

Do They Tell Stories Differently?: Discourse Marker Use by Chinese Native Speakers and Nonnative Speakers

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Based on Schiffrin's definition of discourse markers and her discourse model, this study investigates and compares discourse marker use in elicited narratives by Chinese native speakers and learners of Chinese as a foreign language. The quantitative analysis demonstrates that native speakers produce discourse markers more frequently than learners. The results also show that extra-curricular exposure to the target language environment and interactions with native speakers promote the use of appropriate discourse markers. A qualitative analysis was conducted to investigate the meanings and functions of the most frequently used markers by both groups. Pedagogical implications for Chinese as a second/foreign language and L2 instruction in general are discussed, including the integration of the functions and meanings of discourse markers into L2 instruction.

Achieving speech fluency and coherence in a target language is an important yet difficult task for second/foreign language (L2) learners. Studies have shown that discourse marker (DM) use is a significant feature of oral discourse and colloquial speech (Brinton, 1996; Schiffrin, 1987, 2001) as well as an integral part of sociolinguistic and stylistic variation (Andersen, Brizuela, DuPuy, & Gonnerman, 1995, 1999; Stubbe & Holmes, 1995). Consequentially, for second language learners, mastery of appropriate discourse marker use is an important and integral aspect of sociolinguistic and communicative competence. This paper presents the results of a study on the differences of discourse marker use by Chinese¹ native speakers and learners of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL). The paper outlines, compares, and contrasts the different meanings and functions of the DMs used by these two groups of speakers while exploring the pedagogical dimensions of discourse marker use and sociolinguistic competence.

In the following sections, I first provide a definition of discourse markers while sketching the theoretical framework that forms the basis of my analysis. Then, I review and situate the present study in relation to the relevant literature on DM use in oral narratives as well as in Chinese. Next, I present a quantitative analysis of DM use by Chinese native speakers and CFL learners. The following qualitative analysis presents the meanings and functions of the most frequently used DMs in native speaker and learner speech. I conclude by summarizing the major findings of the present study, relating them to previous work, and discussing the implications of this research for CFL and L2 classroom teaching.

Discourse Markers and Theoretical Framework

One of the most influential and systematic studies on DM use is by Schiffrin (1987). She defines DMs as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" (p. 31).

Schiffrin further offers a tentative guideline of the conditions that allow an expression to be used as a discourse marker. For expressions to function as DMs, they must: 1) be syntactically detachable; 2) commonly used in initial position of an utterance; 3) have a range of prosodic contours; and 4) operate at multiple levels and planes of discourse. Common English discourse markers include *well, like, I mean, so*, among others.

Based on her analysis of English DMs in unstructured interviews, Schiffrin (1987) proposes a model of discourse coherence consisting of five separate planes of analysis. *Ideational Structure* reflects different semantic relationships among ideas (or propositions) within the discourse, including cohesive, topic, and functional relations. *Exchange Structure* reflects the dynamics of conversational interchange and indicates the sequence of conversational roles and how turn changes interrelate. *Action Structure* indicates how different speakers' speech acts are sequenced and determined, reflecting participant identity, social factors, and actions. *Participation Framework* indicates the different ways in which speakers relate to each other, as well as how they relate to the discourse. *Information State* reflects the ongoing organization and management of participants' knowledge and meta-knowledge, as well as their interactional relationship.

Schiffrin also differentiates DMs in terms of planes of use: primary planes and secondary planes. She argues that *all* markers "have uses in more than one component of discourse (either separately or simultaneously)" (p. 316). She further claims that the linguistic properties and semantic meanings of the markers contribute to the overall communicative effect. She proposes that DMs have core meanings that "do not fluctuate from use to use; rather, what changes is the discourse slot in which they appear" (p. 318). Moreover, in regards to DM meaning and use, Schiffrin (1987) suggests that "if an expression used as a marker does have meaning, its primary use in discourse will be in the organization of referential meanings at a textual level—and that if a marker does not have meaning, its primary use will be elsewhere...as an expression loses its semantic meaning, it is freer to function in non-ideational realms of discourse" (p. 319).

Based on a distributional and interpretive analysis of specific DMs, Schiffrin (1987) additionally claims that markers, because of their indexical properties, are important indicators of discourse coherence. She argues that discourse markers "provide contextual coordinates for utterances: they index an utterance to the local contexts in which utterances are produced and in which they are to be interpreted" (p. 326). The local contexts include the planes of discourse, interlocutors, and prior and/or upcoming discourse. As contextual coordinates, DMs contribute to coherence. She argues that "since coherence is the result of integration among different components of talk, any device which simultaneously locates an utterance within several emerging contexts of discourse automatically has an integrative function" (p. 330). In essence, DMs serve an integrative function in discourse by indexing an utterance to local contexts and thus contributing to discourse coherence.

Other researchers refer to discourse markers as pragmatic markers (Andersen, 2001; Fraser, 1990; Park, 2003) or discourse particles (Hansen, 1998; Schourup, 1985; Vanderkooi, 2000), suggesting both the range of linguistic approaches adopted and the multiplicity of functions which DMs are found to perform (Jucker & Ziv, 1998). In this paper, I adopt the Schiffrin's (1987, 2001) definition of discourse marker because I employ her model as the theoretical framework.

Literature Review

Discourse Markers in Oral Narratives

Some studies have shown that discourse markers play different functions in narratives compared to conversations. Norrick (2001), for example, argues that DMs have special organizational functions in oral narratives. These arise because of the unique structural and sequential conventions of oral narratives which are quite different from the turn-by-turn exchange in spoken conversation. Norrick demonstrates that although *well* and *but* function differently in regular conversations, they have similar function in narrative context. In natural conversations, *well* functions as a hesitation device and *but* indicates contrast or cancels some feature of the previous discourse. In oral narratives, however, both markers can lose their primary semantic sense and function instead to introduce the expository section or mark the transitions to the following sections of the story.

