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2009

# Development of Interactional Competence: Changes in the Use of *ne* in L2 Japanese During Study Abroad

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## Development of Interactional Competence: Changes in the Use of *ne* in L2 Japanese During Study Abroad

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### Introduction

This chapter investigates the development of the use of the Japanese particle *ne* by a second language (L2) learner of Japanese during a 9-month study abroad. The particle *ne*, which is normally called a sentence-final particle, does not have a functional or semantic equivalent in English, although it is sometimes compared to *isn't it* in a tag question and the discourse marker *you know*. Linguists have tried to identify its central meaning and social functions but have not been able to come to a consensus on a single description that can cover its versatile use. However, this very versatility makes this particle a highly useful linguistic resource for participating in social interaction. Therefore, L2 learners of Japanese must learn how to use *ne* as they develop their interactional competence (Hall, 1995; He & Young, 1998; Young, 1999), or the knowledge and ability to participate in social interactions through the use of linguistic and other semiotic resources. The development of knowledge about how to use a language in socially appropriate ways and how to formulate grammatically acceptable sentences has been claimed to be important for a few decades, but L2 researchers have only recently begun to pay attention to the development of interactional competence as a necessary part of becoming a competent speaker of a language (e.g., Firth & Wagner, 1997; Nguyen, 2004;

Young & Miller, 2004). No study has yet examined in a longitudinal perspective how an L2 learner's interactional competence develops through the use of a particular linguistic resource. In an effort to fill this gap, this chapter focuses on how one learner of Japanese used the Japanese particle *ne* in interaction during a 9-month study abroad.

## **Application of CA to the analysis of *ne***

To understand the focal L2 learner's competence in his use of *ne* at different times during his study abroad, I examine the interactional functions of *ne* in his conversations by using conversation analysis (CA). In CA, two of the major threads of analysis are how people construct social activities on a turn-by-turn basis (e.g., telephone openings, Schegloff, 1979) and how an action is accomplished through the sequential placement of particular turns (e.g., agreeing and disagreeing, Pomerantz, 1984). Another central concern, and one that is of special interest to linguistics, is how a linguistic form is deployed in the organization of ongoing talk-in-interaction (e.g., *oh*, Heritage, 1984a, 2002). The interactional functions of a linguistic form at a moment in talk-in-interaction can be understood through the turn-by-turn analysis of participants' understanding of what is going on at that moment, which is displayed in their verbal and nonverbal actions.

CA has contributed to the development of interactional linguistics (Selting & Couper-Kuhlen, 2001) and research on grammar and interaction (Ochs, Schegloff, & Thompson, 1996). While sentence grammar may be used by an individual to construct syntactically possible sentences, interactional grammar, or how linguistic forms function at a given moment in interaction, is co-constructed and shared by the participants in social interaction. For instance, Ford and Mori's (1994) analysis of conversations showed how the connective *but* is used in agreeing and disagreeing, and Koshik's (2002) analysis of a writing conference showed how a teacher used yes-no questions to help a student solve the problems that the teacher found in a written text. Such an approach has also been taken in studies of Japanese, as exemplified by Mori's (1999) study of the contrastive connectives *kedo* [but, although] and *demo* [but, however] that are used for negotiating agreement and disagreement.

Research on the Japanese particle *ne* also benefits from the use of CA, as I discuss later (Morita, 2003; Tanaka, 2000). However, earlier theories and empirical studies of the use of *ne* that are not CA-oriented are still relevant to the present paper and are reviewed here. The particle *ne* is sentence-final and has been characterized as an index (Cook, 1992) with which a speaker expresses his or her epistemic stance (e.g., Kamio, 1990, 1997; Masuoka, 1991) and affective stance (e.g., Cook, 1992; Maynard, 1993) and produces communicative

effects such as politeness. Kamio (1990, 1997), who regarded *ne* primarily as an evidential marker, argued that using *ne* is obligatory when the knowledge conveyed in the proposition is equally or more deeply embedded in the hearer's than in the speaker's territory of information. However, he acknowledged that *ne* can also be used as an index of affective stance, arguing that *ne* can "suggest[s] camaraderie between the speaker and the hearer" when used in nonobligatory contexts (Kamio, 1997, p. 153). While Kamio's theory centers on the use of *ne* as an index of epistemic stance, Maynard (1993) and Cook (1992) proposed that *ne* serves primarily as an index of affective stance. Based on an examination of mother-child conversations, Cook argued that *ne* directly indexes "affective common ground" (p. 510) and indirectly indexes various social acts, including requesting confirmation, introducing new topics, and mitigating face-threatening acts.

Provided that *ne* can convey such a wide range of indexical meanings as these researchers suggest, a participant in social interaction must understand which particular meaning is being indexed using the particle and make informed decisions about what kind of action he or she can take in response. With its focus on the participants' perspective, CA is thus quite suitable for identifying the workings of *ne* in social interaction. For example, Tanaka's (2000) CA study of *ne* cast new light on one of the functions of *ne* that most studies have identified as soliciting confirmation and agreement (e.g., Cook, 1992; Masuoka, 1991; McGloin, 1990; Morita, 2003; Nittono, 2003; Uyeno, 1971). Similar to *isn't it*, used in English tag questions (e.g., McGloin, 1990; Nittono, 2003; Tanaka, 2000), such use of *ne* makes an affiliative action (Tanaka, 2000) or an aligning action (Morita, 2003) relevant as a next-turn response. According to McGloin (1990), who explained this use of *ne* as that of an epistemic stance marker, the speaker can use *ne* in such a manner when he or she believes that the information is located in the hearer's territory and seeks confirmation from the hearer because the sharedness of knowledge is in question. Meanwhile, when the information conveyed is based on experience shared by the speaker and hearer, the use of *ne* projects agreement (McGloin, 1990), or "approval or concurrence" (Uyeno, 1971, p. 118). However, such an explanation based on the speaker's assessment of information status does not apply well to a request such as *Naisho ne* [Keep this a secret, okay?]. Using this example, Tanaka's (2000) analysis provides evidence for how a particular use of *ne* can invite an affiliative action. When the speaker in her study said *Naisho ne* and the addressee laughed without providing any immediate affiliative response such as *un* [okay], the speaker then repeated the word *naisho* [secret] with an added copula, *da*, and interactional particle, *yo*: *Naisho da yo* [It's a secret, you understand?], which is more forcible than the use of *ne* in inviting an affiliative response. Through an analysis of subsequent actions, Tanaka (2000) identified one type of interactional work that *ne* accomplishes in social interaction.

Morita (2003) also demonstrated that CA is useful for analyzing the interactional functions of *ne*. Her analysis shows in detail how *ne* segments a long narrative into smaller chunks and allows non-turn-grabbing responses from the hearer. This use of *ne* in both intrasentential and sentence-final positions within a long stretch of talk has been studied by Maynard (1993). Based on the finding that more than 50% of occurrences of *ne* in casual conversations receive listener responses, Maynard (1993) claimed that one of the functions of *ne* is to encourage a “listener back-channel response” as a “conversation management device[s]” (p. 211). However, her quantitative analysis does not show the exact mechanism of how *ne* serves that function. In contrast, Morita (2003) presented a detailed analysis of turn-taking to argue that this use of *ne* “foreground[s] a certain stretch of talk as an ‘interactionally relevant unit’ to be operated on—whether that unit is itself a whole utterance or merely one particular component of that utterance” (p. 126). The particle operates as a turn management device so that the hearer has an opportunity to show his or her involvement in the speaker’s talk by producing backchanneling acknowledgment tokens (*aizuchi*) upon hearing *ne*. Morita’s and Tanaka’s CA analyses thus further our understanding of those interactional functions of *ne*, which cannot be explained as indexing stances.

Following Tanaka and Morita, I examine the interactional functions of *ne* used by a learner of Japanese by analyzing the sequential placements of *ne* and the interlocutor’s subsequent actions.

