

The Mechanism of Forming Cyber-Dialect in terms of Communities of Practice

The case of Japanese gal (girls)'s computer mediated communication

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1 Introduction

This study attempts to explore the construction of a cyber-dialect, a kind of socio-dialect which has been developed in cyberspace. Especially focusing on the cause and process of Japanese gal (girls)' cyber-language formation in the communication by the utilization of mobile phones, the paper describes its linguistic features and analyzes the mechanism of forming it in terms of communities of practice.

Communities of practice, which originated from a social theory of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger 1998), has been examined as regards its appropriateness as an alternative to other sociolinguistics models such as speech communities and social networks particularly in the area of language and gender. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992, 1995, 1999) tries to apply this theory to linguistic change and variety in relation to gender research. Eckert (2000) tries to apply this to Belten High school data and other work on adolescent talk. However, as for the application of communities of practice, some researchers are dubious about its suitability. Meyerhoff (2002) proposes the necessity to consider carefully what would bring together a particular group of people to engage in practice and what recognizes the shared enterprise. Bethan Davies (2005) has discussed the ignorance of the hierarchy in communities of practice and indicates the points which need further thought and development in applying communities of practice to the explanation of language variation.

In order to answer the Davies' proposals as above and apply communities of practice appropriately, this paper will analyze gal's language according to the three constitutive features in communities of practice; mutual engagement, joint enterprise, shared repertoire. By means of examining the three main notions of communities of practice specifically, it will contribute to prove the usefulness of the application of communities of practice to clarify the mechanism of the construction of cyber-dialect.

2 Japanese Gal (girls') speech

The term 'Gal' generally refers to mainly high school girls who are totally obsessed by consumerism and stroll around Shibuya, one of the biggest amusement districts in Tokyo. As a result of these behavior practices, some girls seem to be associated with amateur prostitution or unusual business of selling unwashed underwear. They have created their unique style of variation of speech and orthography including the syntactic and discourse change in transforming standard Japanese. The most common feature among the gals is the frequent calls by mobile phones. The mobile phone has been an essential tool in forming a peer group since 1999 when NTT DoCoMo (Japanese telecommunication's company) began their business of i-Mode, thereby providing internet access on mobile phones in Japan. The reason why gals try to construct a group and produce their own dialect is for seeking the differentiation from other people and obtaining solidarity of their own group so that they may feel their identity being empowered and assured.

Gender has been very influential on language in Japanese society. Tracing back to the Japanese the sociolinguistics history of the Japanese language, Japanese women's speech patterns have been often evolved into separate social dialects. The three representative styles of Japanese women's speech should be introduced: "*nyoobo-kotoba* (court lady's speech in the 15th C.)", "*yuujo-go* (call girl's speech in the 17th-19th C.)", "*yamanote-kotoba* (the modern women's speech in the 19th-20th C.)". This paper finds the sociolinguistic significance in "*gal-go* (young girl's speech in 1990's)" as fourth on the extended line of the three historical women's speeches from the past.

3 Methodology

The Internet interaction of young Japanese girls will be discussed in terms of methodology based on observations concerning the blog named 'Gal's revolution' and other popular blogs among young girls. 'Blog' is a combination of the words 'mobile' and 'log', log meaning a ship's diary. A blog is an easy way to communicate via web homepages, which enables readers to participate by responding. The readers can communicate with the originators of the blogs by sending comments from either their personal-computers or mobile phones. They can build up a peer group when they find that they can share the same value. This paper assumes that the process of constructing on-line relationships is related in the formation of the resulting socio-dialect.

4 Communities of Practice

Communities of practice has been paid attention to by the recent sociolinguists. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet try to apply this theory to linguistics change.

According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet,

Communities of practice are defined as an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, belief, values, power relations - in short, practice- emerge in the course of their joint activity

around that endeavour' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992:464).

