

## Research Article

**Formation and Usage of *Babigo* in Japanese**

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\*Email: [rinafi239@gmail.com](mailto:rinafi239@gmail.com)Received: Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021; Revised: August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021; Accepted: Oct 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021Available online: Nov 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021; Published regularly: Dec 2021**Abstract**

This research discusses the formation and use of *babigo* slang language by taking data sources on video footage of Saitou Kyouko as a *babigo* speaker on the Saitou Kyouko YouTube channel. The purpose of this study was to determine the formation and function of *babigo*. The method used in this research is qualitative method. A qualitative method is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of words or speech of people and behaviors that can be observed. The data collection method uses the listening method, which is the method used to obtain data by listening to the use of the language. While the data analysis method uses descriptive methods which are research methods carried out based on the existing facts, so the results are describing the elements of language as it is. Based on the analysis of this research data, the author found 1) *Babigo* formation that inserts a single vocal syllable in each Japanese language syllable 2) The Function of *babigo* is used by young people as a secret language and can also be used as language games.

**Keywords:** Babigo; Secret Language; Language Games; Young People

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**1. Introduction**

Language use will always be related to speakers and speech partners, this is certainly related to its background aspects, such as regions, social, sex, age, education level, ethnic groups, and situations. This aspect could cause a variety of use in language. The formation of language variations is not only caused by heterogeneous speakers but also because the social interaction activities they do are very diverse (Chaer & Agustina, 2014: 61). We already know that there are certain style of speech that dominantly used by certain group of people such as *onna kotoba* (a variety use of language that mainly used by women), *wakamono kotoba* (a variety use of language that mainly used by young people), *keigo* (honorific form of speech) and many more.

In Japanese, language variations which formed because of the background of age are quite a lot, one of which is the language of young people (*wakamono kotoba*). *Wakamono kotoba* is also often equated with slang (*surangu*). Chaer (2014: 62-67) whose states that, slang is a variety of social languages based on language variations in terms of speakers. Slang is a special and secret social variation. Thus, this variation is only used by certain circles that are very limited and should not be known by the group outside the group. Therefore, the vocabulary used in this slang is always changing. Temporal and generally used by young people.

Likewise with *babigo*, one of the functions is a secret language (*ingo*). *Babigo* is said to be one of the languages of young people (*wakamano kotoba*) because

it is used and popularized by young people in Japan. *Babigo* is a type of *irekotoba* (insertion language). *Irekotoba* is a type of secret language used to communicate with only certain people, namely by inserting other sounds into every sound that forms a word. For example, like inserting 「し」 to 「やきもち」 become 「やしきしもしちし」, inserting vocal sounds that similar to the カ row in the *kana* letter column, into the word 「かね」 so that it becomes 「かかねけ」 (<https://www.weblio.jp/content/ireshi>).

There are only a few researchers who focus on *babigo*. Not to mention that their research focus were not about the *babigo* itself, instead they just used *babigo* as a tool to achieve the results that they needed. The first research was conducted by Wayne P. Lawrence that addresses syllable and *mora* in Japanese in general by using *babigo* as proof that units that have tones are syllable and not *mora*. But syllables can be built well based on *moraic* elements in his research entitled *The Syllable and Mora in Japanese: Evidence Form a Secret Language* (Lawrence, W. P, 1989). Other research was conducted by Hasagi Miwako with the title *Prosodic Phonology in Second Language Acquisition: An Analysis of Japanese Production from a Japanese Language Game* (Miwako, 1999). In Hasagi's research, *babigo* also only used as a tool in a language game that he conduct to his subject which are English native speaker students. He used *babigo* to analyze whether the native speakers of English students can recognize the existence of *mora* in *babigo*'s game or not. From the two mentioned research above clearly that even though they used *babigo* as their research instrument, but their main study were not about the *babigo* itself. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to reveal the formation and function of *babigo* which returned popular among teenagers today by taking data sources in Saitou Kyouko's video footage as *babigo* speaker on Saitou Kyouko's YouTube channel.

## 2. Methods

The method that the author uses in this study, is a qualitative method. Qualitative methods seek to uncover various uniqueness contained in individuals, groups, communities, and/or organizations in everyday life thoroughly, detailed, deep and can be scientifically accounted for (Sukidin, 2002).

The process of data collection in this study uses the listening method. The listening method is used because the way used to obtain data is done by listening to the use of the language (Mahsun, 2005: 90). In this study, the author collected data by listening to the use of *babigo* spoken by Saitou Kyouko in three shows in the Japanese TV station where all gathered from Saitou Kyouko's YouTube Channel which will be used as research objects with the aim of collecting data in the form of verbal *babigo*.

