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# PRESENT DAY, PRESENT TIME

## Pragmatics and Aizuchi in Japanese Live Stream Chats.

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Uppsats/Examensarbete:	15 hp
Program och/eller kurs:	JP1520
Nivå:	Grundnivå
Termin/år:	Ht/2024
Handledare:	Jonathan Puntervold
Examinator:	Fusae Takasaki Ivarsson
Rapport nr:	xx (ifylles ej av studenten/studenterna)

## Abstract

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Nyckelord:	Aizuchi, Backchannels, Pragmatics, Livestream, Digital Communication

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- Syfte:** The purpose of this study is to observe backchanneling, or aizuchi, in a digital context through Japanese live stream chats, to see why aizuchi is so prevalent. By analysing the pragmatic functions and structure it is also of interest to see how the medium both differs from other online environments and its different forms within different streaming formats.
- Teori:** The theory is mainly based on the Horiguchi (1988) aizuchi framework categorising them based on structure and pragmatic intent. Other theory mentions listeners actions in conversation, the purpose of backchannels and theory regarding pragmatic functions. Additionally orthographic perspectives related to online slang and digital communication are drawn from, with focus on how these elements manifest in Japanese.
- Metod:** The analysis is conducted by scraping chat logs from two separate live streams, one solo, and one collaboration stream from the same streamer, and sorted based on theoretically established frameworks for aizuchi pragmatic intent and form it takes. Based on the data, an analysis is then made from a sociological, linguistic and cultural point of view.
- Resultat:** Through the analysis we can confirm that first, aizuchi plays a central role in the live stream chats and see remarkable differences to the medium compared to other environments. There is also reason to believe the presented frameworks can be expanded by adding a new “Emote” category. There are also reasons to believe a cultural shift happening in the usage of slang, with *kaomoji* being replaced by emoticons.

# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Thesis Focus.....	5
1.2 Research Questions.....	6
1.3 Significance of the Study.....	6
<b>2. Theory and Past Research.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Backchanneling and Aizuchi.....	7
2.2.1 When Listeners Talk.....	7
2.2.2 How Backchanneling is Defined.....	8
2.2.3 The Form of Backchannels and Aizuchi.....	9
2.3 Pragmatic Functions.....	10
2.3.1 Pragmatics.....	10
2.3.2 Pragmatic Functions and Backchannels.....	10
2.3.3 Pragmatic Functions in Digital Communication.....	11
2.4 Japanese in a Digital Context.....	11
2.4.1 Difference Between Spoken and Written Japanese.....	11
2.4.2 Orthography and Digital Communication in Japanese.....	11
2.4.3 Kaomoji, Emoticons and Laugh Markers.....	12
2.4.4 Backchanneling in Digital Communication.....	13
<b>3. Methodology/Material.....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 Materials.....	15
3.2 Data Collection.....	16
3.3 Processing Data.....	16
<b>4. Results.....</b>	<b>18</b>
4.1 Quantitative Overview of Backchannel Messages.....	18
4.1.1 Data Summary.....	18
4.1.2 Aizuchi Form Breakdown.....	18
4.1.2.1 Solo Stream (Blue).....	19
4.1.2.2 Collaboration Stream (Red).....	19
4.1.3 Pragmatic Function Breakdown.....	19
4.1.3.1 Solo Stream (Blue).....	20
4.1.3.2 Collaboration Stream (Red).....	20
4.1.4 Laughing Marker Comparisons.....	20
4.2 Comparative Analysis Between Solo and Collaboration Streams.....	20
4.2.1 Message Volume.....	20
4.2.2 Result Excerpts.....	20
4.2.2.1 Solo Stream.....	21
4.2.2.2 Collaboration Stream.....	21

4.2.3 Shared Common Points.....	22
4.2.4 Diverging Patterns.....	22
4.3 Challenges in Categorization.....	23
<b>5. Discussion.....</b>	<b>25</b>
5.1 Contemporary Studies Comparison.....	25
5.1.1 Disrupted Turn Adjacency in CMC.....	25
5.2 Cultural and Sociological Insights of Aizuchi in Live Stream Chats.....	26
5.2.1 Parasocial Interactions.....	26
5.2.2 Kaomoji.....	26
<b>6. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Solo Stream.....	33
Collaboration Stream.....	34

# 1. Introduction

A live stream at its core means to broadcast live video or audio content in real time over the internet to an online audience. As an entertainment medium, live streaming has been growing consistently for years, standing on the same stage fighting with traditional media platforms like television for viewership. In the first quarter of 2021 alone, live streaming platforms accrued over 10 billion hours of watch time (Littleford 2024), proving not only its cultural relevance as a medium, but also the impact the streamer's standing on the forefront have on the quickly evolving communication environment in the 2020's.

What stands out for streaming compared to traditional TV is a feature called chat, which is a chat box where the viewers can type in, directly communicating with the streamer while they are live. Littleford (2024) compares the experience to watching a TV show together with an audience, except they are able to communicate with the actors on the show while they are performing, and then having them communicate back in real time.

As streamer's gained larger audiences, the chat box still remained the same. With an increasingly crowded space with hundreds of messages flying by every minute all trying to form a connection with the streamer simultaneously. While the format of the chat is similar to group chats or online forums, the scale and dynamic of live stream chats stand out. As the medium develops, the communication within also adapts new strategies and tools to stand out in an attempt to connect with the streamer. This thesis will take a closer look at one of these presumed strategies observed within the chat.

## 1.1 Thesis Focus

This thesis focuses on the Japanese live streaming environment, where the presence of *aizuchi*, a type of backchanneling interjection prevalent in Japanese conversation, notably stood out as one of the tools used by the viewers when observing chat logs. *Aizuchi* often involves short verbal cues (such as はい *hai* (yes), or うん *un* (yeah)) signaling active listeners in a conversation without interrupting the speaker. In live stream chats, this *aizuchi* appears in digital form presenting questions about how Japanese conversational norms adapt to the medium. This also includes solely digital conventions such as emoticons and how those tie into the *aizuchi*.

Since the structure of the typical *aizuchi* are at most one or two words, there is a need to look deeper behind the intent behind the *aizuchi* to fully understand the purpose and intent behind it. This is done through exploring both the shape and pragmatic intent of the digital *aizuchi* messages observed in live stream chat logs, putting Japanese online communication in a sociocultural context. Ultimately, the study addresses two main subjects, pragmatics and backchanneling, and how they form *aizuchi* online.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

- Do backchannels in Japanese live stream chats differ from those in other Japanese online communication mediums, such as group chats, and if they do, how?
- How do different live stream formats (eg., solo vs collaborative streams) shape the types and functions of aizuchi observed in the chat?
- What cultural or sociological insight can be drawn from the use of aizuchi in live stream chats?

## **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Despite the growing popularity of live streaming, the linguistic and pragmatic features of this form of communication remains understudied, particularly in the Japanese context. Through the lens of aizuchi and backchanneling, this thesis offers some insights into how Japanese speakers adapt both traditional speaking conventions and online discourse to the constraints of live stream chats. Not only does this expand our understanding of digital communication in Japanese, but it also broadens the discussion on the interplay between culture, language and technology.

