*. Schiffrin (1987: 225) says that “*so* is used at potential transition locations in talk”, for example in case a hearer is presented the possibility of taking the turn, giving an answer or changing the subject of conversation. Thus, “*so* marks invited transitions in participation” (Schiffrin 1987: 225). Schiffrin (1987: 225) points out that using *so* can mirror the consequential sense of it also “when *so* prefaces the functional transition from one idea segment to another”. Schiffrin (1987: 225) adds that “the meaning of *so* is a basis for its function in participation transitions”: it can express a consequential sense and a transitional sense, respectively.

Concerning the position of *so*, Müller (2005: 85) remarks the following:

In the functions described so far, *so* always occurs at the beginning of the intonation unit, maximally preceded by another marker (e.g. *and*) or a filled pause. In contrast, *so* used to imply a result occurs not at the beginning but either at the end of the intonation unit or forming an intonation unit of its own.

This is obvious as otherwise it could also not be understood in its function of implying a result. Müller (2005: 86) addresses the interactionality of *so* in this function:

If I said before that *so* as a speech act marker functions at the interactional level because a speech act needs a hearer to be felicitous, the interactionality is even more obvious in *so* as an indicator of implied result.

In the latter case, the hearer meets the challenge of solving the question of what is indicated by the speaker (Müller 2005: 86). “As marker of speech acts and implied

result, so is” applied in order to select a speaker or to indicate the possibility of a change of turn (ibid.: 89).

Müller’s study (2005) also includes a quantitative analysis. Müller (2005: 91), who compared the use of so of German and American speakers, found out that American speakers use so averagely about 0,3 times as often as German speakers do in the following functions: to mark “result and consequence (R/C) and [...] to summarize, reword or give an example”. Müller (2005: 91) emphasizes that the imbalance between American and German speakers is even larger concerning the use of “sequential so”. Regarding differences between females and males, Müller (2005: 92) says that among the American “speakers, the females used textual so [...] significantly more than the males”. In contrast, “the German female speakers used the interactional functions” oftener in comparison to the men (Müller 2005: 92).

Müller (2005: 94) found out that acquiring English in a non-institutional setting influences the use of “so to summarize/rephrase/give an example”. However, Müller (2005: 94) had anticipated that acquiring English in such a setting would influence the use of so to a greater extent. As can be concluded from the analysis of her data, “German speakers apparently learned abroad to use so as a boundary marker” (Müller 2005: 95).

Müller (2005: 97) found out that it did not matter how the speakers were related to each other in terms of how frequently so was used in a certain function. However, “the role of the speakers had some impact” (Müller 2005: 97). Whereas acquiring English in a non-institutional setting was found out to slightly influence the use of so in one function, “using English in an informal context did not affect the discourse marker functions of so” (ibid.: 97).

Müller (2005: 97) found out that the use of so as a discourse marker was influenced by stays abroad:

Time abroad apparently also was responsible for a higher frequency in using so as a boundary marker and generally in its textual functions.

Besides for one function, it did not matter if the speakers had stayed in the US or in GB (Müller 2005: 97).

5.2 Functions

I identified eleven discourse marker functions of *so* in the 36 conversations I used for my analysis. Considering a classification by Andersen (2001: 81), *so* can be said to be both “a pragmatic marker with an interactional function [...] and [...] a textual function” in the conversations analysed.

To be more precise, the following functions of *so* were found in the respective conversations: marking consequence, marking conclusion, marking implied result, marking change of topic, marking concluding statement, marking main idea, marking explanation, marking question, marking opinion, marking directive and marking boundary.

The terms are partly the same as (or resemble) the ones used by Müller (2005) to name the functions of *so* she found in her data. However, I do not mean exactly the same in each case. This will be explained in more detail when describing the respective functions.

The high number of functions found in my data exemplifies the multifunctionality of discourse markers remarked by many scholars (see Siepmann 2005: 44-45; Travis 2006: 220; Lewis 2006: 49; Frank-Job 2006: 360, 372). The multifunctionality of *so* did not create a considerable number of misconceptions, seemingly because of the context, which proves Siepmann’s view (2005: 45) on the importance of the context:

One might be tempted to think that such plurality of functions gives rise to misunderstandings, but disambiguation is usually achieved through the contextual embedding of the marker.

So was not only found to fulfil a high number of functions but also proved to be a discourse marker which both modulates how an utterance is interpreted and structures discourse and could, thus, be called both “*discourse particles* and [...] *discourse operators*” according to Redeker (2006: 340).

According to Travis (2006: 220), some functions of discourse markers are bound to the initial position in a turn, for example, whereas others are not bound to one position within the turn. This proved to be true in my analysis. In the case of *so* the position of it within a turn was often helpful in deciding which function *so* fulfilled in

a concrete case. The position of *so* will be analysed in more detail together with the respective function in relation to cases in which the position seemed to have an especially striking role. Apart from the functions themselves, I will also analyse the reactions of the communication partners to the use of *so* in any of the functions mentioned and analyse the context in which *so* is used in general as the discourse marker functions simply cannot be analysed without considering contextual aspects. Following the description of the individual functions, the possibility of *so* fulfilling more than one function at once as well as the use of *so* in combination with specific expressions (*okay* and *because*) will be explained.

5.2.1 Marking consequence

The first function described is undoubtedly the most obvious function of *so*: marking consequence. The description of this function of *so* by a number of scholars, for instance by Fraser (1990: 387-394), Müller (2005: 71-74) and Schiffrrin (1987: 202-204), implies that this function is widely acknowledged as a function of *so*. The function of marking consequence is the marking of a causal relation. *So* marks the relation between two propositions, one being the consequence of the other. Thus, marking consequence is “a textual function” of *so*, according to Andersen (2001: 81). Andersen (2001: 81) refers to this kind of function as describing “what the speaker perceives as the relation between propositions or other discourse units”. The speaker uses *so* in such cases to make the relation obvious. Thus, *so* could be seen as being used to prevent misunderstandings or because the speaker feels the need to make the relation clearer. The following extract serves as an example of the function of marking consequence.

▼1216**S3**: e:r (when) you HAVE everything? (2) <slow> you know </slow> (.) <un>xx </un> i <fast> i mean </fast> i don't <@> i don't (use) </@> them (.) erm the most people i (know though) use but (.) when people (.) are not familiar with and they don't know WHAT to use and there're a lot of (.) dealers <slow> who try to </slow><5> make </5> (.)

▼1217**S14**: <5><soft> mhm </soft></5>

▼1218**S3**: money out of: tourists and they use the wrong drugs and hh they faint and it's a it's a problem (.) yeah? (.) and also because everything (1) is is you know there is no policy so every<6>one </6> (.)

▼1219**S14**: <6><soft> yah </soft></6>

▼1220**S3**: COMES (.) to the <@> country </@> and hh takes advantage of the policy so there is like a little <7> bit of </7> er hh e:rm <un> xx </un> (1)

(Extract 11: VOICE EDcon521: 1216-1220)

S3 talks about drug abuse in Amsterdam. The speaker says that no rules exist for drug consumption which leads to people coming to the Netherlands for drugs and taking advantage of this situation. This consequence is marked with *so*. However, *so* could also be left out without rendering the utterance unintelligible. As the information about many people coming to the Netherlands taking advantage of the situation directly follows the explanation that no rules exist concerning drug consumption, it is unlikely that the hearer has difficulties understanding the relation between the two propositions. The use of both *because* and *so* is a further indication of *so* being used to mark consequence. *So* has a rather wide scope in the extract above. It marks the consequence of many people coming to the Netherlands but also the consequence of these people taking advantage of the situation which is added by the speaker using *and*.

The following extract is another illustration of *so* marking consequence. Like in the above extract, again *so* is used to mark consequence following an utterance marked with *because*. However, in this case the use of *because* does not really help the hearer in understanding the causal relation marked with *so*. The claim formulated by S7 concerning the Eurovision song contest and some countries not aiming at winning the contest alone would be sufficient to be able to understand how this claim and sending a candidate who is not a good singer/performer are related. Still the speaker uses *so* to make the consequential relation even more obvious to the hearer.

▼1183**S7**: some countries like (.) really DON't wanna win it (.) because it's <5> so expensive </5>

▼1184**S6**: <5> they can't afford </5><6> it </6>

▼1185**S5**: <6> no </6> =

▼1186**S7**: = so they just put someone awful in <7> (all right) </7>

(Extract 12: VOICE LEcon545: 1183-1186)

So can also be used to mark consequence after this consequence has already been formulated once but without the use of the discourse marker *so*. A reason for doing so might be that the speaker realises only after having formulated the

consequence that the hearer might not understand that it is the consequence of another proposition. The following extract illustrates such a use of *so*. S1 explains a step in a mathematical process. The reason for S1's decision for that particular step is also mentioned, namely that the step was not possible in another way. After having mentioned this reason, S1 repeats the explanation of the step in the mathematical process. The difference to the first mention of the step is that the repetition is marked with *so*. By marking it with *so*, it should become clearer to the hearer that the utterance is the consequence of the circumstance mentioned before. The repetition of the mathematical step is only uttered after a pause, which might indicate that S1 did not hear the reaction S1 had expected and, thus, feels the need to repeat the utterance and make the causal relation between the two propositions clear.

▼101**S1**: i first moved to the <4><spel> I </spel> two </4> estimates (.)

▼102**S2**: <4> i see </4>

▼103**S1**: bec- i couldn't do it directly? =

▼104**S2**: = right (.)

▼105**S1**: so i moved to the <spel> I </spel> TWO estimates. (.)

(Extract 13: VOICE PRcon534: 101-105)

Probably in most cases a speaker does not use discourse markers like *so* randomly. They may be used unconsciously but the use of them is motivated: for instance by the hearer or by the context. For example, the speaker might use *so* to make the causal relation between two propositions more obvious because the speaker assumes that the hearer might not be aware of the relation otherwise. Another reason for the use of *so* to mark a consequence might be that the context in which the consequence is expressed could lead to misunderstandings and, thus, the speaker uses *so* to prevent such. The following extract exemplifies the influence of the communication partners on the use of discourse markers.

The two turns of S5 illustrate two main parts: in the first turn the information is given that S5 has enough wine for all people present during the conversation and the second turn comprises a reason and a consequence. To be more precise, the second turn can be divided in three sections: the two conditions which led to S5 buying two bottles of wine and exactly this consequence. The consequence is marked with *so*. In contrast to the previous extract, a turn by another speaker

separates the first utterance concerning S5 having wine for everybody and the reason plus repetition of the previous utterance which is then marked as a consequence. In the separating turn S4 tells the other communication partners that she was expected to bring a dip by another person. The reason for S4's utterance might have been that she felt under pressure to explain that she also brought something for the group. It seems that S5 is motivated by this utterance to provide more information concerning her bringing wine for everybody. Anyway, whatever the reason, S5 informs the communication partners about what another speaker said to her just like S4 did in the preceding utterance. S5 imitates S4 in a further aspect as well. Like S4 she also provides the reason for her bringing wine.

▼871**S5**: i've got wine for everyone here

▼872**S3**: @ @@@

▼873**S4**: i didn't have to get wine i'd had to get a dip she told me

▼874**S5**: because (.) she told me bring your own poison and the wine was really cheap so i got <5> two </5>

(Extract 14: VOICE LEcon548: 871-874)

In the above extract, *so* is used to mark a consequence which is not an exact repetition of an utterance formulated earlier (as in a previously presented extract) but has the same meaning.

In some cases in the data used for my analysis the utterance marked with *so* was not preceded by an utterance marked with *because* or *cos* but followed by *such*. Adding a reason like this might indicate that the speaker feels the need to add some information to make obvious what the speaker intends to communicate. The following extract exemplifies such an addition of a reason to an utterance marked with *so*.

The speakers talk about how everyone mentioned in the conversations recorded for the VOICE project is made anonymous. S3 explains that the mentioned names will be erased. This explanation is followed by the consequence of this procedure. Then the speaker adds an utterance marked with *cos* which explains in more detail what will be done to make the people named in the conversations anonymous and makes it clear that *so* marks a consequential relation. S3 only adds the reason after the turn of another speaker in which this speaker indicates uncertainty (*okay but*). S3 does not even let S1 finish the turn but immediately

formulates the reason. Thus, it seems that S3 is motivated to add information by the hearer's immediate reaction to the utterance marked with *so*. Possibly, the structure of first informing the hearers about the process of erasing the names, then explaining the consequence of this process and in a third step adding more detailed information concerning the process of making people mentioned in the conversation anonymous was planned from the beginning, however. Previously in the discourse, S1 expressed her worries concerning the mentioning of names. This may have motivated S3 to explain in more detail that the names will not be mentioned in the transcript of the recorded conversation.