The method used in the data analysis stage in this study is a descriptive method. The descriptive method aims to focus on existing problems at the time of research or actual problems. The descriptive method is a research method carried out based on the existing facts, so the results are describing the elements of language as it is (Sudaryanto, 1993:62). The author describes the data that has been collected and analyzed according to the formulation of the problem. From all the data that the author manage to be gathered mainly from Saitou Kyouko's speech in three shows in the Japanese TV station that has been posted on Saitou Kyouko's YouTube Channel, the author aim is to successfully describing the formation and function of *babigo* as stated in the formulation of the problem above.

The presentation stage of the results of data analysis is a stage of research in the form of preparation of reports. The method used is the informal method. The informal method is a method that describes the results of the analysis with ordinary words (Sudaryanto, 1993: 145). This stage

including explaining the formation of *babigo* and its functions as a variety use of language in young people.

In this stage the author will explain 1) the formation of *babigo* is based on the phonological typology of syllables, namely single and long vowel sounds, semi-vowel consonants, nasal /n/ consonants, and double consonants; 2) *Babigo* functions as a secret language in young people mainly in female student and also *babigo* can stand as a language game.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1. Formation of Babigo

The process of *babigo*'s formation is a process of conversion or a decrease in the structure of a word into a new word structure by considering and must meet certain rules. In an outline, *babigo*'s construction is only through the process of insertion of a phoneme in a phonotactic study of a word structure. *Babigo*'s construction is compiled based on syllable phonological typology :

##### 3.1.1. Single vocal sound

Inserting the '*ba, bi, bu, be, bo*' syllables after each syllable that has a single vocal sound. If the single vocal sound is a, then it is inserted with '*ba*', if the single vocal sound is i then '*bi*' is inserted, if the single vocal sound is u, then '*bu*' is inserted, if the single vocal sound is e, then '*be*' is inserted, if the single vocal sound is o then '*bo*' is inserted.

Example:

春日 : 簡単のところで私がまあ自己紹介するんでそこまずとってみてもいいでしょうかね、バビブベボ'できますね。

Kasuga : *Kantan no tokoro de watakushi ga maa jikoshoukai surunde soko mazu totte mite mo iideshouka ne, 'babibubebo' dekimasune.*

Kasuga : To make it easy, I will introduce myself and then you can take it from there and make it into '*babibubebo*' okay?

齊藤 : はい。

Saitou : *Hai.*

Saitou : Okay.

春日 : あたしのなまえはかすがです。

Kasuga : *Atashi no namae wa Kasuga desu.*

Kasuga : My name is Kasuga.

齊藤 : あばたばしびのぼなばまばえべはばかばすぶがばでべすぶ。

Saitou :

*AbaTabaShibiNoboNabaMabaEbeWabaK*  
*abaSubuGabaDebeSubu.*

(<https://youtu.be/6heq-Aaft6s>)

##### 3.1.2. Long Vowel Sound (*Chou-on*)

The stipulation for the insertion of the syllable '*ba bi bu be bo*' after a long vowel has several variations based on the type of the word, and based on it's origin.

###### a. Japanese original words (*wago*)

*Wago* is a Japanese origin word that existed before *kango* and *gairaigo* came to Japan (Sudjianto, 2004:99)

The stipulation of *babigo* on *wago* that have a long vowel sound is to insert the syllable '*ba bi bu be bo*' in the long sound based on it's vowel sound, i.e. if the long vowel sound is a, then insert '*ba*', if the long vowel sound is i then insert '*bi*', if the long vowel sound is u long, then insert '*bu*', if the long vowel sound is e, then insert '*be*', and if the long vowel sound is o, then insert '*bo*'.

若林 : じゃ、みんなちょっと聞いてください、バビ語。何て言っているか。

Wakabayashi : *Ja, minna chotto kiitekudasai, babigo. Nante itteruka.*

Wakabayashi : Alright everyone, please listen carefully to this Babigo. What is it said?

春日 : 言いますよ。「かばすぶ。」え～、難しい!

「かばすぶがばのぼギャバ  
グブさばいびこぼうぶ」

Kasuga : *Imasuyo. (KabaSubu...)*  
*Muzukashii! (KabaSubu*  
*GabaNoboGyabaGubuSabaIbiKoboUbu).*  
Kasuga : I will say it. (KabaSubu...)  
It's hard!  
(KabaSubuGabaNoboGyabaGubuSabaIbi  
KoboUbu).

若林 : あ～、スゲー！わかる人  
いんじゃない。え、なんで、佐々木さん。  
Wakabayashi : A-, *suge-!*  
*Wakaruhito ga inja. E-, nande, Sasaki.*  
Wakabayashi : Wow, amazing!  
There are people who understood. Sasaki,  
what he said?

