

Establishing a Community of Practice on the Internet: Linguistic Behavior in Online Japanese Communication

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# Establishing a Community of Practice on the Internet: Linguistic Behavior in Online Japanese Communication\*

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper I will analyze linguistic behavior in online communication in Japanese. Specifically, I will describe certain unique uses of language on the Bulletin Board Systems at a particular Japanese website called “*ni channeru*”, or “Channel Two”. This website was created in May 1999 by an individual named Hiroyuki Nishimura, age 26, for users to share funny stories, jokes, opinions and so on. This website contrasts with other BBS websites where more serious exchanges of useful information take place.

I will apply to this virtual community the theoretical framework of the “community of practice”, proposed by Wenger (1998), who says, “People congregate in virtual spaces and develop shared ways of pursuing their common interests” (7). In this framework, there are three requirements for a community of practice: (1) a joint enterprise, (2) mutual engagement, and (3) a shared repertoire. First, the users’ joint enterprise is to construct this website; they do so by sending and reading messages. Second, they are mutually engaged in discussing topics of interest. And third, concerning a shared repertoire, users have developed a fairly large number of unique language forms and playful discourse practices, which will be the focus of this paper.

In the Internet community of Channel 2 users, there are clearly members who are more or less experienced in website activities. Thus Wenger’s notion of core versus peripheral membership works well to describe the participants in this community of practice. The oldest member of the community is considered to be the creator, Hiroyuki, the only publicly known figure. Next come the voluntary helpers who assist Hiroyuki in maintaining the computer servers, who have the authority to delete messages; because they know the website rules and guidelines, they sometimes educate other users. Next are certain users who consistently use the same handle names, lead discussions, post messages

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\*This research was conducted while I was a visiting researcher in the Department of Linguistics, University of California, Santa Barbara. I am grateful to Patricia M. Clancy and Mary Bucholtz for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. Any errors that may remain are my responsibility.

frequently, and are considered to be active users. These groups of users form the core membership of the community. Then come the vast majority of anonymous senders, and surrounding them are even larger numbers of users who only view messages; these users can be regarded as peripheral members. About 15 to 20 percent of the users who visit the site and view messages actually post messages. Since a sender on one occasion can also be a viewer on others, this is an approximate categorization of the membership.

The topics discussed on the website cover almost every conceivable subject, categorized into over three hundred boards and further subcategorized into two to three hundred threads per board. The estimated users' age range is from preteens to fifty- or sixty-year-olds. There is no way of obtaining accurate user profiles, such as age, gender, occupation, geographical residence, and so on, because of the strictly guaranteed anonymity on the website, though such information may sometimes appear in their posted messages.

Before turning to the data, I will explain how computer-mediated communication takes place in Japanese. There are four kinds of scripts in standard Japanese orthography, and this has an important effect on the users' behavior in Internet communication.

## 2. Computer-Mediated Communication in Japanese

Interpersonal and informal CMC differs from face-to-face communication in that auditory and paralinguistic information is lacking; furthermore, entering a message on the keyboard takes more time. Users therefore employ emoticons or face marks to show facial expressions, such as ☺, and acronyms (e.g. *LOL* for *laugh out loud*) to speed up typing. Like CMC in other languages, Japanese also uses these means (See Nishimura (to appear) for a more detailed description). However, because the scripts used in Japanese differ from those used in English and other languages, there are major differences in the kinds of realization, interpretation, and interactional effects that can be achieved.

### 2.1. Four kinds of scripts in Japanese orthography

In standard orthography, the Japanese language employs four kinds of scripts, each with its own functions and uses in the Japanese writing system: (1) *Hiragana*, a syllabary, used for certain native nouns, and for grammatical markers, such as postpositions and verb inflections; (2) *Katakana*, a syllabary, typically used for writing foreign (especially Western) names, loan words, and so on; (3) *Romaji*, Roman letters, used to transliterate personal and place names; (4) *Kanji*, characters originally borrowed from Chinese. Each character represents a particular meaning, but can be pronounced in two completely different ways. For example, for the character that means *mountain*, one pronunciation is [jama], and the other one is [san] or [zan], depending on the phonetic context.