Koike (1996), through the analysis of personal experience narrations of eight Spanish speakers, contends that when expressions function as DMs in oral narratives, they can take on special functions and meanings. Investigating the Spanish time adverbial *ya* (already; now; soon; at times), Koike found that in narrative discourse *ya* can function as a discourse marker by highlighting different elements in a sentence and conveying emotional emphasis. In addition to indicating temporal and aspectual information, the multifunctionality of *ya* makes it a useful device for narrators by enabling them to convey an emotional element in storytelling as well as organize narrative content. Koike further claims that the multifunctional ability of the adverbial marker assists the listener in processing information, which in turn, contributes to the overall success of the oral narrative.

Adopting a theory based on framing and verse/stanza analysis (Gee, 1985, 1989; Hymes, 1981, 1982), Minami (1998) investigated Japanese speakers' use of politeness markers (e.g., formal/informal verb-ending forms) and psychological complements (e.g., *omou* (think), *ki ga suru* (feel)) in narrative discourse. Verses/stanzas are defined as thematic groups of lines or idea units, the shift of which usually involve a thematic change such as character, event, location, or time. Minami demonstrates that politeness markers and psychological complements have special functions in Japanese narratives. The use of formal and informal verb-ending forms indicates the perspective (internal or external) that the narrator cognitively takes while narrating. Formal verb styles indicate the external positioning of the narrator in relation to the event being told; informal styles suggest an internal perspective that reduces the distance between narrator and event. Psychological complements, on the other hand, index politeness by softening the illocutionary force of the message or speech act.

The aforementioned studies provide ample evidence of how well-developed narrative study is in the broader realm of discourse analysis. Also, a great variety of narrative texts have been examined. These include oral narratives such as conversational narratives (Koike, 1996; Labov, 1972; Norrick, 2001), retold stories (Norrick, 1998), and memory recall stories or elicited narratives (Chafe, 1980; Stromqvist & Verhoeven, 2004). Differing types of narratives result in differing types of DM use. Moreover, since it has been found that some DMs have particular functions in different types of contexts (Koike, 1996; Minami, 1998), any study that compares DM use between two or more groups should place controls so that

the same type of DMs are elicited. One solution to this dilemma can be achieved by eliciting specific narratives. This method has been successfully used by Chafe (1980) and Stromqvist and Verhoeven (2004), though they did not use their elicited narratives to explore group differences in DM use. They used a specially designed silent video, *The Pear Stories* (Chafe, 1980), to collect linguistic data from around the world by asking the participants to retell the story and investigate the differences in language use by different groups of speakers.

Discourse Markers in Chinese

Research in Chinese discourse marker use is rather scarce. Miracle (1989, 1991) was among the first scholars to systematically investigate Chinese discourse markers. He applied Schiffrin's (1987) discourse marker framework to the analysis of DM use in Chinese conversations. His corpus consisted of the following: regular conversations by native Chinese speakers (university students) in a variety of settings in Taipei, Taiwan; recordings of university classroom interactions; and recordings of local television talk shows on current social issues. The DMs examined in his studies include 好 *hǎo* (good; yes), 但是 *dànshì* (however), 可是 *kěshì* (but), 不过 *bùguò* (but; however), and 那(么) *nà(me)* (so; and then). He demonstrates these markers all carry a "core" meaning derived from their syntactic usage. For example, 好 *hǎo* (good; yes) functions as a marker of closure and transition—one which is closely related to its use in resultative verb compounds such as in 我已经买好票了 (*Wǒ yǐjīng mǎihǎo piào le*; I already bought the tickets) indicating successful completion of an action. The semantic notion of contrast was found to be basic to the use of 但是 *dànshì* (however), 可是 *kěshì* (but), and 不过 *bùguò* (but; however) as DMs. The marker 那(么) *Nà(me)* (so; and then) maintains a core function of marking continuation, which is also basic to the use of 那(么) *nà(me)* as a sentence connective.

Adopting Halliday and Hasan's (1976) tripartite model consisting of ideational, textual, and interactional levels, Wang and Tsai (2005) examined 好 *hǎo* (good; yes) in natural Chinese conversations as well as in radio interviews and call-ins. They demonstrate that on the ideational level, 好 *hǎo* can function as an adjective such as 这本书很好 (*Zhè běn shū hěnhǎo*; This book is very good) or a degree adverb as in 我好冷哦 (*Wǒ hǎolěng ou*; I am very cold). On the textual level, 好 *hǎo* marks the closure of the previous discourse and indicates the transition to the following topics/activities. On the interactional level, 好 *hǎo* conveys positive evaluation or agreement/acceptance with the preceding move made by another interlocutor and at the same time indicates that the speaker is ready for a new exchange or the next stage of discourse.

The studies by Miracle (1989, 1991) and Wang and Tsai (2005) were carried out in Taiwan. The Chinese spoken by the people of Taiwan bears different syntactic and lexical-semantic features from that spoken by Mainland Chinese, the focus of the present study.

Discourse Markers by Non-native Speakers

As previously mentioned, studies on non-native speaker discourse marker use are rare. Even rarer, are those on Chinese language acquisition. Hays (1992), employing Schiffrin's

(1987) discourse model, examined the use of DMs in English interviews by a group of Japanese native speakers. The results of the study showed that most speakers demonstrated ability to use *and*, *but*, and *so*, which Hays attributes to the crucial nature of these markers in developing ideas as well as the fact that they are usually explicitly taught. Hays also found that these learners very often omit discourse markers in places where English native speakers normally use them. It was also found that discourse markers on ideational plane are generally acquired before markers on other planes of discourse. Finally, Hays suggests L2 learners might rely on native language markers as an interlanguage strategy to help in establishing coherence in their L2 spoken discourse.