## **L1 and L2 development in the use of *ne***

While L2 learners of Japanese have difficulty developing their competence with respect to the versatile use of the particle *ne*, children who speak Japanese as their first language (L1) seem to start using it at a very early stage of their language development. Clancy’s (1986) study on the L1 acquisition of Japanese revealed that *ne* emerges at 1.5–2 years of age, which is about the same time as the earliest two-word utterances. The earliest production of *ne* is found in a response to an adult’s utterance that ends with *ne*. When an adult points to some flowers and says *Koko ni mo aru ne* [There are some here too, aren’t there], the child repeats part of the utterance and adds *ne*: *Koko aru ne* [There are some here, aren’t there] (p. 429). After beginning to use *ne* when agreeing with another person, children start using *ne* in expressing opinions or making comments, for example, about a very large boat in a picture, saying *Ookii ne* [It’s big, isn’t it?]. Other uses include those that solicit agreement and those that present information that is not available to the hearer. Clancy concludes that “from its earliest occurrences, *ne* is used appropriately in different types of speech acts” (p. 430).

The early development in the use of *ne* by L1 children contrasts with that by adult L2 learners of Japanese. While L1 children start to use *ne* at the two-word stage, L2 learners' development in the use of *ne* lags behind the development of general vocabulary and grammatical particles, as Sawyer (1992) found in his study of L2 learners who were studying abroad in Japan. Although L2 learners start to use *ne* earlier than other sentence-final particles such as *yo* and *no* (Haijikan, 1994; Mine, 1995; Mine et al., 2002), a large proportion of its use is found in a formulaic expression, *soo desu ne* [‘That’s right’; Sawyer, 1992; Yoshimi, 1999]. In Ohta’s (2001) longitudinal study of first-year classroom learners of Japanese, *soo desu ne* and other aligning expressions such as *ii desu ne* [That sounds good] appeared in L2 learners’ speech after a stage where the learners used an acknowledgement expression, *soo desu ka* [Is that right?/ Really?], in response to a speaker telling new information. When the phrase *soo desu ne* began to be used in response turns, it was often inappropriately used. While the appropriateness of this phrase was not examined in Sawyer’s (1992) study, Yoshimi (1999) also found that it tended to be used in inappropriate contexts. L2 learners seemed to use *soo desu ne* in response turns to show alignment, indicating that they are with the current speaker, but many of its uses were inappropriate in terms of the epistemic stance that the expression indicates. This problem of inappropriate use should be investigated by paying closer attention to the sequential placement of the phrase.

L2 learners use *ne* also in “contributory” turns, in which the speaker is talking about his or her “own experience or ideas, or in the assessment of or commenting on the experiences or ideas of others” (Yoshimi, 1999, p. 1517). According to Shibahara (2002), who examined the use of *ne* by intermediate and advanced L2 learners of Japanese in oral proficiency interviews twice during their 9-month stays in Japan, “facilitating” *ne*, which is used when the speaker assumes a shared perspective and invites an agreement, was used most frequently. She also found that “softening” *ne*, which is used in imparting nonshared information, was used less frequently and often inappropriately. The pervasiveness of inappropriate use of “softening” *ne* was also pointed out in Mine’s (1995) 8-month study of learners from beginning to advanced levels.

To sum up, previous research indicates that although L2 learners’ rate of development is slower than that of L1 children, they have been found to begin using *ne* in response turns as early as their first year in L2 classrooms. The formulaic expression *soo desu ne* may be readily used but appropriateness seems to be difficult at first. In contributory turns, learners use *ne* frequently and appropriately when they state information that is assumed to be shared, while its use in imparting nonshared information is often inappropriate initially.

Although L2 research on the use of *ne* during the past 15 years has given us an outline of development in terms of the order of emergence and frequency and appropriateness of use, how learners can use the linguistic resource *ne* in

social interaction is not clear yet, except for acknowledgment and alignment in response turns (Ohta, 2001). In most of the previous studies, the functions of *ne* were coded according to predetermined categories to count the frequencies. Additionally, because those studies only provide the sentences that include *ne* in their reports, we cannot tell how *ne* in those instances can be “facilitating” (Shibahara, 2002) the flow of a conversation. With the aim of understanding how a learner of Japanese develops interactional competence with respect to the use of *ne* during a study abroad, this chapter analyzes in detail how *ne* functions in the sequential organization of talk-in-interaction.

## Study

### Data

The data for the present study comprises eight conversations (chronologically ordered from FR1 through FR8) that a learner of Japanese video-recorded during his stay in Japan. The learner, Fred,<sup>1</sup> is an American college student who studied Japanese for 2 years in high school and another 2 years at a university. After completing the second-year courses, he participated in a study-abroad program in Japan for two semesters from September 2004 to May 2005. I asked Fred to record 30-minute conversations once a month with people whom he regularly interacted with. He chose to record interactions with his host family (FR1, 2), his Japanese tutor and friend (FR3, 4), his American friend and his host mother (FR5), a friend of his Japanese tutor (FR6), his American friend and his Japanese girlfriend (FR7), and the Japanese person who participated in FR7 (FR8).

The data were given a “comprehensive data treatment” (ten Have, 2007) with regard to Fred’s use of *ne* in the eight sessions (FR1–8). Single case analyses of each occurrence of *ne* in the data were done using CA (e.g., Heritage, 1984b; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). Although applying CA methodology to talk-in-interaction involving L2 speakers involves some difficulties, previous research has shown that it is a fruitful enterprise (Gardner & Wagner, 2004; Schegloff, Koshik, Jacoby, & Olsher, 2002; Wong & Olsher, 2000). As Heritage (1984b) stated, “[c]onversation analysis...is concerned with the analysis of the *competences* which underlie ordinary...social activities” (p. 241). The competences of L2 speakers can also be understood by refraining from prescribing the regularities found in native speakers’ interactions as the norm. By analyzing how responses to *ne*-ending turns are oriented to by others, we can understand the interactional functions that *ne* plays as a linguistic resource and the participants’ interactional competence. After analyzing all of Fred’s uses of *ne*, I compared his use of this particle across conversation sessions.

### Analysis of Fred's use of *ne*

After transcribing all eight conversations that Fred recorded, I found that he did not use *ne* at all in the first two conversations (FR1, 2). His initial uses of *ne* were twice in FR3, once in FR4, and once in FR5. While the use of *ne* was restricted to these few occasions in FR3–5, Fred's use of *ne* greatly increased from FR6: It was used 10 times in FR6, 22 times in FR7, and 13 times in FR8. Therefore, I first analyze Fred's initial uses in FR3 through FR5 in chronological order and then present the analysis of its uses in the rest of the conversations (FR6–8) according to the sequential placement of *ne* in relation to the previous turns. I discuss Fred's development later in the discussion section.

#### *Fred's initial uses of ne*

*Presenting a possible new topic after the previous topic ceased to develop further.* Fred used *ne* twice in FR3, including the segment presented in Excerpt 1.

#### Excerpt 1, final exam (FR3, 12/7/2004, 3'58")

Maho (MH) is Fred's (FR) friend and tutor whom he meets every week. After the previous topic comes to an end by Fred saying "soo soo soo" [right, right, right]" and Maho saying "soo soo soo" [right, right, right]" Fred initiates a new topic (line 1).

01 FR: kimatsu shiken ga ar:imasu **ne**,  
end of term test SB exist-polite *ne*  
"There are final exams, aren't they?"

02 (1.1)

03 MH: un. aru. (.) tada anmashi nai.  
yeah exist-plain except much not exist  
"Yeah, there are. But not many."

04 (0.3)

05 FR: anmashi (nai) (0.2) un.  
much (not exist) yeah  
"You don't have many. Yeah."

06 (0.4)

07 FR: watashi wa: shinpai  
I TP worried  
"I am worried."

In response to Fred's *ne*-ending statement about the final exams, Maho says *un* and produces a partial repetition of his utterance (*aru* [exist-plain], which corresponds with *arimasu* [exist-polite]), confirming that Fred's statement is correct (line 03). However, this is not a wholehearted confirmation as indicated by



the 1.1-s pause before the response and also by a qualification, or an utterance that restricts the applicability of the prior statement, which Maho provides using *tada* [except]. This sequence of an affirmative response followed by a qualification is very similar to the partial agreement that Pomerantz (1984) found in second assessments, in which the hearer of the first assessment agrees with *yes* and then presents a weak disagreement with *but*. This suggests that Fred's turn that ends with *ne* invites an affirmative response as a preferred one. Then, in line 05, Fred repeats the last two words of Maho's qualification and says *un* [Yeah] after a 0.2-s pause, showing his acknowledgment of her response. Such a response indicates that Fred is taking the role of a hearer and that he regards Maho as the main speaker who contributes to the development of the topic that he initiated. However, Maho does not continue her story. After a 0.4-s pause, Fred in line 07 picks up the topic of the final exam and starts telling his own story with the use of the topic marker *wa* in comparison to Maho's story. In this way, Fred not only initiates a topic with the use of *ne* but also contributes to the development of the topic when his interlocutor does not contribute to it.