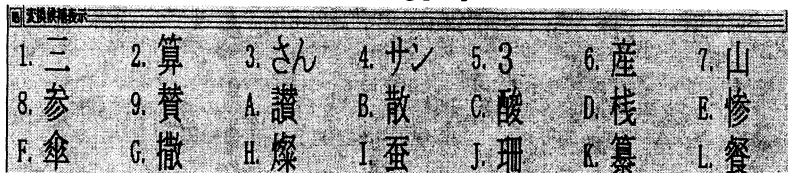
Because of this variety in scripts, it is possible in Japanese to write the same word in four different ways: e.g. to express “*nihon*” ‘Japan’, the *hiragana* representation is “にほん”; *katakana*, “ニホン”; *Romaji*, “*nihon*”; and *kanji*, “日本”. One of the reasons for using *kanji* instead of *hiragana* and *katakana* is to avoid ambiguity. Since there are so many homophones in Japanese in general, *nihon* ‘Japan’ in the representations other than *kanji*

could also mean “two long cylinder-like objects, but the *kanji* representation, 日本, which uses ideographs, is unambiguous.

## 2.2. Word processing in Japanese

To write in Japanese on the computer, users must enter words in *romaji* in the Japanese input mode, and then the conversion software changes the *romaji* into the *hiragana* syllabary. Next, the system automatically shows the users’ most recently used *kanji* corresponding to the *hiragana*. In (1) below, we see the list of *kanji* for [san], which was typed in *Romaji* as *san*: In this list, No. 1 is the Chinese numeral character for *three*; No. 2 is the *kanji* meaning ‘computation’; No. 3, *hiragana*; No. 4, *katakana*; No. 5, the Arabic numeral; No. 6, the *kanji* meaning ‘production’; No. 7, the *kanji* meaning ‘mountain’, and so on, all of which are pronounced [san].

### (1) Computer Image 1: Choices for writing [san]



When the first *kanji* shown by the software is not the intended character, users must press the space key to make the system show a list of all the other *kanji* characters of other representations that have the same pronunciation. To choose one of these options the user presses “enter” to select the desired character. (2) below shows the user’s choice.

### (2) Computer image 2: User has selected No. 7, the character for *mountain*.



Users can also choose *hiragana* (No.3) or *katakana* (No. 4) at this stage after the list is shown. Obviously, users might choose the wrong *kanji*, either by mistake or deliberately, as we shall see.

Because each *kanji* character has a meaning, Japanese users can use *kanji* characters for the same purpose as acronyms and emoticons. Observe the sentences in (3) through (5), which are constructed for the purpose of illustrating the functions of *kanji* in online messages:

- (3) そんなことって、ある の！ (笑)  
*sonna koto tte, aru no wara-*  
 such thing QUOTE exist/happen SFP laugh STEM  
 ‘Could such a thing happen?!’ ‘*kanji* for LAUGHTER’
- (4) そんなことって、ある の！ (涙)  
*namida* ‘*kanji* for TEARS’
- (5) そんなことって、ある の！ (喜)  
*yorokobi* ‘*kanji* for JOY’

In these sentences, the verbal message is identical; the differences are in the *kanji* in parentheses at the end of each message. This practice of adding a *kanji* character in parentheses at the end of a message, especially the character for *laughter*, is very common in Japanese CMC.<sup>1</sup> In addition, however, Channel 2 users treat *kanji* in very innovative and unique ways that ignore the characters’ meaning. I turn to these uses now.

### 3. Unique linguistic practices in Channel 2

The data I analyze here come from three sources: first, the “Glossary of Channel 2 Terms” available online; second, its printed version, *Channel 2 Dictionary*; and third, actual messages posted on Channel 2. Specifically, this study identifies uses that deviate from the standard, and analyzes them regarding their purposes, origins, and process of formation.

I have classified the unique linguistic practices in Channel 2 into three major groups: first, non-standard uses of *kanji* as phonetic representations; second, play with script shape similarity; and third, errors that have become conventionalized on this website.