- ▼1041**S3**: why we will erase ALL <1> names.</1>
 - ▼1042**S1**: <1> oh </1> good =
 - ▼1043**S3**: = so what- whoever you talked about nobody will <2> know </2>
 - ▼1044**S1**: <2> o</2>kay but
 - ▼1045**S3**: cos we ju- ju- just write name one name two and =
- (Extract 15: VOICE EDcon4: 1041-1045)

A striking aspect of the extract above is that *so* marks the consequence of a future action mentioned by S3. *So* being used to mark a consequence relating to an action in the future cannot be named a typical use of *so* as a discourse marker, according to my data. Apart from this, the extract above demonstrates the optionality (which is a crucial aspect of my definition of discourse markers) of *so* when marking consequence. S3 could also leave out *so* and still the hearer would understand that S3 mentions the consequence of the act of erasing names explained before.

Similarly to the above extract, in the following extract a speaker adds information marked with *cos*. In contrast to the extract above, it seems really necessary to include the reason marked with *cos* in order to be able to understand that the speaker intends to express a consequence in the utterance before as will be explained in the following. It seems that the speakers talk about a coalition in Belgium. *So* marks the consequence of specific parties being in power in Belgium, the consequence being that the coalition is named purple. People who do not know about the Belgian parties will not understand that calling the coalition *purple* relates to the colours of the parties. As S2 is not Belgian, S1 cannot expect S2 to know about the colours. Thus, the speaker needs to explain the situation in more

detail. The speaker then mentions the reason in the same turn in which the consequence is mentioned, directly following it. It seems that this is also necessary to ensure that S2 understands that the causal relation, which *so* and *cos* make obvious, exists between these two propositions. To summarise the structure of the following extract, it comprises several parts: the information about which parties form a coalition in Belgium, the consequence of the fact that two particular parties govern the country being that the coalition got a certain name and the reason for the name marked with *cos*.

▼109S1: we NOW have (.) a national level (.)

▼110S2: yeah er <4> of national level yeah that's </4>

▼111S1: <4> a federal level </4> (.) we have er flemish and (.) wa- er (.) walloon socialists

▼112S2: yeah

▼113S1: with (.) flemish and walloon er liberals

▼114S2: liberals yeah

▼115S1: so purple they call it (.) purple cos (.) red and blue (.)

(Extract 16: VOICE LEcon227: 109-115)

So was also used in the function of marking a consequence in combination with *and* which can support the function of *so* but also make obvious that the utterance marked with *so* relates to the preceding utterance, as in the following extract.

▼187S1: <2> then </2> hh (.) you will find out that er most people who use english (.) <3> use it </3> as (.)

▼188S6: <3><soft> mhm </soft></3>

▼189S1: not as their mother tongue but as (.) er (.) a second or foreign language (1) and so this kind of english is very important? (.) hh

(Extract 17: VOICE PRcon599: 187-189)

The speakers talk about the role of non-native speakers of English. S1 explains that the non-native speakers outweigh the native speakers of English. After a short pause, she adds the consequence of this situation. The speaker uses *so* to mark this consequence. *So* is preceded by *and*. *And* in this extract seems to be used to make more obvious which proposition the consequence relates to. Another reason for using *and* in this case might be that the consequence is only formulated after a pause. Thus, the speaker might feel the need to make clear that the following proposition still relates to the proposition formulated before the pause.

As the extracts demonstrate, it is especially obvious that *so* could be left out without making unclear that the speaker names a consequence when the reason relating to the consequence is marked by *because* or *cos*. Using both *because/cos* and *so* when *so* is used to mark consequence seems to be rather typical, according to my data. Comparing the extracts, it can be said that speakers use *so* to mark consequence in various ways. Some formulate the consequence marked with *so* directly following the utterance the consequence relates to. Other speakers only add the consequence after other participants of the conversation have commented on the topic. In some cases the speaker using *so* to mark consequence is seemingly insecure if the hearers understand what the speaker intends to communicate and, thus, uses *because* or *cos* to make obvious that the utterance marked with *so* is a consequence and also to which utterance the consequence relates to. Also the use of *and* immediately preceding *so* is a possibility to make unambiguous between which propositions the causal relation marked with *so* exists.

5.2.2 Marking conclusion

A function closely connected with the just described function of marking consequence is that of marking conclusion. Müller (2005: 73-74) and Schiffrin (1987: 202-206) do not classify marking consequence and marking conclusion as two different functions but in their classifications what I understand by marking conclusion is an example of marking consequence. The function of marking conclusion in my classification can be compared to marking “[a] **knowledge-based** causal relation” which is mentioned by Schiffrin (1987: 202) as one type of marking consequence. A prototypical example of *so* marking a conclusion, in my understanding, is when the speaker using *so* expresses what he/she concludes from an utterance by another speaker. The following extract exemplifies such a prototypical use of *so* marking conclusion:

▼603**S1**: you see underneath? there's this. (4) {S1 is rinsing dishes (4)} but they only won the second prize

▼604**S2**: <smacks lips> and i know why (.)

▼605**S1**: <fast> you see this is but (oth-) look at this quite nice idea.</fast> it fills UP (.) and then it goes (s)LOT of light opening up beLOW . (.) and that illuminates it (1) <soft> at night </soft>

▼606**S2**: a:h yeah i know that's nice. (.) so you got the li:ght underne:ath. =

▼607**S1**: = <fast> yah.</fast> (.)

▼608**S2**: now that's a nice idea <6> actually </6> (.) @@ (2)

(Extract 18: VOICE LEcon566: 603-608)

In the extract above *so* is used to mark S2's conclusion from what S1 said. S1 talks about a specific way of lightening a room or building which is commented on by S2. The comment is followed by S2's conclusion from S1's explanation. Thus, in this case one speaker draws a conclusion from something another speaker said. It seems that S2 needs some time to process what S1 said as the conclusion does not directly follow S1's explanation but these two utterances are separated by a personal comment of S2 and a short pause. The conclusion (getting light underneath) is followed by an expression of opinion which can be seen as being part of the conclusion as the opinion formulated also relates to S1's turn. *So* is obviously used as a discourse marker as it is optional in the extract above. It could be left out and still the hearer would be able to understand that S2 expresses a conclusion drawn from S1's explanation.

Also in the next extract a speaker uses *so* to mark a conclusion drawn from another speaker's utterance. The utterance marked with *so* seems not to be a conclusion only but also an attempt at a clarification, as will be explained in the following. The speakers talk about the wish of non-native speakers of English to sound like native speakers. S1 first brings up the topic. S5 then contradicts S1. However, it seems a bit unclear if S1 contradicts S5's claim that non-native speakers want to sound like native speakers or if S1 only wants to express that maybe some non-native speakers have this wish but not many. In the final turn of the extract S1 formulates the conclusion drawn from S5's comment which is marked with *so*. It seems that in this case S1's conclusion is at the same time an attempt at a clarification of what S5 really meant.

▼258**S1**: but er you know the the <un> x </un> the (.) BRITISH er or AMERICAN standard is: (.) of course (1) privileged and (yeah) (1) people <5> still </5>

▼259**S5**: <5> privi</5>leged

▼260**S1**: s- <6> some people </6> still want to adopt it (1)

▼261S5: <6> e:r </6>
 ▼262S1: and want to sound <7> like </7> a <1> native </1> speaker =
 ▼263S5: <7> yeah </7>
 ▼264S5: <1> o- o- </1>
 ▼265S5: = yeah SOME people
 ▼266S1: yes (.)
 ▼267S5: but many of them (.) i don't think so (.) @ <2> @@ hh </2>
 ▼268S1: <2> you <@> don't think so </@> @ </2> @
 ▼269S5: yeah i don't think so (1)
 ▼270S1: so you think people don't mind if they have an accent and speak english
 (2)
 (Extract 19: VOICE PRcon599: 258-270)

So could also be left out by S1. Still the context would make clear that S1 formulates a conclusion. This confirms the classification of this particular use of so as discourse marker use. As the extract above exemplifies, a conclusion marked with so can also be formulated in response to confusion created by speakers not expressing clearly what they mean. Thus, the conclusion can be an attempt to bring order to the conversation which seems to be lost.

Also in the following example a speaker uses so to mark a conclusion drawn from the utterance by another speaker. S5 talks about a place where you have to pay for being allowed to enter but one drink is free. S1's conclusion drawn from this is that the money paid for entrance is not that much in the end. As the extract below exemplifies, the conclusion can be drawn from several pieces of information. S1 obviously calculates the difference between the amount of money paid for entrance and the price of a drink. S1's conclusion is this calculated difference.

▼603S5: <2> it was a nice place yeah </2> (1) and it wasn't really that expensive when you think that nine euros entrance and you get one of those (.) <3> huge drinks </3> (.)
 ▼604S1: <3> drinks yeah </3>
 ▼605SX-f: <3> drinks </3>
 ▼606S5: so <4> i mean </4>
 ▼607S1: <4> so </4> it's really only about five euros
 ▼608S5: exactly
 (Extract 20: VOICE LEcon545: 603-608)

It is not only possible to make the intension of expressing a conclusion more obvious by the use of *so* but also the use of *aha*, which is classified as a discourse marker by Schourup (1985), can support the effect of *so*, as in the following extract.

- ▼171S2: and and you're studying here? (.)
▼172S1: yes (.) i have completed my studies in: in er march (.) <slow> so (1) i'm now (1) an </slow> <pvc> ex-<@>student </@> </pvc> (.) and <7> but still </7> working for the: department of english (.)
▼173S2: <7><soft> okay </soft></7>
▼174S2: aha great so: =
▼175S3: = hm
▼176S2: more or less as (.) as we are

(Extract 21: VOICE PRcon29: 171-176)

S1 tells the other communication partners about having obtained a university degree and currently working for the university which leads to the formulation of a conclusion by S2. S2 introduces the conclusion marked with *so* with *aha great*. *Aha* expresses the speaker's interest in the information given by the other speaker. The formulation of a conclusion has to be preceded by giving thought to the information with which the speaker is confronted. *Aha* can be seen as indicating this train of thought which results in the conclusion formulated and marked with *so*. As a lengthening of *so* is indicated, it can be assumed that S2 took some time to consider how the conclusion should be formulated. The formulation of the conclusion might have been motivated by the fact that it was S2 who asked S1 if she was a student. S2 might have felt the need to comment on the answer he had asked for.

So is not always used to mark a conclusion which directly follows the utterance which it relates to. Instead, the speaker can also repeat an utterance by a communication partner in the speaker's own words and then add the conclusion marked with *so*. For instance, the speaker using *so* to mark a conclusion in the following extract repeats an utterance by a communication partner in the speaker's own words. The speaker formulates this conclusion directly following the repetition of the other speaker's utterance. The conclusion is interrupted by a short pause. This pause might indicate that the speaker actually waits for S2 to complete the

conclusion. As S2 does not do so, however, S1 is forced to complete the conclusion herself. S2 does not seem to understand what S1 meant. Thus, S1 reformulates the conclusion. This time the conclusion is not marked with *so* but the expression *I guess* can also be seen as indicating that the utterance marked is a conclusion. The following extract also illustrates a case of the use of *so* to mark a conclusion in which *so* directly follows *and*. *So* marking conclusion was, however, not frequently used in combination with *and* in my data. Thus, I restrict my analysis of the use of this combination to one extract.

- ▼19S1: <7> which countr</7>y:<1> and </1>
 - ▼20S3: <7> from which country </7>
 - ▼21S2: <1> country?</1> (.) i'm spanish
 - ▼22S1: you are spanish? and so your mother tongue is (.) obviously spanish. (.)
 - ▼23S2: <un> xx?</un>
 - ▼24S1: your mother tongue your first language is spanish <2> i guess </2>
- (Extract 22: VOICE PRcon29: 19-24)

It seems that in the extract presented above *and* represents the step from processing the information to drawing the conclusion which follows. Thus, *and* seems to have a role similar to that of *aha* when preceding a conclusion.

In the following extract S5's conclusion does not directly follow another speaker's turn from which the conclusion is drawn. Instead, S5 makes obvious what the conclusion is drawn from by repeating what was said by others and then directly adding the conclusion. Thus, S5 again draws a conclusion from information given by another speaker. The difference to other cases is, however, that S5' conclusion is not drawn from an utterance originally formulated in the immediate context of the conclusion. Instead, S5 refers to information given earlier. By formulating the relevant utterance again, the speaker enables the hearer to understand which utterance the conclusion relates to. Otherwise the hearer would not be able to understand why the speaker formulates the conclusion and what it relates to.

- ▼2609S5: but you speak vietnamese as well (.)
- ▼2610S7: well i speak it okay (.)
- ▼2611S5: <3> yeah </3>
- ▼2612S7: <3><soft> but </soft></3> (.) not (.) super
- ▼2613S5: and <4> you </4> already i i just i just heard you already been for a (.)