Lee's (2004) quantitative study examined the acquisition of English DMs by Korean immigrants. The variables he looked at were gender and immigrant generation. The findings showed that women do not use DMs more often than men. As to the effect of immigration generation, it was found that 1.5-generation speakers use discourse markers the most, suggesting acquired yet overgeneralized discourse marker use. Lee attributes this to the intense pressure of linguistic and cultural assimilation. Importantly, it was also found that *all* of the speakers showed limited range of DM preferences. Lee further claims that L2 learners were clearly shown to be aware of using DMs in their speech and were able to acquire their patterns of use.

Another interesting study by Sankoff and colleagues (1997) examined discourse markers used by Anglophone speakers of Montreal French in both their L1 (English) and L2 (French). They found that these speakers used DMs in their native language about twice as frequently as in their second language. They also found a degree of individual DM variability such that different speakers maintained different marker preferences. Finally, the frequency of discourse marker use was found to correlate with speakers' knowledge of French grammar and more native-like control of DM use in L2 indicating heightened success in second language learning.

Summary of the Literature Review and Justification for the Current Study

In summary, the role of DMs in natural conversations has attracted considerable attention from linguists working with English discourse (Fraser, 1990; Schiffrin, 1987, 2001; Schourup, 1985). The field is well established and has produced a large body of work that has shown that DMs are a systematic and important element of fluent, meaningful, and coherent speech. Considering its importance however, there have been few studies on DMs in Chinese (Chen & Weiyun, 2001; Miracle, 1989, 1991; Wang & Tsai, 2005), and even fewer in Chinese oral narrative contexts. Moreover, most DM studies have focused on native speaker usage, and only a limited number of studies have examined discourse marker use by nonnative speakers. Since DM use is generally agreed to be a necessary feature of oral discourse and important for colloquial speech (Brinton, 1996; Sankoff et al., 1997; Schiffrin, 1987, 2001), the ability to use and appropriately apply DMs is undoubtedly an important aspect of sociolinguistic and intercultural communicative competence. As Svartvik (1980) stated,

If a foreign language learner says five sheeps or he goed, he can be corrected by practically every native speaker. If, on the other hand, he omits a well, the likely reaction will be that he is dogmatic, impolite, boring, awkward to talk to etc., but a native speaker cannot pinpoint an “error.” (p. 171)

If L2 speakers want to sound like native speakers and become more assimilated into L2 culture, they need to acquire how “things are said” and be able to use the “conventional expressions” such as DMs (de Klerk, 2005). This type of competence is especially critical in the upper-levels of language proficiency. However, discourse marker use is usually not included in L2 formal classroom instruction (Hellerman & Andrea, 2007). Consequently, learners are expected to acquire DMs through real-life contacts with native speakers and those who would like to be acculturated to L2 culture are expected to use DMs more. The present study examines the differences of DM use by Chinese native speakers and CFL learners in narrative contexts, which will provide some insights for the acquisition of communicative competence and CFL learning/instruction. The research questions explored are the following:

- 1) What DMs are used by Chinese native speakers and CFL learners in elicited narratives?
- 2) What are the differences of DM use between Chinese native speakers and CFL learners in elicited narratives?
- 3) What are the meanings and functions of the most frequently used DMs by Chinese native speakers and CFL learners?

Method

The data used in this study comes from two sources. One is data collected from a group of nine advanced-level CFL learners (from third- and fourth-year Chinese classes) at a university in the U.S. southwest. Three of the participants were Chinese heritage learners and six were American students. Seven out of nine of them had previously studied or traveled in China (from five days to 21 months). Only two of participants, Topher² and Sophie, had never been to China. Since the focus of the study is to look at the use of discourse markers in narratives, I adopted Chafe’s video, *The Pear Stories* (Chafe, 1980), as the elicitation device. *The Pear Stories* is a six-minute long story video designed by Chafe and his colleagues with only images and no language tracks. They used the video to collect linguistic samples around the world in order to examine the differences in language use. The learners in this study were shown the video and asked to retell the story. The second set of data was similarly collected from a group of nine native Chinese speaking college students at a Chinese university in mainland China. Thus a balance was struck between the groups in terms of age and education level. The procedures of the study were approved by IRB for human subject protection and all the participants were recruited on a voluntary basis. All of the narratives were audio taped and then transcribed in standard *Hanyu Pinyin* orthography and Chinese characters by the author.

Table 1: Participant Information

	NS/NNS	Age	Gender	Year in U.S./CHS Level	Experience in China	Heritage Learner
Xin	NS	18	Female	Freshman		
Nan	NS	18	Female	Freshman		
Emma	NS	18	Female	Freshman		
Wujing	NS	19	Male	Freshman		
Qiao	NS	19	Male	Freshman		
Slavy	NS	18	Male	Freshman		
RD	NS	20	Male	Freshman		
Liu	NS	18	Male	Freshman		
Zhao	NS	19	Male	Freshman		
Topher	NNS	21	Male	3 rd year	None	No
Amy	NNS	20	Female	3 rd year	10 months	Yes
Cheryl	NNS	21	Female	3 rd year	5 days	Yes
Sophie	NNS	21	Female	3 rd year	None	No
Wen	NNS	20	Female	3 rd year	3 years	No
Marie	NNS	22	Female	4 th year	6 months	No
Chen	NNS	21	Female	4 th year	2 months	Yes
Lee	NNS	22	Female	4 th year	21 months	No
Renee	NNS	23	Female	4 th year	2 months	No

Note: NS = native speaker; NNS = non-native speaker

Quantitative Analysis and Results

In order to investigate which discourse markers are used by the two groups of speakers, all of the DMs used in the narratives were identified according to Schiffrin's (1987) DM criteria: syntactic detachability, common utterance-initial position, various prosodic contours, and multi-level discourse function. Excluding pause fillers such as "uh" or "um," a total of