#### 3.1. *Kanji* as phonetic representation: *kanji* punning

In the first major group, *kanji* as phonetic representation, the meaning of the *kanji* is ignored and it is used as a phonetic representation for words that have the same pronunciation but different meanings. I call this phenomenon “*kanji* punning”, and it is fairly common on this website. There are a huge number of homophones in Japanese, and in Channel 2, the users apparently enjoy exploring the tremendous gap between the intended and the literal meanings of their puns. The major types of *kanji* punning are described in Sections 3.1.1-3.1.3 below.

##### 3.1.1. *Kanji* for abbreviated loan words

Three examples of the first type of phonetic use, *kanji* for abbreviated loan words, are given in Table 1 below. What is unconventional is the use of *kanji* to represent loan words.

<sup>1</sup> Other *kanji* characters that can function this way include: (謎) *nazo* ‘puzzlement’, (照) *tere* ‘shyness’, (恥) *haji* ‘shame’, (爆) *baku* ‘explosion, burst’, (汗) *ase* ‘perspiration’, (死) *shi* ‘death’, (苦笑) *kusyou* ‘wry smile’, (鬱) *utsu* ‘melancholy’, and so on.

Normally, these words are represented in *katakana*, but because *katakana* representation takes more time to enter, the *kanji* shortcut is preferred. To get *katakana* representation in the case of (computer) *server*, users need to press the key 7 times until the *katakana* is finalized, but *kanji* representation requires only 5 times. Thus the primary reason for this use is to speed up typing, and at the same time, a secondary reason is to enjoy the gap between the intended and literal meaning found in the *kanji* used to express the loan word, which has already been used by other users and lexicalized on this website.

Notice, however, though representation of loan words in *kanji* takes place on this website, this phenomenon is rather limited in its application, in that *kanji* characters that have the pronunciation of the abbreviated loan words must exist. For abbreviated loan words such as *resu* formed from *resu*ponsu ‘response’, the *kanji* character that has the reading of *resu* does not exist, and such abbreviated loan words are in most cases written in *katakana*, as レス in conventional way.

Table 1. Formation process: *kanji* for abbreviated loan words

Origin	Loan word in Romaji	Abbreviated Romaji entered	Automatic hiragana conversion	Automatic conversion and literal meaning	Channel 2 <i>kanji</i> meaning	Cf. Conventional orthography
a) <i>server</i>	<i>saabaa</i>	<i>saba</i>	さば <i>saba</i>	鯖 <i>saba</i> ‘mackerel’	鯖 <i>saba</i> ‘server’	サーバー (in <i>katakana</i> )
b) <i>proxy</i>	<i>purokushii</i>	<i>kushi</i>	くし <i>kushi</i>	串 <i>kushi</i> ‘skewer’	串 <i>kushi</i> ‘proxy’	プロクシー (in <i>katakana</i> )
c) <i>account</i>	<i>akaunto</i>	<i>aka</i>	あか <i>aka</i>	垢 <i>aka</i> ‘dirt, filth’	垢 <i>aka</i> ‘account’	アカウント (in <i>katakana</i> )

Table 1, example (a), illustrates the process by which the English word *server* comes to be written by the character for *mackerel*. *Server* becomes [sa:ba:] when it is taken into Japanese as a loan word. Then the loan word, [sa:ba:] gets shortened to [saba]. When users enter *saba* on the computer, the word is converted to *hiragana*; since the standard character corresponding to *saba* is *mackerel*, this is the character that automatically appears. In (6) below, the message writer is discussing someone’s skills in setting up the computer server, and in doing so, the character that means *mackerel* is used. Table 1 also gives two additional examples of this process. Though the user could select other possibilities, the character that is shown automatically by the software is used because it is the fastest. In some cases users pick a certain character because it has become conventionalized in Channel 2 usage, even if it is inconvenient to select it over other candidates. Note also that the loan words in Table 1 relate to computer uses.

- (6) そいつ 鯖 立てる 程度 の スキル も 無い ...  
*soitsu saba tateru teido no sukiru mo nai ...*  
 that guy server/mackerel setup extent of skills even possess.NEG  
 Literal meaning: 'he doesn't even have enough skills to set up mackerel...'  
 Channel 2 meaning: 'he doesn't even have enough skills to set up the server...'  
 (From PC News Board)

### 3.1.2. *Kanji* punning for speed and special connotations

The next group of phonetic uses of *kanji* is used for added speed and special connotations. In Table 2 example (a), we see the process for writing *chubou*, a common word in Channel 2.

