Learners’ Use of Japanese Interactional Particles in Student-Teacher Conversations

Abstract

This study examines interactional competence of intermediate level Japanese foreign language (JFL) learners by focusing on the use of interactional particles in their conversations with teachers. The data analyzed here consist of two sets of conversations (a total of 5 hours), the first comprised of six conversations between intermediate JFL learners and a Japanese language teacher, and the second consisting of six conversations between Japanese college students (native speakers of Japanese) and teachers. Although some of JFL learners demonstrated a good command of the interactional particle *ne* in making acknowledgment and agreement, none went beyond *ne* by using other interactional particles. In contrast, the Japanese college students productively used the particles *yo(ne)* in extended assessment and confirmation practices. The findings suggest the need to teach intonation and turn-taking patterns of *yo(ne)* to learners of Japanese.

1. Introduction

The present study intends to contribute to a growing body of research on Japanese interactional particles. Japanese interactional particles play a significant role in establishing interpersonal relationships between the speaker and the interlocutor. These particles have been referred to as sentence final particles (*shuujoshi*) or insertion particles (*kantoojoshi*) in Japanese grammar. This paper, however, adopts the relatively new term, “interactional particles” (Morita 2005: 8). Interactional particles (hereafter IP) in naturally occurring discourse appear not only at the sentence or clause final position, but also occur at almost any point in an utterance. Although an IP takes signals a different function depending on its position and its intonation, the IPs are a
speaker’s linguistic resource used to construct interactional opportunities for a relevant next action in the sequence of a conversation. In short, the IPs are linguistic devices used to create a negotiation space and explicitly indicate the conditional relevance of the marked units in conversation (Morita 2005; Tanaka 1999, 2000). Recently, interactional discourse markers have drawn attention in the context of second language pedagogy (Fung and Carter 2007; Yoshimi 2001). Although discourse markers cover a wider range of expressions than interactional particles, both serve an important function in organizing and structuring an on-going conversation.

IPs are indispensable in interpersonal conversational acts in a social context (Cook 1988, 1992; Maynard 1993; McGloin 1990; Yoshimi 1997). For example, *ne*, one of the most frequently used interactional particles, indexes the speaker’s affective stance and establishes common affective ground in a given context. It occurs in a number of speech acts (e.g., displaying and seeking agreement or confirmation, initiating interaction, introducing a new topic, and softening speech). The particle *yo*, on the other hand, indexes the speaker’s affect in a given context, and is employed when the speaker carries out speech acts of requesting, announcing, and warning, among others (Cook 1988, 1992; Yoshimi 1997).

While Japanese-speaking children typically acquire IPs at an early stage of their lives through interaction with their caregivers (Clancy 1987), JFL learners have to go through a much longer process to acquire functional competence with IPs (Ishida forthcoming; Mine 1995; Ohta 1999, 2001a, 2001b; Sawyer 1992; Shibaraha 2002; Yoshimi 1999). There are also individual variations in the acquisition patterns of an IP such as *ne* (Sawyer 1992). The IPs used by JFL learners are limited both in range and frequency (Sawyer 1992; Shibahara 2002), and the inappropriate use of *ne* is influenced by its epistemic stance (Yoshimi 1999). With the exception of Ohta (1999, 2001a, 2001b) and Ishida (2007), most previous studies offered either functional or cognitive accounts of each IP as an independent entity. Little research has examined the use of
 IPs by JFL learners from the perspective of interactional competence (e.g., the expression of alignment and assessment). The present study intends to fill this gap by examining JFL learners’ use of IPs from the interactional perspective.

Another characteristic of IPs revealed in prior research is that the contingent use of IPs varies according to social contexts (Suzuki 1990; Usami 1997). Suzuki’s (1990) study showed that a married couple differentiated the use of IPs depending on their communicative goals. For instance, when a husband and wife were challenging each other’s stance, they deployed the IPs yo and sa, but when they were displaying assessment, evaluation, and agreement, they used ne. In another study, Usami (1997) examined the use of ne by Japanese native speakers in two different social situations: formal business meetings and during informal small talk. In the formal meetings, ne as a softener was most frequent (38%), followed by ne as a filler (34%). The confirmation function of ne came in the third place (15.7%). Ne as a facilitator (i.e., showing.seeking agreement) was not common (9%), and ne as attention-getter was rare (3%). In contrast, in informal conversations, ne appeared most often as a facilitator (64%), followed by ne as an attention-getter (26%). Ne as confirmation was not common (8.6%) and ne as a filler was rare (1.7%). These findings emphasize the importance of considering social contexts and communicative goals when analyzing IPs.

The present study examined a variety of functions fulfilled by IPs in one social context, namely one-to-one student-teacher interaction outside the classroom. The one-to-one teacher-student interaction setting is considered important for two reasons. First, it is one of the dynamic social situations where the student and teacher achieve co-construction of discourse while maintaining a fixed social distance between them (Cook 2006; Yoshimi 1998). Second, it represents a social context that JFL learners are likely to encounter. Because they often interact with higher status interlocutors such as classroom instructors or supervisors in internship programs, findings from this study are considered to provide meaningful implications to
Japanese pedagogy. In order to gain a better understanding of what JFL learners can do with IPs in such social settings, this study first examined the use of IPs by Japanese college students (native speakers of Japanese) and then compared their use with that of JFL learners.

2. Background

Interactional competence subsumes important pragmatic knowledge for sustaining social interactions and is measured by the speaker’s ability to draw on relevant resources in interactive practices (Hall 1993, 1995). It is important to note that the concept of interactional competence is, as He and Young (1998) and Young (1999) explain, different from communicative competence (Hymes 1974; Canale and Swain 1980), which postulates that communicative competence exists within individuals, independent from context. Interactional competence is co-constructed by all the participants in an interactive episode and is thus specific to the episode. Jacoby and Ochs (1995: 171) refer to interactional competence as co-construction: “the joint creation of a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality.” Knowledge of IPs is certainly part of interactional competence since IPs are used to maintain the interpersonal relationships in the given situation.