▼2614**S4**: <4><loud> what?</loud></4>{S4 joins them}
 ▼2615**S5**: year to munich so: you probably speak german <@> as well </@>
 ▼2616**S7**: well i speak (.) pretty good <5> german </5>
 (Extract 23: VOICE LEcon562: 2609-2616)

S5 directly addresses one hearer expressing the conclusion that it is likely that this hearer speaks German. The conclusion is not preceded by a pause. This might indicate that the speaker does not need much time to think about how to formulate the conclusion. The speaker probably does not need to process the information at this point because he has already thought about the utterance which the conclusion relates to previously. At the time the speaker returns to this utterance S5 does not have to think for a long time about how to formulate the conclusion anymore. The formulation of the conclusion offers an opportunity for S7 correcting aspects of the conclusion if necessary. In the extract above, however, S7 does not really correct the conclusion but the conclusion obviously motivates her to add information concerning her knowledge of German.

It has been suggested that *so* marks conclusions which end with a “tag question” (Quirk et al. 1985: 812). However, in my data, conclusions marked with *so* are not followed by tag questions. According to my data, some speakers lengthen the sound of *so* when they use it to mark a conclusion. A reason for such a lengthening might be that the speakers need some time to process what another speaker said before formulating the conclusion. In many cases the conclusion follows the utterance which it relates to directly. Some speakers also use expressions like *aha* or *and* to bridge the gap between the utterance the conclusion relates to and the conclusion itself.

The speakers in my data use *so* to mark a conclusion drawn from an utterance by another speaker. This conclusion either follows the utterance directly or the speaker repeats the utterance by another speaker and then formulates the conclusion. Also the repetition of the utterance can occur at different stages of the discourse: It can directly follow the original utterance but the original utterance and the repetition of it can also be separated by a large number of turns in which the speakers can also talk about other topics. Probably this is even the prototypical case of repeating an utterance before formulating the conclusion drawn from this utterance. Otherwise the hearers might be confused concerning what the

conclusion relates to. Resulting from this wide range of possibilities concerning at which stage of the conversation the conclusion is formulated the position of so marking a conclusion in the turns varies. So is used to initiate a turn if the speaker formulates the conclusion directly or shortly after the utterance which it relates to. It is used in a position more or less in the middle of a turn in case the speaker first repeats the utterance before formulating the conclusion. It might seem impossible to use so at the end of a turn. However, this is possible in cases in which the speaker is interrupted and can only formulate the conclusion after this interruption.

The conclusion marked with so can also function as an attempt at clarification. Instead of directly asking for clarification, the speakers express their conclusion. If a communication partner has the impression of being misinterpreted, this person can then correct the respective aspects.

5.2.3 Marking implied result

In my data so was also used in the function of marking implied result. This function has also been mentioned by Müller (2005: 84-86) and Schiffrin (1987: 223). It means that the result indicated is not expressed in words but is still quite obvious to the communication partners. According to Andersen's (2001: 81) description of functions, this is "an interactional function" of so. Andersen (2001: 81) describes this function as "hearer-oriented". The speaker using so to mark implied result must know that the hearer is able to understand that the speaker implies a result. Otherwise the speaker would have to express the consequence in words. Thus, the speaker has to be aware of the background knowledge of the hearer when using so to mark implied result. It only makes sense to use so in this function, if the speaker thinks that the hearer is capable of understanding which result is implied. So is used in this function at the end of a proposition. This becomes obvious when comparing so marking implied result to so marking consequence. The use of the function of marking implied result resembles the use of marking consequence without the consequence. Thus, it is clear that so follows the utterance which the implied result relates to but so is not followed by the consequence. Hence, so is positioned at the end of an utterance.

▼89S3: the: prices of er flight (1) from <LNger> wi:en {vienna} </LNger> to venice
 (.) but (.) it cost a lot (1)

▼90S5: yeah i know

▼91S3: erm (.) perhaps (1) two hundred euro (.) <3> more </3> than two hundred
 euro (.)

▼92S4: <3> o:h </3>

▼93S4: so <4> maybe </4> it's cheaper by train?

▼94S3: <4> but er </4>

▼95S3: yes but (.)

▼96S4: not really worth the:<5> time </5>

▼97S3: <5> seven </5> hours <6> ooph </6> (.)

▼98S4: <6> okay @@ </6>

▼99S3: to to meet a a uncle that @@@

▼100S4: @@ <@> you haven't seen for fifteen years </@> (.)

▼101S5: but i think there are (.) er tickets for twenty-nine euros so:

▼102S3: a:h yes i f- (.) i'm i'm searching. the erm (.) er red- cheaper prices (.) but
 (.) i'm <smacks lips> i'm (.) perhaps i must e:r look er more (.)

(Extract 24: VOICE LEcon417: 89-102)

The extract above exemplifies the function of marking implied result. The speakers discuss if it is better to take the train or go by plane in order to get to Venice from Vienna. While S3 complains that the flights are very expensive, S5 remarks that also rather cheap tickets are available. The final word of this remark is *so*. It seems that *so* is intended to imply that consequently flying would be an option nonetheless. This consequence, or rather conclusion according to my classification of functions, is not formulated in words, thus, *so* here marks an implied result. A striking feature of the extract is that the speaker using *so* to mark an implied result is hardly involved in the discussion before. The sound of *so* is lengthened in the extract above. The lengthened vowel can be understood as representing what is not expressed in words. Thus, the vowel might be lengthened because the speaker wants to make sure that the hearer understands that *so* is used to mark implied result. As in the case of marking a consequence or marking a conclusion, *so* can also be left out when being used to mark an implied result. For instance, in the above extract the hearers would be able to understand that S5 tries to say that flying is an option also in case *so* would be left out. The context is essential for the understanding of the intention of S5. *So* simply makes it easier for the hearers to understand this intention.

Similarly to the speaker using *so* in the above extract, S5 only marginally contributes to the conversation in the extract which follows up to the turn in which the speaker uses *so* to mark implied result. S1 talks about Oslo and that it is better to use public transport there than walk because Oslo is hilly. S5 points out that this is not the case at the place where the communication takes place. S5 uses *so* at the end of the turn which seems to imply the consequence that public transport is not needed but people can walk. As has been explained before, I classify cases as *so* marking implied result when the speaker does not formulate the result in words but only indicates it. The use of this very function seems to fit in with the speakers not being too communicative in the extracts presented. In contrast to the extract above, the speaker using *so* to mark implied result does not lengthen the vowel. This might indicate that the speaker is convinced that the use of *so* alone makes clear that he implies a result but does not express it in words.

- ▼663S1: yeah we go we usually go by public trans<5>port </5> NOW (.)
 - ▼664S8: <5> yeah </5>
 - ▼665S1: e:r but you can walk but it e:r there is (.) <fast> lot of </fast> (.) height differences <6> in e:r </6>
 - ▼666S8: <6> mhm </6> mhm
 - ▼667S1: hh in the: (.) so it's (.) it's really erm (1) you get really tired if you want to walk <7> around </7><8> oslo for a </8> whole day (.)
 - ▼668S5: <7> yeah </7>
 - ▼669S8: <8> yes (it's like) </8>
 - ▼670S5: <9> but it's </9> all flat here so
 - ▼671S1: <9> it's like </9>
 - ▼672S8: <1> it's HILly </1> in oslo (.)
 - ▼673S1: <1><@> yeah </@> @ </1>
- (Extract 25: VOICE LEcon562: 663-673)

The speaker can also have falling intonation in the utterance in which *so* is used to mark implied result, as in the following extract.

- ▼25S7: <9> and </9> er do you know if he is INVOLVED . in this kind of things
 - ▼26S6: o:h <3> he has </3> written a BOOK about the notions of conVEXity <10> so.</10>
 - ▼27S8: <3> what?</3>
 - ▼28S7: <10> yes </10> he he <11> wrote </11><to S8> you are you [last name3] and [last name4] <12> wrote </12></to S8>
- (Extract 26: VOICE PRcon535: 25-28)

S7 asks S6 if S6 knows about another person being involved in a certain area of research. S6 does not answer directly to the question, however. Instead, S6 informs S7 about the person being talked about having written a specific book. This utterance ends with *so*. The speaker does not formulate the consequence of the fact that a certain person has written a book but only implies it using *so*. The falling intonation seems rather counterproductive regarding the aim of making clear that the speaker implies a result. A reason for the falling intonation in the above extract might be that the speaker is interrupted by another speaker. Thus, S6 might have the impression that the communication partners do not listen to what she says anymore. This again might be a reason for S6 not trying hard to make the hearers understand that she implies a result, i.e. not trying to use intonation in a way which would clarify the implied result even more.

The small number of extracts presented here reflects the relevance of the function of marking implied result in my data. In contrast to marking consequence and marking conclusion, *so* was only rarely used to mark implied result by the speakers in my data. Concerning the intonation of the speakers using *so* to mark implied result, it has to be noted that in some cases speakers have falling intonation. However, not many speakers used falling intonation when marking an implied result. The reason for the seldom use of falling intonation might be that this would rather hinder the hearers in their understanding of the speaker implying a result. The sound of *so* was lengthened by some speakers when marking implied result in my data. However, my expectation that the sound of *so* is frequently lengthened when used in this function was not fulfilled. In the following, I will explain what this expectation results from. Assuming that the speakers try to make clear that they mark an implied result with *so*, it seems likely that in order to make obvious that the speaker intends to imply a consequence but not express it in words this speaker lengthens the sound of *so* which then stands for what is not said.

5.2.4 Marking boundary

This function has also been mentioned by Müller (2005: 80-81). However, I do not mean exactly the same. Müller (2005: 80-81) explains what she means by marking a boundary:

[...] so being used as a boundary marker between types of talk, or, more specifically in my data, as a boundary marker between instructions and the beginning of the narrative.

In my data so was both used to mark a boundary between turns or within turns. So was also used to mark a boundary between different topics. I did not classify so as marking a boundary in these cases, however, as the cases in which it was made clear that a change of topic was indicated by so were so numerous that I chose to classify them in a functional category of its own. This function will be described in more detail later.

To come back to the function of so marking a boundary, the next extract is an example of a speaker using so to mark a boundary between a sequence of questions and answers and the speaker's explanation of how the other speakers should behave. The extract illustrates a use of so as marking a boundary, similar to the use of so marking a boundary in Müller's data. Müller (2005: 81) points out that so was used by the speakers in this function right "after the researcher had given them instructions on what they were supposed to do". In the conversation which the following extract is from, so was used to mark a boundary after the student recording the conversation for the VOICE project had asked all participants of the conversation about their home country. To be more precise, in the following extract so marks a boundary between the questions/answers concerning the home country of the participants of the conversation and the instruction by the recording person on the conversation itself.

▼26S7: = i'm (.) i'm from germany (.)
▼27S1: you're from germany right (.) and what about you? (.)
▼28S6: from germany <7> too </7>
▼29S1: <7> from </7> germany <1> too </1> (.)
▼30S6: <1><soft> hm </soft></1>
▼31S1: okay (1) so (1) you can continue with your conversation if you don't mind (1) @@ <soft> and i'm going to record it </soft>
(Extract 27: VOICE PRcon599: 26-31)

So is preceded and followed by longer pauses which can be seen as indicating the speaker's intention to mark a boundary as well. The first word in the turn in which so is used to mark a boundary is *okay*. Müller (2005: 81) noted that in her data speakers frequently began their turns "with some kind of acknowledgement (usually *OK*) and so" in cases in which so was used as a boundary marker. In my data so as a boundary marker was repeatedly used in combination with *okay* as well. I will go into more detail concerning this frequent combination following the analysis of the functions of so.

In case so is used to mark a boundary between turns and, thus, to mark that a speaker is ready to give up his/her turn, so is used at the end of the turn. Also Mullan (2010: 47) points out this function, saying that "[d]iscourse markers can be used to [...] relinquish the floor". Schiffrin (1987: 225) mentions this function as a particular function of so, saying that "so is used [...] when speakers offer hearers a turn at talk". The fact that Mullan (2010: 47) does not refer to so in particular but to discourse markers in general in her statement on the function of marking a speaker's readiness to give up his/her turn might indicate that so fulfils a discourse marker typical function when marking such readiness. A lengthening of the sound of the vowel in so is indicated which may be seen as another indication of S5's intention to make clear that she has said everything she wanted to say. So is again preceded and followed by a pause whereby the pause which follows so is especially long. The reason for the extraordinary long pause is given in the comment in the extract, namely that obviously none of the speakers had an idea what to say. After the pause another speaker takes the turn and starts to talk about a new topic. Thus, although it takes a long time, the wish of S5 that another speaker takes the turn is complied with in the end. It could also be the case, however, that a speaker expresses his/her readiness to give up his/her turn but nobody takes the turn within a short period of time after the speaker's use of so. The speaker has two possibilities in such a situation: either the speaker continues to talk or the speaker simply waits until another speaker takes the turn accepting that the conversation is interrupted, as in the following extract.