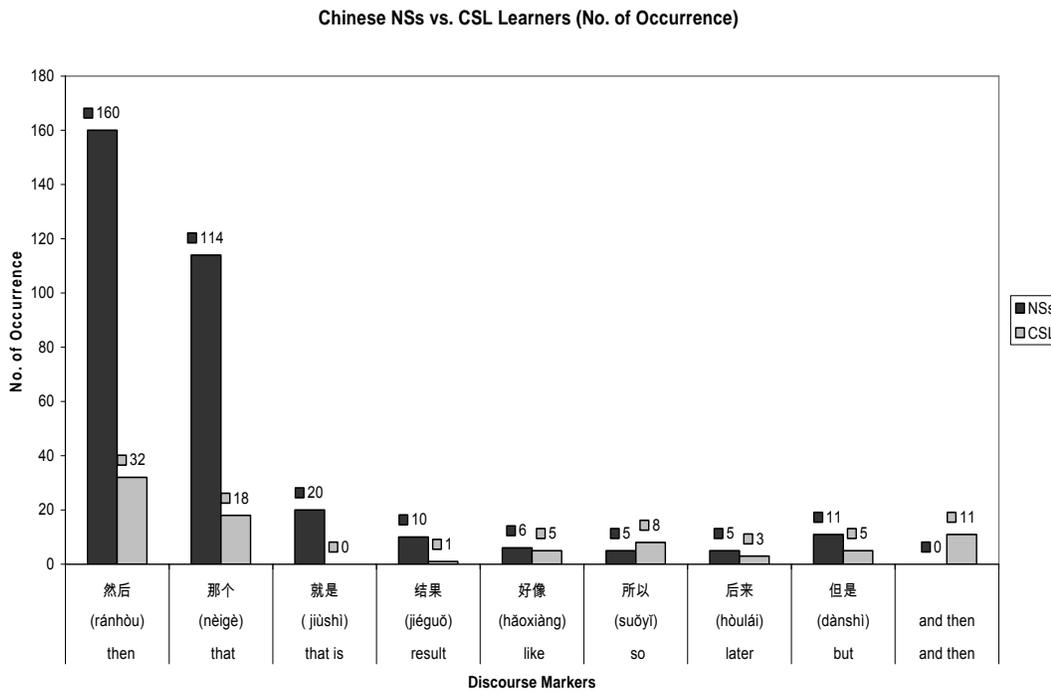


Figure 1: DM use by Chinese Native Speakers and CFL learners (No. of occurrence)

eight different DMs were used by the native speakers: 然后 *ránhòu* (then), 那个 *nèigè* (that), 就是 *jiùshì* (that is), 结果 *jiéguǒ* (result), 好像 *hǎoxiàng* (like), 所以 *suǒyǐ* (so), and 但是 *dànshì* (but). Eight partially differing DMs were used by the Chinese learners: 然后 *ránhòu* (then), 那个 *nèigè* (that), 结果 *jiéguǒ* (result), 好像 *hǎoxiàng* (like), 所以 *suǒyǐ* (so), 后来 *hòulái* (then; later), 但是 *dànshì* (but), and the English “and then.” Quantitative analysis of the discourse markers showed that native speakers used them much more frequently than the CFL learners. Not surprisingly, the nine native speakers produced longer narratives with nearly twice as many words as the learners (6676 vs. 3350). Native speakers produced four times as many DMs as the learners (331 vs. 83) and native speakers used DMs twice as frequently as the learners (4.96% vs. 2.48%)³.

Choice in discourse markers also varied by group. Preliminary analysis (Figure 1) shows that the most frequently used DMs by native speakers are 然后 *ránhòu* (then) (160 times) and 那个 *nèigè* (that) (114 times). For learners, the two most frequent DMs are also 然后 *ránhòu* (then) (32 times) and 那个 *nèigè* (that) (18 times). T-test result ($p < .05$, $t = 2.67$, $df = 7.42$) indicated that the use of 然后 *ránhòu* (then) is significantly different between the two groups,

Table 2: DM use by Individual Speakers

Name	然后 <i>ránhòu</i> then	那个 <i>nèigè</i> that	就是 <i>jiùshì</i> that is	所以 <i>suǒyǐ</i> So	结果 <i>jiéguǒ</i> Result	好像 <i>hǎoxiàng</i> like	后来 <i>hòulái</i> later	但是 <i>dànshì</i> but	and then	Total
<u>NSSs</u>										
Xin	28	25	1	1			1			56
Nan	4	4								8
Emma	23	10	1					2		36
Wujing	1	8	3	2				3		17
Qiao	10	6	5	1	9		1			32
Slavy		11	8				2	1		22
RD	10	12		1		3	1	3		30
Liu	35	27				2				64
Zhao	49	11	2		1	1		2		17
<u>NNSs</u>										
Topher										0
Sophie	1									1
Cheryl	2					1		1		4
Renee	6									6
Wen	2	2				1	1	1		7
Chen	4			3						7
Lee	3			2				2		7
Marie	10			1						11
Amy	4	16		2	1	3	2	1	11	40