The correspondence of a *ne*-ending statement and an affirmative response, *un*, was also observed in another segment in the same conversation (transcript not presented here) when Fred initiated a topic at the beginning of the conversation. Following a 1.9-s pause after Fred greeted Maho, he introduced the topic of the recent weather, saying, *samuku narimas ne* [It gets cold, doesn't it?]. Maho said *hai* [yes] after five lines of negotiating the tense and aspect of this utterance, which suggests her orientation to the absence of an affirmative response after Fred's *ne*-ending turn. In this instance, Maho's delayed response, *hai*, reflexively indicates that Fred's *ne*-ending turn makes an agreement the relevant next turn and that the five lines of negotiation were inserted between the pair of utterances. With the use of *ne* in this interactional structure, Fred invited an agreement to his view of the recent weather and introduced a new topic, which unfortunately faded out with a long pause after Maho's utterance, *hai* [yes].

In these instances in FR3, *ne* was used to make a next turn agreement or confirmation relevant as a preferred response. With this use of *ne*, Fred provided his interlocutor an interactional space to display her understanding of the matter (whether it is about the recent weather or test schedule). Such use of *ne* to introduce a topic was also observed twice in FR7.

*Stating an opinion within Fred's own telling.* While the *ne*-ending statements which Fred used in FR3 made relevant confirmation or agreement in the next turn, the particle used once in FR4 does not have such a function.

**Excerpt 2, Fred's impression of people in Tokyo (FR4, 1/18/2005, 1'56")**

Fred (FR) and Maho (MH) both live in the Kansai area. Fred is talking to Maho about his recent trip to Tokyo.

- 01 FR: tookyoo jin wa::. (0.8) ano: (0.4)  
Tokyo people TP well
- 02 hakkiri itte::. (0.3) h. ((sniffs))  
frankly say-and
- 03 aa:. (0.2) chotto:: shitsurei  
mm a little rude
- 04 to(h) o(h)mo(h)imas **ne**,  
QT think ne  
"Tokyo people are, well, frankly speaking, mm, a bit rude,  
I think"
- 05 (0.5)
- 06 MH: aa a[a].  
ah ah  
"Ah, ah."
- 0 7FR: [doite:. doite:. doite:.  
move away move away move away
- 08 ((performing 'elbowing one's way out'))  
"Move away, move away, move away."

After characterizing Tokyo as a metropolitan city, Fred in line 01 begins making a negative assessment about people in Tokyo (*shitsurei* [rude]). This action is a dispreferred one, as projected with the adverbial phrase, *hakkiri itte* [frankly speaking], and as indicated with several features of his turn: delaying the assessment with the use of sniffs and *aa* [mm], mitigating the criticism with *chotto* [a bit], and adding a modal expression *to omoimasu* [I think that] with chuckles. At a first glance, the utterance-final *ne* in this assessment turn appears to be "soften[ing] the declarative nature of the sentence. [Its] use, therefore, gives the effect of humbling the speaker and being polite to the addressee" (Uyeno, 1971, p. 131). However, even though some politeness is communicated in this utterance, we cannot be certain that the particle *ne* produces this effect because *ne* is used together with other means of softening the utterance. What we can do here is analyze the turns after the occurrence of *ne*. When Maho acknowledges Fred's opinion by saying *aa aa* [Ah, ah] (line 06), Fred in line 07 continues his turn without explicitly demanding an agreement to his view. Fred's continued telling suggests that the *ne*-ending turn does not put the hearer in a position to agree with his statement. As Morita (2003) argued in her analysis of *ne*, a teller can chunk his telling into interactionally relevant segments and provide interactional space for the hearer to respond without pushing for any specific type of response. This example has shown that Fred was capable of using the particle *ne* to mark interactional chunking when stating an opinion. This use of *ne* was also seen in his later conversations, FR7 and FR8, in addition to FR4.

*Emphasizing confirmation in response to a prior turn that ends with deshoo.* While Fred's use of *ne* was seen as part of his opinion statement in FR4, the only instance of Fred's use of *ne* found in FR5 was part of the formulaic phrase

*soo desu ne* [That's right], which emphasizes a prior confirmation he has made in response to a turn that ends with *deshoo* [I suppose; Isn't it so?].

### Excerpt 3, Fred's host sister (FR5, 3/3/2005, 2'11")

Fred (FR) and his friend, Gordon, are in Gordon's host mother's (GM) house. Gordon's host mother is talking about Fred's host brother and sisters based on what she has heard from Fred's host mother. After talking about Fred's host brother, she begins to talk about one of Fred's host sisters (line 1).

- 01 GM: *oneesan wa suisu ka dokka ni*  
*older sister TP Switzerland or somewhere in*
- 02 *iru deshoo.*  
*live I suppose*  
*"The older sister is in Switzerland or somewhere, isn't she?"*
- 03 (0.7)
- 04 FR: [*un n,*  
*yeah*  
*"Yeah."*]
- 05 GM: [*°musume-san°*  
*daughter*  
*"The daughter of your host mother."*]
- 06 (0.4)
- 07 FR: ***soo desu ne<sup>2</sup>***  
*right CP ne*  
*"That's right"*
- 08 GM: *hnn,*  
*mm*  
*"Mm."*
- 09 (0.8)
- 10 FR: *shitte iru*  
*know*  
*"I know that."*

Gordon's host mother states her knowledge about Fred's host sister in lines 01 and 02, followed by a 0.7-s pause. Fred confirms the information by saying *un* [yeah], but this is overlapped with her clarification that the person she is referring to as *oneesan* [older sister] is the *musume-san* [daughter] of his host mother. This clarification reflexively indicates that the information presented with the modal expression *deshoo* [I suppose] in her first turn requires confirmation. Evidence for this is the 0.7-s pause (line 3) and the host mother's attempt to

make sure that Fred understood her message by clarifying the referent. Fred's utterance in line 07, *soo desu ne* [That's right], displays his understanding of the referent and also reaffirms, as an addition to his first response, *un*, that the information about the referent is correct. It is important to emphasize the confirmation because *un* can be taken either as a sign of confirmation or a sign of indecisiveness, especially here because of the subtle prosody in which *un* was uttered and the delay in its utterance. Fred further adds *shitte iru* [I know that] in line 10 and further claims his knowledge by providing information about the sister three lines after that. This example suggests that Fred was capable of using the formula *soo desu ne* to emphasize his confirmation, in response to the interactional demand of the turn sequence.

Fred's use of *ne* after his interlocutor's use of *deshoo* was also seen twice in FR8. Interestingly, in both instances, the uses of *ne*—once in the form of *soo desu ne* and the other with a partial repetition of the *deshoo*-ending statement—were seen not immediately after the minimal responses, *aa* and *un*, but after his interlocutor concluded her telling with an assessment, *kara meccha urayamashii* [so, I am really envious of you] and *Dakara sugoku omoshirokatta* [So, it was very interesting]. Fred used these *ne*-ending utterances, not only to emphasize confirmation, such as in Excerpt 3, but also as a way to mark the end of his interlocutor's previous telling before initiating a related telling.

As we have seen so far, in his initial uses of *ne*, Fred demonstrated his interactional competence in the use of this particle from his third through fifth conversations, although its frequency was very low. Using *ne* in different sequential environments, Fred was able to introduce topics, signal segments of his telling for his interlocutor to come in with some responses, and emphasize confirmation as a way to proceed with the topic at hand. These uses of *ne* are seen not only in the earlier conversations but also in Fred's later conversations, which indicates that Fred used *ne* early in his study abroad not simply by chance.

### **Expanded use of *ne* in FR6–8**

While Fred's use of *ne* in FR3–5 was very limited in frequency and did not show any patterns in terms of its interactional functions, his use of *ne* clearly increased in FR6. I present my analysis here according to the sequential placement of *ne*. When similar uses of *ne* appeared in multiple conversations, I chose an excerpt from the earliest conversation.