▼67S3: it's strange bec- but er (.) i you said er you said that i'm the only (.) er english er speaking er (1) renter e::r in the erasmus <LNger> buero {office} </LNger> today:

▼68S5: TODAY yeah

▼69S3: yeah

▼70S5: today there weren't many people (.) so: (12) {awkward silence as nobody knows what to say (12)}

▼71S3: @@ (4)

▼72S4: but the (.) <LNger> viennale? {film festival} </LNger> (1) do you want to (.) get (.) tickets (.) any time soon?

(Extract 28: VOICE LEcon417: 67-72)

In some cases it was difficult to differentiate between *so* marking implied result and *so* marking a boundary. It could be the case that I do not know about certain personal backgrounds which would explain that a speaker attempts to imply a result. This might be obvious to the communication partners because they know each other but not to me as I do not know the involved speaker personally. My solution to this problem was that I only classified the use of *so* as marking implied result when this result was also obvious to me as an outsider to the communicating group. The reason for this way of classifying the use of *so* to mark implied result is that a speaker will not use *so* in this function when the speaker cannot be sure that the hearers understand his/her intention. It would not make sense to use *so* in such a way as this could lead to misunderstandings which is actually what the use of discourse markers should prevent, according to my understanding of the role of discourse markers in conversations.

5.2.5 Marking change of topic

As has been mentioned before, the function of marking a change of topic is closely related to the function of *so* as boundary marker. If it was clear that *so* was used to change the topic, I also labelled its use as such: marking change of topic. Schiffrin (1987: 225) describes the function as follows, “*so* is used [...] when speakers offer hearers [...] an opportunity to change topic”. Mullan (2010: 47) points out that “[d]iscourse markers mark boundaries in discourse by initiating topics”. This function is also mentioned by Travis (2006: 220). Thus, as in the case of the function of marking turn transition, also this function has been mentioned by Schiffrin (1987: 225) as a function of *so* whereas the function is described by Mullan (2010: 47) as a function of discourse markers in general. It seems that in this function *so* has the role of a sign of warning which prepares the hearers for a

change of topic. The topic the speaker intends to talk about after the change can be either a new topic or a previous topic of the conversation. The following extract is an example of a speaker using *so* to mark returning to a previous topic.

- ▼45S5: and we went to a disco? (1)
▼46S1: yeah
▼47S5: and a bar (2)
▼48S4: also in gracia? (.) or somewhere else?
▼49S5: yeah i <to S7> WAS it in gracia?</to S7> i <3> think so </3>
▼50S7: <3> yea:h </3> (1) <to S1> you <@> oka:y?</@></to S1>
▼51S1: i've got hiccups <soft> @@@ </soft>
▼52SS: @@
▼53S1: and @@@ th- they are really loud so <4> i'm trying to </4>
▼54SS: <4> @@@@ </4>
▼55S1: keep them quiet
▼56S4: @@
▼57S5: so:<6><loud> i got </loud></6> home around six (.)

(Extract 29: VOICE LEcon545: 45-57)

At the beginning of the extract S5 talks about going out. Then the topic changes to one of the speakers having hiccups. In order to mark another change of topic, which is actually a return to the previous topic, S5 uses *so*. The speaker returning to the previous topic is the same speaker who talked about this topic also before. In this extract it seems that S5 was interrupted by S7 and S1 talking about S1's hiccups. S5 is not ready to accept that the topic of going out is forgotten about and, thus, returns to it herself. The use of *so* might be an indication of the desperate wish of S5 to return to the previous topic as *so* clarifies the intention of changing the topic. As in other extracts presented a lengthening of the vowel of *so* is indicated. This lengthening could be seen as mirroring the transition taking place or as an additional warning that a transition is taking place. It also creates a bit of a pause between the different topics. Consequently, the change does not seem too abrupt.

Similarly to the use of *so* to mark a speaker's readiness to give up a turn, the communication partners do not always follow the wish of a speaker to change the topic, as the following extract illustrates.

- ▼160S2: who's the: (.) tutor. (.) for the project

▼161S1: [last name3] (.)
 ▼162S2: oh him?<soft> @@@ </soft> (4)
 ▼163S3: but i found <7> him smart in some way </7>
 ▼164S1: <7> so i basically say okay good morning </7><1> e::rm </1>
 ▼165S2: <to S3><1> hm?</1></to S3>
 ▼166S3: <to S2> [last name3] </to S2>
 ▼167S2: <to S3> mhm </to S3>
 ▼168S3: i found him <8> smart </8> in some way
 ▼169S1: <8> hh </8>
 ▼170S2: he IS smart. (.) but the thing is? (.) he doesn't know how to ACT around me? (.) cos i'm older than he is @ @@@ @ <2> @@@@ </2>
 ▼171S1: <2> true true </2>
 ▼172S3: yeah =
 ▼173S1: = he's a young <3> puppy </3>
 ▼174S3: <3> he's like </3> what twenty-five twenty-six
 ▼175S2: he's twenty-<4>six </4> or twenty-seven (3)
 ▼176S1: <4> seven </4>
 ▼177S3: and already become a teacher
 ▼178S1: <smacks lips><9> erm </9>
 ▼179S2: <soft><9> mhm </9></soft> because he's a ne:rd
 ▼180S3: <5> @@ </5>
 ▼181S1: <5> so i </5> say good morning this is [org1] basically erm [org1] is a company that offers erm solutions and <fast> and and </fast> hh <10> cons- </10>
 (Extract 30: VOICE EDcon496: 160-181)

The speakers talk about a tutor. S1 obviously wants to change the topic which is marked with so. However, the other speakers do not react accordingly. They continue talking about the tutor. Thus, the attempt at changing the topic failed. S1 does not give up, however. Instead, S1 starts another try to make clear that a change of topic is desired by the speaker. Although so obviously did not have the wanted effect that the other speakers realise that a change of topic is desired, S1 again uses so to mark the change of topic. Also in both cases the turns with so as the initial word are interruptions which might be another indication of S1's strong wish to change the topic.

In my data, so was frequently used to mark a return to a previous topic. This contradicts my expectation that so marking the initiation of a new topic would dominate. Perhaps the speakers rather feel the need to mark a change of topic

with *so* when returning to a previous topic as this might surprise the speakers more than a new topic. The vowel in *so* was only lengthened in some cases. The vowel was also mainly lengthened when the speaker marked a return to a previous topic. A reason for this tendency might be that the lengthening of the vowel can function as a way of intensifying the function of *so*.

In the cases classified as marking a change of topic the speakers initiated the topic themselves. Cases in which speakers just ended a turn with *so* perhaps waiting for a change of topic but not directly addressing it *so* was not labelled as marking a change of topic but was labelled more generally as marking a boundary.

5.2.6 Marking concluding statement

In some cases the speakers in my data used *so* to mark a concluding statement. In these cases *so* was used for closing a subject, a function mentioned by Travis (2006: 220). However, it was closed in the sense that the speaker expressed the closing of his/her personal remarks regarding the topic. The function I describe as marking a concluding statement can be compared to a function named marking “a concluding remark” by Mullan (2010: 112). However, in contrast to the utterances she describes, in the utterances I name concluding statements the main idea is not repeated but they only express the speaker’s wish to close his/her remarks on the topic. It might be assumed that marking a concluding statement is a function which can be found at the end of conversations. However, in my data the speakers rather used *so* in this function at some point within the conversations. In some cases the speaker formulated a concluding statement but then decided to keep talking nonetheless, as in the following extract.

S1 talks about a study which is actually the first topic of the conversation. It seems that S1 decides to formulate a concluding statement concerning the topic which is marked with *so*. However, after this turn S1 obviously feels that more information still has to be added and continues to talk about the topic. The topic is changed shortly after that by S1 after all. Also in that case S1 uses *so* to mark the change. S1 has a dominating role in the following extract. He is only interrupted by expressions like *yeah* and *okay*. Thus, S2 does not contribute much to the

conversation in this extract. He neither contributes content nor does he take the initiative to structure the discourse. S2 supports the structure in the sense that he acts according to the structure as determined by S1.

- ▼21S2: = it's w- even worse i mean once a german =
 - ▼22S1: = we express ourselves very functionally (.) you <5> know?</5> (.)
 - ▼23S2: <5> yeah </5>
 - ▼24S1: we don't take (.) you know the right way we just take the way (.) that we think (.) that you will understand me and you =
 - ▼25S2: = yeah (.)
 - ▼26S1: so: (.) that was actually the study. the s- i didn't study it (.) i just read some (.)
 - ▼27S2: yeah
 - ▼28S1: it was something in the er (.) in the margin of a (.) of a congress which was said then (.) <imitating> do people understand each other </imitating> (2) {S1 is handed a drink (2)}
 - ▼29S1: <soft> this is </soft> (.) <@> okay </@> @@ <@> it's for me </@>
 - ▼30S2: <@> okay (.) yeah </@> @@ (.)
 - ▼31S1: but anyway so: (.) we have flemish parties (1) in belgium? (1)
- (Extract 31: VOICE LEcon227: 21-31)

The vowel in *so* is lengthened by S1 both when used to mark a concluding statement and when used to mark a change of topic. Also in both cases *so* is followed by a short pause. In both cases it seems that the speaker intends to use the pauses to draw the hearers' attention to what is said next. This pausing after *so* seems to be a rather personal mannerism, according to my data, however. S1 continues talking about the topic after the formulation of a concluding statement. The decision to continue talking about it might have been motivated by the possibly disappointing reaction of S2 who only reacts to the concluding statement with *yeah*. S1 might have interpreted the absence of a personal comment by S2 on the content provided by S1 as having explained the study not exactly enough.

In some cases of *so* as a marker of a concluding statement it is part of the phrase *so that was*, as in the extract above. Sometimes it is also part of the phrase *so that's* when being used to mark a concluding statement, as in the next extract, for example.

- ▼2390S8: international organizations =
- ▼2391S7: = okay <11> yah </11>

▼2392**S8**: <11> that's </11> what i'm interes<1>ted in </1>
 ▼2393**S7**: <1> is that </1> an <spel> n g o?</spel> (1)
 ▼2394**S8**: er no no
 ▼2395**S7**: it's <2> not it's it's er </2>
 ▼2396**S8**: <2> it's e:r it's </2> e:r a diplomatic er service =
 ▼2397**S7**: = okay =
 ▼2398**S8**: = kind of yeah
 ▼2399**S7**: governmental <3><soft><un> xx </un></soft></3> yeah okay (1)
 ▼2400**S8**: <3> yes yes </3>
 ▼2401**S8**: so that's what i'm doing at the moment
 (Extract 32: VOICE LEcon562: 2390-2401)

In contrast to the previous extract, the speaker using *so* to mark a concluding statement does not make a pause after *so* and does not lengthen the sound of it either in the extract above. Another difference to the previous extract is that in this case the speaker does not change her decision to finish talking about the topic. Also the speaker using *so* to mark a concluding statement does not have such a dominating role as the speaker in the previous extract.

The phrases *so that's* or *so that was*, which are used in the extracts presented, were found to be typical phrases of the speakers in my data in general when *so* was used to mark a concluding statement. *That's* or *that was* are formulations which reinforce the effect of *so*: making clear to the hearers that what is said in the following concludes a topic. As the extracts presented demonstrate, some speakers formulated a concluding statement and really stopped talking about the topic but other speakers reconsidered their decision to close the topic and continued talking about it. Such reconsideration can be motivated by the hearers' reaction, for instance. In some cases of *so* being used to mark a concluding statement the vowel in *so* was lengthened, in other cases not. Some speakers used a pause after *so* in this function. Some speakers added the concluding statement directly to the previous utterances concerning the topic. In other cases the utterances which the concluding statement relates to and the concluding statement itself were separated by utterances by communication partners.

5.2.7 Marking main idea

This function has been described by Schiffrin (1987: 191-203) and Müller (2005: 74-76). In my data, the marking of the main idea with *so* was used to make obvious to the hearer which part of what the speaker says is the most important one. This is an example of a function of discourse markers mentioned by Andersen (1998: 147): the function of indicating how the person using the discourse marker thinks about a proposition. The main ideas marked with *so* were usually short phrases and not too detailed in my data. In some cases they were followed directly by a more detailed, enhanced reformulation of the main idea. In other cases the main idea marked with *so* was a summary or part of a summary at the end of a speaker's turn or a starter of a turn which contained the most important information about a specific topic or an individual opinion. The following extract exemplifies the use of *so* marking the main idea.

▼57S1: yeah (.) but you have (.) we have a <pvc> federalized </pvc> state (1) so it's federal (.)

(Extract 33: VOICE LEcon227: 57)

The above extract exemplifies the use of *so* to mark the main idea which is a reformulation of the utterance preceding *so*. The speakers talk about Belgium's form of government and S1 explains that Belgium is a federal state. The previous utterance in which S1 names Belgium a federalized state and its reformulation (Belgium being a federal state) are separated by a pause. In the specific case of the above extract it seems that the speaker would have offered the turn after the first utterance of the turn. As the pause indicates, no other speaker took the turn, however. Perhaps this made S1 doubt that he made himself clear. This doubt might then have motivated S1 to reformulate the phrase reduced to the main information and reformulate it in a way which puts the word *federal* in the centre, respectively.