Table 2. Formation process for *kanji* punning: "*chubou*" and other examples

Origin/source expression	Romaji after shortening/modification	Automatic hiragana conversion	Automatic <i>kanji</i> conversion literal meaning	Channel 2 meaning and connotation
a) 中学生の坊主 <i>Chuu gaku sei no bou zu</i> 'middle school kid'	<i>chuu bou</i>	ちゅうぼう <i>chubou</i>	厨房 <i>chubou</i>	厨房 <i>chubou</i>  'immature middle school brat'
b) 小学生 <i>syougakusei</i> 'elementary school pupil'	<i>syougakusee</i>	しょうがくせえ <i>syougakusee</i>	生姜くせえ <i>syougakusee</i> 'smelling ginger'	生姜くせえ <i>syougakusee</i> 'immature elementary school brat'
c) 笑う or 笑い <i>warau or warai</i> 'to laugh' or 'laughter'	<i>wara</i> (stem)	わら <i>wara</i>	藁 <i>wara</i> 'rice straw'	藁 <i>wara</i> 'sneering laughter'

*Chubou* comes from *chuugakusei no bouzu*, 'middle school kid', which is an ordinary expression that does not necessarily have derogatory connotations. This then gets shortened to *chubou*. Then the *romaji* for *chubou* is entered on the computer and converted to *hiragana*. Next, the first and only character that the system shows is the character that means a hotel/restaurant kitchen, as shown in Table 2. Thus on Channel 2 *kitchen* is used with derogatory connotations to mean 'immature and inconsiderate middle school brats'. Table 2 gives two additional examples of *kanji* punning for special connotations.

An example of how *chubou* is used in an actual message is given in (7), from the *Chubou* Board of the website. The expression *yatsura* 'guys' in (7) is also consistent with the insulting content and tone of this message.

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(7)-a ここ に いる 奴 ら は 正真正銘の  
*Koko ni iru yatsu ra wa syousin syou mei no*  
 This place LOCATIVE be guy PLURAL TOPIC authentic, real

(7)-b 厨房 ばっかり だろう...  
*chubou bakkari darou*  
 middle school brats/kitchens only probably

Literal meaning: 'You guys who are here are probably all real kitchens...'

Channel 2 meaning: 'You guys who are here are probably all real immature middle school brats...' (From *Chubou* Board)

3.1.3. Euphemism by *kanji* punning

This phonetic use of *kanji* shows users' deliberate avoidance of certain taboo and sensitive expressions. Before Channel 2 was created, there was a similar website, where certain expressions were automatically removed as *No-Good Words*. The example in Table 3, (a) *shine*, which is the imperative form of the verb *shimu* 'to die', was such a word. In order to avoid automatic deletion, users replaced the conventional character with another *kanji* having the same pronunciation.

Table 3. Formation process of euphemism by *kanji* punning

Taboo/ sensitive words	Euphemism	Romaji	Automatic Hiragana conversion	Deliberate <i>kanji</i> selection literal meaning	Channel 2 usage
a) 死ぬ <i>shin-e</i> 'die' imperative, 'drop dead'	氏ね <i>shi-ne</i> respect suffix + Variation: 詩ね Variation: 士ね Variation: 市ね	<i>shine</i>	しね → <i>shine</i>	氏ね <i>shine</i> no such expression 詩ね 'poetry, isn't it' 士ね no such expression 市ね 'city, isn't it'	氏ね <i>shine</i> 'drop dead, die' 詩ね 'drop dead, die' 士ね 'drop dead, die' 市ね 'drop dead, die'
b) 金田一 春彦 <i>kindaichi</i> <i>haruhiko</i> proper noun	禁打老貼肥子 <i>kin-da-ichi- haru-hiko</i>	<i>kin da ichi</i> <i>haru hiko</i>	きんだいち はるひこ <i>kindaichi</i> <i>haruhiko</i>	禁打老貼肥子 <i>kindaichi</i> <i>haruhiko</i> no such expression	禁打老貼肥子 <i>kindaichi</i> <i>haruhiko</i> proper noun

Example (a) shows how *shine* 'die' is written. There are several different *kanji* for *shi*, because there are many characters that have the pronunciation [ʃi]. Therefore, users can

deliberately choose any character that does not mean *death*. (8) shows an actual use of *shine* in a message from the ‘Anything-goes’ Board. In this case, the respect suffix *-shi* replaces the *kanji* for *die*.

