Linguistic and Sociocultural Studies of
Japanese Computer-Mediated Communication:
A Literature Review*

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Abstract

This article presents a review of literature on linguistic and sociocultural studies of Japanese computer-mediated communication (CMC). It begins with a brief discussion of English CMC relevant to Japanese CMC. It describes how linguistic and sociocultural studies of Japanese CMC originated and have been conducted so far. Possible future research directions are pointed out. It is expected that this review will be of benefit to future CMC researchers.

I Introduction

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is defined as “communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers” (Herring 1996: 1). While CMC research in English has accumulated over the past few decades, to which the author is indebted, studies on Japanese CMC have been far fewer. Inspired by English CMC studies, a growing number of works on Japanese CMC have been conducted recently. With a focus on linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of Japanese CMC, this article presents a review of the literature concerning Japanese CMC. It attempts to locate current Japanese CMC studies in some 20 years of previous works. Section 2 will review two among many important works of English CMC research relevant to the discussion here. Section 3 will present three streams of Japanese CMC studies that later joined to become the current linguistic research of CMC. With more recent and wider uses of computers with mobile technology, works discussing mobile phone communications are also included in this section. Section 4 will discuss sociocultural studies of Japanese CMC, featuring politeness and online community studies, in particular. Future research directions and concluding remarks will be given in Section 5. It is expected that this survey will benefit future CMC researchers in general and also facilitate advancing Japanese CMC studies in particular.
II English CMC studies that have direct relevance to Japanese CMC studies: Crystal and Baron

In this section, I review two representative, important studies of English CMC research, and discuss how these are relevant to the study of CMC in Japanese. The first work is by Crystal (2001, 2006) and the second by Baron (2000). The first work is chosen because Crystal’s study can be seen as a representative of the first “wave” (Andrououtsopoulos 2006) of linguistic CMC research in English, focusing on structural features of language use on the Internet, such as abbreviations, emoticons and characteristic hybrid styles of spoken and written languages. In the second “wave,” methods and concepts developed in face-to-face (FTF) sociolinguistics and pragmatics were employed to investigate phenomena in CMC. The topics explored include gender, politeness, cultural differences and variation studies (see Section 4 of this article). Though this distinction is not clear-cut, it is useful in locating earlier works of CMC. Baron’s study goes beyond the first and second wave CMC research, as it takes into account a historical perspective on writing practices. It helps contextualise how Japanese writing practices underwent changes.

As a study typical of the first wave of CMC research, Crystal’s Language and the Internet (2001) should be discussed. Its second edition was published in 2006, just five years after the first edition appeared. The pace of change on the Internet was so accelerated that a new chapter, “New varieties” was added before the final Chapter 9, “Linguistic Future of the Internet.” Other changes and revisions have also been made to the first edition (Ranger 2007). How Crystal treats language in general versus particular languages needs to be commented on from the perspective of the present study.

Given the focus of the article on Japanese CMC, I have concerns with Crystal’s approach to the subject matter, language. Though he clearly states the aim of the book is “to explore the ways in which the nature of the electronic medium...is having an effect on language in general, and on individual languages in particular” (p. 5), it seems that he relies so heavily on English language examples that he misses important phenomena arising from technologically mediated interaction in non-English CMC. One neglected area that should be pointed out is word-processing technology, which is almost transparent and does not need to be mentioned in English CMC. This, however, plays a crucial role in the case of Japanese CMC.

An example of what English CMC research might overlook is given here. In a rather recent discussion of emoticons in English CMC, happy smiley faces, ☺ can appear in several word-processing and mobile phone devices by typing a colon, hyphen and closing parenthesis (Krohn 2004: 323). It seems this and the frowny face (☹), copyright symbol (©) and registered trade mark
symbol (®) are the only four examples in English word processing, in which what is typed on the
keyboard produces different representations, at least in a Word file on the Window’s operating
system, though more of these kinds of conversions appear in recent text messaging platforms.\(^1\)
In Japanese CMC, however, this kind of conversion phenomena takes place on a far greater scale
whenever Japanese language scripts are produced on the computer, as explained in the section,
acceptable Japanese expression needs to be created on the computer, word conversion systems
need to be employed to input by Roman letters to produce Japanese symbols roughly based on the
particular pronunciation.\(^2\)

Furthermore, the use of Chinese characters makes the situation even more complex, due to
a large number of homophones. The word processing technology converts what is typed into
various options, and users need to choose the intended ones. Here what is of interest from a
sociolinguistic perspective is that basic word-processing technology affords Japanese CMC users
room to use the technology for word play based on punning (see Nishimura 2003a). Forms that
are conventionally recognised as incorrect or joking representations can be produced by the
technology, and they are linked to certain group identities among CMC users. These processes
can provide a basis for sociolinguistically and pragmatically meaningful interpretations. In
discussing language and the Internet, observations of such technologically related sociocultural
phenomena are essential in understanding Japanese CMC, and there may be similar phenomena
in other non-alphabet-based languages.