In other cases the main idea marked with *so* was a return to an idea already formulated previously. The next extract is an example of such a use of *so*. The speaker explains in more detail why speaking English with the hearer is good before returning to the main idea that it is good (or not bad in S1's words). All three steps of formulating the utterance the first time, explaining the utterance in more

detail and then returning to the main idea are part of one turn. Consequently, this turn is quite long in comparison to other turns in the conversation.

▼100S1: you only <pvc> speaked {spoke} </pvc> little little littl:e german an- and now i think you can s- you can understand much more than at the first time at the <14> first </14> meeting. (1)

▼101S2: <14> yeah </14>

▼102S2: even when when we were speaking english. (1)

▼103S1: yeah sometimes we speak in english but it it's good for me because hh i i i don't learn an an language here. and when i speak english e- english with you and [first name3] i i i can improve a little my english knowledge. @@ so it's not so BAD for me to speak ENGLISH with you

(Extract 34: VOICE LEcon229: 100-103)

In the extract above so follows laughter whereas in the previous extract a pause preceded so. Perhaps the laughter and the pause indicate the same. Also the laughter could be seen as a kind of pause (from talking at least). The fact that no other speaker interrupted S1's laughter or took the chance to take the turn, respectively, might have motivated S1 to reformulate the main idea of what she said before. In this case so also marks an opinion. However, the status of the marked utterance as the main idea seems to be of primary importance in this extract.

The two extracts already presented in which so is used to mark the main idea demonstrate that the formulation of the main idea can have three functions: it helps to make clear what is seen as very important by the speaker, it might prevent misunderstandings and it can fill pauses when no other speaker seems willing to take the turn.

Judging from the two extracts presented, the impression might be created that the main idea marked with so is always in the same turn as the information or argument of which it is the main idea. However, in some cases these two parts do not follow each other directly but are separated by another speaker's turn, as in the following extract.

▼796S2: it's the substitute that that takes care of (.) insurances

▼797S3: aha

▼798S2: and it was the tenth anniversary yesterday (.) so they invited a lot of important people and there was plenty of (food) you know plenty of drink and

▼799**S3**: @@

▼800**S2**: it was fun really because you get to meet your friends there it was (.) quite relaxed really

▼801**S3**: yes (.)

▼802**S2**: so it was enjoyable (2)

(Extract 35: VOICE LEcon329: 796-802)

S2 tells S3 about a party. He explains the reason for the party and tells S3 about the people and the food and drinks at the party. S2 also expresses his opinion on the party and gives a reason for it. In the last turn of the extract S2 uses *so* to mark the main idea that the party was enjoyable. The main idea is both a summary of the previous turn of S2 and a return to the opinion that a certain party was fun. Thus, S2 uses *so* to make clear which point of what he told about the party is the most important to him.

An aspect which the two extracts presented above have in common is the use of an utterance marked with *because* between the previous information and the return to this previously mentioned information which is marked with *so*. The use of *so* and *because* in these roles is also indicated by Schiffrin (1987: 191).

▼557**S1**: but erm (.) with snowboarding i couldn't do the sideways thing i just <7> went </7> straight down the hill

▼558**S5**: <7> mhm </7>

▼559**SS**: <1> @@@@ </1>

▼560**S5**: <1> exactly </1>

▼561**S1**: and then (.) when you fall (.) you're going THAT way (.) so you fall THAT way =

(Extract 36: VOICE LEcon545: 557-561)

In the extract above *so* marks the main idea which is a reformulation of the preceding utterance. S1 talks about snowboarding in the extract. In the turn in which *so* is used the speaker explains how a snowboarder falls. In this extract the main idea marked by *so* follows an utterance which is a more detailed formulation of the same idea. A motive for the more detailed but also perhaps more complicated formulation first could be that the speaker aims at formulating every step of the process very carefully so the hearers understand what is meant. Probably the explanation is also accompanied by gestures as *that way* cannot be understood without gestures. As this clumsy formulation might be misunderstood,

the speaker formulates the same idea again more clearly. This second formulation of the idea is marked with *so*. The reformulation makes clear that the way of falling is the main idea the speaker wants to convey.

As the extracts presented demonstrate, the main idea marked with *so* was in some cases a reformulation of a previous utterance in my data. In some cases the main idea followed an utterance marked with *because*. The use of *because* made it even easier for the hearer to understand which the speaker thinks of as the main idea and which he/she thinks of as the subordinate idea. In most cases *so* was preceded by a pause when being used to mark the main idea.

In my data the function of marking the main idea was not one of the most frequently used functions of *so*. In some conversations it was not used in this function at all.

5.2.8 Marking explanation

This function has not been mentioned as a function of *so* in the literature, to my knowledge. In many cases in my data *so* was used to mark an explanation. This explanation often followed a short and precise statement or was followed by *such*. Such an explanation sometimes had the form of an example. Thus, in some cases the speakers used *so* to explain something by giving an example, as in the following extract.

▼177S2: so er i visited my son in greece and erm i spent a week with him so he said <slow> it's the time you go home </slow><7><@> i want to feel free </@> @@ and </7><1> he's looking forward for his father </1> to come because he knows <2> they </2> will go to have <3> fun </3> be <4> there </4> and i come to give him ideas how to (.)

(Extract 37: VOICE PBcon594: 177)

Previously in the conversation, S2 has informed the other speakers about her problems with her children and husband. In the turn presented S2 explains these problems in more detail by giving an example. This example which functions as an explanation is marked with *so*. *So* is used twice in the turn. The first use marks an explanation of the situation in which what follows is set. The second use of *so* marks the main idea. In this case the explanation of the background is rather short

whereas the main idea is rather long. The explanation provides the hearer with background information in this case. Thus, it can be seen as a subordinate idea which is rather associated with being marked with *because*. However, the speaker might use *so* in order to make clear that this is still important to know. It is definitely not of less importance for the hearer. If the speaker left the explanation out, the hearer would have trouble to understand what led to the situation of her son saying that she should go home. The use of *so* twice in the turn structures the turn and, thus, helps the hearer in understanding what the speaker perceives as important and what the speaker perceives as not so important. Using *so* to mark an explanation and also using it to mark the main idea in one turn was frequently found in my data.

In the following extract again *so* marks an explanation which provides background information and also in this case the use of *so* in this function is followed by *so* marking the main idea.

▼664S5: = yes we we meet on er the whole day thirtieth. (.)

▼665S7: okay (1) well i got the {whispered parallel conversation between SX-m and S10 ends}<slow> third mail from </slow><clears throat> your scottish colleagues i (.) (so complete) so i'll be there on the first to sit <to S11> are YOU going to be <7> there?</7></to S11>

▼666S11: <fast><7> i shall </7> be there </fast> (1)

▼667S10: and I'LL be there and [S6] will be there we'll <1> ALL be there </1>

(Extract 38: VOICE POcon549: 664-667)

The speakers seem to talk about a conference in Edinburgh. S7 refers to a mail he got from colleagues from Scotland. Thus, the speaker starts the turn giving background information. Then he adds another aspect of this information which is marked with *so*. In a third step the speaker informs the communication partners about when he will be at the place of the conference. This is the main idea which is again marked with *so*.

In other cases *so* was used to mark a more detailed explanation of a previous utterance, as in the following extract.

▼513S1: bootleg (.) it's the: (1) it's the: recorded concert it's live (.)

▼514S2: aha (.) oh yeah.

▼515S1: so bootlegs are like illegal copies of concerts (.)

(Extract 39: VOICE EDcon4: 513-515)

S1 informs the other speakers about bootleg. The speaker only formulates a very general statement about it first but then goes into more detail, describing bootlegs as illegal copies of concerts. This explanation is marked with *so*. In this case, the rather general statement and its rather detailed explanation are separated by another speaker's use of backchannels. Exactly these backchannels could have been a reason for S1 not going on about bootleg as the backchannels rather convey the impression that S2 understands what has been said before. Still S1 seems to feel compelled to explain the statement in more detail. The motivation for the explanation might be, however, that the first rather general statement about bootleg is a clumsy one which is hard to understand for the hearer. Although S2 seems not to have problems understanding the statement as his use of expressions like *aha* and *oh yeah* implies. Sometimes the speaker is not motivated to further explain a statement by the reaction of a hearer but by his/her own judgement concerning how clear he/she made himself/herself, as seems to be the case in the extract above.

In other cases *so* was used to mark an explanation which was a reformulation, as in the next extract.

▼38S1: flemish (1) sixty per cent is flemish (.) forty per cent is walloon so french (.)

▼39S2: yeah (.)

▼40S1: a:nd brussels is the capital (1) and brussels is in e:r (1) is entirely in flanders (1) so: it's surrounded by flanders but is (.) in majority french (.) <1> eighty </1> per cent's french-speaking (1)

▼41S2: <1> yeah </1>

▼42S1: but it is in flanders (.) and the surroundings are then flemish (.) but it's because it's capital and because flemish people like to live in the country (.) and not in cities (.) cos they're more conservative

(Extract 40: VOICE LEcon227: 38-42)

In the above extract S1 first talks about Belgium in general and then about Brussels in specific. He tells S2 about the location of Brussels. The information that it is in Flanders completely can be confusing. This might be a reason why S1 then reformulates this phrase. This explanation of the meaning of Brussels being *entirely in Flanders* is marked with *so*. S1 explains his previous utterance in more detail only after a pause. Thus, it might be assumed that S1 waited for a reaction to his previous utterance. As S2 does not react to it, however, S1 adds the more detailed explanation. The vowel in *so* is lengthened. This lengthening might be an

indication of the time S1 needs to think of how he can explain his previous utterance.

As the presented extracts demonstrate, the explanation which *so* marks can have various realisations. The explanation can be realised as an example, a reformulation or simply provide background information. A typical combination in my data was *so* marking explanation and *so* marking main idea. Using both in one turn is a possibility to structure the turn. Being aware of the fact that the speakers could also use *so* and *because* to structure a turn, the motivation for their use of *so* twice is of interest. I suggest that they perhaps use *so* twice instead of *so* and *because* in order not to present one utterance as being more important than the other but to present them as having different roles.

5.2.9 Marking question

So was also used to mark questions in my data. The function of marking question has also been described by Müller (2005: 81-83). Also Schiffrin (1987: 208) mentions that “*so* prefaces a request” in one of the extracts presented by her. In contrast to the function of marking a change of topic, for example, which has been named by various scholars as a function of discourse markers in general, the function of marking a question seems to be a function specific to the discourse marker *so*. The function of marking a question is another “interactional function” of *so*, according to the classification of functions by Andersen (2001: 81), as the questions challenge the hearer to express himself/herself in an answer.

My decision to classify a use of *so* as being used to mark a question was determined by the word order. However, in some cases it seemed that a phrase marked by *so* was intended as a question although the word order did not clearly indicate it. Here the intonation could help decide which classification would be justified. It should be added that in most cases in which *so* fulfilled this function it also fulfilled an additional function. This aspect of double functions will be approached in a later chapter.

In the following extract the speakers talk about a specific article of food. Previously in the conversation, S1 and S2 have discussed the difference between two articles

of food. Both speakers raise a number of arguments but S2 questions the validity of the arguments raised by S1. Thus, S2 seems to be sure that S1 does not know much about the respective articles of food. This behaviour of S2 probably intensifies S1's insecurity and leads to S1's confession about his uncertainty concerning the difference between the two articles. S2 hardly reacts to this confession, only saying *no*. S1 still seems to wait for an explanation as the pause indicates. As S2 does not explain it to S1, S1 directly asks about the difference. S1 waits for this explanation, as the pause indicates, and only then formulates the question. This question is marked with *so*. A causal relation can be found as the uncertainty is the reason for S1 asking the question about the difference. Another reason for a high interest in knowing about the specific article of food which leads to the formulation of the question might be that S2 has previously repeatedly raven about this product.

▼207S2: it's in the: erm (.) cupboard mm: it's deLlicious. (2) mm it's the most delicious thing i've ever had (8)

▼208S1: i think it's:<7> (what) what i </7> thought was <LNspa> dulce de le- dulce de leche {milk-based syrup} </LNspa>

▼209S2: <7> I love it </7>

▼210S2: n:o (2)

▼211S1: so what's the difference (1)

▼212S2: the TASTE . (2) this is very MILky taste (.) <LNspa> dulce de leche {milk-based syrup} </LNspa> tastes like TOffee. (3) this is if you COOK that one (.) a bit more it becomes TOffee.{noise of rinsing dishes}

(Extract 41: VOICE LEcon566: 207-212)

The next extract also involves a question marked with *so*. The context in which this question is formulated can be described as follows: S1 informs the hearers about not being from Austria which obviously surprises the hearers. S1 then apparently feels like letting the hearers guess where she is from. To help the hearers, S1 mentions some countries which can be excluded.