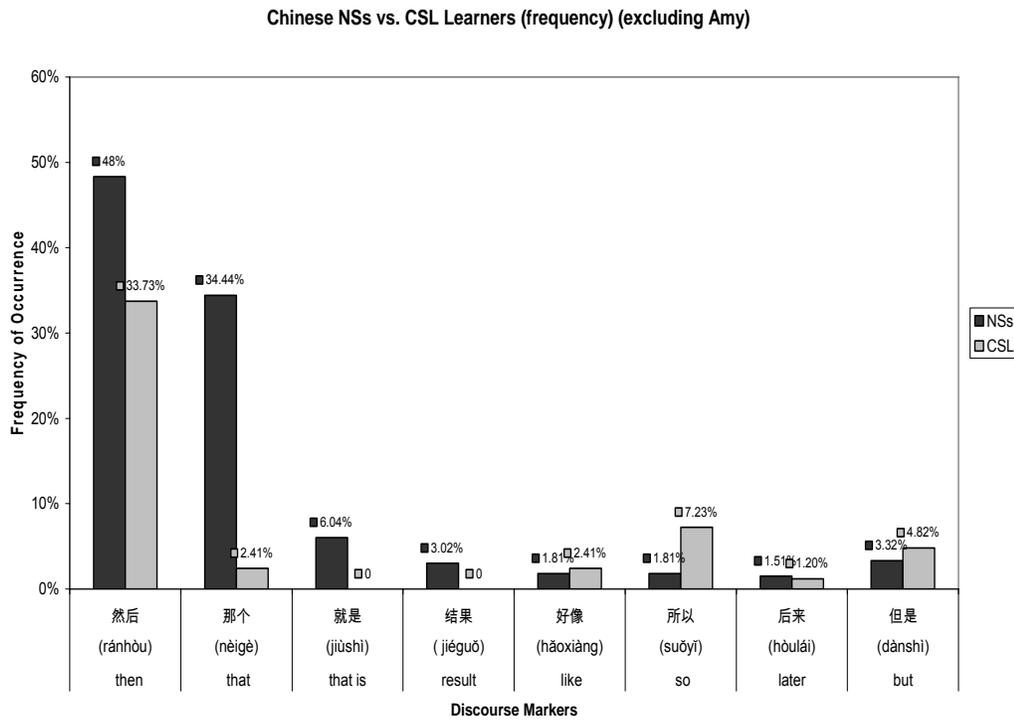


Figure 2: DM use by Chinese Native Speakers and CFL learners (Excluding Amy) (Frequency)

with native speakers using it more than CFL learners. Although the use of 那个 *nèigè* (that) by the two groups is not significantly different ($p > .05$, $t = 4.89$, $df = 1.31$), the distribution result (Table 2) showed that native speakers use them more often than learners and only two learners used 那个 *nèigè* (that) as a discourse marker. Learners used 结果 *jiéguǒ* (result) just once, while native speakers used it ten times. Interestingly, the English discourse marker “*and then*” occurred in learners’ productions 11 times. Mirroring the findings of Lee (2004) and Sankoff et al. (1997), further analysis of individual DM use (Table 2) found that each speaker maintained their own preference for specific markers.

Two extremes of DM use were also noted among the learners. One learner, Amy, accounted for almost 50% (40 out of 83) of all the learner DMs. Of the 18 occurrences of 那个 *nèigè* (that), Amy produced 16 of them; she also produced three of the five 好像 *hǎoxiàng* (like). Moreover, all 11 occurrences of “*and then*” were produced by this one person. On the other extreme we find Topher, who did not use a single discourse marker across his entire narrative. If we exclude Amy and reexamine the distribution (Figure 2), we

find the most frequently used DMs by learners are 然后 *ránhòu* (then) (33.73%) and 所以 *suǒyǐ* (so) (7.23%). This partially differs from native speakers, who used 然后 *ránhòu* (then) (48%) and 那个 *nèigè* (that) (34.44%) most frequently.

Functions and Meanings of Discourse Markers

Schiffrin's (1987) discourse model based on the five planes of analysis—Exchange Structure, Action Structure, Ideational Structure, Participation Framework, and Information State—is adopted in analyzing the meanings and functions of the more frequent discourse markers used by native speakers (然后 *ránhòu* and 那个 *nèigè*) and learners (然后 *ránhòu* and 所以 *suǒyǐ*). This is followed by an analysis of the interesting case of the English discourse marker *and then*.

Chinese Native Speakers

然后 *ránhòu* (*then*). The frequent use of 然后 *ránhòu* by native speakers is due to the sequentiality of narrative discourse—the sequence of events and the temporal decisions made by the narrator. Linguistically, the core meaning of 然后 *ránhòu* is “then” and it primarily functions on an ideational level by indicating temporally cohesive relationships among propositions within the discourse. In essence, it means “what happens next,” as the following example illustrates.

Example 1: Xin narrates how the little boy in the video accidentally hit a rock in the road and fell off his bicycle, she said:

(他)不小心绊到了一个石头上, 然后车子就倒了。
 (tā) bùxiǎoxīn bàn dào le yīgè shítou shàng, **ránhòu** chēzi jiù dǎo le.
 (He) ran into a rock accidentally, **then** the bicycle fell.

Sometimes, however, the core meaning may fluctuate and 然后 *ránhòu* can mean, in narrative contexts, almost anything involving the concept of “next” or “then”, such as “what I can say next,” “what I want to say next,” “what I can think of next,” “what else,” and “what is shown next in the video.” At other times, however, the core meaning may be lost entirely and the expression becomes semantically bleached. In so doing, 然后 *ránhòu* acquires even more linguistic freedom allowing it to serve in non-ideational realms of discourse. For instance, it can function as a verbal filler and hesitation device, providing the narrator with linguistic planning time. A closer look at the following excerpts illustrates this.

Example 2: When RD started his narration, he inserted his own comments.

最开始的时候出现了一个比较胖的人。戴着草帽。他是在收梨。嗯，收获梨子。
 然后, (停顿), 但是, 我看他, 在收梨子时候不是很认真。

Zuì kāishǐ de shíhòu chūxiàn le yīgè rén. Dài zhe cǎomào tā shì zài shōulí. En, shōuhuò lízi. **Ránhòu**, (pause), dànshì, wǒ kàn tā, zài shōulí shíhòu búshì hěn rènzhēn.

At the very beginning, a pretty fat person appears, with a straw hat. He is collecting pears, um, harvesting pears. **Then**, (pause), but, I think he is not collecting pears in a very careful manner.