佐々木 : *かすがのギャグさいこう。*  
Sasaki : *Kasuga no Gyagu saikou.*  
Sasaki : Kasuga's jokes is the best.  
(<https://youtu.be/6heq-Aaft6s>)

#### b) Loan words (*gairaigo*)

*Gairaigo* is a type of Japanese vocabulary derived from a foreign language (*gaikokugo*) which has been adapted and then used as the national language (*kokugo*). Words that include *gairaigo* in Japanese, in general, are words that come from European countries excluding *kango* which was first used in Japanese since ancient times. (Sudjianto, 2004:104).

The stipulation for *babigo* on *gairaigo* that has a long vowel sound is different from the stipulation of *babigo* on *wago* that has a long vowel sound. In *wago*, the 'ba bi bu be bo' syllable insertion are according to the sound of the long vowel. Whereas in *gairaigo* -which is always written using *katakana* and long vowel sounds are written using the ー sign- the insertion of the 'ba bi bu be bo' syllables after the ー sign. Here is an example of a conversation with *gairaigo* in it:

齊藤 : まばたば ラバーバメベン  
ブいびこぼうぶねべ。  
Saito : *MabaTabaRaba-baMebeNbu*  
*IbiKoboUbuNebe.*

春日 : 今なんて言ったの？  
Kasuga : *Ima nante itta no?*

Kasuga : What just she said?

佐々木 : また ラーメン いろいろね。  
Sasaki : *Mata ra-men ikoune.*  
Sasaki : Let's eat ramen again.

齊藤 : 正解！  
Saito : *Seikai!*  
Saito : Correct!

(<https://youtu.be/6heq-Aaft6s>)

#### 3.1.3. Consonant Sound + Semi-Vocal [Y] + Vocal (*Yoo'on*)

*Yoo'on* is a syllable sound in Japanese that is represented by the *kana* letter. *Yoo'on* is formed from a combination of two syllables, 'ki, shi, chi, ni, hi, mi, ri, gi, ji, bi, pi' syllables with the 'ya, yu, yo' syllables written in small *kana* letters so that they become 'kya, kyu, kyo', and so on. (Sudjianto, 2004:48).

The stipulation of *babigo* on *yoo'on* is to insert the syllable of the *babigo* based on the vowel sound of the *yoo'on*. So even though it is a *yoo'on* syllable, the *babigo* insert remains in the form of the *ba, bu, bo*, syllable and it doesn't change into *bya, byu, byo*. Here is a conversation in which there is one word with *yoo'on* syllable .

春日 : ちょっと面白いね語。も  
うちよっと聞いて。

Kasuga : *Chotto omoshiroi ne go. Mou*  
*chotto kiite.*

Kasuga : Quite an interesting  
language isn't it. I want to hear some more.

齊藤 : きよぼうぶはばじびめべ  
てべかばんぶらばんぶきやばくぶのぼ  
かばたば がばいびるぶのぼでべ、すぶ  
ごぼくぶきびんぶちよぼうぶしびてべ  
るぶ。

Saito :  
*Kyoboubuhabajibimebetebeka*  
*banburabanbukyabakubunobokatabaga*  
*baibirubunobodebesubugobokubukibinbuc*  
*hoboubushibiteberubu*

佐々木 : 「きょうはじめて観覧客  
の方がいるので、すごく緊張してる」  
と言っています。

Sasaki : *Kyou hajimete kanrankyaku no kata ga iru node, sugoku kinchoushiteru to itteimasu.*

Sasaki : She said 'I'm really nervous, because today is for the first time that there are audiences'

(<https://youtu.be/4a0gtQ773CY>)

### 3.1.4. Nasal Consonant Sound /N/ (Hatsuon)

*Hatsuon* in the Japanese writing system is expressed by the *hiragana* letter ん or *katakana* ン, which is one of the letters that can produce a nasal sound. *Hatsuon* only consists of one consonant sound and does not contain a vowel sound (Sudjianto, 2004:45).

The construction of *babigo* in *hatsuon* is to insert the 'bu' syllable after *hatsuon*. The following is an example of a conversation in which there are several words that contain *hatsuon*.

春日 : 齊藤さんがバビ語の使い手ね、佐々木さんはバビ語の通訳ですね。では、よろしくお願ひします。

Kasuga : *Saitou-san ga Babigo no tsukaite ne, Sasaki-san wa Babigotsuuyaku desune. Dewa, yoroshiku onegaishimasu.*

Kasuga : So Saito will be a *babigo* user, and Sasaki will be a translator okay. Okay then, let's do it.