There are several listener response patterns in Japanese that often involve IPs: expressions of acknowledgement, agreement, confirmation, and assessment (Ohta 2001a, 2001b). Using acknowledgement, the listener sends a signal that s/he is listening to the speaker attentively. With agreement, the listener indicates his or her understanding and sharing of the speaker's message. As confirmation, the listener makes sure that his/her understanding is correct. In assessment, interlocutors express their evaluations of the entity referred to in an on-going conversation (Goodwin 1986; Goodwin and Goodwin 1992). These listener responses are essential for JFL learners in order to carry out a smooth interaction. Since IPs are one of the
effective linguistic means to achieve these listener responses, it is important to explore learners’
actions as listeners as well as their involvement in conversation as speakers with a focus on the
use of the IPs in acknowledgement, agreement, assessment, and confirmation practices. The
excerpt (1) below illustrates the use of the IP *ne* in various listener responses. The

Excerpt (1): Student S and teacher T, both from Pittsburgh, were visiting Atlanta in the
mid-March. = indicates lengthening.

1. S:  …*Ataranta tte, hontooni ii toko desu ne?* ←1<sup>st</sup> assessment (uptake)
   Atlanta QUO really nice place COP:PRES IP
   (Atlanta is such a nice place *ne.*)

2. T:  ..*ne=.* ←agreement
   yeah

3.  ..*attakakute ne, yappari ne.* ← elaboration/ 2<sup>nd</sup> assessment (upgraded)
   warm:GER IP as expected IP
   (because it’s warm *ne*, as I expected *ne.*)

2-a.  *ee soo ne.*
   yes so IP
   (yes, it is *ne.*)

2-b.  *ee soo.*
   yes so
   (yes, it is.)

The first assessment, ‘a nice place’ in line 1, is not a mere comment on Atlanta because
of *ne*. It is something that can be responded to, and participated in, in a certain way (Goodwin
and Goodwin 1987), as T responds in the one-utterance, *ne* = (‘yeah’), showing her agreement in the following turn. Without *ne* in line 1, this utterance may not necessarily be heard as expecting a response. In other words, *ne* = in line 1 projects alignment, as is interactionally important at the time of its receipt. If T utters *ee soo ne* (= ‘yes, it is so *ne*’) as shown in 2-a, it would also be a good response. However, if T utters *ee soo* or *soo* (= ‘yes, it is’) without *ne* as shown in 2-b, it would be unnatural because it is not marked by the affective marker *ne*.

Oso (1986) pointed out that JFL learners’ responses often lack *ne*. As a result, their conversations sound rather unnatural because when both the speaker and the addressee share the same information, *ne* typically occurs to confirm the “shared information” (see Kamio, 1994, for similar explanation). Recently, however, Morita (2005) argued that the “shared information” may not get at the underlying interactional resources that define all of the functions of *ne* (e.g., *ne* in initiation and *ne* in response). Thus, the present study does not limit the analysis of *ne* to the notion of “shared information.” Instead, it focuses on how a speaker handled interactional concerns with an interlocutor in the interaction.

In excerpt (1) above, T agrees in line 2, and then upgrades her assessment by telling why Atlanta is such a nice place in line 3, ‘because of being warm as I expected.’ These tokens are identified as second assessments. Affirmative second assessments commonly occur when both interlocutors have access to the conversation topic (e.g., weather, food) (Pomerantz 1984). Alignment is not limited to the utterance immediately following the initial assessment; extended assessment activity sometimes continues beyond the turn of interlocutor who initiated the assessment (Goodwin 1986; Goodwin and Goodwin 1992).

Assessment is an important activity in Japanese conversation. Strauss (1995) found that Japanese speakers use assessment tokens such as repetitions or reformulations of the primary speaker’s talk more frequently than Korean and English native speakers. However, in JFL learners' discourse, previous research has found that practice of assessment functions is rather
underrepresented compared with that of other functions. A series of classroom studies by Ohta (1999, 2001a, 2001b) revealed that beginning level JFL learners developed their ability to use IPs in acknowledgement and agreement functions because they were exposed to these two IP functions through teacher-student and peer-peer interaction. Previous studies also showed that *ne* appeared most frequently in the formulaic expression *soo desu ne* (‘that’s right’) for making an alignment (Ishida forthcoming; Ohta 1999, 2001a, 2001b; Sawyer 1992; Yoshimi 1999). For instance, in Yoshimi’s (1999) study, 35 out of 46 *ne*-marked tokens (76%) appeared in the formulaic expression. Ishida's (forthcoming) longitudinal study, on the other hand, reveals a late-emerging nature of the assessment function. Over a nine-month study in Japan, Ishida’s intermediate JFL learner made progress not only in using IPs for acknowledgment and agreement but also in making confirmation, introducing a topic, projecting and making assessments. Ishida argues that the learner's ability to use *ne* for a variety of functions facilitates his participation in conversation. In light of these findings, in contrast to Ohta’s (1999, 2001a, 2001b) study of beginning students’ IP use measured in a teacher-to-student in classroom format, intermediate JFL learners in the present study would be expected to be able to demonstrate acknowledgement and agreement functions with the IP *ne* in a relatively more intensive one-to-one student-teacher interaction format. Thus, it is important to explore whether they can use *ne* with other functions, particularly assessment and confirmation, since their intermediate proficiency surpasses the beginning level examined in Ohta’s classroom research (1999, 2001a, 2001b).9

In order to identify the types of discourse functions achieved with IPs in one-to-one student-teacher interaction, this study first examines the use of IPs by Japanese college students (native speakers of Japanese). Native speaker data from the same age group and conversation setting forms the base-line data to which JFL learners' data is directly compared. This study asks: what IPs are used in conjunction with agreement, assessment, and confirmation practices by
Japanese college students (native speakers of Japanese) and intermediate JFL learners, and what functions do the IPs serve in each of these practices?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