*In response to the interlocutor's ne-ending statement.* While Fred retrospectively used *soo desu ne* and partial repetition after his interlocutor's *deshoo*-ending statements, he also used these responses immediately after *hai* [yes] or *un* [yeah] in response to his interlocutor's *ne*-ending statements. Such use of *ne* after Fred's interlocutor's use of *ne* was seen four times in FR7 and once in FR8. Excerpt 4 presents one of these instances.

**Excerpt 4, American Standard English (FR7, 4/8/2005, 30'45")**

Fred (FR), Derek (DR) and Maki (MK) are talking about regional varieties of American English. When Derek says "nansee no eego wa [English spoken in the Southwest is]" "hyoojun-go [the standard language]," Fred agrees with him by saying "un. soo to omoimasu [Yeah, I think so]." He then begins to state his opinion in line 1, using the word "Hollywood," which Derek provided.

- 01 FR: hariudd, (0.2) no eego wa:. (0.3)  
*Hollywood LK English TP*
- 02 hyoo-go: (0.2) hyoogen-go?  
*language expression-language*  
*"The English spoken in Hollywood is st- language,*  
*stand- language?"*
- 03 (0.4)
- 04 DR: hy[oojun-go  
*standard-language*  
*"Standard language."*
- 05 MK: [hyoojun-go,=  
*standard-language*  
*"Standard language."*
- 06 FR: =hyoojun-[go  
*standard-language*  
*"Standard language."*
- 07 DR: [to: iema:su ne:. (.)  
*QT say-can-Polite ne*
- 08 to [iwareteima[s ne:,  
*QT say-PASSIVE-PROG-Polite ne*  
*"We can say so. It is being said that way."*
- 09 FR: [un. [un.  
*yeah yeah*  
*"Yeah, yeah."*
- 10 (0.2)
- 11 FR: hai. (.) **soo desu ne,**  
*yes right CP ne*  
*"Yes, that's right."*
- .
- 12 DR: °u:n.°  
*yeah*  
*"Yeah."*

In lines 01 and 02, Fred tries to say that the English spoken in Hollywood is the Standard English in the USA, using the same sentence structure

that Derek used earlier. When Fred indicates difficulty in pronouncing the word *hyoojungo* [standard language] by using a rising intonation in line 02, Derek and Maki model the pronunciation. Before Fred finishes repeating their models, Derek in line 07 completes the sentence initiated by Fred in line 01, building on the word that he modeled in line 04. Fred responds to Derek's *ne*-ending statement (line 07) with *un* [Yeah] in line 09, but it is overlapped with Derek's restatement (line 08). Although Fred says *un* again when Derek's restatement reaches the end of a sentence (the *masu* form of a verb), he further responds to Derek when he completes his restatement with *ne*. This time, Fred in line 11 says, *hai. soo desu ne* [Yes, that's right] instead of a short token *un*, specifically in response to Derek's second *ne*-ending statement.

The use of *un* (the first *un* in line 09) seems to be sufficient to show agreement with Derek's first *ne*-ending statement (line 07) because the statement was originally initiated by Fred in line 01. However, Derek's overlapping *ne*-ending restatement makes a renewed agreeing response relevant in the next turn. We have seen in this excerpt that Fred used the phrase *soo desu ne* to respond to the immediate need for a renewed display of agreement to his interlocutor's *ne*-ending statement.

*In response to the interlocutor's statement that aligns with Fred's earlier telling.* In the previous example, Fred used *un soo desu ne* to agree with Derek's *ne*-ending statement. However, his use of this phrase was not limited to responding to a statement that ends with *ne*. As shown in Excerpt 5, Fred used *soo desu ne* even when his interlocutor did not use *ne*.

#### **Excerpt 5, scary ride on a roller coaster (FR6, 3/8/2005, 6'32")**

Fred (FR) is telling Yuko (YK), whom he met for the first time, about a ride at an amusement park. After Yuko says that she was scared when she rode on a roller coaster, Fred starts telling her about how his host sister expressed her fear and hesitation before riding with him.

- 01 FR: sore ato de:. (0.7) ((imitating host sister))  
*that after in*
- 02 aa:.. (.) daijoobu:. kowanakatta(h). hh=  
*ah alright scary-Neg-past*  
 "After that, she said, 'Ah, I'm okay. It was not scary'."
- 03 YK: =ah hah hah: .hh (0.3) kowag[atтеру dake  
*scary-pretending only*  
 "She was just pretending to be scared."

- 04 FR: [soo desu ne:.  
right CP ne  
"That's right."
- 05 eh heh heh heh heh
- 06 (0.5)
- 07 YK: heh heh
- 08 (0.2)
- 09 FR: heh heh
- 10 (0.4)
- 11 FR: hosuto oneesan wa (0.4)  
host older sister TP
- 12 ano (1.0)totemo tanoshii hito.  
um very funny person.  
"My host sister is, um, a very funny person"

After Fred imitates his host sister's expression of relief in line 02, Yuko in line 03 laughs along with him and expresses her interpretation that Fred's host sister might have been merely pretending to be scared. Fred overlaps with Yuko's interpretive comment with the phrase *soo desu ne* and laughs in line 04. Considering the timing of the overlap, Fred's use of *soo desu ne* cannot be said to show agreement with Yuko's interpretation. However, the syllables *kowa-(i)* [afraid, scary] are enough to show that the content of Yuko's utterance is about Fred's host sister's emotional state. With the anticipation that Yuko is aligning with his story, Fred in line 04 is acknowledging Yuko's ongoing turn. His later assessment of his host sister (lines 11, 12) and his subsequent story about her suggests that his story about the roller coaster ride is completed when the alignment with Yuko is achieved.

This example shows that when Fred's interlocutor displayed her understanding of Fred's telling by making an aligning comment, Fred used the phrase *soo desu ne* to acknowledge her contribution before continuing his telling. Fred's competent use of *soo desu ne* in this sequential environment was seen in FR8 as well as in FR6.

*In response to an interlocutor's telling that does not align with Fred's earlier telling.* While Fred's use of the phrase *soo desu ne* alone served well to acknowledge his interlocutor's aligning turn as seen in Excerpts 4 and 5, its use seemed to require some explication when the prior interlocutor's turn presented a view that contrasted with Fred's telling, as shown in Excerpt 6.

#### **Excerpt 6, making friends with apartment neighbors (FR6, 3/8/2005, 11'43")**

In response to Yuko's (YK) question of where he used to live in Hawai'i, Fred (FR) tells her that he used to live

in a dorm [ryoo] and adds "gakusee no apaato [apartment for students]." He explains that living in a dorm was cheaper than living in a regular apartment.

01 YK: huu:[n:  
um hum  
"Um hum."

02 FR: [iroirona: (.) iroirona tomodachi: (0.4) aa:  
various various friend um

03 (0.3) ga: (0.4) tsukatta:. (0.3) tsuka:u?  
SB use-past use-present  
"I used (=made) various, various friends. Use?"

04 (0.5)

05 YK: apaato ni sundetemo:, (0.2)  
apartment in live-even if  
"Even if (we) live in an apartment,"

06 FR: un un un.=  
yeah  
"Yeah, yeah, yeah."

07 YK: u::[:n.  
uhm  
"uhm,"

08 FR: [hai.  
yes  
"Yes."

09 (0.9)

10 YK: nihon de wa: apaato ni: sundetemo:. (0.5)  
Japan in TP apartment in live-even if

11 tonari dooshi anmari nakayoku [(wa nare-)<sup>3</sup>  
next door each other much befriend TP become-can  
"in Japan, even if (we) live in an apartment, (we)  
can't make friends with the neighbors that much."

12 FR: [aa aa.  
ah ah

13 **soo** [desu ne:.  
right CP ne  
"Ah, ah. That's right."