▼106S1: = i'm not german not austrian (.) <5> and </5> not swiss

▼107S2: <5> (whe-) </5>

▼108S3: but your english i- is not er native

▼109S1: yes that's <6><@> true </@></6><7> @@@@ </7>

▼110S2: <6> no </6><7> tha- that's right that's right </7>

▼111S3: <7> @@@@ </7> @@ but =

▼112**S2**: = yeah

▼113**S1**: <clears throat>

▼114**S2**: so where is a is a guess? (1) we have to: (.) to guess? =

(Extract 42: VOICE PRcon29: 106-114)

The speakers have a few guess but they all fail. It seems that the speakers are helpless. This might be a reason for S2 to ask if anybody has a guess. S2 here takes on the role of a moderator. The reason for the formulation of the question is probably that the speakers seemingly gave up guessing. The intended effect of asking the question seems to be a restart of this kind of guessing game.

In the two extracts in which *so* is used to mark a question presented above the question is followed by a pause. A pause following a question might be a result from the hearer needing time to process that he/she himself/herself is addressed and is expected to answer the question. This is a challenge for the hearer. The length of the pauses indicates that the speakers also seem to be aware of the difficulty as they do not continue their turn if the hearers do not answer immediately.

In the following, an extract is presented in which several questions follow each other. The speakers talk about an ID card. S4 wants to know if S1 has an international ID card. S1 does not understand the question, however, as it seems. Thus, S4 repeats the question slightly modified. This question is then marked with *so*. The reason for another reformulation of the question might be S1 looking puzzled or desperate. As I do not have any information about the facial expressions of the speakers, it is more advisable to search for a reason in the turns of the speakers. S1's answer to the first question by S4 being a question could be a reason for S4's reformulation of the question, for instance. A striking feature of this short extract is that after each question concerning the ID card, besides the one marked by *so*, a pause follows. The pauses may occur because of S1's uncertainty as related to what S4 is talking about and be a result of S1 taking time to process the questions asked by S4.

▼136**S4**: <soft> (okay) you have (erm) (1) you have an international <spel> i d </spel> card </soft> (1)

▼137**S1**: pardon?

▼138**S4**: <soft> do you have an (an) international <spel> i d </spel> card </soft> (1)

▼139**S1**: another <spel> i d </spel> card? (1)

▼140**S4**: so your <spel> i d </spel> card is international isn't it?

▼141**S1**: yeah <4> yeah </4>

(Extract 43: VOICE LEcon8: 136-141)

Although in the extract above a pause precedes the question marked with *so*, considering my data, it seems rather usual that a pause follows this question.

The extracts presented illustrate that the marking of a question includes the marking of a causal relation, a circumstance also addressed by Schifffrin (1987: 225). However, these causal relations are hidden in a way which makes the relation often not being obvious at first. Thus, it is questionable if a hearer who does not have a lot of time to think about the speaker's use of *so* is able to realise the marking of a causal relation. In most cases in my data *so* was in initial position in the turn when being used to mark a question. Considering the relevance of the function of marking a question in my data, it should be noted that *so* was not used very often in this function. It did not even occur in every conversation in this function.

5.2.10 Marking opinion

Only few speakers used *so* to mark an opinion in my data, so it seems that this function of *so* was not too relevant to the speakers in my data. The literature on functions of *so* mirrors this circumstance as this function is, to my knowledge, only mentioned by Müller (2005: 84).

In the following extract S1 talks about a certain tram line the speaker took, explaining its route. The opinion formulated by S1 is the finishing sentence of this explanation before the speakers goes on to talk about having forgotten about another tram line which would have been an alternative. The opinion formulated functions as an assessment of the route and its suitability for the speaker's use. The opinion follows a pause which functions as a boundary between the explanation of the route and the opinion expressed by S1. It seems as if S1 takes some time to reflect on the explanation of the route and only then decides on

which opinion to formulate. In the extract presented S1 clearly has a narrator's role whereas S2 only interferes with minimal responses.

▼95S1: e:r (.) well e:r during the daytime (.) now i took to t- er <fast> when i came here now i took the number five </fast> (.) from er <LNger> praterstern {name of tram stop} </LNger>

▼96S2: yeah =

▼97S1: = the <LNger> strassenbahn {tram} </LNger>

▼98S2: yeah

▼99S1: and that goes all the way to: er just outside <LNger> tigergasse {name of a street} </LNger> (.)

▼100S2: okay

▼101S1: so that was quite nice but i didn't i i had forgotten that e:r (1) there was a <LNger> strassenbahn {tram} </LNger> that went from e:r (.) <LNger> josefstaetterstrasse {name of a street} </LNger> i just realized today i (.) yeah i remembered

(Extract 44: VOICE LEcon228: 95-101)

In the following extract the speakers talk about Erasmus parties. S5 tells the communication partners about her attempt to explain the difference between two different kinds of parties which are both labelled Erasmus parties to another person. She remarks her doubt that the other person understood what she meant. Following this expression of doubt, S5 expresses her opinion regarding the use of the word *Erasmus* on posters of parties. In contrast to the previous example, the speaker using so in the following extract makes clear that so marks an expression of opinion. The expression *I guess* indicates that S5 formulates an opinion. Also in the data used by Müller (2005: 84) for her analysis in some cases “the speaker explicitly declared the utterance to be an opinion, by using [...] *I guess*”, for instance.

▼273S5: <2> but er </2> i tried to explain the difference but she didn't quite get it? so i guess it's like they're just putting on (.)

▼274SX-1: <2> okay </2>

▼275S5: posters er with the (.) the (.) word erasmus to <3> get students </3> (.)

▼276S1: <3> oh yeah </3>

▼277S5: <4> the international </4> students to (.)

▼278S1: <4> (to) come </4>

(Extract 45: VOICE LEcon545: 273-278)

As the extracts demonstrate, in some cases the speakers used *so* to mark an opinion which was clearly indicated as such by the use of phrases such as *I guess* but this was not the case in all examples of *so* marking an opinion. *So* was in some cases preceded by a pause when being used to mark an opinion but not in all cases. One possible reason for this might be that in some cases the speakers express an opinion which they formed long time before expressing it, but in other cases the speakers might express an opinion formed in the immediate situation of the conversation. Obviously, the speakers who express an opinion formed long time before are not likely to express this opinion only after a pause. The speakers who express an opinion formed during the conversation, however, are more likely to express this opinion following a pause.

5.2.11 Marking directive

Another function of *so* found in my data is the marking of directives. This function has not been mentioned as such by Fraser (1990: 393) but he gives examples of the use of *so* in which it fulfils this function.

The following extract demonstrates the use of *so* to mark a directive. The speakers talk about a presentation. S4 explains how much time will be needed for a certain part of it. Following this explanation, the speaker formulates a directive marked with *so* concerning how much time another speaker should plan for another part of the presentation. The directive marked with *so* is preceded and followed by a pause. However, as is indicated in the transcription, the speaker seems to use pauses frequently. Thus, it is questionable if the pauses preceding and following the directive can be attributed a specific function or reason.

▼181S4: er but (.) probab- we're we're gonna need (.) probably like (.) five or seven minutes at the most (.) hh e:r <8> for this </8> (.)

▼182S1: <8><un> xx </un></8>

▼183S4: so try to keep yours for like ten minutes (.) <9> no more </9> than ten minutes

▼184S6: <9><soft> @@ </soft></9>

▼185S6: it will never be ten minutes <1><soft><un> xxxx </un></soft></1> (.)

▼186S2: <1> o:h that's good </1>

(Extract 46: VOICE EDcon521: 181-186)

In the next extract the directive relates to banners which have been mentioned previously in the conversation. S2 informs the other speakers about a football club and the success of this club. It seems that the sight of banners motivates S2 to explain the reason why these banners can be seen. Having finished this explanation, S2 formulates a directive which tells the other communication partners to have another look at these banners.

▼2S2: those <1> are </1> the <2> banners </2> of <L1mlt> bir<3>kirkara </3> {maltese town} </L1mlt> (.)

▼3S3: <1> aha </1>

▼4S1: <2> banners </2>

▼5S3: <3> yes?</3>

▼6S2: because they won the football league you see (.)

▼7S3: aha

▼8S1: yes last last saturday =

▼9S2: = <soft> last saturday </soft> (.)

▼10S1: they fa- w- they won it so look at (like) the banners =

(Extract 47: VOICE LEcon329: 2-10)

The directives were not so detailed in all cases, however. Some directives only consisted of one word, as in the following extract. This one word was emphasised by the speaker, as the capital letters indicate. The decision to use just one word (plus so) to express the directive and then also emphasise it should have the effect that it is understood by the addressed people as being very important to comply with. However, S2 still criticises the content of the directive, saying that he should be natural. This utterance is followed by a longer pause and laughter. It seems, thus, that both S1 who formulates the directive and S2 are joking. In this case the transcribed laughter is essential for being able to analyse the directive. Not considering the laughter, the directive would seem to be expressed in a very strict way.

▼97S2: hhh (2) are you reCORding this?

▼98S1: yes

▼99S2: (o)kay

▼100S1: so beHAVE (.)

▼101S2: no i should be NATural (2)

▼102S1: @@@ (.)

(Extract 48: VOICE LEcon565: 97-102)

The reason for the formulation of the directive in the extract above seems to be that the speakers have previously talked about the conversation being recorded. Thus, in this case *so* also marks a causal relation.

So was not used in the function of marking a directive very often and in some of the rare cases it was formulated jokingly. This rare use of *so* to mark a directive is probably connected with a rare use of directives in conversations in general.

5.2.12 Double functions

So seemed to fulfil more than one function at the same time in a considerable number of cases. In most cases *so* clearly had a primary function, however. Cases in which not one function seemed to be primary will be discussed in the following. Most of them were cases in which one of the functions was marking a question, as in the following extract.

▼139S5: <2> are you </2> also e:r a student here? (.) <spel> p h d?</spel> (.) are you (.) working together

▼140S2: no no n-n. (.)

▼141S5: mhm

▼142S2: i'm (.) i came from <L1ger> bremen {city in germany} </L1ger> now i work in <L1ger> bremen? {city in germany} </L1ger> (.)

▼143S5: ah: =

▼144S2: = so erm and i finished my <spel> p h d </spel> last year (.)

▼145S5: <soft> hm okay </soft> (.)

▼146S2: it's done =

▼147S5: = good <11> @@ </11>

▼148S2: <11> @@ </11>

▼149S3: she she's done it @@ <3> @@ </3>

▼150S5: <3> @@ </3>

▼151S2: <3> @@ </3> @@ (.)

▼152S3: yeah very good

▼153S5: <spel> p h d </spel> (14)

▼154S2: so how are you enjoying your erasmus year?

▼155S5: er: it is good. e:r the city is very good. i like it but (1) i don't have any close friend in here and i'm

(Extract 49: VOICE EDcon250: 139-155)

S5 has the role of an interviewer in the first part of the above extract. Having answered S5's questions, S2 reverses the roles and asks S5 a question which is marked with *so*. A striking feature of the question marked with *so* is that it is preceded by an oddly long pause. It seems that S2 waits for S5 to ask another question. As this does not happen, S2 takes the initiative and asks S5 a question. *So* also marks a change of topic in this case. In the first part of the extract the speakers talk about where S2 comes from and lives and S2 having finished a PhD. After the use of *so*, however, the speakers talk about S5's Erasmus experience. Thus, the two functions fulfilled by *so* in the extract above are marking a question and marking a change of topic, one of the most frequent combinations in my data.

Also the next extract demonstrates the combination of the functions of marking a question and marking a change of topic.

▼782S2: you take some pictures and then <3> you go and show them to boyfriend </3>

▼783S3: <3> yes </3>

▼784S4: @@@

▼785S3: yes (2)

▼786S2: or you send them on the computer won't you?

▼787S3: <4> yes yes </4>

▼788S4: <4> yes </4> you can through internet (5)

▼789S3: if this was (.) <LNmlt> mdina {maltese city} </LNmlt> we were talking about @@

▼790S2: ah well <@> yes </@> (8)

▼791S3: okay (8) so what was er (.) your (.) party like? (.) yesterday

(Extract 50: VOICE LEcon329: 782-791)

The speakers talk about taking pictures and sending them to others. S3 then changes the topic with a question about a party. This question is marked with *so*. As in the extract presented before, again *so* is preceded by a long pause. It seems that *so* often follows a longer pause when *so* is used in the double function of marking a question and marking a change of topic. This co-occurrence of *so* and longer pauses can also be found in cases in which *so* only marks a change of topic. The use of *okay* which initiates the turn in which *so* is used is of peculiar interest as the combination of *okay* and *so* was also found in cases of *so* in other functions.