There were two groups of participants in this study. The first group (the native speaker group; hereafter NS) consisted of six Japanese college students (two female junior college students, two male undergraduate students, and two female graduate students) and three female Japanese junior college/university teachers (40-50 years old). The Japanese college students spoke with their female teachers who were in their forties and early fifties. The second group (JFL learner group) consisted of six students (five undergraduate and one graduate) enrolled in a Japanese language program in a U.S. university, and one female Japanese language instructor in her late thirties. Table 1 displays the students' pseudonyms, length of Japanese study, and length of stay in Japan. The learners’ study abroad experience in Japan ranged from zero to three months and three weeks. According to the SPOT (Simple Performance Oriented Test) assessment scores, the JFL students were intermediate level proficiency. The JFL learners achieved over 85% on the SPOT version B, and 71-83% on the SPOT version A. These scores were considered equivalent to Intermediate-Mid through Intermediate-High on the ACTFL OPI (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language Oral Proficiency Interview) (Iwasaki 2002). The JFL learners had a conversation with a female teacher who had previously been their Japanese instructor at their home institution.

[Insert Table 1 here]
3.2. Data collection

One-to-one conversations for the NS group were recorded in the teachers’ offices or at a conference site. The topics of conversations varied: daily life, family, travelling, class presentations, summer study, job hunting, cultural differences between the United States and Japan, and popular phrases used by young people in Japan. Each conversation lasted from 24 to 30 minutes, for a total of 2.8 hours. One-to-one conversations for the JFL learner group were recorded either in the teacher’s office or in the library. The topics of conversation ranged over college life, summer/spring break, family, travels, the summer program, childhood, job hunting, and cultural experience in Japan and the United States. Each conversation lasted from 18 to 33 minutes, for a total of 2.2 hours.

3.3. Data analysis

All conversations were recorded with a digital recorder or a tape recorder and transcribed by the researcher. All relevant IPs in both sets of conversations were analyzed. Qualitative, functional analysis of IPs in this study focused on one IP, *ne*, because it was extremely frequent in the JFL learner data in this study (118 out of 122 IPs-marked utterances, 96.7% of occurrence). All expressions that contained *ne* were classified according to a modified version of Morita’s classification of *ne* (Morita 2005: 147-140; see Table 2), because this classification reflects a full sequence of interactional activities. For the inter-rater reliability, randomly selected 24 *ne*-marked tokens (approximately 20% of the total JFL tokens) were submitted to a native speaker of Japanese who was an academic in linguistics. The researcher explained to the second judge the classification shown on Table 2 and provided three additional examples of *ne*-marked tokens.
before the judge classified the tokens. Modifications were made to Morita’s framework in the following manner: (1) categories that did not appear in the JFL learners’ data were deleted, (2) the formulaic expression *soo desu ne* was added since this expression was common in the JFL learner data, (3) the category of “Question” was renamed as “Confirmation Question” because Ohta’s study used this term as listener response. Morita explained that the question with *ne* also solicits confirmation.⁹

[Insert Table 2 here]

4. Results

4.1. Types of interactional particles used by the JFL Learners and the Japanese college students

As shown in Table 3, Japanese college students used a wide variety of IPs such as *ne*, *yo*, and *na*, as well as combinations of two interactional particles such as *yone*, *kana*, and *kane*.

[Insert Table 3 here]

In contrast, JFL learners used two IPs, *ne* and *yo*. The next section examines the types of assessment practices that the Japanese college students performed with IPs, especially *yone* and *yo*, which rarely occurred in the JFL learners’ conversation. The purpose of the analysis is to determine what functions that the Japanese college students achieved with these IPs.

4.2. The use of *yo* in the Japanese college students’ conversation: Mutual understanding
As shown in Table 3, yo was the most common IP (29.3%) after ne in Japanese college students’ conversations. This finding appears to sharply contrast with Yoshimi’s (1997) study, which reported no instance of yo occurring during a 45-minute interaction between a Japanese professor and his graduate student. Although the topics of conversation with a teacher in this study were not limited to academic issues, which were the focus in Yoshimi’s (1997) study, one might still wonder why yo occurred so frequently in the present data. A close examination of the data reveals that it is essential to consider both the prosodic feature of yo and the conversational turns in order to account for the frequent use of yo in student-teacher interaction.

Excerpt (2): Teacher T and student S talk about a popular phrase among young people in Japan, dondake (‘how much?’). \ indicates falling pitch.

1. T: …dare-ga saishoni ii-hajimeta no?
   who-NOM at first say-begin:PAST NML
   (who started saying this phrase?)

   --- several lines omitted ---

2. S: …sono geibaa no masutaa ga,
   that gay bar GEN master NOM

3. dondake tte iu hito datta n desu yo. \ 
   ‘how much?’ QUO say person COP:PAST NML COP:PRES IP
   (it was the master of the gay bar who is called ‘dondake’ yo)

In this excerpt, T requests for the information regarding who started using the popular phrase. After S provides the description of the gay bar master in Kabukichoo, a red-light district in Tokyo, she fills in the information by deploying yo with falling pitch at the end of the turn in line 3. Note that the use of yo does not sound assertive here. According to Shimotani (2006), yo with a falling pitch occurs quite frequently in naturally occurring conversation (78 cases out of 106
cases of yo, 73.6%). She argues that this type of yo does not signal speaker affect in information-shared discourse because there is a type of mutual understanding between the speaker and the hearer (i.e., the speaker knows that the hearer needs some information). Yo with a raising pitch, on the other hand, does signal the speaker’s assertive attitude due to a lack of mutual understanding about the shared information/viewpoint.

4.3. The use of yone in the Japanese college students’ conversation: Confirmation and opinion

It is argued that yone carries an interactive and emphatic role in conversation, which represents the speaker’s opinion while drawing a conclusion and anticipating agreement from the addressee. The combination of yo and ne has a dynamic and interactive function, and displays harmony with the other participant (Cook 1988; Fukao 2005; McGloin 1990; Yoshimi 1997). While 17.3% of IP occurrences (76 out of 440) were yone in the NS data, yone never appeared in the JFL learners’ data. Observe (3).