14 YK: [u::n.  
yeah  
"Yeah."

15 (0.8)



16 FR: aa. apaato ni sundeimasu ka?  
 uhm apartment in live Q  
 "Uhm, do you live in an apartment?"

After Fred tells that he made (*tsukatta* [used] for *tsukutta* [made]) many friends (lines 02, 03), Yuko in line 05 begins presenting an opposing view about interpersonal relationships in apartments. Although her utterance in line 05 is incomplete as a sentence, the connective *-temo* [even if] shows a contrast with Fred's telling. After receiving Fred's encouragement to continue with her telling in lines 06 and 08, Yuko repeats her previous statement following a qualification (*nihon de wa* [in Japan]), which enables her to not have to contradict Fred's argument about the situation in Hawai'i. Before she finishes talking, Fred in lines 12 and 13 begins saying *aa, soo desu ne* [Oh, that's right]. This overlap indicates that he has already understood her argument and can anticipate how her telling will proceed without hearing it. Yuko halts her telling just after Fred's overlapping utterance starts, and says *u:n*, with which she acknowledges Fred's display of understanding. When Fred asks a question after a 0.8-s pause (line 16), the difference brought up by Yuko is left up in the air.

Fred's response *aa soo desu ne* in this excerpt requires some discussion. Although his use of the phrase indicates at least that he understands Yuko's argument and possibly that he agrees with the statement, Fred's subsequent turn (line 16) does not help us understand what he is doing exactly with the phrase. If he is only indicating his understanding, he should have said *aa. soo desu ka* [Oh, is that right?]. Otherwise, because he has never lived in an apartment in Japan, he could have used a secondhand evidential *rashii* [according to what I have heard], as in *soo rashii desu ne* before eliciting a firsthand story about apartment life in Japan (line 16). In addition to the problem with the choice of linguistic resources, this response consequently prevents Yuko from continuing her telling. Although Fred elicits more telling from Yuko, the question seems to be brought up abruptly. To relate this question to Yuko's argument, Fred could have used a different form, *sunde iru n desu ka?*, which regards *sunde iru* [living in an apartment herself] as the supporting evidence for her argument.

This example shows that the phrase *soo desu ne* cannot be readily used as the sole response when Fred's interlocutor's previous turn is not in alignment with Fred's earlier telling. The epistemic marking of the phrase might need some adjustment, and coherence with subsequent turns should be established with the use of other linguistic resources. In another instance found in FR6, Fred used *soo desu ne* and supported this response with a "second story" (Sacks, 1995, p. 257). As an answer to Fred's question, his interlocutor, Yuko, told him that she wanted to improve her English, at least before trying to learn other languages. Following a 0.8-s pause after he said *un un. (.) soo desu ne.*, Fred began talking about his experience learning Spanish as a second language by saying *boku ni totte*: [For me]. Although what Fred was doing with the phrase



- 10 (0.2)
- 11 MK: hunde (n)an(ka) kooritsu no kookoo no  
 so like public LK high school at
- 12 hito wa[:. sugoku urayamashigatteta:.=  
 people TP very envied  
 "So, like, we at a public high school were very envious."
- 13 FR: [un  
 yeah  
 "Yeah."
- 14 FR: =aa hawai mo: ano:: onaji (.) ano  
 uhm Hawai'i also well same well  
 "Uhm, it's the same in Hawai'i. Well,"

((Fred continues to say that he would put on a jacket in the classroom during the summer but feels hot when he goes outside.))

While Fred's initial response to Maki's telling, *huun* [Oh, is that so?] (line 02), indicates that the telling has provided some information new to him (cf. Mori, 2006, on the use of a similar expression, *hee* [oh, I didn't know that]), he says *soo desu ne* [That's right] a little later (line 05). Fred's use of these contrastive responses can be interpreted in two ways. Considering his earlier response, *huun*, Fred could have misused the final particle *ne* in the phrase *soo desu ne*: that is, Fred should have used the phrase *soo desu ka* [Is that right?] in line 02 to acknowledge the new information. However, taking into consideration Fred's subsequent turns, it is more probable that, after acknowledging Maki's telling of her friend's experience, he realizes that the experience of being in a cold classroom is, actually, not unfamiliar to him. He first shows alignment with Maki's story by using the phrase *soo desu ne* in line 05, then displays his understanding of how an air-conditioned room can get too cold (line 07). His second story introduced in line 14 clarifies the ground on which he said *soo desu ne* in line 05: He also has experienced such cold classrooms in Hawai'i. I submit that what Fred proceeds to tell from line 14 onward is a second story to Maki's story. Although he clearly aligns his upcoming story with Maki's story by using the particle *mo* [also] and the lexical item *onaji* [same] (line 14), this second story about his experience in cold classrooms is not simply a reiteration of Maki's telling of envious feelings that she and her friends at a public school had toward students in private schools (lines 11, 12). In this light, the *ne*-ending comment in line 07 serves both as a supporting statement for the agreement made with *soo desu ne* and also as a preliminary to his second story.

In this excerpt, we have seen that Fred aligns with the previous telling with the use of the phrase *soo desu ne*, a *ne*-ending statement, and a second story. Compared to Excerpt 5, where the previous speaker is already in alignment with

Fred, the phrase *soo desu ne* by itself does not seem to be enough to show alignment. While the interactional function of *soo desu ne* is left ambiguous in Excerpt 6, Fred's subsequent turns make it clear in Excerpt 7. With regard to the aligning comment to which the particle *ne* is attached (line 07, Excerpt 7), Maki agrees to it by saying *ryoohoo* [both jackets and sweaters] and *soo soo* [That's right], which is uttered immediately after Fred says *ne*. Because Fred's *ne*-ending comment is showing alignment with Maki's story, an agreement in the next turn seems to be projected. Such projection of an agreement was also observed in three instances in FR7 where Fred used a *ne*-ending comment that aligns with the previous telling.

However, not all of Fred's *ne*-ending statements are in alignment with the interlocutor's earlier telling, as shown in Excerpt 8.

**Excerpt 8, scenery in Arizona (FR7, 4/8/2005, 1'06")**

Fred (FR), Derek (DR) and MK (Maki) are talking about the State of Arizona, where Derek is from. After Fred asks Derek what Arizona is famous for, Derek tells him that it is famous for its cactuses and hot weather, and continues his telling with the connective *kedo* [but].

01 DR: keshiki: ga (.) utsukushii.  
          *scenery SB beautiful*  
          *"Its scenery is beautiful."*

02 (0.3)

03 FR: soo,  
          *right*  
          *"Is that so?"*

04 (0.4)

05 DR: °un:°  
          *yeah*  
          *"Yeah."*

06 (0.9)

07 FR: demo keshiki wa:: (0.2) ((sniff)) (1.0)  
          *but scenery TP*

08 *nanim o arimasen ne?*  
          *nothing not exist ne*  
          *"But speaking of the scenery, there's nothing, right?"*

09 (0.4)



**Excerpt 9, Shiga Prefecture (FR6, 3/8/2005, 0'48")**

After talking about where he lives, Fred (FR) asks Yuko (YK) where she lives (line 1).

- 01 FR: docchi ni sundeimasu ka?  
*which in live Q*  
 "Where do you live?"
- 02 (0.4)
- 03 YK: eeto: shiga-ken.=  
*well Shiga prefecture*  
 "Well, in Shiga prefecture."
- 04 FR: =shig[a-ken.  
*Shiga prefecture*  
 "Shiga prefecture"
- 05 YK: [shiga-ken [(tte)  
*Shiga prefecture QT*  
 "A prefecture called Shiga."
- 06 FR: [aa:. tooii desu **ne**, (0.2)  
*oh far CP ne*  
 "Oh, it's far, isn't it?"
- 07 YK: ha:[i.=  
*yes*  
 "Yes."
- 08 FR: [(sugoi oto dashi-)<sup>4</sup> (0.3)  
*horrible sound emit*  
 kyoo (1.2)  
*today*
- 09 ima wa: nanka tazunete imasu ka?  
*now TP like visit-PROG Q*  
 "It's a horrible sound. Today, are you, like, visiting now?"

In response to Fred's question in line 01, Yuko answers that she lives in Shiga prefecture. After repeating her answer without a pause (line 04), Fred makes an assessment about the information given (line 06) by attending to the distance between the prefecture and the place where they are having this conversation. Although Yuko in line 05 repeats her answer as if she is trying to check Fred's understanding, she discontinues her utterance when Fred claims his understanding by saying *aa* [oh]. Then, she agrees with Fred's *ne*-ending assessment by saying *hai* [yes]. Building on the agreement on the distance he brought up, Fred asks whether she is visiting the town on that day (lines 08, 09).