## 2. Theory and Past Research

### 2.1 Introduction

This section explores current research and theories relevant to the analysis of this study. First examining the foundational concept of backchanneling and its Japanese equivalent, *aizuchi*, comparing the two definitions. Next, theories regarding pragmatic functions and its appliance on *aizuchi* are discussed focusing on their categorization of both spoken and text-based communication. Lastly it transitions into viewing Japanese from a digital context, touching upon the roles of emoticons and how online slang shapes *aizuchi* digitally. The section concludes by tying it all together, exploring how backchannels are used and understood in Japanese online spaces.

### 2.2 Backchanneling and Aizuchi

#### 2.2.1 When Listeners Talk

“The principal way in which we are social beings, in contrast to being individuals, is through talk.” Gardner (2001, p.1). Conversation, as defined by the Cambridge English Dictionary (n.d.), is “(a) talk between two or more people in which thoughts, feelings, and ideas are expressed, questions are asked and answered, or news and information is exchanged.” For any conversation to take place there always needs to be a recipient, someone to listen, for the exchange of ideas.

Purdy and Borisoff (1997) highlight listening as a crucial component of conversation, citing no less than 12 major research studies that identified listening not only as an important skill but the most important communication skill—surpassing even speaking. Yet, what does it truly mean to be good at listening? Listening is more involved than simply hearing words being spoken. As the title of Gardner’s book *When Listeners Talk* (2001) suggests, listeners too, can talk, listening is an active process. Among seven key components of listening identified by Purdy and Borisoff (1997), is the habit of “responding with feedback” (p.9), which they argue is a critical step in ensuring that the speaker knows their message has been understood and correctly interpreted. This type of feedback, both verbal and nonverbal feedback, is what is now commonly referred to as backchanneling.

Gardner (2001) elaborates on the concept of response tokens, a term he uses to describe backchannel feedback. These response tokens, he notes, are challenging to define because they often lack inherent “meaning” in a dictionary sense and are rarely given attention by linguists. This observation, although made more than 20 years ago, brings light on the relative neglect listening gets within linguistic studies. Gardner critiques the field for prioritizing speaking and writing over listening, which he considers an equally vital component of communication. As Goodwin (1986, cited in Gardner, 2001, p.205) notes, “The primary source of data for the study of language has typically come from the activities of

speakers. Noticeably lacking within linguistics, has been systematic study of the action of hearers.” As by extension, if listening itself is understudied, then backchanneling, a key aspect of active listening, can be considered to have received even less scholarly attention compared to writing and speaking.

The role of listener feedback does not merely take a supportive role in a conversation, but is integral to the dynamic of the whole conversation. Tolins and Fox Tree (2014) demonstrate that a listener’s level of engagement directly influences the quality of a speaker’s narrative. Their study revealed that the listener can take on the role as a co-narrator, based on how engaged they appear to be to the story through the backchannels they give, directly affecting the storyteller’s performance. The more interested one seemed to be, the better the storyteller told their story, and vice-versa if one showed no interest.

### **2.2.2 How Backchanneling is Defined**

The definition of backchanneling has proved to be notoriously hard to define, Peters and Wong (2014) attempt it, taking a more definitive tone on their definition of a backchannel as: “...Intermittent vocal noises: e.g. *mm, oh, right, yeah*, made by the listener while in a conversation with another person.” meaning they exclusively thrive in a vocal conversational setting, having no mention of their space in written communication. This raises questions about how backchanneling would be adapted when transposed into a written, or in this study’s case, a digital format.

The interchangeability of *aizuchi* and backchannels as linguistic concepts has long been a topic of discussion and goes deeper than one might expect. Tajima (2001) states: “This concept (backchannels) is also translated as “*Aizuchi*” in Japanese, which is understood the same as the English backchannel signals.” (p.54) implying they are the same. As Tajima (2001) notes however, significant differences between the two, manifest through their frequency, occurrence and nuanced meaning within interactions. Similarly Ike (2010) refers to *aizuchi* as a rough translation of backchanneling, noting that Japanese speakers use backchannels in conversation approximately 30% more frequently than English speakers. Moreover, nonverbal backchannels, such as listener head movement, were much more prevalent in Japanese communication showing that while similar are not exactly the same.

Several scholars, including Krouse-Ono (2004) as well as Miyata and Nishizawa (2007), distinguish between “Japanese backchannel signals” and “English backchannel signals”. Their research suggests that the concept of backchannel is not universally synonymous, but rather dependent on the language or cultural context in which it is applied. Krouse-Ono views the two as rather than separate entities, manifestations of the same fundamental concept taking on different forms depending on the language. From this perspective, *aizuchi* would then represent the Japanese variation of backchanneling, just as response tokens would reflect a variant for the English language. This approach aligns with Gardner’s work, which often used just the term backchannel or response tokens in an implicitly English context, likely because the term originated in English-language linguistic literature.

For simplicity and consistency, this study adopts the stance that aizuchi is the Japanese-specific form of backchanneling. Thus, while the two terms aizuchi and backchannels can be used interchangeably to refer to the same underlying linguistic phenomenon, it is still acknowledged that their manifestations may vary across languages and cultures.

### 2.2.3 The Form of Backchannels and Aizuchi

Functionally, the actual form or shape aizuchi expressions in Japanese take can be categorized into three general categories, as defined by Horiguchi (1988). The Horiguchi framework goes as follows:

1. Aizuchi phrases: Includes expressions such as はい *hai* (yes), ええ *ee* (eeh), へー *hee* (heh), そうですね *sou desu ne* (Is that so), etc. These phrases lack significant semantic content with its primary use being to keep the flow of a conversation going without interrupting the speaker. Their meaning on a dictionary level is partially nonexistent outside of their use as aizuchi.
2. Reflection aizuchi: where the listener repeats parts or all the speaker's words verbatim.
3. Rewording aizuchi: which involves rephrasing the speaker's statements in the listener's own words.

Further nuance in the use of the first category of aizuchi phrases arises from demographic factors such as gender and age, as noted by Tajima (2001) leading to a large number of possible expressions being used as aizuchi that can be broken down into even smaller groups of categories. However, as this study has no data available to determine exact demographics for an in depth analysis, we will instead simply count all aizuchi phrases as one single category.

An alternative classification of backchannels, proposed by Wong and Peters (2007, p.483), in this case for English, organizes them into three categories: minimal, lexical and grammatical constructions. Kraaz and Bernaisch (2020) summarize the three proposed classifications as follows:

1. Minimal Backchannels: Semantically empty interjections such as “uhuh”, “mm” or “yes” and “now”.
2. Lexical backchannels: Single-word responses present in dictionaries corresponding to an increase in semantic weight, such as “really”, “right”, and “good”.
3. Grammatical backchannels: Polished syntactic structures, including phrases such as “I see” and “that’s true”.

While these three can be considered some lengths away from Horiguchi's framework for Japanese, some parallels can still be drawn. For instance the “reflection” and “rewording” types of aizuchi somewhat align with the grammatical and lexical backchannels and the “aizuchi phrases” with the minimal backchannels in English. On top of that, as aizuchi

phrases can be hard to properly explain, the closest example would be the minimal backchannels of English.

## 2.3 Pragmatic Functions

### 2.3.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics, at its core, examine the deeper implications of language use and its role in social interactions, Griffiths (2006). It extends beyond the literal meaning of words, as studied in semantics, to explore how context and intent shapes communication. As Griffiths explains, “Pragmatics is concerned with using these tools given by semantics making meaningful communication.” (ibid., p.3) Effective communication requires active collaboration between both the sender and the addressee as mentioned earlier between the speaker and listener. The speaker must present their message in an understandable manner, while the addressee is tasked with interpreting the speaker’s intent. Only when the sender's intentions are recognized can the message be considered successfully communicated.

