The prosodic features of the interactional particle *yo* in student-professor conversation

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Japanese interactional particles (IPs) like *ne* and *yo* play a significant role in establishing interpersonal relationships between interlocutors, and are also indispensable in social contexts (Cook 1992; Morita 2005; Maynard 1993; McGloin 1990; Saigo 2011). Although they have been hardly studied except for Eda (2000), Hiramoto-Sanders (2002) and Shimotani (2006), the prosodic features of IPs crucially signal speakers' affective attitudes. The present case study investigates the discourse functions and prosodic features of *yo* in student-professor conversation from the perspective of social constructivist discourse theory (Ochs 1993, 1996). It especially examines how speakers' use of *yo* constructs social identity which covers "a range of social personae that include social status roles, positions, relationships, and institutional and other relevant community identities one may attempt to claim or assign in the course of social life" (Ochs 1993: 288). Six one-to-one informal conversations (i.e., a total of 2.5 hours) between a university student and a professor were examined. The intonation of *yo* was analyzed using *Praat* software. Following Shimotani (2006), unmarked *yo* was identified in information-oriented discourse (i.e., whether or not mutual understanding between interlocutors exists), and marked *yo* was identified in affect-oriented discourse (i.e., whether or not a differing viewpoint between interlocutors exists).

The findings demonstrate that the use of *yo* by professors and students exhibits different patterns. While students tended to use *yo* with a falling pitch [+fall] in performing pre-story telling with most cases unmarked information-oriented discourse (Excerpt 1), the professor often used *yo* with a rising pitch [-fall] providing an opinion or advice with most cases unmarked information-oriented discourse. Excerpt (2) shows that the professor's utterance indexes her professional stance as an advisor. The marked *yo* in more affect-oriented discourse, on the other hand, was very rather rare and appeared, for instance, in one of the professor's utterances as shown in Excerpt (3). Here, the professor urged her student through the use of *yo* who had a 'dream' of working at an airport to have travel experience so that she could understand what it really means to work there. Overall, the findings from this study underscore the importance of mutual understanding between interlocutors which motivates the use of *yo* [+fall], and indicate that the prosodic feature in IPs is an essential linguistic resource used to construct speakers' social personae such as story-teller or advisor.

Table 1: Frequency of *yo* [+fall] and [-fall] in student-professor conversation

	+Fall	-Fall	Quotation	Not clear	total
Students	36 (60%)	5 (8.3%)	15 (25%)	4 (6.7%)	60 (100%)
Professors	22 (34%)	35 (56%)	4 (4%)	2 (2%)	63 (100%)

(1) *teate-ga   aru-n-desu-yo* [+fall] ╱ '(those who go to school using a bullet train) get some allowance.'

(2) *bakuzen-to-shita ukemi-de shigoto   kimecha-ikenai-yo* [-fall] / 'you mustn't passively decide your carrier with such a vague motivation.'

(3) *icchae-ba   ii-n-da-yo* [+fall] ╱ 'you should really go.'

Selected References
Ochs, E. (1993) Constructing social identify: A language socialization perspective. *Research on Language and Social Interaction* 26 (3), 287-306