Following the above discussion it may be better to see Crystal’s overview as being of “English
and the Internet,” rather than “Language and the Internet.” As a non-native speaker of English,
I have mixed interpretations and reactions. On the one hand, readers who are not native English
speakers can obtain detailed aspects of English CMC. I have also identified a number of shared
features between English and Japanese CMC (Nishimura 2003b). On the other hand, a number of
interesting phenomena in non-English or non-alphabet-based CMC are ignored.

Crystal’s work, therefore, reinforces the need for research in non-English CMC, in order to
fill a large research gap in CMC studies in languages other than English. Such studies will
illuminate aspects of CMC that have not fully been recognised by examining English CMC alone.
Most noticeably the role of technology that allows not just converting scripts but is linked also
to word play and to cultural group identities can be clarified.

Before moving on to how Japanese CMC research originated, I will review one book by
Baron (2000), as this makes a historical review of language, typography and the technology
specific to writing. Some of the discussions are useful in contextualising how Japanese CMC
research came to be.
Baron’s *Alphabet to Email (2000)* describes the transition of English writing practices from the 14th century to the present, paying attention to the role of technology such as printing, telephone, telegraph and the computer. This book is addressed to linguists, composition professionals and teachers, students of English and to any other laypersons interested in language change particular to writing.

Of interest to this work is Baron’s prediction of how the English language is going to change. Baron’s discussion on how the language has undergone changes over the history of written English is reminiscent of some reflections on how the Japanese language has been changing throughout history. For example, the spoken and written languages had completely separate styles until rather recently, around the beginning of the Meiji Era (1868-1912). At this time there was a movement called “*gen-bun itchi,*” which literally means “unification of the written and spoken languages.” In this movement, novelists including Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909) attempted to write their novels (e.g. *Ukigumo [The Drifting Cloud],* 1887) in the spoken styles of the day, and gradually the style spread and became the basis for present-day writing style (Ooya et al eds. 1995). The second stage of *gen-bun itchi* is now taking place, and is to be described in the next section.

Baron’s award-winning book thus inspires the author of this article with regard to how language undergoes change in relation to technology. Baron’s work is valuable not only for documenting English writing practices over the time-span covered and discussing various issues such as authorship and prescriptivism, but also for giving readers from non-English backgrounds an opportunity to reflect on what changes have been occurring in their respective cultures.

III Linguistic studies of Japanese CMC

How, then, has the Japanese language online been studied linguistically and socioculturally? Before the advent of the Internet, there were two focus areas that later merged into a third research interest in the study of online Japanese: the first on young people’s language and the second on the effect of word-processors on writing, namely technologically supported writing, and the third approach inspired by English CMC studies. I will explain each research interest in turn.

The first area of enquiry that leads to research of online Japanese came from an investigation of the language used by younger generation in Japan. This has been studied by a number of scholars. Satake (1980) identified young people’s spoken styles appearing in writing, which he dubbed “*shin genbun itchi tai*” or “new unification of the written and spoken styles.” He also conducted quantitative analysis on such language based on popular magazine articles for young people (Satake 1991). Other scholars' works include those by Yonekawa (1998) on young people’s group language in general and Koyano (1994) on campus slang among female students. Yonekawa
(2002) discusses language use based on gender, occupation and even anti-social groups. Koyano (1993) specifically studies college girls’ language, mostly colloquial uses in the Osaka area. This line of research is seen in recent observations made by Yamaguchi (2007) from her long-standing work on classical Japanese literature and linguistics, and Kitahara (2008) focusing on contemporary Romanized Japanese acronyms from his years of lexicographic works.

The second area of CMC study comes from scholars who actively experienced technologically supported writing. This must be pointed out because Japanese writers in general did not experience the stage of typewriting, which has been familiar to Western writers since the 1880s or so (Walker 1984). The technological impact on language brought on by typewriters and word-processors thus does not seem so rapid and extreme in Western countries as it does in Japan. The word-processor had a more significant impact on writing practices among Japanese, who employ more complicated script systems (Gottlieb 1994, Smith and Schmidt 1996) than writers of alphabet-based languages.