For instance, Griffiths provides the example of the phrase “Not so loud” (ibid., p.4). On its own, this phrase might seem ambiguous or open to multiple interpretations, which it is. However, when contextualized—such as it being said to a student speaking loudly in class—its meaning becomes clearer, he was berating a student for being loud and warned them to quiet down. Pragmatics, as per the example, delves into the context-dependent interpretation of language, uncovering the implicit meanings behind words and sentences connecting them to how context contributes to communication.

### 2.3.2 Pragmatic Functions and Backchannels

The pragmatic function is the meaning a speaker wishes to convey to the person they are speaking to. These functions can be attributed to backchanneling in language and have been categorized in multiple ways. Kjellmer (2009, p.84) outlines categories:

1. Regulative
2. Supportive
3. Confirmatory
4. Attention-showing
5. Empathic

These functions can be seen to align closely with the pragmatic functions of *aizuchi* in Japanese proposed by Horiguchi (1988) which include:

1. Listening (聞いている *kīteiru*): Demonstrating attentiveness to the speaker.
2. Understanding (理解 *rikai*): Indicating comprehension of the message.
3. Agreement (同意 *dōi*): Expressing agreement with the speaker.
4. Disagreement (否定 *hitei*): Disagreeing or rejecting the speaker’s statement.
5. Emotive (感情表出 *kanjō hyōshutsu*): Conveying emotions or feelings.

These categories proposed by Horiguchi (1988) are added to the framework mentioned in 2.2.3 concerning the structure of aizuchi completing the Horiguchi framework. Overlap between these frameworks also highlights the parallels between the pragmatic functions of “backchannels” and “aizuchi”, further solidifying their theoretical functional equivalence, this time on a pragmatic level.

### **2.3.3 Pragmatic Functions in Digital Communication**

Kurata (2018) utilized the aizuchi framework of Horiguchi (1988), applying them to investigate the appearance of aizuchi in a LINE group chat. Kurata’s analysis, which incorporated findings from earlier studies (Kurata 2005), examined the frequency of the different backchannel categories in a handful of digital chat settings. Here emotive pragmatic functions accounted for 53% of identified aizuchi. This prevalence begs the question of why emotive backchannels ended up being so dominant in digital communication. The findings prompt further consideration whether the data from live stream chats, which are similarly text-based but multitude bigger in scale, will show comparable results.

## **2.4 Japanese in a Digital Context**

### **2.4.1 Difference Between Spoken and Written Japanese**

Comparing written to spoken communication, the written side lacks many of the context clues and communication channels one normally might take for granted while speaking to someone. For example access to nonverbal backchannels like body language or tone of voice (Gardner, 2001). Nishimura (2017) however argues that computer-mediated communication (CMC) occupies an intermediate position between the spoken and written modalities, blending the characteristics of both while exhibiting traits specific to the online communication space. One of these unique features his study highlights is the variety of orthographic choices available in Japanese, as an example of how online communication enriches discourse. Nishimura suggests there not only being a distinction between spoken and written Japanese but also the value of studying these differences, as many communicative events unique to online contexts, such as live streams, remain underexplored and not yet fully understood.

### **2.4.2 Orthography and Digital Communication in Japanese**

Uchiyama (2010) identified further differences in how Japanese is employed in spoken and written form giving examples of exactly what orthographic choices are available for Japanese and why they are possible. Thanks to its three script systems—hiragana, katakana, and kanji—Japanese offers writers significant creative freedom compared to other languages when writing. Uchiyama notes internet users in Japan leverages this flexibility to its limits, creating innovative orthographic expressions to express themselves, something distinctly found in just online spaces according to him. Nishimura (2017) elaborates further, explaining that this high degree of expressive freedom, in part, enables Japanese internet users to construct informal and friendly community spaces online (e.g., Forum boards or comment

sections), contrasting with the more formal communication norms prevalent in users' daily lives when dealing with face-to-face interactions.

Investigating further, it becomes apparent that a significant distinction of the language used exists within different online spaces in Japanese digital communication. "Net-world Japanese," a term coined by Uchiyama (2010), describes just this phenomenon of how the language used differs in different online spaces, for example while both can be considered online communication, more conventional digital formats like email takes on a completely different language compared to posts on a forum board. The term is based on Matsuda (2006)'s earlier exploration of 集団語 *shūdan* (group-specific jargon or slang), documenting jargon and slangs emergence within online communities. While the net communities both Matsuda and Uchiyama observed have since faded in usage, their basic ideas, of how slang and orthographic conventions are shaped in different spaces continue to carry relevance even now in our contemporary digital landscape.

### 2.4.3 Kaomoji, Emoticons and Laugh Markers

Uchiyama (2010) highlights *kaomoji* (the literal translation of *kao* meaning face and *moji* meaning text symbol, facial expression portrayed using text characters, e.g. (o•ω•o)) as a notable category of online slang featuring an extensive repertoire of possible unique expressions. These can be likened to the western emoji, graphical icons (e.g. 😊 *Slightly Smiling Face*) portraying feelings, often utilised in online spaces including live stream chats, which draws a parallel between the two. As Littleford (2024) emphasizes on his study of live game streaming and the streamer's community, fostering a sense of community is a critical factor in the success of a channel trying to make it big.

Language plays a pivotal role in this process; for instance, personalized emojis provided by streamers, often accessible only through paid subscriptions, serve as a parasocial tool to create and reinforce a sense of belonging to the community. These emojis thus become an integral part of the communal identity of the stream, and because of the feelings emoticons can portray they work as a backchannel giving feedback to the receptor.

Li and Yang (2018) go further into the pragmatic intricacies of emojis, exploring whether they have the capability to serve as substitutes for non-verbal backchannels, such as facial expression or body languages in face-to-face communication. Their findings suggest that while emojis can in fact partially mimic the functions of non-verbal backchannels, they still fall short of perfectly replicating these cues. For instance, the "grinning face" emoji is found to be the most frequently appearing emoji, used as either signaling for laughter, or to enhance the intensity of a conveyed emotion, effectively replacing smiling or laughing in digital conversations. Their study highlights the multifunctionality of emojis, emphasizing their ability to deliver a wide range of pragmatic cues.

Since Li's and Yang's study was conducted with Chinese participants communicating in Chinese, it becomes essential to account for potential cultural differences in the use of emojis,

as the findings may be fully applicable to neither Japanese nor English. The way in which emojis are interpreted and utilized may vary across different cultures. But despite this, the broader ideas put forward by Li and Yang that emojis serve as carriers of pragmatic meaning, remains relevant and worth exploring, applying it within a Japanese context.

One of these orthographic backchannel expressions extensively studied by Aoyagi and Kawai (2019), is the *w* and 草 *kusa* laughter marker, an equivalent to the slang lol (laughing out loud) in the Western anglophone online world. The etymology originally stems from typing 笑 *wara* (laugh), which got shortened to just the first letter *w*. Typing multiple *w* in a row started representing continuous or emphasised laughter. A row of *wwwww* was interpreted visually as blades of grass and thus the term 草生えた *kusahaeta* (grass sprouted) came as a new variant. This term was then shortened to just 草 *kusa* (grass).