Example 3: When Liu was telling what the farmer in the video was doing, he said:

他好像摘梨子，**然后**，嗯，在一个梯子上面进行劳动，
tā hǎoxiàng zhāi lízi, **ránhòu**, en, zài yīgè tīzi shàngmiàn jìnxíng láodòng.
He is like picking pears, **then**, um, working on a ladder.

In Example 2, 然后 *ránhòu* can be interpreted as “what happens next” and the DM, 但是 *dànshì* (but), steers the discourse in another direction, towards the narrator’s personal commentary. 然后 *ránhòu* also functions as a hesitation device by providing the narrator time to plan content and organize the response. In Example 3, 然后 *ránhòu* can be interpreted in two ways. It can mean “what is next” indicating the narrator realizes there is something more he wants to say about the man picking pears. In order to do so, he uses a filled pause “um” to redirect the hearer to further information about the man. It can also be used as a hesitation device. In both of these cases, 然后 *ránhòu* functions simultaneously on several planes of discourse. The primary plane is on the level of Ideational Structure where it directs the hearer to the context of what happens next. The secondary and tertiary planes are Action Structure and Information State because, as the discourse progresses, the narrator changes directions and thus adopts 然后 *ránhòu* as a hesitation device. In this context, 然后 *ránhòu* functions to manage the narrator’s own, as well as the hearer’s, information state in regards to the progression of the narrative—what the hearer expects him to say next, and what he does say next. At the same time, 然后 *ránhòu* marks certain actions, such as hesitation, searching for words, and planning content. In these two examples, 然后 *ránhòu* indexes adjacent utterances only to the speaker in that it is the speaker who controls the direction and orientation of the discourse. The following example illustrates the multiple functions of 然后 *ránhòu*.

Example 4: Zhao describes the scene of the man picking pears.

Z:

他的那个装束很有一点墨西哥人的味道。**然后**戴了一个那个，那种小帽子。这个故事发生在墨西哥吧？

L⁴: 我不知道。

Z:

然后，**然后**，这儿戴了一个小围巾，**然后**，在这儿，在腰部的位置，系了一个，白色的一个，那个，象围裙似的。**然后**，它是用来装梨。

Z: tā de nàigè zhuāngshù hěnyǒu yīdiǎn mòxīgērén de wèidào. **Ránhòu** dài le yīgè nàigè, nàizhǒng xiǎomàozi. Zhègè gùshì fāshēng zài mòxīgē ba?

L: *wǒ bùzhīdào.*

Z: *ránhòu, ránhòu, zhèier dài le yīgè xiǎowéijīn, ránhòu, zài zhèir, zài yāobù de wèizhì, jīle yīgè, báisè de yīgè, nèigè, xiàng wéiqún shìde, ránhòu, tā shì yòng lái zhuānglí.*

Z: His clothes have much of a Mexican flavor. **Then**, (he) wears a, that, that kind of little hat. Did this story happen in Mexico?

L: I don't know.

Z: **then, then**, here he wears a small scarf, **then**, here, around waist, (he) wears a, white, that, like apron, **then**, it is used to hold pears.

In Example 4, when the narrator starts to explain why he thinks the man's clothes look Mexican, the first token of 然后 *ránhòu* functions as an act of clarification. The fourth and fifth occurrences of 然后 *ránhòu* can be interpreted as "and." In this context, they contribute to the cohesive relationship between ideas or propositions which lack a temporally sequential relationship. Thus, in these three contexts, 然后 *ránhòu* functions primarily on an ideational level while maintaining functionality on the actional level by indicating the narrator's act of clarification. However, these markers also function on an informational level by enabling the narrator to manage informational flow between interlocutors. Thus, these three cases of 然后 *ránhòu* function as contextual coordinates by allowing the speaker to clarify and manage propositions. At the same time, they also contribute to discourse coherence by functioning as cohesive devices connecting propositions within the narrative.

Differently, the second and third instances of 然后 *ránhòu* mark conversational exchange and enable the transition back to the topic of the story. In this context, they function primarily on an ideational plane indicating cohesiveness and topic relationships between ideas and propositions. However, as with discourse markers in general, these two instances maintain functionality on several planes simultaneously. They function on planes of "Exchange Structure" and "Participation Frame" by marking speaker change and indexing conversational structure. On the level of Action Structure, they function to signal the narrator's acceptance of the hearer's response. On the level of Information State, the narrator uses the discourse markers to organize narration and manage information between interlocutors. As contextual coordinates, the markers index adjacent utterances to both the hearer and the speaker, as well as to prior and the upcoming discourse. Table 3 summarizes the meanings and functions of 然后 *ránhòu* (then) across the planes of discourse.

那个 *nèigè* (*that*). For the native speakers 那个 *nèigè* was another frequently used discourse marker. Its frequency in the narratives can be explained, at least in part, by the need of speakers to refer to people and things. In modern Chinese, 那个 *nèigè* primarily functions as a demonstrative meaning "that." As the following example illustrates, this primary semantic sense is maintained during its use as a DM.

Table 3: Meanings and Functions of 然后 ránhòu (then)

Primary plane of discourse	
Ideational Structure	Indicating temporal relationship between propositions/ideas
Secondary planes of discourse	
Action Structure	A device for hesitation, word searching, content organization, clarification, and acceptance of the previous discourse.
Information State	Managing the interlocutors' information state regarding what is going to be done next, what is expected next, and what really happens next.
Exchange Structure	Indicating speaker change
Participation Framework	Marking conversational structure

Example 5: RD describes the scene where the man realizes he is missing a basket of pears.

那个摘梨的那个人发现一个筐空了。

Nèigè zhāilí de nèigè rén fāxiàn yīgè kuāng kōng le.

That, that man who is picking pears found that one basket was empty.