Example (b) in Table 3 gives a phonetic use of *kanji* for a proper name. Since proper names can be found by computer search engines, different *kanji* with the same pronunciation are often used, in order to avoid discovery of the user’s criticism or other negative comments about an individual or institution. In (b), taken from the Linguistics Board of Channel 2, we see the name of a well-known linguist, Haruhiko Kindaichi, written in completely incorrect *kanji* characters. This form of the name is used in (9), in which the author is making unfavorable comments about Kindaichi. By sight, it is very difficult to understand what the sequence of characters refers to, but if the pronunciation of each character is identified, it is not difficult to determine who or what is being discussed. In this way, Channel 2 has produced quite a few jargon uses of *kanji*, which can be understood easily by the in-group, but only with difficulty by outsiders.

- (8) ネタ が フリー ン だ よ。 氏 ね  
*neta ga huri: n da yo. shi ne*  
 stuff SUBJECT old NOMINALIZER SFP RESPECT SUFFIX SFP

Literal meaning: ‘(I’m telling you) (your) stuff/information is old. \*Non-word’

Channel 2 meaning: ‘(I’m telling you) (your) stuff/information is old/boring. Drop dead’  
 (From ‘Anything-goes’ Board)

- (9) ...禁打者貼肥子 の 食べ物 日記 が 載っている。  
 ...kindaichi haruhiko no tabemono nikki ga not-te iru  
 Kindaichi Haruhiko GENITIVE food diary SUBJECT appear-PROGRESSIVE

Literal meaning: Food diary of \*kin-da-ichi-haru-hi-ko appears ....

Channel 2 meaning: Kindaichi Haruhiko’s food diary appears ....  
 (From Linguistics Board)

### 3.2. Play with script shape similarity

We see the second type of unconventional usage on Channel 2, play with script shape similarity, in Table 4. Most of these examples of replacing one symbol with another involve the *katakana* syllabary, because some of the *katakana* symbols have very similar and sometimes confusing shapes.

A typical example is the replacement of *n* with *so*, shown in (a). This occurs because the two *katakana* symbols, *n* and *so*, look very similar; here Channel 2 users rely on the visual rather than phonetic information of scripts. The difference between *n* ン and *so* ソ is that in *n* ン, the longer slanting line goes upward from bottom to top, while in *so* ソ, the long line goes from the top down. In (a), we see the deliberate use of *so* for *n*. The original expression is *sumanai* ‘sorry’, and this gets shortened to *suman*. The last *katakana* *n* ン of *suman* looks similar to *so* ソ. Then, the users coin a new word, *sumaso*, relying on the shape similarity for other users’ comprehension. *Sumaso* actually is a non-word in contexts

other than Channel 2. Although there is no specific reason to prefer *sumaso* over *suman* as an expression of apology, the users' motivation, it seems, is to share the fun of creating and using visually-oriented play with words. The use of *sumaso* as an expression of apology was imitated by other users and has now been lexicalized as part of the common vocabulary in Channel 2. (b) and (c) are additional examples of this practice. An instance of *sumaso*, taken from the Movies Board, is given in (10). The writer of (10) has posted her message on the wrong thread, and so she apologizes, using *sumaso*.