#### **2.4.4 Backchanneling in Digital Communication**

Funato (2018) and Kurata (2018) are two that have analyzed aizuchi within a digital written context. Yet their findings can not be considered to fully extend to the dynamic and interactive nature of live stream chats where thousands of users are typing simultaneously. Both their studies of backchanneling in written Japanese digital communications have mainly focused on one-to-one direct messaging analysing full conversations between two people, or at most group chats with tens of people through the messaging app LINE (Japan's leading messaging app). Although the communication environment in their studies inherently differs from this study's, findings are still relevant as both are based on the same general theory and methodology.

Kurata (2005) in an earlier study introduces the concept of disrupted turn adjacency in CMC, as an answer to Herring's (1999) findings supposed lack of simultaneous feedback in digital interactions. In other words, unlike face-to-face interaction, digital interactions do not guarantee immediate responses after, for example, sending a message to somebody the same way one would when talking to a person. If somebody spoke to you in person one would be put in a spot where they are forced to reply to not appear rude. While if one got a message there is no guarantee the receptor is online to see the message, removing the expectation of instantly answering the message.

Building on this, Kurata's later thesis (2018) focused on aizuchi in LINE, a conclusion can be drawn that response intervals—the time between sending a message and receiving a reply—have the ability to serve as a substitute for explicit backchanneling (explicit in this case meaning not non-verbal backchannels). This is because when reading a message on LINE, the other party receives a “marked as read” notification. These notifications have the potential to function as an implicit backchannel showing one is “paying attention” to the conversation according to Kurata, a function not present in the live stream chat which potentially marks a difference in the usage of aizuchi in the latter medium.

This accents one of the key differences found between spoken and written communication in Japanese: written aizuchi offers more intentionality and control. Not only is there no time pressure in responding giving the recipient time to think, thanks to the orthographic freedoms Japanese provides many more possible responses open up. Both Kurata and Funato observe that aizuchi in written communication helps compensate for the absence of non-verbal cues such as body language or tone of voice. In this context aizuchi also serves as substitutes, fulfilling pragmatic functions for non-verbal cues helping conveying pragmatic functions like agreement, empathy or attentiveness.

### **3. Methodology/Material**

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach by analyzing data collected from a smaller sample size of archived live stream chat histories. The objective is to classify each message whether they have aizuchi present or not, and according to its underlying pragmatic intent and structure, framing it against backchanneling frameworks introduced by Horiguchi (1988) and Kjellmer (2009). Due to technical limitations, Youtube was selected as the platform to source data from, as it offers easy access to chat archives compared to other platforms.

To ensure the study reflects on contemporary Japanese usage, the streamer is selected based on popularity. Popularity as a metric is here defined as watch time over a period of time, the combination of average viewer count to the amount of time streamed. According to Littleford (2024), popular streamers act as cultural touchpoints, maintaining a strong connection with online communication trends. Furthermore, streamer with larger audiences provide more diverse ranges of linguistic input in the data, ensuring the resulting dataset becomes more representative of the average online communication.

Due to time constraints, this study provides a snapshot of the current state of streaming chat linguistics rather than an exhaustive analysis crossing the evolution over time and differences between different creators. The limitation on a small sample size does lay grounds towards opportunities for future further research expanding on these findings.

#### **3.1 Materials**

Two live streams from the selected streamer, Kuzuha Channel (n.d.), will serve as the primary material for the analysis. Kuzuha Channel or just Kuzuha, is a YouTuber that streams using a virtual 2D avatar powered by real-time motion capture technology to mimic movement and facial expressions. This channel in particular is one of the most prominent in the Japanese live streaming scene, boasting over a million subscribers on YouTube and consistently attracting 20 thousand plus average viewers per stream. Known primarily for gaming content and casual “just chatting” streams, Kuzuha has through a charming and entertaining personality maintained their position as a leading live stream channel, amassing more than six million total hours watched monthly, as reported by StreamHatchet’s dataset (n.d.).

To examine variations in communication dynamics, the study will include two types of streams:

1. A solo “just chatting” stream (2024), where the interaction is primarily one-on-one between the streamer and the chat.
2. A collaborative gaming stream (2024) featuring guests where the streamer’s attention is primarily put on the co-hosts over the chat.

Including these two types allows for an exploration of how chat behaviour shifts depending on the presence of a co-host, potentially sidelining the chat into a more static position taking on an observational spectator role rather than one as a conversational partner.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

A small corpus of data is constructed by scraping the complete chat logs from two selected live streams. Messages not written in Japanese will be filtered out while cleaning the data. Through this an initial rudimentary filter is provided to determine whether a message is likely authored by a native Japanese speaker and at the same time avoiding spam from bots. One exception is made for the “w” letter as it is considered a staple slang notation in Japanese online communication as mentioned in the previous studies and will be included in the final dataset.

The data does not include information about the chat's user demographics, such as age, gender or nationality, nor does it account for whether participants are first-time viewers or long-term followers, constricting the possibility of more minute and comprehensive conclusions to draw. On the other hand this omission protects user privacy, as no data about single users are stored and the identity of individual chat members remain anonymous.

### **3.3 Processing Data**

The initial processing separates all the messages into two categories: those that could be categorized as pure aizuchi and those containing more substantive content. Pure aizuchi will be defined as short, contextually responsive messages solely serving as a backchannel response with pragmatic functions without conveying new information, essentially messages not inherently contributing to the conversation. Longer messages containing aizuchi alongside the rest of the messages, as in full sentences or paragraphs, are excluded.

Following the framework established by Horiguchi (1988) and Kjellmer (2009) mentioned in 2.3.2, aizuchi markers are classified into five primary pragmatic functions:

1. I am listening (Attention showing acknowledgment)
2. I understand (Indicating comprehensions)
3. Agreement (Supportive)
4. Disagreement (Disagreement)
5. Emotive markers (Expressing feelings)

Messages are then further categorized by their shape in line with Horiguchi's theoretical frame of the shapes aizuchi takes in written form mentioned in 2.2.3. The three categorizes are:

1. Aizuchi (Backchannel markers exclusive to Japanese )
2. Reflection (Direct repetition of the speaker's words)
3. Rewording (Reformulating the speaker's words)
4. Emoticons (Nonverbal expression conveying emotion)

To expand Horiguchi's framework, this study introduces a fourth category: emotes, encompassing emoticons, “w” and “草” *kusa* (as a laughter marker) and punctuation marks like exclamation and question marks. While Horiguchi's framework does not include visual elements such as emojis or *kaomoji* in aizuchi's definition, Kurata (2018) considers LINE stamps (a type of emoticon) that incorporates text into the itself as aizuchi, this meaning pure image emojis are excluded from this classification.

This study argues that even textless emoticons or emojis can serve as aizuchi due to their ability to convey pragmatic intent to an extent as Li and Yang (2018) suggests. Building on this, I propose that emoticons hold sufficient communicative importance to be categorized as a distinct form aizuchi can take. By introducing this new category, we expand the tools available to more precisely differentiate emotive forms of aizuchi from the other subtypes. Additionally, this expansion allows for comparison to studies using similar methodologies, such as those focused on online messaging chats, and may provide additional insight into how live stream chats might diverge from previously established data for other communication contexts.