Excerpt (3): Professor P and a graduate student R talk about American students’ behavior. @@ indicates laughter and [ ] indicates overlapping. The numbers in the parenthesis correspond to overlapping parts.

1. P: …ne, kangaeru ja-nai?
   IP think:PRES COP:NEG
2. ..sumimasen wa ii-taku-naishi [^1@^1].
   sorry TOP say-want:NEG:CONT
   (ne I wonder what to do. I don’t want to say sorry (after pointing out their misbehavior in classroom @@)).
3. R: [^1e, demo^1],
(well, but…)

4. P: …demo oboete hoshiishi @ @,
   but learn:GER want:CONT

5. .de shikatte gomennasai tte,
   and scold: GER sorry QUO

6. kocchi ga [²moo²],
   this side NOM well
   (but I want them to learn (good manners) @ @ (it’s strange) to apologize to them
   when I scold them.)

7. R: [²so so²].
   (right, right.)

8. .demo sore wa muzukashii desu ne? ←1st assessment
   but that TOP difficult COP:PRES IP
   (but it is difficult, ne?)

9. .sore wa muzukashii desu yone=?, ←2nd assessment
   that TOP difficult COP:PRES IP

10. sore wa.
   that TOP
   (that IS difficult, yone.)

11. P: …dakara, hijooni kiotsukau wa ne. ←response
   so extremely cautious IP IP

12. sooiu toki wa.
   such case TOP
   (so I need to be extremely cautious ne about this sort of case.)
From line 7, R, makes a comment about teaching students good manners in language class. Here she used *ne*, simply showing her agreement with the arduous challenge of teaching good behavior in the classroom. Immediately after this utterance, R uses a different IP – *yone* – and post-position of the pronoun, *sore* (‘it’), and repeats her comment ‘hard’ with an emphatic tone in lines 8 through 9. Here *yone* plays a dynamic role in discourse: explicitly presenting her opinion about the challenge of teaching good behaviors while seeking confirmation from the teacher. The IP *ne* could have been used here if she simply wanted to show her agreement repeatedly. However using *ne* is not as powerful when presenting her opinion because *ne* alone has no function of asserting a claim, and also because *yo* alone has no function of seeking agreement.

Another use of *yone* found in the Japanese students’ conversation is confirmation. Observe (4).

Excerpt (4): Teacher T and student A talk about how to come to school from the station.

The school is on the top of a hill.

1. A: …*takushii wa, okane de-nai n desu* *yone?*\[confirmation\]  
   taxiTOP money pay:NEG NML COP:PRES IP  
   (the school does not pay for the taxi expense, *yone*)

2. T: *de-nai, de-nai.* \[acknowledgement\]  
   pay:NEG pay:NEG

3. *sugoi shuppi da yo.* \[1st assessment\]  
   extraordinary expense COP:PRES IP

   almost every day COP:PRES because
   (no, no, it’s an extraordinary expense *yo*, since I take a taxi almost every day)

5. A: …*sugoi shuppi desu ne.* \[2nd assessment\]
extraordinary expense COP:PRES IP
(it's an extraordinary expense ne.)

6. T: ..sugoi shuppi da ne. ←3rd assessment
extraordinary expense COP:PRES IP
(it’s an extraordinary expense ne.)

7. A: …700 en toka desu yone?
700 yen something COP:PRES IP
(I assume it costs 700 yen or something, yone?)

8. T: ..suru ne. ←acknowledgement
do IP

9. …kaeri wa yobu kara 900 en suru ne. ←elaboration
Return TOP call ‘cause 900yen do IP
(it does, ne. It costs 900yen for returning ’cause I call a taxi ne.) + elaboration

In line 1, A tries to confirm whether T's school pays for her taxi expense by using yone. If A were to use ne, she would sound more confident about her conjecture, and also give the impression that she is too assertive or is utilizing a cross-questioning tone. After both T and A have engaged in assessment practices from line 3 through 6 employing the adjective, ‘expense’, the speaker A deploys yone again in order to confirm her further conjecture about the degree of taxi expense in line 7. In responding to A, T acknowledges and gives more detailed information on this matter in the following turn. Here yone, in its confirming function, facilitates the creation of further interaction between T and A, and increases the shared background by providing A with the additional opportunity to engage in assessment activity.

The use of yone allows the Japanese student to express her own point of view while comparing and confirming his/her assertion in this extended assessment and confirmation
discourse. It also helps her participate in conversations actively. Together with this example, lack of *yone* in learners' data shows that the JFL learners are not yet competent enough to use a variety of IPs including *yone*, which was used productively in extended assessment practices in Japanese college student conversation. Mine's (1995) study found that due to massive exposure to natural use of interactional particles in conversation intermediate JFL learners in Japan used *yone* only after they had mastered the use of both *ne* and *yo*. In sharp contrast, JFL learners in this study used the IP *ne* predominantly in order to encode a variety of functions. The next section discusses how JFL learners use *ne* in conversation in terms of acknowledgement, assessment and confirmation practices.

### 4.4. Interactional particle *ne* by JFL learners

This study adopted a modified version of Morita’s (2005) categories of *ne* (See Table 2). Table 4 displays the frequency of *ne* for each JFL learner. The researcher classified *ne* based upon the modified version of Morita’s categories of *ne*. Twenty percent of the *ne* used by JFL learners were submitted to the second judge who showed 90% correlation with the researcher’s findings.

![Insert Table 4 here]

Despite the large individual variation among the JFL learners in their use of *ne*, the most commonly used one was *soo desu ne* (‘That’s right’) in acknowledgment/agreement, suggesting that these functions were essential in learners' discourse. This finding is compatible with Ohta's (2001b) findings. Her study documented two JFL learners going through similar developmental trajectories with *ne*, that is to say starting from *ne* with basic expressions of acknowledgment (e.g., *hai, un* ‘yes’ at Stage 1 in Table 4 in [ibid.: 117]) and moving to *ne* with expressions of...
acknowledgment beyond Stage 1, and acknowledgment/agreement (e.g., *soo desu ne* [‘that’s right’]).