Based on this theory, Eckert and McConell-Ginet illustrates the relation between gender and language. They observe that gender is produced and reproduced in differential membership in such communities of practice. Women define themselves in respect to other women, men to men. Women and men differ in the paths they take to obtain greater social status. Women are under constant pressure to display their persona (Eckert, 1989:247). However, Wodak (1997:9) criticizes Eckert's work are too general, neglecting many subtle and important intervening variables, including the context, that is the communities of practice. Even after some further studies by Eckert, the impression that her application is still general and abstract have been given to the sociolinguists. Davies (2005)'s indication reflects this suspicion. This study try to examine the theory more preciously, referring to the context carefully.

4.1 The theory of social practice

First of all, as for communities of practice, the three crucial characteristics should be defined (Wenger, 2006).

1. The domain: A communities of practice is not merely a club of friends or network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest.
2. The community: In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. The members interact and learn together.
3. The practice: Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing, recurring problems.

In this paper, dimension of practice will be discussed in terms of the property of a community. Wenger (1998) describes the dimensions of practice;

- 1) mutual engagement
- 2) a joint enterprise
- 3) a shared repertoire

Under the above three constitutive features of the communities of practice, the duality of participation and reification in negotiation of meaning should be discussed.

- 1) mutual engagement

Wenger (1998:73) says communities of practice exists when 'people are engaged in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another'. In this case, how much engagement or what type of engagement should be necessary to be defined when the communities of practice can be realized. Wenger (ibid.:74) adds communities of practice is not defined merely by who knows whom or who talks with whom in a network of interpersonal relations through which information flows. Practice must be produced in the process. Therefore, to share membership means to bring about mutual engagement and defines the community.

2) Joint enterprise

Communities of practice was first developed as a way of explaining the process of learning in business situation, therefore, it is quite straightforward to see what the joint enterprise might be in the workplace or in any other situation where there is an end product or result (Fox:2006). Then, it is argumentative in thinking in less formal situations. Meyerhoff (2002:528) indicates that the shared enterprise should 'be reasonably specific and not very general or abstract'. Davies provokes the necessity to develop an alternative criterion which can recognize the shared purpose and would fit in with the conceptual structure of communities of practice, and to conduct further linguistic investigation so that the impression of vagueness and unconvincingness might be swept away.

3) Shared repertoire

As a consequence of engagement in a joint enterprise, repertoire of a community of practice is developed. The repertoire of a community of practice includes routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genre, actions, or concepts. Eckert (2002) talks about 'crusing' and hanging out in parks.

Davies raises a concern about the types and sizes of groups to which the concept of communities of practice can be applied. To answer this question, the next statement of Wenger (1998:72) is very insightful; 'by associating practice with community, I am not arguing that everything anybody might call a community is defined by practice or has a practice that is specific to it; nor that everything anybody might call practice is the defining property of a clearly specifiable community.'

The three concepts aforementioned as the constitutive features of communities of practice are philosophical standards to realize the quality and substance of human communication. In any occasion, at any time, as long as communication is conducted among humans, the three features sometimes cross each other. Even in the chatting after lunch, the mutual engagement can be operated, and lead to cultivate some new forms, customs in the community. On the other hand, even if people endeavor to gather in order to discuss and produce something, it frequently happens that the three features are not well coordinated and facilitated effectively at all because of some interference. In such a case, the meeting ends up with nothing creative. Therefore, it is not appropriate to require communities of practice which originated from the theory of learning, directly of wide-application to Sociolinguistics analysis. In this sense, the application of Eckert might be a little hasty and she misleadingly treats communities of practice as a perfect theory. It is rather the task of the sociolinguistics researchers to examine the usefulness of communities of practice by much considerate investigations. However, the practical conditions such as size of group or frequency of the meeting which Davis is seeking are not determined factors to set up communities of practice.

5 Observation of Sample data

First of all, the blog named Gal's Kakumei (gals' revolution) which has been observed for this paper is introduced. This blog has started on January 8th 2005. While it has been on the web for almost two years, it has ever been chosen as one of the most popular blogs among the livedoor Blogs. It has got more than ten thousands a month as formally registered access number.