Other cases in which *so* fulfilled two functions at once included the function of marking conclusion. In the following extract the order of certain pages is explained by S2. A speaker then asks S2 a question in order to make sure that the order was understood. *So* which marks the question also marks the speaker's conclusion from S2's explanation.

▼1576**S2**: you'll see it (.) somehow (.) {parallel conversation between SX-f, SX-f and SX-f starts (25)}<un> xxx </un> page one (.) and it's (.) there (.) continued on page three (.) (there you go) (.) then it's back <5> to page </5> two (1)

▼1577**S9**: <5> right </5>

▼1578**S2**: <6> e:r </6> and then it's page four (1)

▼1579**S9**: <6> okay </6>

▼1580**SX-f**: <soft> so it's one three two four?</soft> (.)

(Extract 51: VOICE EDcon521: 1576-1580)

Double functions did not occur often in my data but especially when *so* marked a question it often fulfilled another function as well. The most frequent functions in addition to marking a question were marking a change of topic and marking a conclusion. However, in some sense *so* fulfils more than one function in most cases as it marks a causal relation also in most cases in which this is not its primary function.

5.3 Co-occurrences

5.3.1 *Okay so*

A combination which was found frequently in the data was *okay so*.

This combination was used in 26 cases of *so* as a discourse marker but in none case when *so* was not used as a discourse marker. Thus, it seems that in my data *okay so* is not just a typical combination involving *so* but *so* as a discourse marker in particular. Also Müller (2005: 81) refers to this combination being frequently used.

So was primarily used in this combination when functioning as a boundary marker (in nine cases). This result does not seem too surprising as also *okay* can function

as a boundary marker. This seemingly typical use of *okay so* will be demonstrated in the following extracts.

In the next extract *okay so* is part of a sequence of expressions indicating the wish to mark a boundary. In the first part of the extract the speakers talk about going to a certain place or event (this is not specified). The pauses and the use of expressions like *okay*, *yeah*, *erm* by several speakers might indicate that the speakers agree on the intension to change the topic. However, none of them seems to know what to talk about next. Also S1 uses *okay* but she uses it in combination with *so*. The falling intonation of S1 makes clear that *so* is used as a boundary marker in this case. In the end, S2 takes the turn and introduces a new subject which is immediately taken up by S4, perhaps motivated by a feeling of relief that another speaker found a topic to talk about.

▼832S3: yeah i'll join you =
▼833S2: = me me not but yeah
▼834S1: and be there this time
▼835S2: yeah <un> x x </un>
▼836S3: <soft> okay </soft>
▼837SX-1: yeah okay e:rm:: (3) {S4 starts moving the technical equipment}
▼838S2: hm (1)
▼839S1: yeah okay so.
▼840S4: thank you
▼841S2: i got cold in your room
▼842S1: @@
▼843S4: o:h i thought <2> it was so hot </2>
(Extract 52: VOICE LEcon420: 832-843)

As was mentioned before, in some cases *okay so* was not used when *so* was used as a boundary marker but in other functions. The following extract exemplifies the combination *okay so* in a case in which *so* is used to mark a directive. Previously in the conversation, the speakers have talked about whether to involve S1 in the conversation as an active conversation participant or not to involve her. S1 makes suggestions concerning this matter. However, S3 contradicts this suggestion. The directive marked with *so* follows this contradiction. The directive in this extract is a special kind of directive as it does not have a

meaning of *you must* but rather it is an offer. This characteristic of the directive is also mirrored in the laughter transcribed.

▼187S1: <3> yes that's (.) it's (ve-) (.) but you can also (.) i mean if you don't </3> want to talk to me you can talk to ea- each other about you:r

▼188S2: well =

▼189S3: = yes <4> but w- w- </4> but w- we we can talk every time (.)

▼190S1: <4> topic <soft> (but) </soft></4>

▼191S3: but w- we can only ask you NOW (.)

▼192S1: <5><@> yes okay @@ so feel free to ask </@></5>

(Extract 53: VOICE PRcon29: 187-192)

In the extract above *okay* cannot be said to have the same function as *so* or even reinforcing the function of *so*. *Okay* rather expresses the acknowledgement of a remark by another speaker. The laughter separating *okay* and *so* indicates that they do not have the same function. In case they are used in the same function separating *okay* and *so* would hinder the understanding of them fulfilling the same function.

Okay was also used in combination with *so* when *so* was used to mark a concluding statement, as in the next extract.

▼373S1: friday so s- you have some time (1) to (1) reLAX a little bit <soft> @@ </soft> hh

▼374S5: sure =

▼375S1: = before your presentation

▼376S5: mhm? (.) no problem =

▼377S1: = but good luck to you <6> too <soft> @@@ </soft></6>

▼378S5: <6> @ thank you @ </6> @@@ (2)

▼379S1: okay so thank you for your conversation <soft> @ = </soft>

(Extract 54: VOICE PRcon599: 373-379)

S1 seems to have a dominating role in this extract of the conversation. In the first turn of the extract S1 comments on S5's previously formulated statement concerning the date of his presentation. She then wishes S5 good luck for this presentation. Following S5's expression of his gratitude for S1's comment, S1 formulates a concluding statement. She uses *okay* to initiate the concluding statement marked with *so*. S1 concludes not only a topic but the whole conversation in the above extract. *Okay* might be used in this extract to prepare

the hearers for a change, meaning that the conversation does not go on like before.

As the extracts demonstrate, *okay so* was not only used in combination when *so* is used as a boundary marker in my data. Instead, it seems that *so* is not reduced to one specific function when it is used in combination with *okay*. For instance, *so* was also used in this combination when marking a concluding statement or a directive. The use of this combination was definitely not only the mannerism of one speaker. On the contrary, a variety of speakers in a variety of different conversations used *okay so*.

5.3.2 *Because* and *so*

As was mentioned in the analysis of the functions of *so*, *so* was used in a structure with *because* in many cases in my data. This is not too surprising considering how they relate to each other. Regarding this relation, Schiffrin (1987: 191) says that “they are complements both structurally [...] and semantically”. The frequent co-occurrence of *so* and *because* is reflected in the analysis by Schiffrin (1987: 191-227) who does not analyse *so* and *because* separately but considers the roles of both in discourse, focusing on how they can be used together.

Considering my data, *because* and *so* mainly co-occurred when *so* was used to mark a consequence or the main idea. In some cases the speakers provided the reason marked with *because* before the consequence marked with *so* in order to clarify that the respective proposition is the consequence of the previous proposition. An important effect of using both *because* and *so* is that the hearer can understand more easily which propositions are causally related. In other cases the speakers only provided information marked with *because* after the consequence, seemingly in reaction to doubts of the speakers that the hearers understand the context. As some examples of the use of co-occurrence of *so* and *because* have already been presented in the course of the analysis of the functions of *so*, I will only present a few extracts in the following with a particular focus on the co-occurrence of *because* and *so*.

In the following extract S1 uses both *because* and *so*. The speaker talks about being late for university as a rule. She explains that she has to run to university. She also adds information concerning slowly walking tourists. To be more precise, the speaker first communicates the reason (always being late) marked with *because* and then adds the consequence (having to run) marked with *so*. Providing reason and consequence in this order facilitates the task of the hearer to understand how the propositions are related.

▼12S1: = because i always er (.) erm (.) i'm always s- <LNger> spaet {late}
</LNger> @@ =

▼13S2: = @@@

▼14S1: and e:r (.) and so i must run (.) and if i find tourists

▼15S2: @@ okay =

▼16S1: = they walk too slowly for me @@ and so (.) <3> yes </3>

▼17S2: <3> mhm </3> (1)

(Extract 55: VOICE LEcon405: 12-17)

The use of the discourse marker *so* alone is already helpful in the hearer's challenge to interpret the utterances of the speaker but the use of *because* even intensifies the assistance rendered. Thus, it is likely that the speaker using both *so* and *because* feels the need to provide helpful indications regarding how the utterances formulated by her relate to each other.

Also the next extract exemplifies the use of *so* to mark a consequence. Again the speaker mentions the reason marked with *because* first and then adds the consequence marked with *so*. In the following extract it is more obvious that the speaker feels the need to mark these propositions compared to the extract above.

▼250S2: <6> we can </6> come from time to time because er rented a big flat there so there is <7> er room enough for us </7> to come (.)

▼251S4: <7> mhm mhm mhm mhm </7>

▼252S4: mhm (.)

▼253S2: me <1> or:</1> my <pvc> ex-husband </pvc> or <2> his girlfriend or brother or someone can be there very often so i think it will be </2> (.)

▼254S4: <1><soft> mhm </soft></1>

▼255S4: <2> mhm mhm mhm mhm mhm mhm mhm mhm </2>

▼256S2: not too difficult for him

(Extract 56: VOICE PBcon594: 250-256)

S2 tells the communication partners that she and her ex-husband or other family members or friends can visit their son at times. Obviously, the speaker then feels compelled to provide more information and adds the reason that the son lives in a big flat. In a further step S2 adds the consequence of this fact. The reason marked with *because* and the consequence marked with *so* function as an explanation for the previous utterance concerning the possibility to come to the place of the son at times. In comparison to the previously presented extract, the relations marked with *because* and *so* are more complicated in the extract above. The utterance marked with *because* is the reason for both the preceding utterance and the following utterance which is marked with *so*. Thus, this structure involves two consequences. Still, only the consequence which is expressed following the utterance marked with *because* is marked with *so*.

In the two extracts presented above the utterance marked with *because* precedes the utterance marked with *so*. This was not always the case, however, as the following extract illustrates. S6 informs the communication partners about a fear concerning a particular airport being only used for cargo flights in the future. This utterance is followed by an utterance marked with *so* in which S6 explains the consequence of such a decision. *So* alone would already make the causal relation obvious to the hearer. However, S6 still adds another utterance marked with *because* which serves as an explanation for S6's decision to present the two previous propositions as reason and consequence.

▼240S6: there was a fear that our airport will become only for (.) cargo? (.) er <9> and er </9> in vienna (.)

▼241S4: <9> mhm </9>

▼242S6: only for persons (.)

▼243S3: mhm

▼244S6: so er we would lose a lot of money? because there are

▼245S3: of course =

▼246S6: = er services and o- er many other things? (.) er so i don't know whether this will last

(Extract 57: VOICE EDcon250: 240-246)

As the extracts presented demonstrate, the speakers in my data used *so* and *because* in different ways: to clarify between which propositions there is a causal

relation or to provide more background information which facilitates the hearer's challenge to realise the kind of relation between two propositions.

5.4 Speaker tendencies

Throughout my analysis I came to notice that a number of speakers showed clear tendencies in their use of the discourse marker *so*. These tendencies were various: The speakers either showed tendencies regarding the functions in which the discourse markers were used or their positions within a turn. As these tendencies were quite striking, I decided to include them in this paper. It is important to notice that the numbers refer to cases in which a particular function could be ascribed to the use of *so*.

5.4.1 Tendencies regarding functions

Some speakers showed a clear tendency regarding the functions in which they used *so*. The most striking examples will be presented in the following.

One speaker (S1 in LEcon560) used *so* to mark consequence in 16 of 36 cases, so nearly in every second case of using *so* as a discourse marker.

Another speaker (S3 in LEcon417) used *so* mainly to mark a boundary, namely in 10 of 22 cases.

The function of marking explanation was obviously preferred by two speakers. One of them used it in this function in 13 cases out of 28 uses of *so* as a discourse marker in total (S7 in PRcon536). The other speaker used *so* to mark an explanation in 10 of 19 cases, so in more than every second case (S6 in PRcon535).

5.4.2 Tendencies regarding positions

Some speakers showed clear tendencies regarding the positions in which they used the discourse marker *so*.

Only one speaker seemed to prefer using *so* turn-initially. This speaker used it in turn-initial position in 13 of 16 cases (S8 in LEcon562).

Many more speakers mainly used *so* in a medial position of the turn. One speaker used it in this position in 14 of 22 cases (S3 in EDcon521), others used it in a medial position in 12 of 16 cases (S7 in POcon549), 10 of 16 cases (S1 in POcon543), 14 of 17 cases (S1 in LEcon565), 17 of 22 cases (S3 in LEcon417), 21 of 36 cases (S1 in LEcon560), 22 of 40 cases (S2 in LEcon560), 11 of 19 cases (S6 in PRcon535), 15 of 27 cases (S8 in PRcon535), in 11 of 16 cases (S4 in LEcon548) and in 11 of 20 cases (S3 in LEcon420).

6 Conclusion

This thesis aimed at clarifying how ELF speakers use the discourse marker *so*, focusing on the functions of *so*. Therefore, this thesis was centred on a thorough analysis of the functions of *so* and the context in which *so* is used in certain functions. In order for the reader to be able to evaluate the results of my analysis, other studies on discourse markers and descriptions of them, respectively, were presented in advance. As this thesis focused on the use of the discourse marker *so* by ELF speakers, also ELF-relevant background knowledge was provided. The data used for my analysis and methodological issues as well as descriptions of *so* in specific were discussed as well. The main part of this thesis, which was concerned with the analysis of the functions of *so* in my data, followed the chapters on discourse markers, ELF and the particular data for my analysis.