Before word-processors were in common use in Japan around 1995, when the household penetration rate of such machinery reached 43.7 percent (Hashimoto 2003), handwriting was normal for everyday individual needs. Institutional organizations employed printing, but the cost and the equipment was beyond what ordinary Japanese writers could afford (Hashimoto 2003). There were discussions on whether word-processors could enhance or deteriorate the quality of writing or how this could relate to literacy. Such debates involved educators, professional writers such as novelists and journalists and, more importantly, those involved with national language policy on script uses. The publication of special issues on word-processors in the semi-academic journal *Nihongogaku [Japanese Linguistics]* in 1984 and again in 1988 shows the intensity of the impact on Japanese speakers’ writing practices. Tanaka (1991) describes the impact of word processing on Japanese society, focusing on more technological aspects such as how input by Romanisation brings about *hiragana*, *katakana* and *kanji* representations, though Unger (1984) was pessimistic about Romanisation input on the computer, when word processors were invented in the early 1980s.

As computers with Internet access began replacing word-processors used by the general public around 2000, some early computer users who had been word-processor users began to comment on the language and new writing styles such as emoticons in emails and chat (e.g. Takamoto 1993, 1997), in the second stream of online Japanese investigation. In the 1990s, when CMC was referred to as “personal computer communication,” features of the language used in the online environment caught the attention of researchers, such as Itou (1993), Asao (1996) and Takamoto (1993, 1997) among others. Itou (1993) describes chat phenomena, still new at that time, and ascribes the spoken/written hybrid qualities of the language to synchronicity and inter-
activity. Asao (1996) points out stylistic features of email initial statements in the sender’s self-introduction that are different from letter-writing practices.

These phenomena are contrasted with American email styles by Sugimoto and Levin (2000), who compare how American and Japanese users identify themselves and use emoticons in email messages sent to discussion groups. Takamoto (1993) discusses various functions of Japanese emoticons, referred to as “face marks,” in email and discussion board messages, at a time when it was not even decided what to call emoticons. Takamoto (1997) later describes structural and organisational properties of emails, foreseeing the possibility of emails becoming an important means of communication and the need for studying what forms and expressions are to be used.

From a perspective of CMC studies relating to issues about language and technology and the social impact of technology, Gottlieb (2000) needs to be mentioned to consider issues particular to the Japanese language and culture. Gottlieb (2000) describes in detail how word-processing technology has changed writing practices in public domains such as government script policies, and also private practices such as personal letter writing in Japanese society. This book is informative and useful to understand the sociocultural impact of word processing technology in Japan. Not only word-processing, but also sociocultural evaluations of other writing tools, such as brushes, pens and pencils are also compared. Such a comparison may not be seen in cultures other than Japanese. While I welcome this publication, one comment I would like to make concerns the greater focus on government script policies than on contemporary uses of scripts found on the Internet. Though there is actually a section, “Kanji on the Internet” in the final chapter, Gottlieb’s discussion is on general issues involving kanji, which may cause such possibility as linguistic isolationism from a global perspective. Finer descriptions on how users exploit contemporary word processing technology to link the language to writers’ identity and community bondage, as reported by Nishimura (2003a, 2003b), are not found in Gottlieb’s work.

After this stage of Japanese CMC research in the 2000s onwards, CMC platforms expanded and the online population has constantly risen (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications Japan 2007). This has been brought not only by personal computers, but also mobile phones, which have become an indispensable part of Japanese culture, especially among young people. Though social and psychological research on the effect of mobile phones has appeared (e.g. Itou et al eds. 2005), I limit this review to linguistic and sociocultural studies on mobile phone communications. Tanaka (2001), Matsuda (2003) and Miyake (2005a, 2005b), among others, discuss mobile phone communications including mobile phone text messages. Tanaka (2001) compares users’ behaviours in exchanging messages by computer versus mobile phone. Matsuda (2003) explains linguistic behaviour of mobile phone users during 1990s. Matsuda (2008) reports her recent observation on mobile phone text messages and finds more uses of templates and more standardisation due to
pre-installed word-processing software with predictive functions, which enable users to input messages with fewer key strokes. Miyake (2005a, 2005b) studies linguistic features of mobile phone text messages, and in her later work analyses these messages from the viewpoint of managing interpersonal relations (2007). Studies edited by Yamazaki (2006) discuss both mobile phone conversations and mobile phone text messaging from a conversation analytic approach. They analyse how mobile technology affects users’ communication behaviours, based on university students’ mobile phone conversation recordings and text messages.