It is on the ideational level, that the discourse marker 那个 *nèigè* primarily functions. Here, it contributes to the relationship among ideas through its referential meaning. Anything shown in the video can be referred to as “that” – 那个果子 *nèigè guǒzi* (that pear), 那个小孩 *nèigè xiǎohái* (that boy), and 那个车子 *nèigè chēzi* (that bicycle) among others. In addition, 那个 *nèigè* is also used to emphasize information. However, the core meaning of demonstrative can fluctuate or even be lost, which allows 那个 *nèigè* to function, similar to 然后 *ránhòu*, as a hesitation device.

Example 6: Liu describes the scene in which a man and goat pass by the three baskets of pears.

(他们)从, 那个, 三个筐的, 边上走过去了。

(Tāmen) cóng, nèigè, sāngè kuāng de, biānshàng zǒuguòqù le.

They walked by, **that**, three baskets.

In the above example, 那个 *nèigè* functions primarily on the level of Ideational Structure by maintaining discourse cohesiveness and topic relationships among ideas. Secondly, it functions on the level of Action Structure by signaling and emphasizing the information in the

Table 4: Meanings and Functions of 那个 *nèigè* (that)

Primary plane of discourse	
Ideational Structure	Indicating topic relationship between propositions/ideas through its referential meaning
Secondary planes of discourse	
Action Structure	A device for hesitation, signaling, emphasizing the action
Information State	Helping the narrator for speech organization and information exchange and assisting the hearer for information processing

relevant discourse. On the level of Information State it functions by assisting the hearer process information and by helping the narrator organize discourse and manage information exchange. As a contextual coordinate, 那个 *nèigè* indexes adjacent utterances and enables both the speaker and hearer to organize information. It also indexes the utterances to prior and upcoming discourse by connecting shared information with the new ideas.

Table 4 summarizes the meanings and functions of 那个 *nèigè* (that).

CFL Learners

然后 *ránhòu* (then) and 所以 *suǒyǐ* (so). 然后 *Ránhòu* and 所以 *suǒyǐ* are the most frequently used discourse markers by learners of Chinese.

The meanings and functions of 然后 *ránhòu* as used by the learners are similar to those of native speakers. The sole exception to this being that it is rarely used as a hesitation device. For this purpose, Chinese learners often rely on the English markers *uh* and *um* when hesitating and word searching.

The core meaning of 所以 *suǒyǐ* signals a cause-effect relationship between ideas and propositions. However, 所以 *suǒyǐ* can sometimes function similarly to 然后 *ránhòu* by indicating a sequential relationship between phrases. Example 7 illustrates this.

Example 7: Chen explains how the group of three boys returns the hat to the little boy.

C: 他骑车, 可是他忘了他的, hat?

L: 帽子。

C: 帽子。

L: Uhuh.

C: 啊, 所以别的孩子叫, 叫他。“你别忘了你的帽子。”所以他, 啊, 给他他的, 他子。

C: *tā qíchē. Kěshì tā wàng le tā de, hat?*

L: *màozi.*

C: *màozi.*

L: Uhuh.

C: *Uh, suǒyǐ bié de háizi jiào, jiào tā, “nǐ bié wàng le nǐ de màozi.” Suǒyǐ tā, uh, gěi tā tā de, tā de màozi.*

C: He rode a bike. But he forgot his hat?
 L: hat.
 C: hat.
 L: Uhuh.
 C: Um, **so** other kids called him, “Don’t forget your hat.” **So**, he, um, gave him his, his hat.

In this example, the first token of 所以 *suǒyǐ* indicates a causal relationship between utterances. The second occurrence of 所以 *suǒyǐ* is interpreted as *then*, and indicates a temporal relationship between propositions. Primarily functioning on an ideational level, 所以 *suǒyǐ* indicates a cohesive relationship between ideas. On the levels of Exchange Structure and Participation Frame (the first 所以 *suǒyǐ* in Example 7), it functions by signaling turn/speaker change and topic shift. On the informational level, 所以 *suǒyǐ* helps the interlocutors connect prior information with upcoming information. As a contextual coordinate, 所以 *suǒyǐ* indexes adjacent utterances to both the hearer and the speaker, but also to both prior and subsequent discourse. Table 5 is a summary of the meanings and functions of 所以 *suǒyǐ* (so).

And then. As previously mentioned, English discourse markers often crop up in the speech of CFL learners. In particular, we found that Amy, who speaks fluent Chinese, consistently uses the English DM, *and then* in both conversation and narrative. She uses *and then* so frequently in fact, that according to Myers-Scotton’s (1992) definition, this expression qualifies as a loan word rather than a code-switch. Because her parents are from Hong Kong, has traveled there on several occasions to visit relatives. As people from Hong Kong are frequent code switchers (Wright & Kelly-Holmes, 1997), this may be playing a role in Amy’s frequent usage. The meaning and function of *and then* in Amy’s speech are similar to those of 然后 *ránhòu*, previously discussed.

An obvious question that emerges is whether the English DM *and then* is replacing the translation equivalent 然后 *ránhòu*. The answer is no. Amy knows 然后 *ránhòu* and uses it frequently as well.

Example 8: Amy describes the three boys leaving after helping the little boy pick up the pears.

And then, 然后, 他们, 他们, 捡完以后就走了。
And then, ránhòu, tāmen, tāmen, jiǎn wán yǐhòu jiù zǒu le.
And then, then, they left after they picked up (the pears).

This finding suggests that L2 learners might use features of their L1 as a strategy to achieve discourse fluency and coherence. As cited earlier, a similar finding by Hays (1992) showed that Japanese learners of English often rely on Japanese markers in their L2 speech in order to manage conversational flow and improve discourse coherence.