5.1 The example of mutual engagement

5.1.1 The Start of the blog of Gal's Kakumei (Revolution)

Example (1) is the first blog page of this 'Gal's Kakumei (Revolution)'. Sifow explains her motivation of this blog. <http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/11988379.html>

Example (1) January 8th, 2005

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/2005-01.html>

ギャルでもやるんだから！

Gal demo yarun dakara!

Gal even do-FN Coj

'Even gal can do that!'

はじめまして♪¹

hajimemashite ♪

'Nice to meet you.'

1. ♪ is a kind of affective signs "emoticon", which makes the soft-ending of the statement. It is used for a full stop. Lots of affective sign's use is one of the most characteristics features of Sifow's writing of this blog.

今日から起業して成功するまで日記をかき続けますw²

kyoo kara kigyooashite seikoo surumade nikki o kaki tsuzukemasu w

today from start business success until diary P write-continue

'From today until I get a success in starting my own business, I 'll keep writing diary.'

2. 'w' means the initial alphabet of *Warai* in Japanese which means smile or laugh in English. This usage of 'w' instead of full stop is frequently seen in on-line messages among young people.

野望→自分の夢を最大限に実現させること。³

yaboo→jibun no yume o saidaigenn ni jitsugen saseru koto.

Ambition my of dream maximum to realize let it done FN

'My ambitiousness, it is to realize my own dream to the maximum.'

3. When Sifow uses full stop in the ordinal Japanese orthography, many of the cases are noun ending, which is not usually admitted to be desirable style as a formal Japanese sentence.

これからは大人からのギャルの目を変える事。⁴

Korekara wa otonakara no gal no me o kaeru koto.

Since now Topicalizing from adults's gals of eyes Particle change nominative

'From now on, I will try to change the adult's view of a gal.'

4. the same as 3.

そして世の中のギャルの背中押しする！⁵

soshite yononaka no gyaru no senaka oshi suru!

and society of gals of backs push-do

'And I will encourage the gals in the society.'

5. The frequent use of exclamation mark is one of the characters of this blog. This is also a remarkable tendency of young people's writing on line.

世の中に言いたい事？若いから？チャラ②⁶しているから？そんな理由で

Yononakani iitakoto? wakaikara? chyara② siterukara? Sonnna riyuu de

Towards society to want to say FN →because of youth, frivolity some reasons P

'What I want to say to the world, because of the youth or the frivolity, for that reason'

6. '②' indicates the duplication, so this means チャラチャラ 'chara chara'.

何も出来ないとか⁷しっかりしていないとか⁷そんなギャルばかりじゃない！

Nanimo dekinai toka sikkarisiteinai toka sonna gayru bakarija nai!

Anything cannot do etc. independent-not etc. such gals only not

'They said that gals can not do anything or can not be independent, but we are not all like that.'

7. とか *toka* means 'etc.' or 'something like that' in Japanese. A lot of *toka* adoption is also the clear inclination in the young people dialect.

それを明確にするため、あたしからギャル革命宣言します☆⁸

Soreo meikaku ni surutame atashikara gal kakumei sennngenn shimasu☆

that clarify (I) for the purpose from me gal's revolution (I) declare

'In order to prove it, I dare to declare the gal's revolution.'

8. Star mark is a popular affective sign which are used among young girl's writing especially on line.

これから写メ⁹とかで活動の画像とかつけてきまっ¹⁰す☆

Korekara shyame toka katsudoo no gazou toka tuketekimassu☆

'From now on, I am going to send also pictures or images and things like that.'

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9. 写メ (sha-me) is the abbreviation of *sha-meiru* 'shyashin-male' which is a picture on line.
10. まっす (massu) is variation of standard Japanese orthography ます, which is added double consonant between *ma* and *su*. This is aimed at the effect to bringing in the energetic mood and aspiration.

ガングロギャル¹¹の底力をみせてやる!

Gannguro gyaru no sokojikara o miseteyaru!

Characteristic maked- up girls of power (I) will show you.

'I will definitely show you the strong power of gal.'