Besides these mobile phone studies, there is research on “web diaries”, which are now called blogs. Matsuda (2001) analyses Japanese web diaries, focusing on the construction of “voice,” and discusses one of the four Japanese scripts, katakana, as contributing to “voice” construction. More recently Kishimoto (2003, 2005) also analyses linguistic features of web diaries. Kishimoto clarifies the styles in which writers are conscious of their audience. Miura and Yamashita (2007) surveyed blog authors in Japan and found positive feedback strongly encouraged these authors to continue writing. Blogs are discussed in the special issues of Nihongogaku [Japanese Linguistics] (2007) and Gendai no Esupuri [L’Esprit D’Aujourd’hui] (2000).

Research on other aspects of CMC includes Matsuda (2002), who examines the negotiation of identity and power in email messages written by Japanese teachers of English at colleges and high schools, including analyses of the uses of honorifics. Fais and Ogura (2001) discuss issues concerning Japanese-specific practices and orthographic issues of Japanese email messages when they are translated into English. Yamazaki (2002), based on the messages from a Japan-based newsgroup, finds both features of local Japanese discourse patterns and global or English-oriented discourse patterns. Katsuno and Yano (2002) analyse “face marks” or kaomoji, the Japanese equivalent of emoticons, used in email and mobile phone messages.

Works on CMC in languages other than English have appeared rather sporadically. Among non-English CMC, articles in books and academic journals that discuss Japanese CMC include a comparison of orality in English, Japanese and Korean chat room and newsgroup messages (Fouser et al 2000), and a doctoral dissertation, written in German, featuring a linguistic analysis of Japanese web diaries kept mostly by young people (Oberwinkler 2006). In Nishimura (2003a) messages sent to a large-scale bulletin board systems (BBS) site, Channel 2, are investigated from the viewpoint of a community of practice (Wenger 1998), detailing site-specific features that lead to community identity, such as kanji punning and unconventional vocabulary based not only on pronunciation but also on script shape. Akizuki (2009) more recently discusses visual aspects of Japanese CMC both from mobile phone text messages as well as various blog sites. Interest in the language of blogs can be seen in a special issue of Nihongogaku [Japanese Linguistics] (2007) on the language of blogging. There is thus a certain amount of research on the structural and
linguistic properties of Japanese CMC.

The most recent stream of the research is inspired by English CMC studies. At a time when non-English CMC studies were (and still are) limited, what filled this research gap was a themed issue of an online journal, the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication (JCMC)* Volume 9, issue 1, in 2003. The central theme of this special issue, edited by Herring and Danet, was “Multilingual Internet,” on CMC research of languages other than English. The languages explored include not only other European languages such as Swiss, Greek, Catalan-Spanish and Portuguese, but also non-alphabet-based ones spoken in other parts of the world: Gulf Arabic, Chinese (Taiwan), Thai and Japanese. The article on Japanese CMC (Nishimura 2003b), using Werry (1996) and Danet (2001) as a frame of reference, discusses how young Japanese users of BBS creatively manipulate language for CMC, while compensating for and adapting to the limitations of their environment to have fun. It discusses linguistic and interactional features of BBS communication based on messages sent to fan sites, focusing on the vast variety of scripts used by the Japanese speakers innovatively as key elements that characterise Japanese online communication.

Another important publication, *Multilingual Internet*, also edited by Danet and Herring (2007), is an extended, printed version of the online *JCMC* publication. This book collects additional articles on languages not included in the online journal, such as Chinese (Hong Kong), French, German and Swedish. Another article on Japanese CMC by Katsuno and Yano (2007) specifically discusses emoticons used in chat among Japanese housewives and regard them as key elements of forming communities among them. This work broadens the understanding on Japanese CMC, as the author’s own study on Japanese CMC included in this book has a focus on linguistic properties (Nishimura 2007b).