Table 4. Formation process of coining new words based on shape similarity

Origin	Shortening/ modification	Replacement due to shape similarity	Outcome literal meaning	Channel 2 usage
a) スマナイ <i>sumanai</i> 'sorry'	スマン <i>suman</i> 'sorry'	ン → ソ <i>n</i> → <i>so</i>	スマソ <i>su ma so</i> no such expression	スマソ <i>sumaso</i> 'sorry'
b) マジメ <i>mazime</i> 'seriously'	マジ <i>mazi</i> 'seriously'	ジ → ツ <i>mazi</i> → <i>madu</i>	マヅ <i>madu</i> no such expression	マヅ <i>madu</i> 'seriously'
c) スレッド <i>sureddo</i> 'thread'	スレ <i>sure</i> 'thread'	ス → ヌ <i>su</i> → <i>nu</i>	ヌレ <i>nure</i> no such expression	ヌレ <i>nure</i> 'thread'

- (10) スレ 違い                      スマソ      でした。  
*Sure*    *chigai*                      *sumaso*    *deshita*.  
 Thread different/wrong    sorry      be. POLITE PAST

Literal meaning: Wrong thread, it was \*sumaso

Channel 2 meaning: '(I'm) sorry (to have posted my message) in the wrong thread.'

(From Movies Board)

### 3.3. Conventionalized errors

#### 3.3.1 Literacy errors

The third type of innovation on Channel 2 is found in conventionalized errors; at first they may have been used inadvertently, due to the user's insufficient literacy skills. Table 5 summarizes how one such error occurred. A Channel 2 user wrote *gaisyutsu*, instead of *kisyutsu*, which means 'already mentioned'. Apparently this user believed the *kanji* characters for the meaning 'already mentioned' were those in *gaisyutsu*, and so he or she entered the *romaji* for *gaisyutsu*. This was converted to *hiragana* and then the conversion system produced the *kanji* characters for 'going out of home/office', which are pronounced *gaisyutsu*. These characters were different from what the writer had in mind, so s/he decided to return to *hiragana*.

Table 5. Formation process for reading error

Intended <i>kanji</i>	Entered <i>Romaji</i>	Automatic <i>hiragana</i> conversion	Automatic <i>kanji</i> conversion literal meaning	Return to <i>hiragana</i>	Channel 2 usage
既出 <i>ki syutsu</i> 'above mentioned'	<i>gaisyutsu</i>	がいしゅつ <i>gaisyutsu</i>	外出 <i>gaisyutsu</i> 'going out of home'	がいしゅつ <i>gaisyutsu</i>	外出,がいしゅつ <i>gaisyutsu</i> 'above mentioned'

The actual message is given in (11), in which the writer uses *hiragana* for 'already mentioned'. After this message was posted, there was a tremendous reaction to it. (12) is the message immediately after (11). In (12), this very first responder asks whether the original sender meant *kisyutsu* 'already mentioned', and even adds the *hiragana* for *kisyutsu* 'already mentioned' in parentheses, to clarify the correct pronunciation, and to be sure that *kisyutsu* 'already mentioned' rather than *gaisyutsu* 'going out of home' was intended. The source of *gai* in *gaisyutsu* is either 概 or 慨, both of which are pronounced [gai] and share two of the same part or radical, 既 *ki*, in 既出 *kisyutsu*.

- (11) がいしゅつ                      だつたら                      すみません。  
*Gaisyutsu*                      *dat-ta ra*                      *sumimasen*.  
 Going out/already mentioned    be-PAST CONDITIONAL    apologize  
 Literal meaning: I'm sorry if (it [the following story]) has gone out of home.  
 Channel 2 meaning: I'm sorry if (it [the following story]) has already appeared.

- (12)-1 がいしゅつ?  
*Gaisyutsu?*  
 going out  
 '(Are you saying) Going out?'

- (12)-2 既出                      (きしゅつ)                      のこと?  
*Kisyutsu* [in *kanji*]                      (*kisyutsu*) [in *hiragana*]                      *no koto?*  
 Already mentioned                      (already mentioned)                      of thing, fact  
 'Do you mean, "Already mentioned"?' (From Glossary of Channel 2 Terms,  
 also archived in <http://saki.2ch.net/news/kako/962/962871899.html>)

The kind of interaction we see in (11) and (12) continued for a fairly long time, half a year after the message was first posted. The use of *gaisyutsu* 'going out' instead of *kisyutsu* 'already mentioned' was so amusing to many of the users that it stirred a considerable amount of discussion and interaction. Their reactions were, for example, "I can't stop laughing", "It's the birth of a new Channel 2 term", "I like *gaisyutsu* and so I'll use it," and so on. One other user praised the original user for his/her use of 'gaisyutsu', commenting on this use as a kind of pardon for those who might not have appropriate literacy. Based on

the fact that this use has been inherited and favored by many others and has become conventionalized, we can infer that the standard forms may not always be the most welcome ones on this website. We can speculate further that users enjoy the freedom to create and use new words, unbound by standard convention.