11. Ganguro gyaru (gal) means the gals who have carnival-like make up on their face, especially on the artificially tuned skin of the face.

まずわ¹²こんな感じでw

Mazu wa konnna kannjide w

At the start (I) perform like this.

'I would like to start like this.'

12. The small letters are frequently used in Sifow blog writing. まずわ (mazu-wa) should be written in the standard Japanese orthography まずは (mazu-wa). 'は' should be pronounced 'ha' individually, however, when it is used as a particle following the topic of the sentence, it is expected to be pronounced as わ'wa'. In order to adopt the small letters which promote the gal's atmosphere on her blog page, Sifow dares to choose わ in stead of は which has a small letter version of わ in the computer software because the small letters limited in あいうえおつやよわ.
- The below is the summary of the 1-12 of Gal's revolution blog's writings characteristics.

Characteristic Features of Gal's revolution blog's writing

1) The full of affective signs 'emoticon'

The various kinds of affective signs can be noticed. Although ☆, ♪, w does not so directly reflect 'emotion' as effective as pictograms in English, it should be included in affective signs in a broad sense. Those are used to avoid complete closing by a full stop. The writer tempts to remain the memory of the statement and makes the statement look fashionable by using these signs. The reason why affective signs are used so often is to bring oral into literacy. The writer makes great efforts to transform the lifeless of literacy on line communication close as much as possible to face-to face communication.

2) Shortenings and jargons

It is general tendency that online communication produces many shortenings because the length of message on line is concerned with the economical efficiency. 写メ (shame; mails of photos) and ㊤ as a duplication mark in the above blog are good examples. Nowadays since the communication on line through mobile phones has increased drastically, this tendency has be-

come accelerated.

3) The use of the small letters

The use of the small letters is related to the identity of the writer of this blog. It is a kind of action of affirmation and expression of identity. This orthographic invention is sometimes noticeable in other young people's on line communication, however, they are not so systematic as those in this blog. Sifow sometimes insists in her response to the comments, which are criticizing her adoption of unusual orthography, that she adopts the small letters with her strong assertion as the expression of her identity (Sifow, 2005).

4) Double consonants at the final position of a sentence

While Verb-ます (masu) ending in a sentence final position is the polite style of the standard form, まっす (massu) is often adopted in this blog. The insert of double consonant gives to readers some impression of a yell or a kind of shout which might be attempted to express the vitality or drive of the gal. Anyway, this trial should also be considered as one of the devices to bring about orals into the literal world of blog writing and consequently make the blog writing close to natural communication.

5) indirectness

To add or create the words of indirectness is one the most characteristic features in youth dialect. 'Toka', which actually means 'something like that', frequently is used in the text as the above example (1) shows. As so-called 'toka' dialect, from the middle of 1990's, the frequent adopt of this diminutive word has become remarkable. Beside *toka*, *mitai* (like), *teki ni wa* (in terms of) are also come to be used in the young people's speech.

5.1.2 The Response to the Original message

The two examples as below are chosen among the comments of Gal's revolution. These two girls are taking different stances concerning Gal's value; example (2) writer has already employed a sort of gal's writing style, on the other hand, example (3) writer says that she is not a gal and seems to follow, relatively faithfully, the standard of Japanese orthography. However, both of them show their interest in Sifow's advocate of Gal's revolution and express their support. This should be recognized as the beginning of the mutual engagement of communities of practice because the comment-senders seem to share the value of Sifow by expressing the agreement with Sifow and the support for Sifow. The comment-senders chose this blog among tremendous amount of choices and dare to access to it. This can be considered that they have strongly desired to be engaged with Sifow.

Example (2)

Posted by さーや★(Saaya) September 27th, 2005

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/11988379.html>

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はじめまして(e^□^e) 高①のさーや★です↑

Hajimemasite koo i chi no Saaya★desu ↑

'Nice to meet you, I am Saaya in the 1 year of high school.'

志穂さんのこと、JELLYなどで前から知っていてカッコイイなあって思っていました!!