All the data is manually reviewed and then compiled into graphs for analysis. With visual representation the distribution of the pragmatic functions and structure of the data is highlighted, forming a basis for the study's conclusions.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Quantitative Overview of Backchannel Messages

#### 4.1.1 Data Summary

- **Solo Stream** (Just Chatting): Runtime of 1 hour 13 minutes; total of 22 448 messages, out of those 15 702 containing some aizuchi, accounting for 69,95% of the total. Approximately 307 messages per minute rounded down.
- **Collaboration Stream** (Gaming): Runtime of 2 hours 36 minutes; total of 21 753 messages; out of those 18 560 containing some aizuchi, accounting for 75,32% of the total. Approximately 139 messages per minute rounded down.

Across both streams, 77,51% of all messages were identified containing cases of aizuchi or backchanneling. The breakdown of the frequency of what aizuchi forms were observed can be seen in Figure 1 with the breakdown of the pragmatic functions in Figure 2.

#### 4.1.2 Aizuchi Form Breakdown

Starting with Figure 1, the analysis of the aizuchi forms observed in the live stream chat data produced the following results of the four predefined categories: **Aizuchi, Reflection, Rewording, and Emotes.**

Aizuchi Forms

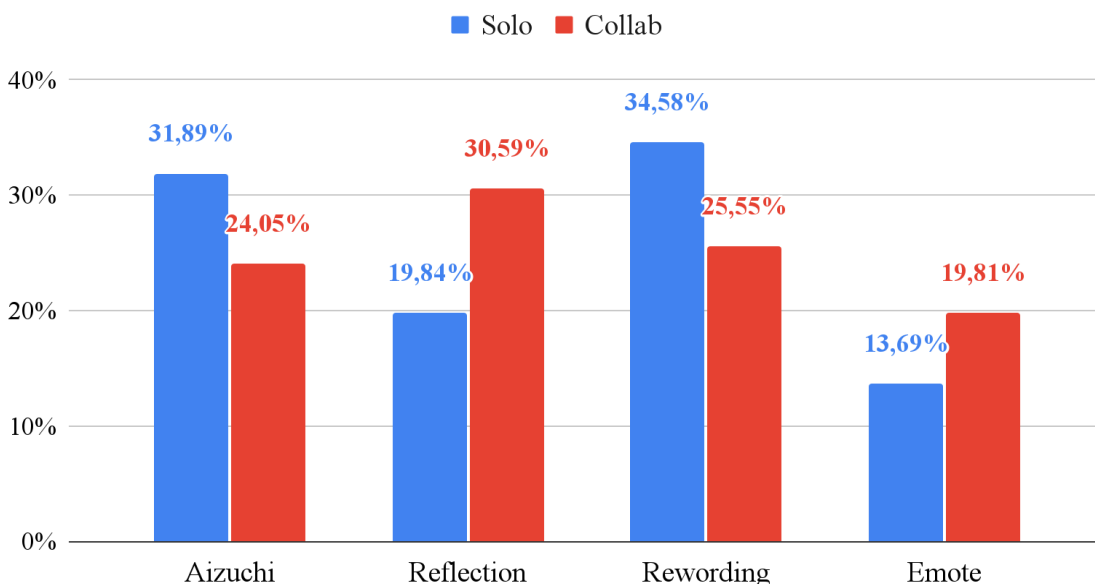


Figure 1, Breakdown of the appearance of aizuchi forms observed in the data.

#### 4.1.2.1 Solo Stream (Blue)

- Aizuchi phrases: 31,89%
- Reflection: 19,84%
- Rewording: 34,58%
- Emotes: 13,69%

Out of the four, **Rewording** emerged as the most frequently used category, making up 35% of the total. While not all categories had an equal distribution, the percentages remained relatively balanced overall, with the outliers being the **Emotes** form ending up being the least common form.

#### 4.1.2.2 Collaboration Stream (Red)

- Aizuchi phrases: 24,05%
- Reflection: 30,59%
- Rewording: 25,55%
- Emotes: 19,81%

In the collaboration stream, the distribution was much more even across all four categories, with no obvious outlier standing out. The **Reflection** type took the highest share at 30,59%, but the remaining types of aizuchi were not far behind indicating a more balanced use of the different forms. Overall comparing the two datasets against each other, each type had on average a 10% difference for each category as per Figure 1.

### 4.1.3 Pragmatic Function Breakdown

Figure 2 provides the breakdown of observed pragmatic functions behind each message in both the solo and collaboration stream, categorized into, **Listening**, **Understanding**, **Agreeing**, **Disagreeing** and **Emotive** functions.

Pragmatic Functions

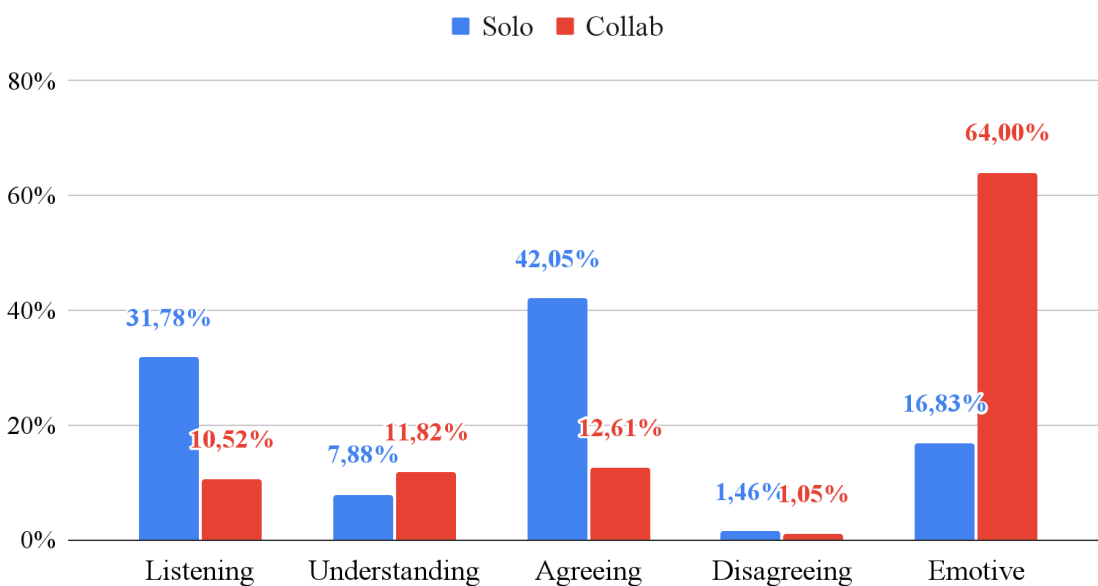


Figure 2, breakdown of the pragmatic functions observed in the data.

#### 4.1.3.1 Solo Stream (Blue)

- Listening: 31,78%
- Understanding: 7,88%
- Agreeing: 42,05%
- Disagreeing: 1,46%
- Emotive: 16,83%

Within the data the two obvious outliers are the amount of **Agreeing**, and near absence of **Disagreeing**. Agreeing markers together with Listening made up more than 70% of the total a, showing that the intent behind the majority of messages were for some way of keeping the conversation going.