Table 5: Meanings and Functions of 所以 *suǒyǐ* (so)

Primary plane of discourse	
Ideational Structure	Indicating a cause-effect or sequential relationship between propositions/ideas
Secondary planes of discourse	
Exchange Structure	Indicating turn/speaker change
Participation Framework	Marking topic shift
Information State	Helping the interlocutors to connect prior with upcoming information

Discussion

Variation was found in both native speakers' and learners' discourse marker preferences. Frequent use of 然后 *ránhòu* and 那个 *nèigè* by NSs was partially due to the conformation of their core meanings with the nature of narrative structure and organization. Because these expressions can serve multiple discourse functions, they are convenient for native speaker use. Learners' most frequently used discourse markers were 然后 *ránhòu* (then) and 所以 *suǒyǐ* (so). My speculation for the reason is that these two expressions are formally introduced in CFL classes as connectives, functioning respectively as a time adverbial and as an indicator of a phrasal cause-effect relationship. Thus, first of all, these expressions become part of a learners' repertoire, and also, the core meanings of these two markers go well with the sequential nature of narrative context. This notion echoes a study by Hays (1992), who found that English markers explicitly taught in second language classrooms (e.g., *and*, *but*, and *so*) are used more frequently than other markers. Moreover, *then* and *so* can function as discourse markers in English (Schiffrin, 2001), thus facilitating positive transfer to Chinese DM use. On the other hand however, 那个 *nèigè*, one of the two most frequent markers for native speakers, formally functions as a demonstrative in Chinese and is often introduced as such in CFL classes. Seldom is it, or other expressions such as 就是 *jiùshì* (that is), 结果 *jiéguǒ* (result), and 好像 *hǎoxiàng* (like), formally taught as a discourse markers and thus students might be unaware it can be used to mark discourse. Therefore, this bears pedagogical implications for CFL and L2 instruction including explicit instruction in the polyfunctional nature of discourse markers. A good way to do this is to introduce the expressions with authentic examples from native speaker speech. Another technique that is worth trying is to let learners listen to and then analyze native speakers' speech. The purpose of including discourse markers in L2 instruction is to develop learners' awareness of how native speakers use them and then their ability to make informed choices in authentic situations. The study also found that learners sometimes adopt linguistic features in their native language as a strategy to achieve fluency and discourse coherence. In this study, Amy used the English marker *and then* many times in her narration. Similarly, Hays (1992) found that Japanese learners of English very often use Japanese marker *n* to assure information flow. Sankoff et al. (1997) also showed that Anglophone French speakers often adopt English discourse markers in their French speech. These findings suggest that learners actively use both

Table 6: Functions and Meaning of DMs

	Core Meaning	Primary Plane of D.	Secondary Plane of D.	Participation Coordinates	Textual Coordinates
然后(<i>rán hòu</i>) / and then	then	Ideational Structure	Exchange Structure; Participation Framework; Action Structure; Information State	speaker speaker/hearer	prior/ upcoming
那个(<i>nèigè</i>)	that	Ideational Structure	Action Structure; Information State	speaker/hearer	prior/ upcoming
所以(<i>suǒyǐ</i>)	so	Ideational Structure	Exchange Structure; Participation Framework; Information State	speaker/hearer	prior/ upcoming

Notes: D = Discourse

language resources in order to achieve their communicative purposes and establish discourse coherence.

It was also found that there was considerable variability in DM use and frequency at the level of the individual. Specifically, recall the two extreme cases of Amy and Topher. My interpretation of this is based on extracurricular exposure to a native Chinese environments and increased opportunities to interact with native Chinese speakers. Amy though born in the U.S., had traveled to China on numerous occasions. Moreover, in the home environment, she often talks to her mother in Chinese. On the other hand, Topher has never visited a Chinese speaking-country, nor has he interacted with native speakers outside of the classroom. As noted by Sankoff et al. (1997, p. 193), because discourse markers are “not subject to explicit instruction, they are likely to be an accurate indicator of the extent to which a speaker is integrated into the local speech community. That is, only L2 speakers with a high degree of contact with native speakers will master the use of discourse markers.” Other studies (Mougeon, Rehner, & Nadasdi, 2004; Rehner, Mougeon, & Nadasdi, 2003) have also shown that learners who have more extracurricular exposure to the target language—such as experience in the target language environment and contact with native speakers and media—tend to produce significantly more target-like variants than those who have had less exposure. This suggests that extra-curricular exposure to the target language environment and interaction with native speakers are significant factors in the development of sociolinguistic and intercultural communicative competence. It therefore seems reasonable that creating more opportunities for L2 learners to experience the target language environment and interact with native speakers should be a significant component of second language instruction. Study abroad and language partner programs are both good venues to provide ample opportunities

for learners to interact with native speakers and thus develop their communicative competence.

Conclusion

Because discourse markers play such an important role in colloquial speech and sociolinguistic/communicative competence, the acquisition of DMs is an important task facing second language learners. This study examined the similarities and differences between DM use by Chinese native speakers and Chinese language learners. Schifffrin's (1987) framework was found effective to accomplish the task. Results found a large 2:1 difference in discourse marker frequency between native and nonnative groups. Moreover, it was found that the two groups use partially different DMs in their narratives. The functions and meanings of the DMs are summarized in Table 6.

As any other study, this study has limitations. First, only English-speaking learners of Chinese were investigated. As one of the findings in this study indicates, learners' native language might have an effect on their discourse marker use. Therefore, in order to gain more understanding of how learners of Chinese use discourse markers, studies that examine learners with different native languages are needed. Second, only DM use in narratives was examined. Speakers might use discourse markers differently in different situations and contexts. Consequently, future research studies are needed along the line of Chinese discourse marker use by learners with different native language backgrounds in order to see the influence of L1 on discourse marker use in L2 and also in natural conversations to see how discourse markers are used in different speech contexts.

Notes

1. In the current study, Chinese refers to Mandarin Chinese.
2. Student names are pseudonyms chosen by students themselves.
3. Frequency = total number of DMs/total number of words.
4. L is the interviewer who is the author.

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