For further analyses, I divided the six JFL learners into two types of *ne* users: (1) users who have used *ne* in agreement, acknowledgment, and assessment practices (Alan, Bob, David, and Helen), and (2) conservative users (Charles and Elizabeth) who rarely used *ne* in agreement, acknowledgment, and assessment practices during the whole conversation. The section below presents qualitative analyses of these two groups of *ne* users.

### 4.5. Assessment practices by JFL learners

Bob was one of the active users of *ne*. He uses *ne* in agreement, acknowledgment, the first assessment, the second (extended) assessments, initiation, response, and confirmation. Observe (5).

Excerpt (5): Bob and teacher K talk about Bob’s weekend.


   weekend laundry-do:CONT to return:PRES

   (on weekend you go home to do laundry)

2. B: .. *hai, tada desu kara @@.*

   yes, free COP:PRES ‘cause@@

   (yes, ‘cause it’s free @@.)

3. K: …*jitensha ni nosete?/*

   bike DAT load:GRE

   (loading a pile of laundry on your bike?)

4. B: .. *ie, kuruma arimasu @@.*

   no car there
(No, I have a car @ @ @.)

5. K: ..kuruma ni nosete?
car DAT load:GRE

/loading the pile in your car?/

6. B: ..hai, jitensha de? taihen desu. ↔1st assessment (uptake, without ne)
yes, bicycle by hard COP:PRES

/yes, by bicycle? It would be hard/)

7. ..ichijikan gurai kakarimasu @ @ @. ↔ elaboration
1 hour about take:PRES

(It would take about 1 hour @ @ @)

8. K: ..sore wa taihen desu ne. ↔2nd assessment
that TOP hard COP :PRES IP

(That would be hard ne.)

9. B: ..soo desu ne. ↔ agreement
so COP:PRES IP

(that’s right ne.)

Prior to this excerpt, Bob told K that he rides a bicycle to campus. With this knowledge, K asks
Bob in line 3 if he rides a bike home on weekends. This question prompts a sequence of
assessment practices from lines 6 and line 8. Bob uptakes the 1st assessment ‘hard’ without any
interactional particles, but he elaborates in line 8 by making the comment ‘it would take about 1
hour’. Immediately after receiving his comment, K incorporates her evaluation with
interactional particle ne, which elicits Bob’s further alignment with affect, expressed with ne in

1. K: …kazoku-wa yokohama desu kedo,
   family-TOP Yokohama COP:PRES but
2. tuuson ni kuru mae made-wa,
   Tucson-to come before till-TOP
3. zu=tto kazoku to issho deshita ne.
   long family with together COP:PAST IP
   (My family is in Yokohama, but before I came to Tucson,
   I had lived with my family ne.)
4. B: nihonjin, minna soo deshoo ne. ←confirmation
   Japanese people all so COP:PRESU IP
   (I assume that Japanese people all do so ne.)

--several lines skipped--

5. K: …Amerika de-wa, minna hatachi gurai-ni natta toki,
   America in-TOP all 20 yrs-old about-to become:PAST when
6. .ie-o demasu ne. ←confirmation
   home-ACC leave:PRES IP
   (In America, when people become 20 years old, they leave their parents’ home
   ne.)
7. B: …hai, jibun-no apaato toka dokka ikimasu ne ← response
   yes self-GEN apartment something somewhere go:PRES IP
   (yes, they start living in their own apartments or somewhere ne.)
8. .demo nihon-wa takai kara deshoo ne. ←confirmation
   but Japan-TOP expensive ‘cause COP: PRESU IP
(but, it’s because Japan is expensive *ne*.)

Bob actively participates in the conversation as he attempts conformation regarding the Japanese family situation in lines 4 and 8. In line 7, Bob answers K’s confirmation question in line 6 using *ne* to express his own opinion from his own experience of ‘living independently’. In lines 4 and 8, Bob’s conjecture followed by *ne* sounds natural, not assertive, due to the use of *desho*, a presumptive form of the copula followed by *ne*. Importantly, *ne* after *desho* gives the effect of “softening the illocutionary force” and functions as “rapport” (Ueno 1971: 132), since the speaker can expect an answer from the addressee and yet the option of not answering is left for the addressee’ (ibid: 125). He could use *yone* here, too. Excerpt (8) demonstrates that Bob and K seem to use *ne* effectively as a turn-taking device, and that the use of *ne* gives Bob the opportunity to engage in the conversation actively.

Alan, another active user of *ne*, used *ne* in agreement, acknowledgment, assessment, response, and confirmation activities. Observe (7).

Excerpt (7): Alan and K talk about K’s experience teaching Japanese in Japan prior to coming to the United States.

1. A: …*sore-wa  doko  deshita  ka?*  
   that-TOP  where  COP:PAST  Q  
   (where was it? (where did you teach Japanese?))

2. M: …*sore-wa  *ne,  tookyoo-na  n  *[da  kedo].*  
   that-TOP  IP  Tokyo-COP  NML  COP:PRES  but  
   (that was in Tokyo, but…)

3. A:…  
   a  *[tookyoo]  desu  ka.*  
   Oh  Tokyo  COP:PRES  Q  
   (Oh, It was Tokyo.)
4. …*iroiro* *gaijin* to *aimashita* *ne*? \(\leftrightarrow\)confirmation

various foreigners with meet:PAST IP

(I bet you have met various types of foreigners *ne*?)

5. M: …*n=*, *aja* no *hito* ga *ookatta* *kana*.

let’s see, Asian GEN people NOM many:PAST IP

(let’s see, I believe that they were mostly Asian people.)