#### 4.1.3.2 Collaboration Stream (Red)

- Listening: 10,52%
- Understanding: 11,82%
- Agreeing: 12,61%
- Disagreeing: 1,05%
- Emotive: 64,00%

Compared to any other data, this stream exhibits a starkly different distribution with the **Emotive** markers dominating at 64% of all the total messages. Meanwhile the four other categories all took a backseat implying some possible passivity from the viewers side. Similar to the Solo stream here too disagreeing where rare only making up one percent.

#### 4.1.4 Laughing Marker Comparisons

Laughter markers “w” and “草” *kusa*, as per defined in part 2.4.3 showed notable difference in usage between the two streams analyzed. Comparing the “草” *kusa* count to “w” count, the solo stream had a total of 1 279 “草” *kusa* while “w” had 1,884 appearances. The collaboration stream on the other hand had 5 000 w character with 1 787 “草” *kusa* characters.

## 4.2 Comparative Analysis Between Solo and Collaboration Streams

### 4.2.1 Message Volume

Despite the differences in runtime, the solo stream featured a slightly higher volume of backchanneling relative to its total messages, but also had twice the messages per minute meaning if the streams would have had the same runtime, the solo stream would potentially have had twice as many messages.

### 4.2.2 Result Excerpts

This section presents two excerpts of data: one from the solo stream and one from the collaboration stream, will be provided together with the transcript from what the streamer

said with context and translation together with the following response that came from the chat providing an example of how messages with aizuchi observed were categorised structurally and pragmatically. More excerpts are provided in the Appendix.

#### 4.2.2.1 Solo Stream

This stream took on the shape of more complex grammatical backchannels, or as aizuchi phrases stuck to the end of a longer sentence. That is not to say that the complex messages were the majority, but there were a noticeably larger amount. The pragmatic intent the majority of messages took was corresponding to the “Listening” pragmatic function and “Agreement” had the most appearances as it was more of a conversation to be part of.

##### Example:

Responding to a message from chat about wanting him to perform his next concert from a coffin and the following comments taken from chat.

Streamer:

“俺も埋まる気しないよ、怖いよ” *Ore mo umaru ki shinaiyo, kowaiyo*  
 “I don’t want to be buried, it’s scary”

Chat:

Time	Message	Romaji	Translation	Form and Pragmatic Function
48:21:	うめるって	<i>Umerutte</i>	Getting buried...	(Rewording, Listening)
48:22:	うまるやろ	<i>Umaruyaro</i>	Get buried!	(Rewording, Disagreement)
48:23:	ww		lol	(Emotes, Emotive)
48:23:	埋まるって	<i>Umarutte</i>	Getting buried...	(Rewording, Listening)
48:23:	埋まるて	<i>Umarute</i>	Getting buried...	(Rewording, Listening)
48:23:	絶対埋まる	<i>Zettai umaru</i>	Totally getting buried	(Rewording, Disagreement)

Regardless of the shape they take, the messages all share the core word phrase 埋まる *umaru* taking on slightly alternating forms reflecting the streamers statement. Messages categorized as listening includes the て *te* at the end, which grammatically signifies a quoted or echoed phrase, which was interpreted as an indication of attentive listening intent.

#### 4.2.2.2 Collaboration Stream

High frequency of reflection and rewording (lexical backchannels) where whatever was said by the streamer was quickly followed by a stream of messages with various variations of whatever was just said. Pragmatic intent heavily leaned towards the “Emotive”.

##### Example:

Mistakenly saying their friend's name Ibrahim (イブラヒム *Ibrahimu*) wrong and the following reaction messages taken from the chat.

Streamer:

“オブラヒム？” *Oburahimu*

“Obrahim?”

<i>Time</i>	<i>Message</i>	<i>Romaji</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Form and Pragmatic Function</i>
Chat:				
55:04:	オブラヒムw	<i>Oburahimu w</i>	Obrahim lol	(Reflection, Emotive)
55:04:	オブラヒム	<i>Oburahimu</i>	Obrahim	(Reflection, Listening)
55:04:	オブラヒムw	<i>Oburahimu w</i>	Obrahim lol	(Reflection, Emotive)
55:04:	ww		lol	(Emotes, Emotive)
55:04:	オブラヒムw	<i>Oburahimu w</i>	Obrahim lol	(Reflection, Emotive)
55:04:	おぶらひむw	<i>Oburahimu w</i>	Obrahim lol	(Reflection, Emotive)
55:04:	草	<i>Kusa</i>	lol	(Emotes, Emotive)

The trailing “w” of オブラヒムw *Oburahimu w*, did not take precedence over the core of the messages based of the context, arguably weighing the messages as reflections over emotes.

### 4.2.3 Shared Common Points

Despite difference of context, both streams shared certain overarching trends:

Aizuchi messages rarely, if ever, expressed disagreement. This could reflect the nature of the interaction where viewers aim to affirm and support the streamer rather than challenge them. An alternative explanation is that dissenting opinions may be overshadowed by the sheer volume of affirming messages. In such an environment, viewers who disagree might refrain from expressing their thoughts, knowing their posts are unlikely to be noticed.

A dominance of rewording and reflection that account for almost 70% of all aizuchi across both streams. Emote usage was also not as significant to its counterparts, but still accounted for 20% of the total aizuchi, though the collaboration stream saw a slightly higher percentage overall.

### 4.2.4 Diverging Patterns

Chat behavior in the solo and collaboration streams appeared to adapt to the level of attention given to the chat by the streamer. This illustrates a key hypothesis: the more attention chat receives, the more conversational its behavior becomes, as seen through the diverging uses of aizuchi. This can partially be proven through the data where, for example, chat getting close to no attention in the collaboration stream, showed a sharp increase in messages containing emotive pragmatic functions.

In the solo stream, where the streamer directly engaged with chat participants, viewers displayed a higher level of interactivity. This was evidenced by firstly, a general higher ratio of messages overall, since the solo stream had close to the same amount of recorded messages with half the runtime of the collaboration stream. Secondly, the greater ratio of aizuchi messages, particularly longer, more complete sentences took on the pragmatic function of listening. The active engagement from the streamer likely encouraged viewers to

perceive the interaction as a conversation, motivating them to contribute to it and through these backchanneling behaviors.

In contrast, the collaboration stream saw a general less engagement overall looking at the average message per minute marker. Here the stream exhibited a similar overall volume of aizuchi messages but with a notable shift in type. Rather than making use of aizuchi phrases, viewers rather used repetition and rewording forms of aizuchi, the majority taking on the emotive pragmatic function. This shift can possibly be attributed to the divided focus of the streamer, who balanced interactions with the co-host and chat, putting most of it at his friends. With close to no conversation attention directed towards the chat, viewers appeared to engage more passively through the chat. Many messages became less about participating in a perceived dialogue and more about expressing emotional reactions.

Notably, chat members in the collaboration stream chat never attempt to engage with one another, maintaining a focus solely on connecting with the streamer, which was interesting as the streamer themselves were not trying to connect with the chat

Another key difference was the length and frequency of messages. The solo stream featured a higher proportion of longer messages overall. This could reflect a strategic choice made by chat participants: longer messages catch the eye of the streamer easier and increase the likelihood of their message being read. Contrastingly the collaboration stream had on average shorter messages character-wise, as chat was not being read as often, there was potentially less point in writing longer messages.