Sifow-san no koto, JELLY nado de maekara sitteite kaokkoii naa-tte omotte mashita!!

'I've known Sifow is in Jelly from the past, and I have adored you as you're cool.'

わたしもここでブログ書こうと思ってたら偶然見つけて☆ ケータイから

Watashimo kokode blog kakoo to omottetara guuzenn mitukete☆ keetai kara

'When I too was going to write my blog here, I happened to find your blog, through my mobile phone'

ですがつい②最初から読んじゃい、改めて志穂さんはスゴイ!!って

思っています(*>μ<*)

desuga tsui ② saishyo kara yonnjai, aratamete sifow-san wa sugoi!! tte omotteimasu

'I was attempted to read up all the pages from the beginning, I was sure of your greatness again.'

Example (3)

Posted by U-ca☆ January 15th, 2006

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/50331867.html>

初めてコメントします☆私はギャルではなくごくごく普通の女子高生です笑最近この

*Hajimete komennto shimasu☆ watashi-wa gal dewa naku, gokugoku futsuu no jyoshi koo sei desu 笑
Saikinn kono*

'This is the first comment which I have sent. I am not a Gal, rather an ordinary high school girl.'

ブログを知って始めからよませていただいています (*_*) しほさんのブログを読んで、

blog wo shitte hajimekara yomasete itadaite imasu. Sifow sann no blog wo yonnde

'Since getting to know your blog recently, I have been reading it from the start.'

毎日高い壁に向かって進んでいかなきゃいけない事は私もしほさんも同じだし、

Mainich takai kabe ni mukatte susunnde ikanakya ikenai-koto wa watashimo Sifow-sann mo Onajidashi

'Just like you, I am expected to continue to aim towards a higher purpose every day....'

5.2 The examples of Joint enterprise

Joint enterprise is the most controversial part of the three features when communities of prac-

tice is applied to sociolinguistic issues. According to the examples in its original educational theory, it is admitted that the master or trainee runs some business or shops, so they obviously have some opportunities to acquire the knowledge or learn some technique.

In the case of application in sociolinguistic field, it should not be limited in some actual economically productive collaboration. The sociolinguists who are dubious about joint enterprise seem to have narrowly inflexible viewpoints. It is impossible to expect communities of practice to fit perfectly to sociolinguistic phenomena because it is originate from the learning theory. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare some flexibility if sociolinguists expect to obtain new hints to analyze the dynamism of constructing socio-dialects in examining the availability of communities of practice. Some modification should be positively done by sociolinguists.

As the evidence of joint enterprise, this paper suggests the development of discourse marker: *teka* through the on-line communication between blog writer and comment -senders. In the blog writing discourse markers are more necessary than in face to face communication, because in face-to-face communication, it is easy to identify the change of the topic in conversation by means of the phonological change or silence, the facial expression of the speaker. In contrast to this, in the blog writing, the signs of the change of topic or discourse are necessary. As a result of that, lot of conjunctions, connective words are frequently adopted. Under the circumstances as this, *teka* is developed. In this paper, any kinds of collaborative works and new production from the works are defined as joint enterprise.

5.2.1 Pragmaticalization: TEIUKA from subordinate marker to a diminutive through a filler

Pragmaticalization means to change the linguistic function of words to a form which provides signals indicating what messages the speaker expects to send through this form in order to communicate the intended propositional content. In the case of Gal's speech the subordinate phrase maker '*teiuka* (rather than)' transforms into a discourse marker and turn into a filler.

Addition to this, according to the observation of the comments of the blog of Gal's revolution as the above, the usage of *teka* as diminutive can be found. *Te iuu ka* consists of the three parts; '*te*' is a quotation marker '*iu*' means 'to tell', and '*ka*' is a particle to confirm the new information.

The change of usage is categorized into 5 stages depending on the grade which is determined by how far from the original function the usage is. Although this pragmaticalization of *teka* has begun to be noticeable more than 5 years ago, the examples of all the stages are adopted from the Si-fow's blog and its comments except original *te iuu ka* expression.