There are differences in CMC messages depending on the modes, such as email, chat, blog, BBS and mobile phone communications, and it would be difficult to generalise the findings from these above studies. What is still lacking in the literature is a somewhat more general look at the features of CMC language in Japanese. None of these studies, including my own, describe CMC language in comparison with written or spoken Japanese in numerically comparable ways. There are such studies on English CMC (e.g. Yates 1996, Collot and Belmore 1996). To Japanese native speakers, the difference between speech and writing might seem so huge that they are treated as if completely different entities. Or this difference might be considered too obvious for some researchers to undertake such a study. Whatever the reason for this, there is a research gap in these above studies of Japanese CMC. Nishimura (2008a) addresses this gap, based on BBS messages from Channel 2 and another major website, Yahoo Japan! BBS. The CMC language is quantitatively compared to speech of casual conversation among college-age friends, and writing
from magazine articles on similar topics as discussed on BBS. It finds that interjections distinguish speech from CMC and writing. CMC is distinguished from writing by the usages of particles. Uses of auxiliary verbs separate the two target websites, Channel 2 and Yahoo within CMC.

Based on the linguistic characterisation of the CMC language, Nishimura (2008b) further discusses qualitatively politeness and impoliteness behaviours in the two target BBS websites with contrasting linguistic features. Other studies from sociocultural perspectives will be described in the next section.

IV Sociocultural studies of Japanese CMC

Interest in Japanese CMC from sociocultural perspectives seems to be growing among Japanese scholars. Four such studies were presented at the 10th International Pragmatics Conference. Satou (2007) discusses online community from the perspective of narrative theory, which helps users maintain rapport and a sense of community. Miyake (2007) investigates young mobile phone users’ apology behaviour using questionnaire method and finds that unique Japanese orthography helps them maintain smooth interpersonal relationships. Okamoto (2007) analyses corporate email messages focusing on visual elements such as pictorial signs within a framework of visual grammar. Takenoya (2007) takes up BBS messages sent to real estate buying and selling sites, and analyses them based on speech act theory. These four studies all discuss the CMC phenomena in Japanese cultural settings employing concepts developed in pragmatics and sociolinguistics. Since such studies in languages other than English are limited, they are welcome additions to the body of scholarship on Japanese CMC.

Further, Nishimura (2008a) points out that one theory of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) can explain impolite behaviour on Channel 2, but not politeness on Yahoo, and that another theory proposed by Ide (1989) can explain polite behaviour in Yahoo, but not impoliteness on Channel 2. A third theory from a discursive approach proposed by Locher and Watts (2005) is shown to be capable of synthesising the two contrasting situations. Nishimura (2008b) discusses politeness and impoliteness in BBS communities and points out the possibility of differing linguistic behaviour based on two variables the topic of discussion (study-related or hobby-related) and the relative strength in participants’ sense of community. It also identifies that the seemingly impolite behaviour on Channel 2, where users have a strong sense of community, can be explained by the concept of contextual appropriateness or “politic behaviour” (Watts 2003).

Regarding the unique Internet community, Channel 2, there are some academic studies, in addition to those mentioned above. Kaigo and Watanabe (2007) discuss how Channel 2 users reacted to video files of a murder scene. It evoked anti-war threads, and what may appear to be
an unethical website showed conscientious reaction. This study reports that Channel 2 exhibits
violations of socially accepted moral principles, yet does not show anti-social behaviour due to
self-regulating mechanisms. A similar remark can be made about users’ linguistic practices, in
which the normal language used on Channel 2 may sound like a violation of the socially accepted
norms of the larger Japanese speech community, but within this community their language use is
well received and in fact enhances the sense of community.

Matsumura et al (2005) explain overall dynamism of Channel 2 messaging activities. Using
the Structural Equation Model, the researchers measure the site’s popularity by setting up eight
indices for online activities, including content, activity, interaction. These indices are quantita-
tively and automatically applied by computer to 5748 threads that have been classified into 30
categories. After identifying types of communication depending on the nature of discussion, such
as chitchat and special expression types, the model found that the use of Channel 2 specific
expressions affects positively chitchat-type communication and negatively discussion-type com-
munication, among other findings.

This study by social psychologists intrigues Channel 2 researchers including the author, as it
has identified certain aspects of causality in Channel 2 dynamics. However, their study does not
deal with clarifying the linguistic and sociocultural practices of Channel 2. To focus on the
sociolinguistic features they have not paid attention to would also be important in understanding
this online community better, as such a sociolinguistic approach complements the approaches of
social psychology. An automated computer analysis does not seem to be capable of analysing
interactional details. Combined with the research from social psychological motivation, studies
from sociolinguistic approach would capture a more comprehensive picture of this unique and
popular online community.25 The number of works discussing socio-cultural issues such as
politeness and online communities in Japanese CMC is still very limited. More works are
expected to advance the understanding of Japanese CMC.