Being curious about K’s experience of teaching Japanese in Japan, Alan takes an active role and asks questions in lines 1 and 4. From his experience visiting Tokyo one summer, Alan attempts to make a conjecture about K’s experience teaching Japanese by deploying *ne*. *Ne* creates a negotiation space, but he sounds too assertive here. Since he does not share any information about K’s experience, *ne* may not be appropriate. One appropriate response could be *iroiro* *gaijin* to *atta n ja nai n desuka* (‘I believe you probably met various foreigners’), where *janai* is a negative form of the copula in the informal style which expresses realization (with rising intonation) or an opinion about possibility of meeting foreigners, and *n desu* is an extended predicate. Another appropriate response is to use the presumptive form of the copula, *desho* as in *iroiro* *gaijin* to *attan desho ne* (‘You have probably met various foreigners’).11 Although *ne* in this excerpt is incorrectly used, Alan attempts to participate in conversation actively by expressing his opinion and by engaging in assessment practices. His use of *ne* conveys his overly assertive attitude.

Helen was a heavy user of the formulaic expression *soo desu ne*, but she also deployed *ne* effectively in first and second assessment practices. Observe (8).

Excerpt (8): Helen and K talk about her future ambition.

1. H: *...ongaku-ga* *shi-tai-n* *desu* *kedo*,

music-NOM do.want-NML COP:PRES but
2. ..daigakukinsei no toki atode,
   graduate student GEN when after
   (I want to do music. But after finishing my graduate school.)

   (hum)

4. H: ...bengosh san, bengoshi-ni nari-tai-n desu.
   lawyer lawyer-DAT become-want-NML COP:PRES
   (lawyer, I want to become a lawyer.)

5. K: e=.
   (wow!)

   (@@@, yes)

7. K: ..ongaku-no ato, bengoshi desu ka?
   music-GEN after lawyer COP:PRES Q
   (after studying music, becoming a lawyer?)

8. H: ...chotto hen desu kedo, e=tto. ←1st assessment
   a bit strange COP:PRES but well
   (It sounds a bit strange but, well.)

   (hummm)

10. H: ...entaateimento no bengoshi-ni etto, nari-tai-n desu @@
    entertainment GEN lawyer-DAT well, become-want-NML COP:PRES
    (I want to become a lawyer for entertainers @@.)

11. K: …omoshiroi desu ne. ←2nd assessment
    interesting COP:PRES IP
Helen confesses her ambition of becoming a lawyer after getting an M.A. in music. She expresses the first assessment about her ambition, ‘strange’, in line 8 without using *ne*. After listening to further description of Helen’s dream, K aligns the second assessment with *ne* using a more positive adjective, ‘interesting’, in line 11. Helen giggles with slight embarrassment, and further aligns the extended assessment, this time using *ne*, and also using the same adjective, ‘strange’.

David is also a heavy user of *soo desu ne* (for both acknowledgment/agreement and also the more idiomatic expression ‘let’s see’) and also deploys *ne* in the first assessment among others. Observe (9).

Excerpt (9): After David states that he wants to study at University of Tsukuba in Japan, he inquires about K’s academic background in Japan.

1. D: …*K sensei-wa nihon-ni donna daigaku-ni ikimashita ka?*
K teacher-TOP Japan-to what type university-DAT go:PAST Q

(Teacher K, which university did you go in Japan?)

2. K: e=to ne, watashi-wa nihon-no tokyo-no [daigaku-de],
   well IP, I-TOP Japan-GEN Tokyo-GEN university-at
   (Let’s see, I (studied at) a university in Tokyo, Japan….)

3. D: [a=, ii daigaku] desu ne. \(\leftarrow\) 1st assessment
   oh, good university COP:PRES IP
   (Oh, that’s a good university, ne)

4. K: .. tokyo daigaku ja-nai, tokyoo-no daigaku-de
   Tokyo University COP:NEG Tokyo-GEN university-at
   (it’s NOT University of Tokyo, a university in Tokyo.)

5. D: .. toodai, toodai, @@@.
   University of Tokyo, University of Tokyo
   (University of Tokyo, University of Tokyo @@@)

   Tokyo-GEN university COP:PRES IP
   (it’s a university in Tokyo, yo)

K accidently provides an ambiguous description of the school, ‘a university in Tokyo’. Being familiar with universities in Japan, David spontaneously expresses his first assessment, ‘a good university’, with ne. K clarifies her expression in line 4, but David still half-jokingly repeats ‘University of Tokyo’ and laughs. Excerpt (10) is an example in which David uses ne in alignment.

Excerpt (10): David and K talk about Chicago, which David visited before. K knows that David often eats sushi.
1. D: ..nihon-no resutoran-wa arimasu kedo,
   Japan-GEN restaurant-TOP there is but,
2. tuuson-no hoo, shikago yori yasui desu.
   Tucson-GEN area Chicago than cheaper COP: PRES
   (There are Japanese restaurants in Chicago, but ones in Tucson are cheaper.)
3. …shikago, shikago-wa, umi-ga nai n desu.
   Chicago, Chicago-TOP ocean-NOM there is: NEG NML COP:PRES
   (in Chicago, Chicago, there is no ocean nearby.)
   lake-TOP there is:PRES but IP
   (there is a lake, though.)
5. D: ..soo desu. soo desu ne. ←agreement
   so COP:PRES so COP :PRES IP
   (that’s right. That’s right ne.)
6. .. demo mizuumi-wa sake-ya maguro-ya hamachi-ga
   but lake-TOP salmon-and tuna-and kingfish-NOM
7. nai n desu @@@
   there is:NEG NML COP:PRES
   (but there are no fish like salmon, tuna, and kingfish in the lake @@@.)

David explains why eating sushi in Tucson, Arizona, is cheaper than in Chicago. His reasoning in line 3 is related to the distance from the cities to the ocean. K elicits the fact that there is a lake near Chicago by deploying ne in line 4 without knowing that Lake Michigan is not a good place to find sushi fish. David aligns her comment without using ne first, but then repeats using ne immediately, thereby providing a counterargument in lines 6 and 7.
So far we have examined conversations in which Alan and David deployed *ne* for agreement, assessment, and confirmation practices. These learners demonstrated competence in using IP linguistic resources available to them to actively participate in conversation. In contrast, Elizabeth and Charles were conservative users of *ne*, and as a result, their non-use of *ne* in conversation exhibits alignment that feels unnatural. Observe (11).