In this excerpt, Fred, with the use of a *ne*-ending assessment, gave a new meaning to the information that his interlocutor provided as an answer to his question and developed the conversation based on the perspective that they mutually agreed on in lines 04 and 07. Three more instances of such use of *ne* together with assessments were found: one in FR6 and two in FR7.

The use of *ne*-marked assessments after hearing new information is similar to what was reported in Ohta's (1999) study. In the initiation-response-follow-up sequence found in typical foreign language classrooms, teachers of Japanese use *ne* as in *ii desu ne* [Your answer is good] to evaluate the correctness of students' answers to display questions. In contrast, when teachers ask real questions about students' lives, such as places they go on weekends, their feedback to the answers are acknowledgments (e.g., *aa soo desu ka* [Oh, is that right?]) or assessments such as *omoshiroi desu ne* [That's interesting] and *ii desu ne*: [That's nice]. Ohta (1999, 2001) found that students in Japanese as a foreign language classrooms used a greater variety of utterances in the follow-up turn. In addition to the use of *ii desu ne*, which teachers would use to evaluate students' answers, Ohta found an increasing use of *ne*-ending assessments in the students' follow-up responses. However, one of the four students who participated in Ohta's study was found to misuse the phrase *soo desu ne* [That's right] in the follow-up turn. Fred also misused the phrase in FR6, as shown in Excerpt 10.

### **Excerpt 10, trip to America (FR6, 3/8/2005, 3'34")**

After Fred (FR) tells a story about an old lady who went to many foreign countries, he asks Yuko (YK) a question (line 1).

01 FR: amerika itta koto ga arimasu ka?=  
America went thing SB there is Q  
"Have you been to America?"

02 YK: =a (.) arimasu  
uh there is  
"Uh, I have."

03 (0.2)

04 FR: arimasu k(a)=  
there is Q  
"You have."

05 YK: =a etto::. [losanzerus to:[:.  
let me see Los Angeles and  
"Let me see, I've been to Los Angeles and"

- 06 FR:                   [hai,                   [aa. so- (.) desu **ne**:.  
                           yes                   oh right CP ne  
                           "Yes. Oh, that's right."
- 07 YK: rasu begasu.  
       Las Vegas  
       "Las Vegas."
- 08 FR: ras begasu: ya na:. (.)  
       Las Vegas CP IP
- 09     ras begasu: wa doo datta?  
       Las Vegas TP how CP-PAST  
       "I see, Las Vegas. How was Las Vegas?"

In response to Fred's question of whether she has been to the United States, Yuko answers positively (line 02). In the follow-up turn, Fred acknowledges her answer by repeating *arimasu* [there is] and ending with a question marker *ka*, which indicates the receipt of new information in a falling tone. This acknowledgment serves as a continuer as Yuko's immediate elaboration of her answer in line 05 indicates. Fred also encourages the continuation of Yuko's answer by saying *hai* [yes] after she says *etto*: [umm, let me see]. After Yuko mentions the first city, Fred acknowledges the information by saying *aa* and adds *soo desu ne* [That's right]. As projected through the use of the connecting particle *to* [and] in line 05, Yuko in line 07 continues naming another city she has visited, thus treating Fred's response in line 06 as a continuer.

While we have analyzed the use of *soo desu ne* in a turn that aligns with the interlocutor's previous telling, the previous turn in this excerpt (line 05) presents new information that is ill-suited to be aligned with "that's right." The information could be acknowledged by saying *Aa, soo desu ka* [Oh, is that right?] or by adding *ka* after the repetition of the new information (Los Angeles *desu ka* [Oh, you've been to Los Angeles], as he did in line 04. If he wanted to show recognition of Los Angeles as a familiar place, he could have said *Aa, LA desu ne* [Oh, LA] instead of using *soo* [right].

The analysis of this excerpt suggests that providing an acknowledgment or an assessment in the follow-up turn requires the right choice of linguistic resources and the skill to anticipate the projected trajectory of the current speaker's turn to find the right moment to respond. The next excerpt shows that the timing of an assessment and the choice of linguistic resources are consequential for the interlocutor's treatment of the turn.

#### **Excerpt 11, Maki's summer plan (FR8, 5/6/2005, 10'12")**

In response to Fred's (FR) question about her summer plan, Maki (MK) says that she will be going on a trip to England. After Fred says *un* [yeah], she elaborates her answer by saying she will be going there together



(line 1) with her friend if the friend can save enough money for the trip.

01 MK: *isshoni iku to omou.*  
*together go QT think*  
*"I think we will go there together."*

02 (0.4)

03 FR: °*un.*°  
*yeah*  
*"Yeah."*

04 (0.4)

05 MK: *da[kara:]*  
*therefore*  
*"So,"*

06 FR: [°*tano*]shis[oo°]  
*sound-fun*  
*"That sounds fun."*

07 MK: [moo sorosoro (.) keekaku-suru  
*soon soon plan*  
*"we will make a plan soon."*

08 (0.2)

09 FR: *un::.. tanoshimi ne: ,=*  
*yeah looking forward ne*  
*"Yeah. It's exciting, isn't it?"*

10 MK: =*u[n.*  
*yeah*  
*"Yeah."*

11 FR: [n heh heh.

12 (0.2)

13 MK: *sugoi tanoshimi*  
*very looking forward*  
*"I'm looking forward to it very much."*

After Maki's elaborated answer about her summer plan comes to a short halt at the end of a turn constructional unit (TCU) in line 01, Fred says *un* in line 03. This token is taken as a continuer, as Maki's resumed telling in line 05 indicates. Meanwhile, as reflexively indicated by Fred's assessment that overlaps with Maki's utterance (line 06), *un* for Fred is not a continuer but an acknowledgement that has to come before making an assessment. Failing to make his assessment taken up as such, Fred in line 09 makes another assessment after saying *un*.

While his first assessment *tanoshisoo* [That sounds fun] is not responded to by Maki, who has already resumed her telling with *dakara* [therefore], his second assessment after *un* uttered at the end of a TCU (line 07) is responded with *un* by Maki and even upgraded in line 13.

Both of the two instances of Fred's assessment after *un* occurred at the end of a TCU (lines 01, 07), but only the second assessment was responded to and taken up as such by Fred's interlocutor. A question arises as to what the differences are between the two instances. The most noticeable difference is the presence of a 0.4-s pause (line 02) after the first acknowledgment token *un*, while the second instance has no pause. Second, the token *un* itself in the first instance is short (lasting 0.2 s) and uttered in a soft voice, while the second *un* (line 09) is much longer (lasting 0.4 s) and produced at regular speech volume. Although the verb form at the end of Maki's utterance in line 01 indicates the completion of a TCU and suggests a transition-relevance place, Fred's soft and short uttering of *un* followed by a short pause seems to indicate that he will not grab a turn for a further response. In addition, Fred utters the overlapped assessment (*tanoshisoo* [That sounds fun]) also in a soft voice, thus failing to claim it as a legitimate turn to be responded to. In contrast, Fred utters "*un:: tanoshimi ne*: [Yeah, it's exciting, isn't it?]" in a normal voice quality and volume (line 09) at a transition-relevance place, making a legitimate acknowledgment and an assessment to be responded to. Because the word *tanoshimi* [looking forward] indicates Maki's state of mind, this assessment requires a confirmation from Maki that Fred's guess of her emotional state about the trip was right. Thus, Fred uses *ne* after *tanoshimi* as a linguistic resource that makes an upcoming confirmation relevant. The analysis of Excerpt 11 suggests that the timing, voice quality, choice of lexical item, and the use of *ne* all contribute to how an assessment gets acknowledged and responded to as such.

The particle *ne* is a useful linguistic resource to be used with an assessment in the follow-up turn because the speaker can project an upcoming alignment in the subsequent turn. As I have analyzed in this subsection, Fred in FR6 began to use *ne* in such a way (Excerpt 9). The analyses of Excerpts 10 and 11 have suggested that precise placement of the follow-up utterance and the choice of linguistic resources, including the use of *ne*, are important for successfully providing acknowledgments and assessments.

*Within a longer telling*. While previous subsections have analyzed Fred's use of *ne* immediately after his interlocutor's previous turns, his use of *ne* was also seen in longer tellings that present his viewpoint without being in direct response to his interlocutors' previous turns. Excerpt 12 is one of those instances.