Stage 1 Compound phrase particles : *te iu ka* (rather than)

Example (4)

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Gakkoo te iu ka puri sukuuru desu ne.

School rather than preschool copula FP

'Did I say school? I meant preschool.' (Hinds: 1982)

Stage 2 Discourse marker/ hearsay marker : *teiukaa* (however)

This is the feedback writing from Sifow to the comment from Konaba.

Example (5)

Posted by Sifow, February 2nd, 2006

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/13356769.html>

BIGになれますかしらねえ～?! ってか、なるつもりですけどっ♪笑)

Big ni naremasu kasira nee?! tteka, naru tsumori desukedott ♪ warai)

'I wonder if I will become 'Big', however, that is my intention' Smile)

Stage 3 Pragmatic marker/ Illocutionary connective: *te-ka* (by the way)

Example (6)

blog original text February the 2nd, 2006

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/50377753.html#comments>

そうだ! 2月からエンディングでながれるんだっ!

Sooda! 2gatsu kara enndinngu de nagarerunn data!

'Ah! My song's gonna be on the ending of that TV program!'

・・・てか、もう2月なのお!?

Teka moo 2gatsu nanoo!?

'Well, it's February already!'

ってゅー感じで、パニくってました(° 皿° ;)

Tte yuu- kannjide panikutte mashita

'I was panicking like this.'

来週は絶対にみのがさないぞ!!

Raisyuu wa zettaini minogasa nai zo

'I will definitely not miss it next week.'

Stage 4 Filler / (well)

Example (7)

Posted by (no records) July 13th, 2005

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/27884041.html#comments>

すいませんイタ電にムカついて 電話番号 晒してしまいました。

Suimasenn itadenn ni mukatuite dennwa banngoo sarashite shimaimashita

.....

'I published the telephone number of the prankster on the web, because I was upset about the prank call.'

Example (8) Posted by 暇人 (himajinn) July 13th, 2005

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/27884041.html#comments>

つーか、電話番号載せるって！いくらいたずらと思ったからって。

Tsuuka, dennwa banngoo noserutte! Ikuraitazura to omottakaratte.

'Well, how could you do that with somebody else's phone no! Even if you thought it was a prank call.'

確実にいたずらって わかってからなら まだわかるけど。

Kakujitsuni itazuratte wakatte karanara mada wakarukedo.

'If it is definitely a prank call, I understand why you did it.'

Stage 5 Diminutive

Example (9)

Posted by たく (Taku) December 16th, 2005

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/11988379.html>

俺もがんばろー、俺はなかなか始めの気持ちとか、今とか。仕事もスポーツも恋愛だ

Oremo gannbaroo orewa nakanaka hajime no kimoti toka, ima toka. Sigoto mo supootsu mo

'I will do my best. My state of mind is such that I can not see so well'

って、みえなくなってるもんとかおおかたりしてww。・・・なんてかありがとー。

Renn-ai datte mienaku natteru monn toka ookattari site ww. Nann teka arigato-

'the start, the present situation, job, sports and love ww. Thank you in some way, I guess.'

Example (10)

Posted by たく (Taku) January 20th, 2006

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/11988379.html>

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とりあえず一周年。つっぱしてっかー? ファイトー。

*Toriaezu issyuunenn. Tsuppashi **tekka**. Faito-*

'For the moment, one year has passed. Are you achieving your goal? Fight!'