Excerpt (11): Elizabeth and K talk about the dormitory in the local institute during the summer program in which Elizabeth has just participated. K ran the summer program the previous year, so is familiar with the local situation.

1. K: …*demo are desho, daigaku-kara tooku-nai kara…*  
   But COP:PRESU university-from far:NEG because   
   (but well, because it (the dormitory) is not far from the university.)

2. E: ..*un*  
   (yeah)

   Fukuoka university-to subway-by IP

4. *yokatta desu ne.*  
   ←1st assessment  
   good:PAST COP:PRES IP  
   (you could take subway to the university, *ne*. Good for you *ne*.)

5. E: .., *soo desu.*  
   ←Agreement (without *ne*)  
   so COP:PRES
   (that’s true.)

6. .. *yokatta.*  
   ←2nd assessment (with plain past form of adjective ‘good’)  
   Good:PAST
   (It was good.)

7. ..*demo, ano=, jyugyoo-no atode tenjin-ni ikimashita.*
but well, class-GEN after Tenjin-to go:PAST
(but, well, after classes, I went to Tenjin (downtown)!)  

K makes the first assessment using *ne* and ‘good’ in line 4. However, Elizabeth’s alignment in the following turn does not include *ne*. She aligns the second assessment using the adjective ‘good’ without marking the affective stance with interactional particles, which are often observed in native speakers of Japanese who recall that something was good (‘that was good (as I recall)’. She also switches her style from polite style (*desu/masu*), which is an expected style in conversation with her teacher, to casual here. In the following turn, she shifts back from casual to polite *iki-mashi-ta*, a polite form of ‘go’ in the past tense. A similar pattern of missing *ne* in alignment and assessment practices was also observed in excerpts from Charles’ conversation.

6. Conclusion and Implications for pragmatic teaching

This study examined the interactional competence among six intermediate JFL learners by analyzing their use of IPs in acknowledgement, agreement, assessment and confirmation practices during conversations with a native speaker teacher. Although preliminary in nature due to the small sample size and a relative imbalance of gender between the native speaker group participants and the JFL learners group, this study revealed a picture of the JFL learners’ ability in using the interactional particles in authentic one-to-one student-teacher interaction. In comparison with the Japanese college students who productively used IPs in extended assessment and confirmation activities (e.g., *yone*), the JFL learners in this study were demonstrably limited in their use of a range of IPs. Although they showed good command of *ne* in agreement and assessment functions, the use of *ne* in extended assessment and confirmation functions was rather underrepresented.
The results of this study suggest five important directions for future research. First, this study reiterates the importance of examining interactional competence in naturally occurring discourse, rather than in elicited discourse via questionnaires or discourse completion tasks. Recording and analyzing naturalistic conversation is a time consuming process; however, as shown in this study, naturalistic data is valuable in revealing learners’ social and cognitive processes in moment-to-moment interaction. As Jones and Ono (2005) suggested, JFL learners should not be forced to replicate native speaker norms if they feel uncomfortable doing so, but they should be informed about how real life interaction works in native speaker discourse. Second, this study compared conversations between a female teacher and JFL learners with conversations between female teachers and Japanese students. Future research should examine conversations with both male and female teachers in order to address potential gender differences in the selection of IPs. Third, this study examined the interaction of six JFL learners and six Japanese college students with a teacher. There might be individual differences in the use of interactional particle by JFL learners. Thus, it is important to design a large scale discourse study that would collect data from more JFL learners and Japanese college students in order to provide additional solid quantitative evidence to enhance the above qualitative findings, which could then be disseminated among researchers and language instructors. Fourth, the participants in this study were intermediate JFL learners who spent a limited period of time in Japan. This study revealed that ne in formulaic, acknowledgement expression was common, and that ne in assessment and confirmation practices was rather limited in this JFL group. It is vital to take the further step of examining how JFL learners acquire various functions of ne in a longitudinal design (cf., Ishida’s longitudinal study, forthcoming). Finally because this study did not measure intonation patterns (i.e., pitch) by using digital software (e.g., Praat), future research should incorporate such prosody analysis.

This study offers two pedagogical implications. First, it is important to teach intonation
and turn-taking patterns with IPs, especially with yo, because, as shown in the Japanese students’ conversations, yo with falling intonation was most common when the speaker and hearer exchanged information. Second, it is also valuable to teach the confirmation function of ne in various combinations (yone, desho ne, ka ne) when guessing or telling second-hand experience because it could help JFL learners to express their own opinion and facilitate their participation in interaction. Such studies will promote our understanding of interactional patterns in Japanese conversation in specific social contexts, and in turn provide useful pedagogical implications that can be utilized in classroom instruction.

Acknowledgement

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Notes

1. Maynard (1993:183) proposes this term, but her focus is how speaker control the ‘information’ in conversation management by language recourse such as IPs.

2. This is especially the case for ne and sa (Morita 2005), but yo is limited to sentence-final (Maynard 1993).
3. Cook (2006) suggests that politeness is used as a measure of interactional achievement among students and a professor.

4. One reviewer suggested the possibility of measurement bias when examining one-to-one student-teacher interaction for investigating the JFL learners’ interactional competence with focus on the use of the IPs, especially *ne* as confirmation and assessment, due to the nature of the measured interaction in which learners most likely to play a receptive role vis-à-vis the teacher. Although this is certainly a possibility, because of the compelling interest of interactional competence in social situations, the present study has direct pedagogical implications. Furthermore, the measurement dilemma might exist between the type of IPs and what type of social interaction that the researcher is exploring since a type of social interaction may affect the type of IPs used in conversation.

5. Ohta (2001: 181) uses the term “alignment”, which is similar to “agreement”, to refer to the listener’s empathy and understanding of the speaker’s message. This paper, however, uses “agreement” for the sake of simplicity.