**Excerpt 12**, speaking different varieties of English (FR7, 4/8/2005, 31'53")

Fred (FR), Derek (DR) and Maki (MK) are talking about different varieties of English. Fred states that

because American people expect foreigners to speak American Standard English, if people used Australian English and British English, it would be strange.

01 FR: ano chotto okashii: (0.4) °to omou.°  
 um a little strange QT think-plain  
 "Um, it's a little strange, I think."

02 (0.2)

03 °to: omo[(imasu)°  
 QT think-polite  
 "I think so."

04 DR: [hyo- hyoogen.  
 expression  
 "Expression."

((4 lines omitted. Fred and Derek talk about the word "hyoogen." Then, there is a 0.9-s pause.))

09 FR: a nihon-jin wa: oosutoraria no yoo ni:.  
 um Japanese people TP Australia LK way in  
 10 hanashite imasu kedo aa. (.) hanas (0.6)  
 speak-PROG but uh speak-  
 11 hanas:seba:.  
 speak-if  
 "Um, Japanese people are speaking like Australians  
 do but, uh, if they spea- speak that way,"

12 MK: °un.°  
 yeah  
 "Yeah."

13 DR: °un.°  
 yeah  
 "Yeah."

14 (0.8)

15 FR: chotto okashii **ne**,  
 a little strange ne  
 "it's a little strange, isn't it?"

16 (0.4)

17 MK: huu:n  
 uh-huh  
 "Uh huh."

18 (0.7)

- 19 DR: nan[ka  
like  
"Like,"
- 20 FR: [a amerika-jin no baai wa.  
um America person LK situation TP  
"Um, for Americans."
- 21 (0.3)
- 22 MK: u:n=  
humm  
"Humm."
- 23 FR: =un.  
yeah  
"Yeah."
- 24 (1.3)
- 25 DR: demo iro:nna (.) sekai: de:. (.) sekaijuu de  
but various world in world-around in  
26 ironna nihongo ga a- (.) aru kara shikatanai  
various Japanese SB exist so nothing to do  
"But there're various Japanese in various places in  
the world, all over the world. So they must be allowed."

In this excerpt, Fred says *chotto okashii* [a little strange] twice (lines 01, 15). When he makes this statement for the first time, he adds *to omou* [I think that] in the plain form after a 0.4-s pause. Then in line 03, he again expresses the same epistemic stance by using the same verb but this time in the polite form (*to omoimasu*) after a 0.2-s pause. Receiving no response to his opinion statement from the hearers at each of these pauses, Fred seems to be extending the TCU until one of the hearers joins with a response. Although Derek eventually joins to say *hyoogen* [expression], this utterance does not show his position toward Fred's opinion.<sup>5</sup> Fred repeats the opinion statement ending with *ne* in line 15, after specifying the situation to which his opinion pertains (lines 09–11). Although he receives responses from both Maki and Derek, they are both delayed and not in agreement with Fred's opinion. Maki's delayed unenthusiastic response *huun* [uh-huh], which is produced in a monotone, acknowledges Fred's opinion without clarifying what she thinks about it (line 17). Derek, who starts telling something by saying *nanka* [like] in line 19, discontinues this turn when Fred starts adding a qualification to his earlier opinion (line 20) and restarts his telling with the contrastive connective *demo* [but] (lines 25, 26). Hearing Maki's rather indifferent response and Derek's incipient disagreement in lines 17 and 19, Fred in line 20 adds a qualification that limits the effect of his earlier statement. Although the use of a qualification does not elicit any clear agreement, such fine-tuning of

his turn to Maki's and Derek's responses suggests that he is anticipating an agreement to his opinion when he repeats the opinion statement *chotto okashii* in line 15. Thus, Fred used *ne* in line 15 as a resource for pursuing an agreement, along with the use of the epistemic expression *to omou* [I think that], specification of the situation, repetition of the opinion statement, and a qualification.

In this excerpt, we have seen Fred's use of *ne* as a resource for pursuing an agreement from his listeners. This use of *ne* in a longer telling was observed five times in FR7.

### **Discussion: The development of Fred's use of *ne* as part of his interactional competence**

As the analysis of Fred's use of *ne* in the previous section has shown, Fred used *ne* in a variety of sequential positions and with various interactional functions. Although his initial uses of *ne* in FR3–5 were very limited in frequency, a sudden expansion of its use was observed in FR6. The increase of the frequency in the use of *ne* during learners' stays in Japan has also been found in earlier L2 studies of *ne* (e.g., Shibahara, 2002).

Although the developmental path that Fred took is difficult to compare with the findings from other studies, its characteristics are worth discussing here. A large proportion of Fred's use of *ne* was found as part of the formulaic expression *soo desu ne*, which is consistent with the findings in Sawyer's (1992) and Yoshimi's (1999) studies. Note that Fred began using the phrase rather late, only from FR5, and that some of his early uses of *soo desu ne* were found in inappropriate contexts (FR6), as seen in Excerpt 10. Fred's relatively late start in using the phrase and his occasional misuse are consistent with the findings by Ohta (2001) and Yoshimi (1999): The formulaic expression is rarely used by beginning learners, and when they start to use it, its uses are often inappropriate. Although Sawyer (1992) concluded that "the acquisition of *ne* began with the formulaic expression *soo desu ne*" (p. 104), without examining the sequential contexts in which the phrase was used, we cannot rely on frequency counts to investigate "acquisition."

With regard to other uses of *ne*, the findings of the present study have a similarity with those of Shibahara (2002) and Mine (1995). Many of Fred's *ne*-ending turns are immediately responded to with an affirmative response *un* [yeah] or *hai* [yes] (e.g., Excerpts 1, 7–9, 11) even when the interlocutor disagrees later (Excerpt 8). Also, even when Fred's interlocutor does not agree with him, he is observed to use *ne* as a resource to pursue agreement (Excerpt 12). Shibahara (2002) also found that the use of *ne* that was responded to with agreement was most frequent, and Mine (1995) found that

this use had a low percentage of misuse. On the other hand, they found that the use of *ne* in reporting turns, which can be exemplified by the one instance found in Excerpt 2, was observed less frequently (Shibahara) and with a high percentage of misuse (Mine). Although some learners may overuse *ne* in reporting turns as found in Mine's study, Fred's use of *ne* in his longer telling was selective and showed sensitivity to the sequential context.

While the findings of the present study have some similarities to those from earlier research, the comparison is based on a rough estimate of frequencies of different uses of *ne*, and such an approach does not deepen our understanding of the interactional competence that learners develop by using *ne* as a linguistic resource. Therefore, the excerpts we have analyzed in the previous section must be reviewed in their own right. The analysis of *ne* as used by Fred is shown in Table 1 in chronological order.

**Table 1. Summary of Fred's uses of *ne***

session	initial instance of Fred's use of <i>ne</i>	excerpt
FR1	(not found)	
FR2	(not found)	
FR3	in introducing a topic, makes an aligning response as the relevant next turn	1
FR4	with an opinion statement, provides a space for the interlocutor to respond	2
FR5	<i>soo desu ne</i> : emphasizes confirmation that is made relevant with <i>deshoo</i>	3
	<i>soo desu ne</i> : acknowledges the interlocutor's aligning comment	5
FR6	<i>soo desu ne</i> : displays understanding; alignment is not clearly indicated	6
	<i>soo desu ne</i> : acknowledges information provided; misuses <i>soo</i> or <i>ne</i>	10
	with an assessment in response to a short answer, invites agreement	9
FR7	<i>soo desu ne</i> : shows agreement to a <i>ne</i> -ending statement	4
	with a contrasting statement, projects agreement as the preferred response	8
	<i>soo desu ne</i> : shows alignment; alignment is made clear in subsequent turns	7
FR8	with an assessment, makes an alignment in the next turn relevant	11
	with an opinion statement, pursues agreement	12

First, Fred began using *ne* in turns where he could take control over the trajectory of talk-in-interaction. In FR3, Fred used *ne* as a linguistic resource for achieving intersubjective understanding of the topic he introduced. In FR4, *ne* was used at the end of a TCU, which allowed his interlocutor to join in with a response in the middle of his narrative.