The usage of Stage 1 is standard Japanese. *Teiuka* is almost equivalent to 'rather than' of English subordinate clause. In Stage 2, *teiuka* is adopted as the marker preceding the statement of a sort of objection. A concessive sense of the original standard usage from stage 1 can be still recognized in this stage. The function of the stage 3 is topic transition. In this stage, the concessive implication is gradually fading out. In stage 4, it connects the statements without any concessive sense. *Tsuuka*, which is a variation of *teiuka* is adopted for the sole purpose of making the coherence of conversation or allowing time before giving one's statement. In the above case, the comment sender tried to connect his chatting with the previous comment which had been sent about one hour before. As for stage 5, *teka* in the example (9) is replaced for *toiuka of nann-toiuka arigato*. *Nanntoiuka* means 'what shall I say' or 'in some way'. It brings about quite indirectness of the statement. It might be strange to try to soften the effect in telling thanks to others. However, it is a sort reflection of Japanese shyness or embarrassment. As these changes depending on the stages tells, pragmaticalization of *teka* shows that the function has been transmitted from the subordinate marker to contextual and phatic marker whose function is partly one of mitigation, then, finally become a diminutive, which combines with other words and become a part of a new word. In the example (10), *tsuppashi tekkaa* is a colloquial style of the present progressive: *tsuppashi teiru kaa*. It means 'are you rushing?' It can be simply understood that *tsuppashi tekka* is just the variation of *tsuppashi teiru kaa*. However, it can be hypothetically assumed that *tekka* is not simply colloquialized form of *teiru* in the formal style, but *tekka* as pragmaticalization of *te iu ka* is overlapped on the identical *tekka* only because they resembles phonologically. In this case, it might be possible to define that this is another diminutive example of *teka*.

5.3 Shared Repertoire

The examples as below (dated August 26th, 2005: January 21st, 2006: January 24th, 2006) are the comments written by 雅弥 (Masaya) who has been continuing sending comments to Sifow's blog for months. It can be observed that the style of the comments had gradually become similar to Sifow's style as the time passed. The process of increasing similarity indicates the sympathizing of Masayo with Sifow.

Example (11)

Posted by 雅弥 (Masaya) August 26th, 2005

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/30695373.html#comments>

今、マーメイドストーリー☆PCから購入しました＼(´O`)／。到着まで
Ima maameido stoorii ☆ PC kara koonyuu shimashita. Toochaku made
'I have just bought the Mermaid story from the web. I am looking forward to its arrival.'

楽しみです。俺、個人はギャル革命マジ応援しているんで、sifow さんガンバp(^^)q
tanosimi desu. Ore, kojinn ha gyaru kakumei maji ooenn-siteiru nde, sifow-sann gannba
'I myself seriously support the Gal's revolution. I wish your success. Good luck!

俺がギャル好きってのも有るんだけどね(^-)笑 さあー仕事に行くべし。
Ore ga gal-zuki tte nomo arunndakedo-ne warai saa- sigoto ni iku besi.
It might be because I do like gals. (Smile) Well, I will go to work.

でわ×2 (^ ˘ ˘
Dewa dewa
See you, see you.

Example (12)

Posted by 雅弥 (Masaya) January 21st, 2006
<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/50349255.html#comments>
バニ〜☆多コン②録画になってしまったんですが、
Banii, baniinn ☆ konn konn rokuga ni natte simattann desu ga,
'Hello, hello it was just on video tape but I watched you on TV'

サッキ今日のTVみました★ホリサンのコーディネート楽しくみました！
sakki kyono TV mimasita ★ horisann no koodineito tanoshimi mashita.
'I enjoyed seeing your sense of fashion coordination provided by Mr.Hori.'

シホちゃんわ、素敵で輝いていました！★
Sifow chann wa suteki de kagayaite imashita
'Sifow, you look so cool.'

雪がすごかったですね!?
Yuki ga sugokatta desu ne!?
'The snow was heavy, wasn't it?'

シホちゃん、皆サンも除雪のサイお気を付けて下さい！
Sifow- chan, minasann mo jyosetsu no sai wa kiotsukete kudasai
'Sifow, and everybody, be careful when you clear away the snow.'

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Example (13)

Posted by 雅弥 (Masaya) January 24th, 2006

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sifow/archives/50356242.html#comments>

シホちゃん、バニー②☆(ω`v) CDモチ買うよ～☆彡

Sifow-chan, banii banii CD mochi (abbreviation of mochironn, 'of course') kau yo.

'Sifow, hello, hello, I definitely will buy your CD.'

モウ 早く出ないかとまちどうしいです (o`ω`o)

Moo, hayaku denai ka to machidooshii desu

'I am longing for your CD to be released in the market.'