6. In order to avoid the possible confusion that ‘assessment practices’ might be considered to be some type of academic test/task in the context, this paper uses the term, ‘assessment practice’ rather than assessment practices.

7. The following abbreviations are used for the remainder of this paper. NOM: nominative marker [*ga*], ACC: accusative marker [*o*], DAT: dative marker [*ni*], TOP: topic marker [*wa*], GEN: genitive marker [*no*], QUO: quotative maker [*to*], Q: question marker [*ka*], NML: nominalizer [*no, koto*], IP: interactional particles [*ne, yo, yone, kana*], PAST: past tense, PRES: present tense, NEG: negative form, COP: copula, GER: gerund form, CONT: continuative form, POT: potential form, and PRESU: presumptive forms.

lowering pitch, Japanese language typically has two speech styles: the masu form (so-called “addressee honorific” form), and the plain form (“detached style”, Cook (forthcoming)), which is considered to be an informal speech style marker. Note that for the conversations examined in the present study, teachers use the plain form most of the time, while the students use masu form most of the time.

9. The category that is not included in this paper is: “Change-of-State Token + Component of Information + ne (information transmission has just been achieved as the acknowledged result of the previous turn’s informing → aligned epistemic stance (p149).” In the original, Morita breaks the “Ne in Question” into two subcategories: (1) none for alignment in the framing of a question, and (2) kane for when the questioner is aligned to answer. Such detailed categories are not needed for JFL learners, and thus combined into one category here.

10. One reviewer suggested that it is the relationship between two speakers that determines the use of yone because a speaker feels close enough to the other interlocutor to draw some kind of assumption or conclusion about a given situation and explicitly share that view with the interlocutor. While the relationship between speakers is certainly one of the crucial factors for the use of interactional particles, control of the interlocutors’ relationship in this study was not possible, but should be noted for follow-up research.

11. If both Alan and the Japanese teacher had experienced ‘meeting with various kinds of foreigners’ together in the past, then it would have been natural to say iroiro gaijin to aimashita yone (‘I believe that you met various types of foreigners there yone’).

References


Iwasaki, Noriko. 2002. Nihongo nooryoku kanishiken (SPOT) no tokuten to ACTFL kootoo nooryoku (OPI) no reberu no kankei ni tsuite. *Nihongo Kyooiku* 114: 100-105


### Tables

#### Table 1. *JFL learners’ backgrounds*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Length of Study</th>
<th>Length of Stay in Japan*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>undergraduate</td>
<td>4.5 semesters</td>
<td>5 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>undergraduate</td>
<td>4.5 semesters</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>undergraduate</td>
<td>4.5 semesters</td>
<td>15 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>graduate student</td>
<td>3 semesters</td>
<td>zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>undergraduate</td>
<td>4.5 semesters</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>undergraduate</td>
<td>4.5 semesters</td>
<td>zero</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. *Charles made a trip to Japan when he was in high school, while the other JFL learners did so when they were in college.*
Table 2. *Classifications of 'ne'*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Description/examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td><em>Ne</em> in a minimum response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A: <code>atsui desu ne</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hot COP <em>ne</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Isn’t it hot? <em>ne</em>’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B: <code>soo desu ne</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So COP <em>ne</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Yes, it is. <em>ne</em>’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>(1) <em>Ne</em> in first assessment: marks the current assessment as alienable to the recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A: <code>suteki na sukaato-ga dekita ne</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nice skirt-NOM done <em>ne</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘We made a nice skirt. <em>ne</em>’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) <em>Ne</em> in second assessment: second assessment is facilitated by the first assessment (agreement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A: <code>suteki na sukaato-ga dekita ne</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nice skirt-NOM done <em>ne</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘We made a nice skirt.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B: <code>un, suteki da ne</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yeah nice COP <em>Ne</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘yeah, it’s nice. <em>ne</em>’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response Position  
Response + *ne*: aligned to the action, invite to co-construct the utterance’s meaning

\[ A: \text{mina san genki desu ka} \]

All fine COP: PRES Q

‘is everyone fine?’

\[ B: \text{chotto ne} \]

Little *ne*

‘little *ne*’

Confirmation Question  
*Ne* in the framing of a question and confirmation is expected. Or a questioner is aligned to answer (searching an answer is shared activity) (*none, kane, desho ne*)

\[ A: \text{sore wa muzukashii desu ka ne.} \]

That-TOP difficult COP Q IP

‘that is difficult, *ne*?*

\[ B: \text{Un.} \]

Yeah.

Action Initiation  
*Ne* attached to a component of a turn toward its beginning

ano *ne* ano

uh IP uh
Table 3. *Frequency of interactional particles by Japanese college students and JFL learners*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactional Particles</th>
<th>Japanese College Students</th>
<th>JFL learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ne</td>
<td>45.7% ( 201 )</td>
<td>96.7% ( 118 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yo</td>
<td>29.3% ( 129 )</td>
<td>3.3% (  4 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yone</td>
<td>17.3% (  76 )</td>
<td>0% (  0 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kana</td>
<td>5.2% (  23 )</td>
<td>0% (  0 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others (kane/na)</td>
<td>2.5% (  11 )</td>
<td>0% (  0 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% ( 440 )</td>
<td>100% ( 122 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Frequency of interactional particle 'ne' by JFL learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Total of ne</th>
<th>soodesu ne 1</th>
<th>soodesu ne 2</th>
<th>soodesu ne 3*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Acknowledgment/Agreement)</td>
<td>(Filler ‘let’s see’)</td>
<td>(Odd Case)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>118 (100%)</td>
<td>62 (52.5%)</td>
<td>10 (8.5%)</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. * Odd cases of soodesu ne include a case where the JFL learner is confused between soodesu ka (‘oh, I see/is that so?’) (e.g., in response to being informed about the teacher’s housing) and soodesu. (‘yes, it is true’) (e.g., in answer to oneself such as status.) ** The occurrences of ne confirmation question by Alan and David include one odd case for each.