A consistent trend across both streams was the chat's tendency to echo (following the structural framework of aizuchi, reflection and rewording) the streamer's statements, regardless of context. In the collaboration stream, was this particularly pronounced, with nearly every chat message taking on the form of a rewording or reflection aizuchi with the pragmatic functions showing that they were emotive. This highlights the parasocial nature of the interaction, where viewers seek to affirm their connection with the streamer and take part in the conversation through the use of aizuchi.

### **4.3 Challenges in Categorization**

Differentiating between a "rewording" and "reflection" aizuchi message proved particularly challenging due to their highly context-dependent nature. Without a synchronized transcript of the live stream and chat, it was difficult to ascertain whether a message was an exact replication of the streamer's word or a creative variation. One workaround was to classify any messages with special trailing characters, such as "w" (indicating laughter) or punctuations like "!", as exact copies rather than creative variations. These were placed into the reflecting category.

However, as mentioned earlier, messages consisting solely of characters such as "w" and "!" were considered part of the newly introduced "emote" category. This distinction did not apply to trailing characters but only to messages where these characters formed the entire content.

Even with these simple guidelines laid out, ensuring completely accurate categorization remained difficult, it could even be argued that the rewording and reflection categories should be combined into one. For readers of the study, treating them as a single category may offer a work-around navigating the ambiguity. While this approach may overlook more nuanced differences between rephrased and reflected response, it ensures a basic level of consistency while categorizing and analysing the data.

Similarly issues arose trying to accurately identify pragmatic functions behind each and every message. Without direct insight into the sender's thoughts, can you really confirm to a certainty what intent they had when sending their message? As an observer, the best one can do is make an educated guess based on the content and context of a message, which inevitably carries a margin of error. For example, differentiating whether a viewer is "agreeing" or "listening" through a two word message in chat can be tricky, as they appear similar in function or overlap functioning as both at the same time. While the question of dual or layered pragmatic intent falls outside the immediate scope of this study, it is worth acknowledging as a potential variable when interpreting aizuchi.

## 5. Discussion

Concluding the analysis, the research questions raised in part 1 are addressed and answered in this section through the results from this study's analysis, together with the theories and past research presented. The first question—whether backchannels in Japanese live stream chats differ from those in other online communication mediums—is first addressed by comparing the results and theories from studies concerning online group chats. The second question regarding the influence of live stream formats on what types and functions of *aizuchi* in chats appear, is extensively dealt with in part 4. Finally, the final question concerning what cultural or sociological insight can be drawn from the use of *aizuchi* in live stream chats is tackled.

### 5.1 Contemporary Studies Comparison

By comparing this study's findings to prior research examining *aizuchi* present in digital communication, particularly Kurata (2018) and Funato (2018), who analysed the pragmatics of *aizuchi* in one-to-one conversations over the messaging app LINE. Although the communication environment in their studies inherently differs from the live stream chat, their methodologies (small sample sizes) and findings still offer valuable points of comparison.

A significant difference is the amount of “listening” *aizuchi* markers (e.g. うん *un*, similar to the English “mm-hmm”, a minimal acknowledgment). Kurata observed such markers were rare in the LINE conversation, only amounting to 4% of their dataset. Kurata attributes this scarcity to a technical feature of LINE: the “read” indicator, which serves as a non-verbal acknowledgment of listening to a message, effectively replacing the need for explicit listening *aizuchi*. In contrast live stream chats lack that feature, in turn pushing users to send explicit *aizuchi* to convey their attentiveness. This difference likely explains the higher occurrence of “listening” *aizuchi* in this study's chat data compared to our results.

Funato's study, conducted on Japanese learners rather than native speakers, found that roughly half of the *aizuchi* were categorised as emotive. Interestingly, “laughter” and “emotive” expression *aizuchi* were counted as separate *aizuchi* types, meaning that if going by this study's classification of counting laughter markers as emotive *aizuchi* then the total would account to nearly 70%. This aligns to the results of the analysis of the collaboration stream with 64% emotive *aizuchi*. While the other solo stream did not reach similar results, the prominence of emotive *aizuchi* still arguably suggests a broader trend in the use of expressive *aizuchi* in digital communication.

#### 5.1.1 Disrupted Turn Adjacency in CMC

Kurata (2018) pointed out one feature of online conversations mentioned above, the disrupted turn adjacency in CMC. What was found was *aizuchi* and text replies often being sent as separate messages: an *aizuchi* message is sent directly as an immediate acknowledgement, then followed by the main reply. This structured sequence of interactions contrasts sharply with the live stream chat environment, where such a pattern is noticeably absent.

This lack can be attributed to two main factors, the sheer volume of messages coming through chat and the differing governing rules of a public stream chat and private message conversation. Live stream chat operates within a relatively chaotic framework where message and conversation overlap is the norm. Hundreds of participants simultaneously posting messages muddles the concept of a “turn” when speaking since nobody waits for theirs nor respects others, creating an environment where the “traditional” conversational turn-taking becomes irrelevant.

When no single participant has a “turn”, the streamer instead retains full control over the conversational flow. They choose which messages to respond to and effectively dictate which interactions become part of their dialogue. This way of thought illustrates an asymmetry where participants aim to engage in conversation, with only the streamer keeping hold of the lead baton conducting the conversation's trajectory.

## **5.2 Cultural and Sociological Insights of Aizuchi in Live Stream Chats**

This section addresses the third research question: whether any cultural or sociological insights can be drawn from the analysis presented in part 4, alongside the theories discussed in part 2. The Sociological dimension is explored through the parasocial bond between streamer and viewer, examining the ways in which aizuchi reinforces these interactions. Culturally, the focus shifts to the orthographic presence, or rather notable absence, of kaomoji investigating how this phenomenon reflects broader linguistic and cultural trends in Japanese digital communication.

### **5.2.1 Parasocial Interactions**

The parasocial connection between the streamer and viewer, as described by Littleford (2024), is an essential part of the live streaming interactions. This one-sided yet emotionally significant relationship may amplify the aizuchi used in the chat. Viewers actively seek to establish a sense of connection and intimacy with the streamer, emulating the affirming and supportive role aizuchi serves in face-to-face communication when coming from the listening side as per Gardner (2001). As a social signal, aizuchi thus can be argued to reinforce the perceived closeness and involvement of viewers in the stream.

### **5.2.2 Kaomoji**

Although *kaomoji* (defined earlier in part 2.4) have been widely discussed as significant elements of Japanese online slang, the data revealed virtually no instances of them in use. One possible explanation is that the studies mentioning their supposed prominence were conducted during a trend peak in the 2000's and 2010's (noticeable on Google trends when looking at the term 顔文字 *kaomoji*). Alternatively, this could be linked to the Japanese streaming culture possibly assimilating into the Western streaming culture, adapting channel emojis over *kaomoji*. This cultural shift might signify a linguistic evolution, potentially heralding a new “renaissance” in Japanese. As (assumably) mostly young people participate

in live stream chats, they are often at the forefront of language trends, driving the adoption and development of new slang.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine how Japanese aizuchi manifests within the livestream chat medium, how these observations compare to other communication mediums (both verbal and text-based), and whether any cultural or sociological insight could be derived from the findings. The study revealed that aizuchi plays a significant role in livestream chat communication, often reflecting viewers' attempts to build a parasocial bond with the streamer through the use of aizuchi.