In order to be able to draw a comparison between descriptions of discourse markers in the literature and the results of my analysis, I gave an overview of the literature concerning discourse markers in the second chapter, focusing on definitions, terminology, characteristics and functions. In the course of the discussion of the definitions in the literature I argued that the most important aspect of discourse markers is their support in interpreting the intention of the speaker or hearer. I also presented my working definition of discourse markers. An overview of the terms used to describe what I call *discourse markers* provided insight into the disagreement regarding how to call these elements. Furthermore, my own view on this discussion was provided. Also the reasons for my choice of the term *discourse marker* were presented. Moreover, the characteristics which are defining criteria and those which are optional criteria were contrasted. The functions of discourse markers named in the literature were presented as well.

In the third chapter ELF was in the focus. Definitions of lingua franca and ELF in particular in the literature were presented as well as my own definition of it. Furthermore, the origin of the term *ELF* was explained and different terms for English in its role around the world were discussed in order to make a clear distinction between *ELF* and other terms. Also general characteristics of ELF were discussed, including influences on ELF and special features of ELF research. Moreover, the likeability of misunderstandings was questioned. Also the reactions

of ELF speakers to misunderstandings or difficulties of comprehension were presented. In this context, aspects of pronunciation in ELF were discussed too: the influence of the various language backgrounds and strategies of ELF speakers. The ELF community and the relation between ENL and ELF were discussed as well. Following this description of the ELF community, two ELF corpora were presented which are essential for further research into ELF.

The fourth chapter focused on the data and methodology of the study. The data used for the analysis was drawn from the VOICE corpus. I first had to decide on a working definition of discourse markers in order to be able to differentiate between discourse marker uses of *so* and non-discourse marker uses of it. Supported by the VOICE POS Online 2.0 version (VOICE. 2013. *The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English*. (version POS Online 2.0). (22 January 2013)), in which the discourse marker uses of *so* are tagged, I analysed each use of *so* checking whether it is used as a discourse marker or not. I used my working definition as a guiding line for this process. In some cases I did not agree with the tagging in the corpus. Having determined which uses were discourse marker uses, I started to analyse the discourse marker functions of *so* which I then classified. The first challenge I faced in the process outlined above was the distinction between discourse marker uses and non-discourse marker uses. Although I determined a clear guideline for this distinction, I was still confronted with some cases in which I was dubious about the intention of the speaker and, thus, could only try to decide on the function considering the context of the use of *so*. Therefore, the analysis of the surrounding context was necessary for a distinction as unambiguous as possible. Also speaker information was in some cases helpful in this process. For instance, in case the speaker was a native speaker of German, it was easier for me to decide if *so* was part of a German phrase, which the speaker literally translated, containing *so*, or if *so* was used as a discourse marker.

In the fifth chapter then the functions found in the data used for the analysis were presented. This detailed description of the functions in my data was preceded by a presentation of descriptions of *so* in the literature: in a dictionary, a grammar book but also in literature on *so* as a discourse marker in particular. These descriptions of *so* were provided in order to make differences and similarities in comparison to

the functions I found in the data used for my analysis obvious. Following this, I gave an overview of the eleven functions I found. I discussed there, too, the multifunctionality of *so* and consequences which are associated with it but did not arise from it. Furthermore, the relevance of the position of *so* within a turn for identifying the function in which it was used was explained. In the second part of the chapter, which is also the main part of it, the individual functions were described in detail. Extracts of the corpus were presented in order to illustrate the functions. These were provided to demonstrate different forms one function can take.

So was used to mark a consequence, to mark a conclusion, to mark implied result, to mark a change of topic, to mark a concluding statement, to mark the main idea, to mark an explanation, to mark a question, to mark an opinion, to mark a directive and to mark a boundary.

The speakers used *so* to mark a consequence frequently in combination with *because* to make obvious which proposition the consequence marked with *so* relates to. An utterance marked with *so* to mark a consequence was either followed or preceded by an utterance marked with *because*. The utterance marked with *because* was in some cases only added after a communication partner had expressed doubt. *So* was also used to mark a consequence of an action in the future. *So* was used to mark a consequence in the combination *and so* in some cases. *So* was also used to mark a consequence which had already been mentioned before but not marked with *so*. The motivation for such a use of *so* seemed to be the reaction of the communication partners or the missing reaction. The speakers also used *so* to mark a consequence which had been expressed in other words before.

So was used to mark a conclusion drawn from a statement of a communication partner. It was in some cases used in this function when trying to clarify what a communication partner had intended to say. *So* was in some cases used in combination with *aha* which made it even more obvious that *so* was used to mark a conclusion. In some cases *so* was used to mark a conclusion which was then repeated without being marked with *so*.

Boundaries marked with *so* were either boundaries between turns of different speaker or within turns. In this function *so* was used in combination with *okay* by some speakers. The speakers used *so* to mark a change of topic in order to return to a previous topic or to start talking about a new topic. In some cases the communication partners still kept talking about the same topic, however. Some speakers used *so* to mark a concluding statement but then still continued talking about the same topic. In this function *so* was in some cases followed by *that's was* or *that's*. *So* was used to mark the main idea which was in some cases a reformulation of a previous utterance. Explanations marked with *so* had the form of an example in some cases.

The detailed analysis of the functions was followed by a brief discussion of co-occurrences including *so*. The last part of the chapter provided examples of individual tendencies regarding the use of *so* as a discourse marker. Speakers who used *so* mainly in one function or in one position were presented.

The main conclusion which can be drawn from my analysis is that the discourse markers were successfully used although the speakers were in most cases not native speakers of English which was pointed out as a prerequisite for being a successful user of discourse markers by Andersen (2001: 39). The fact that the speakers in VOICE already had some experience with communicating in an ELF setting (VOICE-Homepage 2013a) was probably influential on the successful use of discourse markers.

In most cases my analysis of ELF data confirmed statements and findings in the literature (mostly on native speaker use of discourse markers) concerning discourse markers in general and *so* as a discourse marker in particular. Such aspects will be presented in the following. For instance, *so* was found to be multifunctional as it was used in eleven different functions. The importance of the context of any use of *so* is another aspect which confirmed a statement in the literature. Also *so* was only used in one or two specific positions within a turn in some functions whereas *so* was more flexible concerning its position when being used to fulfil other functions. *So* was used to mark a consequence, to mark a conclusion, to mark implied result, to mark a boundary, to mark a change of topic, to close topics, to mark the main idea, to mark a question, to mark an opinion and to mark a directive. *So* was used to mark a boundary between distinct kinds of

discourse. In this function *so* was frequently preceded by *okay*. A boundary marked was, for instance, a boundary between turns. To be more precise, *so* was used to indicate the speaker's willingness to give up his/her turn. *So* was used in structures together with *because* in order to make clear which information was seen as the main idea by the speaker and which was seen as background information or they were used together to make obvious that *so* marks a consequence and which proposition the consequence relates to. In its function to mark a question *so* also marked a causal relation.

Only one statement in the literature concerning *so* in particular which was not confirmed in the ELF data I used for my analysis. Conclusions marked with *so* were not followed by tag questions.

Comparing the number of aspects (concerning the use of discourse markers and *so* in particular) mentioned in the literature which were also found in the data I used for my analysis to the number of aspects which were mentioned in the literature but not found in my data, it becomes obvious that the use of *so* in the ELF data I analysed is mostly in conformity with descriptions of *so* or discourse markers in general in the literature.

In the course of studying the literature on ELF, discourse markers and *so* in particular as well as in the course of my analysis, I found many interesting questions concerning discourse markers in ELF unanswered. Maybe these questions will be answered in future research. I will present a few ideas concerning future research in this field which are related to these unanswered questions in the following. In general, a very interesting aspect which could be analysed in future research is the use of discourse markers in written ELF data. Furthermore, co-occurrences including the discourse marker *so* in ELF with regard to the functions *so* fulfils could be studied in detail. Also individual tendencies of ELF speakers regarding the use of discourse markers would be an interesting subject for a detailed analysis. Moreover, the interaction of the speakers' use of discourse markers could be analysed in the future. Other possible subjects of future research are differences regarding the use of discourse markers between conversations in which native speakers are present and conversations in which no native speaker is present, a comparison of the use of *so* and the use of other discourse markers in ELF and the use of discourse markers in internet forums.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Abstract

The objective of this diploma thesis is to contribute to the research in the area of English as a lingua franca. A detailed analysis of the use of the discourse marker *so* is an attempt to do so.

Descriptions of discourse markers in the English language as well as descriptions of English as a lingua franca are presented in the theoretical part of this paper. Also my respective definitions of discourse markers and English as a lingua franca are explained. Moreover, it is pointed out which characteristics of discourse markers are defining according to my definition of discourse markers. The purpose of this overview of the descriptions of discourse markers and English as a lingua franca is to make obvious differences and similarities between the descriptions in the literature and the results of the present study.

In the empirical part of the study the functions are analysed in detail. The data used for the analysis is drawn from the “Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English” (VOICE). The description of the use of *so* in the different functions in 36 conversations, which were analysed, is illustrated with examples from the corpus. In addition to a detailed analysis of the particular functions, also the context in which *so* is used in the respective function is explained: for instance pauses before or after *so* or the reactions of the communication partners to the use of *so* in a specific function are analysed. Furthermore, examples of *so* in a double function are discussed as well as co-occurrences of *okay* and *so*, and *because* and *so*, respectively. The empirical part is completed with an analysis of obvious tendencies of individual speakers regarding the use of *so* in specific functions or positions. In the conclusion the aims of the present paper are explained once more and the content of the particular chapters is summarised. Moreover, the results of the analysis are named and ideas for future research in the area of discourse markers and discourse markers in English as a lingua franca are presented.

8.2 German abstract

Ziel dieser Diplomarbeit ist es, einen Beitrag zur Forschung im Bereich von Englisch als Lingua Franca zu leisten. Dies wird anhand einer genauen Analyse der Verwendung des Diskursmarkers so versucht.

Im theoretischen Teil dieser Arbeit werden Beschreibungen der Diskursmarker in der englischen Sprache sowie Beschreibungen von Englisch als Lingua Franca in der Literatur vorgestellt. Dabei werden auch meine jeweiligen Definitionen von Diskursmarkern und Englisch als Lingua Franca erklärt. Außerdem wird erläutert welche der Charakteristika von Diskursmarkern definierend sind entsprechend meiner Definition von Diskursmarkern. Der Überblick über die Beschreibungen von Diskursmarkern und Englisch als Lingua Franca soll es ermöglichen Unterschiede bzw. Ähnlichkeiten zwischen den Beschreibungen in der Literatur und den Ergebnissen der vorliegenden Studie sichtbar zu machen.

Im empirischen Teil der Studie werden die Funktionen genau analysiert. Die Daten für diese Analyse stammen aus dem „Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English“ (VOICE). Die Beschreibung der Verwendung von so in unterschiedlichen Funktionen in den 36 Gesprächen, die analysiert wurden, wird durch Beispiele aus dem Korpus veranschaulicht. Neben einer genauen Analyse der einzelnen Funktionen wird auch der Kontext, in dem so in der jeweiligen Funktion verwendet wurde, erläutert: zum Beispiel werden Pausen vor oder nach so oder die Reaktionen der Kommunikationspartner auf die Verwendung von so in einer bestimmten Funktion analysiert. Weiters werden Beispiele von so in einer Doppelfunktion diskutiert sowie das gemeinsame Auftreten von *okay* und *so* bzw. *because* und *so*. Der empirische Teil wird abgeschlossen mit einer Analyse von offensichtlichen Tendenzen einzelner Sprecher hinsichtlich der Verwendung von so in bestimmten Funktionen bzw. bestimmten Positionen. In der Zusammenfassung werden noch einmal die Ziele der vorliegenden Arbeit erläutert sowie der Inhalt der einzelnen Kapitel zusammengefasst. Außerdem werden die Ergebnisse der Analyse angeführt und Ideen für die zukünftige Forschung im Bereich Diskursmarker bzw. Diskursmarker in Englisch als Lingua Franca präsentiert.

8.3 Curriculum vitae

Personal data

Name:	Riccarda Reiter
E-mail:	riccarda.reiter@gmx.net
Date of birth:	30.06.1989
Place of birth:	Linz
Nationality:	Austrian

Education

1995-1999	Elementary school in Linz (Upper Austria)
1999-2007	Secondary school in Linz (Upper Austria)
Since 2007	Teacher education of English and Psychology and Philosophy at the University of Vienna
10/2010-01/2011	Erasmus in Scotland (Aberdeen)

Working experience

Since 08/2012	Private lessons at Schülerhilfe (Linz, Upper Austria)
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Languages

Mother tongue:	German
Other languages:	English, French, Latin, Italian