### 3.3.1. Typing errors

The next and final example of conventionalized errors concerns typing errors. Table 6 shows how an unconventional way of writing ‘me too’ and another example came about.

Table 6. Formation process for typing errors

Intended <i>kanji/expression</i>	Entered <i>romaji</i>	Automatic <i>hiragana</i> conversion	Automatic <i>kanji</i> conversion literal meaning	Channel 2 usage	Lexicalized also as
a) 俺も 俺も <i>ore mo ore mo</i> 1 <sup>st</sup> person pronoun + Particle ‘me too me too’	<i>ore more mo</i>	おれもれも <i>Oremoremo</i>	俺 漏れ も <i>Ore more mo</i> ‘I’ ‘leakage’ ‘too’	漏れも <i>more mo</i> ‘me too’	漏れ <i>more</i> ‘I, me’ (without particle)
b) がんばる <i>ganbaru</i> ‘to do one’s best’	<i>gangaru</i>	がんがる <i>gangaru</i>	No correspond- ing <i>kanji</i> no such word	がんがる <i>gangaru</i> ‘to do one’s best’	がんがれ <i>gangare</i> ‘do your best’ (Imperative)

In Example (a) of Table 6, the first user intended to type *ore mo ore mo*, meaning ‘me too me too’. When this user entered the words in *romaji*, s/he apparently did not enter all the roman letters, but skipped one, *o*, as shown in “Entered *romaji*”. This *romaji* then got converted to the *hiragana* for *ore more mo*. The system correctly converted *ore* to the right character. But it took *more* to be the word for ‘leakage’. Now *more* has been lexicalized to mean ‘I’ in Channel 2. The typing error in Example (b) above comes from typing *g* instead of *b*, because these two keys are near to one another on the keyboard. This error results in coinage of a new word that is in currency mostly in Channel 2. An example of how *more* instead of *ore* is actually used to mean ‘I’ is shown in (13). As we see, *more* is used even in serious discussion.

- (13) 漏れ は (生成 スレ に も 少し 書いた ...)  
*more wa (seisei sure ni mo sukoshi kai-ta ...)*  
 leakage/I TOPIC generative thread LOC also a little write-PAST

Literal meaning: As for leakage [I] (wrote a little also in the generative (grammar) thread) ...

Channel 2 meaning: As for me, (I wrote a little also in the generative (grammar) thread) ...

(From Linguistics Board)

#### 4. Summary and conclusions

In this study I have analyzed the special linguistic and interactional features of online communication in one Japanese website. The unconventional uses of scripts on Channel 2 have at least two motivations: first, they are entertaining, and second, they are identity markers for this Internet subcultural community, an identity that can be characterized as free, funny, and unconventional. As we have seen, Channel 2 constitutes a community of practice, in which users are mutually engaged in constructing the website as their joint enterprise and have created a huge shared linguistic repertoire with unique uses of Japanese scripts. The kind of written informal, interpersonal, unedited communication in Channel 2, and on the Internet in general, allows us to explore new dimensions in linguistic and interactional behavior. This study is one step in this new direction for socio-cultural linguistics.

#### Primary sources

Channel 2 website: <<http://www.2ch.net/2ch.html>>

Glossary of Channel 2 Terms: <<http://shake-hip.com/niwatori/>>

Chubou Board: <<http://tmp.2ch.net/kitchen/>>

Linguistics Board: <<http://academy.2ch.net/gengo/>>

Anything-goes Board: <<http://tmp.2ch.net/mog2/>>

PC News Board <<http://pc.2ch.net/pcnews/>>

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