While Fred's earliest uses of *ne* were found in turns that did not require him to fine-tune his use of *ne* as an immediate response to the previous speaker's turn, the use of *ne* in a response turn was first found in FR5. In the form of *soo desu ne*, Fred in FR5 emphasized the confirmation that his interlocutor projected with the use of *deshoo* [I suppose, isn't it true?] (Excerpt 3). Fred later used *soo*

*desu ne* also in response to the previous speaker's *ne*-ending turn, which made next turn agreement a relevant response (FR7, Excerpt 4). His uses of *soo desu ne* in these confirmation or agreement turns demonstrate his competence in using an appropriate phrase in the second part of an adjacency pair. Moreover, Fred was found to take the opportunity to elaborate on the information (FR5, Excerpt 3) and his opinion (FR7, Excerpt 4) after saying *soo desu ne*.

In FR6, Fred began using *ne*-ending responses not only in turns where aligning responses were made relevant but also in other sequential environments. For example, Fred used *soo desu ne* after his interlocutor made an aligning comment about Fred's narrative (Excerpt 5) and made a *ne*-ending assessment about the information his interlocutor provided as an answer to Fred's question (Excerpt 9). In some cases, his use of the phrase *soo desu ne* did not seem to fit the sequential environment (e.g., Excerpts 6, 10). Although previous studies (Ohta, 2001; Yoshimi, 1999) have also pointed out learners' inappropriate use of *soo desu ne*, the source of the inappropriateness may not be the use of *ne* per se. In Excerpts 6 and 10, the source of the problem might be the combination of linguistic resources such as *soo*, *ka*, and *ne* and the choice of epistemic stance markers. Moreover, when alignment had not been established in the preceding turns, the use of *soo desu ne* as the sole response did not seem to be enough for the current topic to develop further. Although the function of *soo desu ne* could be made clear through the actions in the subsequent turns (e.g., FR8, Excerpt 7), Fred was not capable of linguistically marking alignment in FR6.

In the final two conversations (FR7–8), the function of the phrase *soo desu ne* was made clear by Fred's subsequent turns. He began using *ne*-ending statements not only in turns where he had already displayed alignment (FR8, Excerpt 7) but also when presenting a view that contrasted with his interlocutor's previous statement (FR7, Excerpt 8). As we observed in Excerpt 12, he also began using *ne* as a resource to pursue agreeing responses to his opinion statements. His active pursuit of a mutually aligning view on a certain matter is also seen in his *ne*-ending assessment about his interlocutor's narrative (FR8, Excerpt 11). As these instances suggest, in later conversations, Fred was able to use *ne* not only to build his talk on the alignment already established in previous turns but also, by presenting his view with *ne* attached, to actively pursue alignment when it was absent.

As we have seen, Fred was found to use *ne* in a wider range of sequential contexts and take more active roles in developing a conversation through its use in his later conversations. While Fred's development of interactional competence can be thus understood through the comparison of his various uses of *ne* used in the longitudinally collected conversational data, I make some notes on the interpretation of the present findings. First, the situational set-up of the particular conversation affects the interactional roles that one can take, although interactional roles can also be negotiated locally. For example, the role of introducing topics was more or

less assigned to Fred in FR3. Before the formal beginning of the conversation in Japanese started, his interlocutor, Maho, asked him in English, "Anything particular that you wanna talk about?" He replied, "Yeah. I'll bring it up." This exchange seems to have helped increase the opportunity for Fred to use *ne* in introducing topics. Because the interactional roles that Fred was able to play varied from conversation to conversation, the comparison of Fred's interactional competence in different conversations is constrained to a certain degree. However, by focusing on how Fred used the particle rather than relying on frequency counts, we were able to see how its interactional work expanded over time when Fred was engaged in different conversations.

While the opportunity to take a certain interactional role in a conversation was affected by the situational set-up and the relationship among the participants that they brought to the conversation, when we compared the actions that Fred accomplished in certain sequential positions, we were able to register a developmental change. For example, when we compare Excerpts 6 (FR6) and 7 (FR8) with regard to his use of *soo desu ne* as an aligning response to his interlocutor's previous telling, we find that in FR8 he was more competent in clarifying his aligning stance through the use of an additional statement and linguistic marking of his second story. Moreover, with regard to his competence in providing assessments, although Fred's first *ne*-ending assessment was found no earlier than in FR6 (Excerpt 9), he had already begun to provide assessments in FR3 without the use of *ne*. In FR3, at a possible completion of his interlocutor's narrative, Fred said *omoshiroi* [interesting], and after a 0.7-s pause, he said *soo soo soo* [right]. Compared to Excerpt 11 (FR8), in which Fred successfully gets a *ne*-marked assessment taken up as a legitimate assessment at a second attempt, his action after making an assessment in FR3 suggests that he was not capable of using *ne* as an interactional resource to mark an assessment.

Note that although the use of *ne* as a linguistic resource helped Fred become interactionally competent, its use itself does not determine his interactional competence. Rather, Fred's interactional competence is co-constructed in the ongoing interaction, as shown by Maho's subsequent action in the example given in the previous paragraph (FR3). Fred at first appears to be incompetent in providing an effective assessment because his assessment, *omoshiroi*, was not taken up as such in the next turn. However, his interlocutor, Maho, did take up Fred's assessment 0.3 s after he said *soo soo soo*. Her delayed response and weak agreement (*Omoshiroi kedo. demo* [It's interesting but. But]) indicate that his use of *soo soo soo* was taken as emphasizing his assessment and thus as a pursuit of an agreement. Despite his rudimentary use of linguistic resources, Fred made an assessment and did get it taken up as such. Because collaborative work is involved in achieving an activity of making assessments (cf. Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987), a learner's interactional competence should be understood through careful analysis of each participant's contribution within the



sequential unfolding of talk-in-interaction. The present study has investigated the development of Fred's interactional competence based on an analysis of how Fred contributed to the collaborative achievement of activities by using the particle *ne*.

## Conclusion

Although *ne* is a versatile linguistic resource for engaging in conversations, previous L2 studies of this particle have not investigated how the use of *ne* enables learners to participate in social interaction more competently over time, except for Ohta's (2001) study. The present study has shown an expansion of the interactional work that one learner was able to engage in through the use of *ne* during his 9-month study abroad. The learner, who initially used the particle only in turns that do not require fine-tuning toward the previous speaker's turn, came to use it as an immediate response to the previous speaker's turn and became more active in pursuing aligning responses through its use. We saw in his later conversations how he used *ne* to state opinions that did not align with his interlocutor's previous telling and how his use of *ne* in assessments helped achieve mutual alignment with his interlocutors. Moreover, while his initial use of the phrase *soo desu ne* did not fit as a response to his interlocutor's previous turn at times, he became capable of adding comments to clarify what he was doing with the phrase and further developing his own telling to show alignment with his interlocutor's previous telling.

The present chapter has shown one way of investigating the development of an L2 learners' interactional competence by using CA. While this study comprehensively treated all the instances in which the focal learner used the particle *ne*, aggregated data analysis could also focus on a certain activity, such as the activity of making an assessment, as a unit of analysis. As shown in the discussion section, comparison of what the learner is doing with and without using the particle *ne* is another way of investigating how the use of this resource develops over time. However, by focusing on the learner's use of *ne*, this study showed how the learner became more competent in engaging in conversation by taking a variety of interactional roles.

## Acknowledgements

I express my appreciation to the anonymous reviewers and the editors of this volume for their insightful comments and suggestions.

## Notes

- 1 All participant names in this chapter are pseudonyms.
- 2 Although the use of *ne* here is not unnatural in itself, the utterance would sound more natural if an evidential marker *mitai* (seems) were added, as in *soo mitai desu ne* ('that's right, according to what I heard').
- 3 A negative form of a verb (*narenai* [cannot become]) is expected here because the adverb *anmari* requires *nai* [not] to mean "not so much."
- 4 The music in the jazz café where this conversation was recorded was very loud, especially at this moment of the conversation. It is thus highly plausible that Fred in line 8 is referring to the loud music.
- 5 By saying *hyoogen* [expression], Derek might have meant to say that expressions are different among different varieties of English. However, he could have mispronounced *hoogen* [dialect], a Japanese word that he could have provided for Fred to refer to different varieties of a language.

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