去年突っ走ってキタコトをイカして、自分のペースでガンバッテ下さい！

Kyonenn tsuppushitte kitakoto o ikashite jibunn no peesu de gannbatte kudasai

'I hope you will do your best at your own pace, making the best use of your experience you gained last year.'

オレわシホちゃんの謡大好きだから、CD発売前わイツもうれしいです☆彡

Ore wa Sifow chann no uta daisuki dakara, CD hatsubaimae wa itsumo ureshii desu

'I like your songs very much, Sifow, so I always excited before CD is released in market.'

.....

The process of becoming closer to Sifow's style

1) The adoption of the small letter of わ 'wa'

As aforementioned, the small letter of わ is the most characteristic feature of Sifow's blog writing. In the contrast that the first comment of example (11) did not employ わ, in the second comment, example (12) and the third comment, example (13), the small letter of わ as a topic particle can be found on a few spots.

2) The adoption of the duplication mark

The mark of duplication in example (11) is '×2' which is used in the ending greeting, while the sample (12) and (13) adopts '②' in the opening greeting. Sifow has used this mark frequently in her own blog writing.

3) The expression of the first person singular

This comment-sender, 雅弥 (Masaya) uses '俺 (Ore)' for the first person pronoun in order to indicate him/herself. *Ore* is thought according to the standard Japanese to be the informal form for male, however, recently it has become recognizable that some young girls try to use *Ore* for themselves. Therefore, it is impossible to define the sex of Masaya. However, focusing on the content and style of the comments, those comments give some impression of a female writer.

The perceivable change of the orthography of Ore is from Chinese letter of ‘俺’ in example (11) to オレ in Katakana in example (13). Katakana is a kind of Japanese syllabary which is usually adopted for writing the borrowing words, so おれ (Ore) in Hiragana is supposed to be written in stead of オレ according to the standard Japanese. Hiragana is another kind of Japanese syllabary, which is used for expressing ordinal Japanese text.

The change of the orthography in expressing first person aforementioned can not relate directly to the influence from Sifow’s blog at the present stage, however, it is obvious that both Masaya and Sifow has inclined to adopt Katakana more often than they are supposed to do according to the standard of Japanese orthography. Masaya actually show his favor of Katakana writing from the first comment, example (11). The reason why they prefer Katakana so much is in its unusualness. The official documents had been mostly written in Katakana and Kanji (the borrowed Chinese letters) up to the recent time but both of Katakana and Hiragana have never been used in the mixed style except the borrowing words in Katakana. In addition to the unusualness, the impression of light taste of Katakana should be accounted. Katakana constituted with straight line and sharp curbs seems to be up to date and cool. Anyway, it is for sure that Masaya and Sifow share the orthographic sense, it is understandable for Masaya to employ Katakana in order to show the strong support for Sifow and tell that they are sharing the same value.

6 Conclusion

This paper has examined whether communities of practice is really applicable to analyze the construction of the cyber-dialect. The blog, a type of on-line communication which has observed here is organized by a Japanese girl and she has interacted with comment-senders on her blog. According to the observation of the change and variation of their writing, it is noticeable that the blog writer and comment-senders have encouraged each other and consequently, comment-senders gradually try to express the sympathy and strong support by adopting the blog-writer’s authentic orthographical ways.

In the paper, focusing the three dimensions of practice; mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire, communities of practice has been illustrated. As a result of the mutual engagement at the first step, the blog writer and comment-senders have interest each other, and they are successful in building up solidarity and empowered. Then, they have reached up to cause language change in their communities on line. The pragmaticalization from compound phrase particle to diminutive via a filler can be recognized as the proof of joint enterprise as the second step.

The adoption of blog writer’s habitat by comment-senders is set to be considered as shared repertoire. Although some modification or looseness is necessary, communities of practice is significant in developing the theory to analyze sociolinguistic phenomena and will contribute to seek the more

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elaborate theory.

Abbreviations

Coj conjunction
 FN final nominative
 FP final particle
 P particle

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