While slight differences were observed in the use of aizuchi between the two studied livestream formats, the aizuchi tended to be more emotive and agreement-focused, often adopting a reflective and rewording structure mimicking the streamer's words back. This in comparison to other studies made of other communication mediums such as group chats. Furthermore, the study proposes the introduction of a new category for emoticons within the established aizuchi framework, arguing for their presence taking on a distinct role and purpose within the medium. From a cultural perspective, the findings suggest a shift in the Japanese online landscape, where the preference of emoticons appears to some degree be overtaking the traditional use of *kaomoji*. This evolution may reflect broader changes in the digital communication trends among Japanese internet users.

However a shortcoming that came to light during the study is how the boundaries of what constitutes aizuchi and its scope may have been somewhat stretched in this study. During the categorizing process, the ambiguous nature of how aizuchi was defined posed challenges in determining which messages belonged to which categories both structurally and pragmatically. For example the question arises whether standalone words with meaning of their own should count as aizuchi phrases or not. This issue extended to the pragmatic functions, which were often inferred based on contextual assumptions such as the stream transcript. To improve the reliability and accuracy of future datasets and ensure that conclusions are more robust and trustworthy, it would be essential to establish much clearer and precise criteria for the definition and categorization of aizuchi.

The findings, while derived from a relatively substantial source of Japanese use, can still be considered niche in the grand scale of the internet and Japanese as a language. Obviously if we were to observe other streamers, or other mediums online like forum boards or comment sections on social media, different phenomena might be observed. As mentioned before due to the small sample size it is just not viable to assume these conclusions are based on general patterns witnessed within the subject. For future studies it might be of interest for a large scale of data to be analyzed verging across different channels, genres of live streams and platforms. Implementing this through AI using natural language processing models to discern pragmatic functions could be a possible way forward as the technology is improving rapidly in that field.

Another point of view worth exploring involves addressing the user demographics and their role in shaping the statistical trends. However, due to both technical limitations and questions

of ethical concern incorporating such data was not feasible for this study. Addressing these challenges in future research could provide deeper insights in how different user groups contribute to aizuchi and linguistic trends, making it a promising avenue for further research.

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# Appendix

## Solo Stream

### Context:

Reaction to reading out a message of the viewer sitting next to an elderly fan at his concert.

Streamer:

“やばくね？ご年配って何歳から？” *Yabakune? gonenpaitte nan sai kara?*

(Isn't that crazy? How old counts to be called elderly)

<i>Time</i>	<i>Message</i>	<i>Romaji</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Form and Pragmatic Function</i>
Chat:				
3:13:	すげええ <i>Sugee</i>		Wow	(Aizuchi, Emotive)
3:14:	おお！	<i>Oo!</i>	OO!	(Aizuchi, Emotive)
3:17:	さすが	<i>Sasuga</i>	As expected	(Aizuchi, Emotive)
3:18:	えええすごい	<i>Eee sugoi</i>	Wow that's crazy	(Aizuchi, Emotive)
3:18:	すげえ	<i>Sugee</i>	Wow	(Aizuchi, Emotive)
3:24:	いいね	<i>Iine</i>	Nice	(Aizuchi, Listening)

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### Context:

Talking about how he took no photos from the latest concert.

Streamer:

“ちよつとないね、今回” *Chotto naine konkai*

(I don't have any this time)

<i>Time</i>	<i>Message</i>	<i>Romaji</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Form and Pragmatic Function</i>
Chat:				
3:53:	ないかーw	<i>Naika</i> ー w	So there are none lol	(Rewording, Emotive)
3:53:	ないかあww	<i>Naikaa</i> ww	So there are none lol	(Rewording, Emotive)
3:54:	ないか	<i>Naika</i>	So there are none	(Rewording, Understanding)
3:54:	無いかあw	<i>Naikaa</i>	So there are none lol	(Rewording, Emotive)
3:55:	ないのかいw	<i>Nainokai</i> w	So there are none lol	(Rewording, Emotive)

Disregarding the nonsensical translation as the expression is hard to convey, here even as just part of the statement of the streamer is repeated. The use of “w” suggests an emotive intent of playfully engaging with the streamer’s comment rather than purely being a listening response.

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**Context:**

Talking about food he ate while on a trip.

Streamer:

“たこ焼きのタコはめっちゃ小さかった” *Takoyaki no tako wa meccha chīsakatta*  
(The squid in the takoyaki was so small)

Time	Message	Romaji	Translation	Form and Pragmatic Function
Chat:				
44:11:	...	...	...	(Emotes, Emotive)
44:19:	草	<i>Kusa</i>	Lol	(Emotes, Emotive)
44:22:	そうなの??	<i>Sou nano?</i>	Really?	(Aizuchi, Listening)
44:22:	ちっちゃい	<i>Chicchai</i>	Small	(Emotes, Emotive)
44:23:	まじかw	<i>Majika w</i>	For real? lol	(Aizuchi, Emotive)

**Collaboration Stream****Context:**

In the middle of an intense fight in the game.

Streamer:

“うおおおお” *UOOOO*  
(UOOOO)

Time	Message	Romaji	Translation	Form and Pragmatic Function
Chat:				
1:42:46:	うおおおおおUOOOOO	UOOOOO		(Aizuchi, Emotive)
1:42:46:	うおおおおおお!	UOOOOO!	UOOOOOO!	(Aizuchi, Emotive)
1:42:47:	うおおおおおUOOOO	UOOOO		(Aizuchi, Emotive)
1:42:48:	うおお	UOO	UOO	(Aizuchi, Emotive)
1:42:47:	おー	Oー	Oー	(Aizuchi, Emotive)

The UOOO could be argued as classifying as a type of reflection of the streamer, but as it is more of a noise or battle cry over any real words it is categorised as an aizuchi phrase.

**Context:**

Dies in game to another player and expresses how good the other player is.

Streamer:

“うっま!!” *Umma!!*  
(So good!) *as in good at the game*

Time	Message	Romaji	Translation	Form and Pragmatic Function
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Chat:

1:51:36:うんまw	<i>Unma w</i>	Too good lol	(Rewording, Agreement)
1:51:37:うぎゃ;;	<i>Ugya!</i>	Ugya!	(Aizuchi, Emotive)
1:51:37:うんまwww	<i>Unma www</i>	Too good lol	(Rewording, Agreement)
1:51:37:うっまww	<i>Umma ww</i>	Too good lol	(Rewording, Agreement)
1:51:37:www	<i>www</i>	www	(Emotes, Emotive)

Depending on how the expression was heard, the transcript could have either been うんま!  
*unma* (So good) or うっま!  
*umma* (So good) both short forms for 上手い  
*umai* (to be skillful). But due to the difficulty in determining the exact utterance, both were categorised as  
as rewording aizuchi of the streamer's expression.

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**Context:**

Trying to aim and shoot a cannon in game.

Streamer:

“けっこうむずいんだな” *Kekkou muzuindana*  
(it's pretty hard)

<i>Time</i>	<i>Message</i>	<i>Romaji</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Form and Pragmatic Function</i>
Chat:				
1:09:43:w		<i>w</i>	lol	(Emotes, Emotive)
1:09:44:うーんw		<i>U-n w</i>	Yeah lol	(Aizuchi, Agreement)
1:09:45:草		<i>Kusa</i>	lol	(Emotes, Emotive)
1:09:46:わ〜ムズ		<i>Wa~muzu</i>	Wow looks hard	(Rewording, Agreement)
1:09:48:むずっ		<i>Muzu</i>	Looks hard	(Emotes, Emotive)