V Concluding remarks

This article has outlined how Japanese CMC studies have emerged, arising from mainly three
streams of focus areas. It first pointed out the need for conducting Japanese CMC research by
reviewing English CMC studies represented by Crystal (2001, 2006) and Baron (2000), as they help
make researchers of non-English CMC realize the need for it. In fact, more studies on non-English
CMC are being conducted, as summarised by McLelland (2007).

What can follow and expand current Japanese CMC research may include the following
topics: (1) quantitative analyses of the Japanese language online covering more genres of commu-
nications, (2) continued qualitative discussion on face, identity and community maintenance in
CMC and (3) comparative, cross-cultural study of CMC.

The first research area comes from limitations in Nishimura’s (2008a) quantitative study, which discusses the particular genre of BBS communication within CMC. In addition to BBS, there are other genres that show specific CMC features such as novels created and read in mobile computers. Preliminary studies (Nishimura 2009a, 2009b) have been conducted, yet further analysis is necessary in comparison with the same genres from printed (written) media.

In order to take quantitative analysis further, more corpus tools are needed than those employed in the research to date. Though parts of speech distribution was the primary measure for the comparison in earlier studies, measures other than this need to be applied to make finer analysis of respective genres.

The second feature area demands more detailed analysis of BBS interactions, in which users manipulate their interactional behaviour and psychological distance with varying degrees of honorifics. Mixtures of politeness acts as the basis for face and identity construction and maintenance, and this needs to be explored in expanded qualitative research.

The third direction of future research will allow for cross-cultural comparison of CMC. One particular area of interest will be in the comparison of mobile phone communications, in which text messages collected in the UK and Japan can be contrasted and compared. This can reveal cultural differences and similarities of mobile phone use in the management of interpersonal relations. These differences might partly be attributed to the technological designs of mobile phones. It would be of interest to ascertain to what extent and in what areas differences and similarities exist between the two cultures in mobile phone communications.

To conclude, this article has reviewed the literature and demonstrated how Japanese CMC has been researched. It has also presented the relevant discussions of English CMC. It has pointed out the need for non-English CMC research to be conducted in various cultures of the world. The author, with a Japanese cultural background, has focused on Japanese CMC, which could broaden and deepen understandings of areas of CMC that may have gone unnoticed. I have also pointed out a few possible future research directions. It is expected that this review will be of use to scholars interested in CMC in Japanese and other languages, and that these and other research directions can be pursued by future CMC researchers.

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Notes
1. I owe this observation to Sarah Louisa Birchley.
2. It is possible to directly enter Japanese syllabaries, but it is not the preferred way of input for most users. Text message input methods on mobile phones have different systems, but these details are not given here due to space limitation.
4. Chronology of the technological development of Japanese word-processing can be summarised as follows:
   1978: First word processor, Toshiba “JW-10,” cost ¥6300000
   1983: Fujitsu “My Oasys 2” cost ¥500,000
   1983: Canon “Cano Word Mini 5” cost ¥300,000
   1981: First Japanese language on the computer made available by Fujitsu “FM8”
   1983: “Japanese word processing” software made available by Kanri Kougaku
   1984: “JX-Word,” father of Japanese language word processing software, made available by Just System
   1995: Household penetration rate of word processors reaches 43.7%
   1995: Decline in word-processing machines, beginning to shift to personal computers
   1999: Personal computer household penetration rate at 37.7%
   2000: Personal computer household penetration rate 44.2%; 62% of households have either word-processors or personal computers
   (Source: Hashimoto 2003)

5. Other works that discuss Channel 2’s community are as follows: Inoue (2001) reports an interview with the site originator, Nishimura Hiroyuki, and explains its history and popularity. Channel 2 dictionaries are compiled by Niten Purojekuto (2002, 2003), and can be a source of community specific dictons. Suzuki (2003) also discusses details of thread name varieties, and can be another guide for those who are unfamiliar with Channel 2. Onishi (2004) describes Channel 2 as a vent for Japanese speakers to utter socially acceptable remarks. Hiroyuki (2007) himself defends the website in his book explaining why Channel 2 is not going to crash. His answer is because there will always be a need for people to post messages there. Kitayama’s (2008) interview with Hiroyuki gives updates on the current situation of Channel 2 as well as its origin. Inoue (2006) discusses Channel 2 language from the perspective of youth language, and more recently Hayakawa and Ide (2009) examine how interactions take place in the community-specific language and how the sense of Channel 2 community is shaped.
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