齊藤 : たばかばはばしびさばんぶはばいびつぶもぼそぼんぶなばにびえべがばおほなばんぶでべすぶかば?

Saito : *TabaKabaHabaShibiSabaNbu WabalbiTsubuMoboSoboNbuNabaNibiEbeGabaOboNabaNbuDebeSub Kaba?*

佐々木 : 「高橋さんはいつもそんなに笑顔なんですか」と言っています。

Sasaki : *Takahashi-san wa itsumo sonnani egao nandesuka to itteimasu.*

Sasaki : She said Is he always smiles like that?'

春日 : え〜、すごい!。何これ。。。。

Kasuga : *E-, sugoi! Nani kore...*

Kasuga : Wow, amazing! What is that...

(<https://youtu.be/4a0gtQ773CY>)

### 3.1.5. Double Consonant Sound (Sokuon)

*Sokuon* is a closed or blocked sound. When written in *hiagana* or *katakana*, the *sokuon* is denoted by the lower 'tsu' letter, but when written in Roman letters, the *sokuon* is written as the same size as the consonant syllable in the next section. (Sudjianto, 2004:42).

The construction of *babigo* in *sokuon* is by not inserting *babigo* after it, but still reading it as it is without any changes. The following is an example of a conversation in which there are words that contain *sokuon*.

春日 : え、ちょっとじゃ俺らにはわからないぐらいのことをパート喋ってみて、教えてくれない。

Kasuga : *E, chotto ja orera ni wa wakaranai gurai no koto wo pa-to shabetemite, oshiete kurenai.*

Kasuga : Now, could you talk about something that we don't understand, and then could you tell us about it?

齊藤 : きよぼうぶババカバリビズブムブさばんぶとぼはばじびめべてべあばったばんぶでべすぶけべどぼ、すぶごぼくぶしびふぶくぶがばかばわばいびかばったばよぼねべ。

Saito : *KyoboUbuBabaKabaRibiZubuMubuSabaNbuToboHabaJibiMebeTebe AbaTTabaNbuDebeSubuKebeDoboSubuGoboKubuJibiFubuKubuGabaKabaWabalbiKabaTTabaYoboNebe.*

佐々木 : 「きょうバカリズムさんとはじめてあったんですけどすごく私服が可愛かったよね」って言った。

Sasaki : *Kyou Bakarizumu-san to hajimete attandesukedo sugoku jifuku ga kawaikattayone.*

Sasaki : She said that 'Today is the first-time meeting with Mr. Bakarizumu, the outfit is funny isn't it.'

(<https://youtu.be/4a0gtQ773CY>)

## 3.2. Babigo Usage

### 3.2.1 As a Secret Language

Based on the statement of one of the members of the *Hananochūsantorio* (Flower Trio) who is the creator of *babigo*, Mori Masako when he was invited to the *Kinyou Puremiamu [teiseisasetekudasai]* event on Fuji TV, she stated that *babigo* was created because they were fed up with the daily events that they experienced, especially when a conversation between the Flower Trio is intercepted by their surroundings.

Similarly, Sato Kyoko's statement in *Hiragana Muzukashii* TV show stated that if you want to talk about something with your friends but don't want to be noticed or understood by surrounding people, then you can talk about it using *babigo*.

### 3.2.2. As a Language Game

As stated by Laycock (1972 in Davis, t.t.: 2), a cross-language game can be described in one or more of the following four mechanisms: insertion, rearrangement, replacement, and deletion.

Language games that use insertion, derive their words by inserting a group of (language-specific) phonemes into some part (or parts) of the original language word. One of the other types of insertion games invented is as exemplified by the Japanese game known as *babigo*.

Through the data sources that the authors refer to, that currently *babigo* has a function as a language game. The game is done in two ways, which are:

#### 1) Saying or recreating a sentence into a *babigo* form.

齊藤 : はい。  
Saitou : Hai.  
Saitou : Oke

春日 : あたしのなまえはかすがで  
す  
Kasuga : *Atashi no namae wa Kasuga desu.*  
Kasuga : Nama saya Kasuga

齊藤 : あばたばしびのぼなばま  
ばえべはばかばすぶがばでべすぶ。

Saitou : *AbaTabaShibiNobo*  
*NabaMabaEbeWabaKabaSubuGaba*  
*DebeSubu.*

(YouTube Saitou eps.02, 00:24 – 00:40)

#### 2) Saying or guessing the origin sentence from it's *babigo* form.

齊藤 : きよぼうぶババカバリビ  
ズムブさばんぶとぼはばじびめべて  
べあばったばんぶでべすぶけべどぼ、  
すぶごぼくぶしびふぶくぶがばかばわ  
ばいびかばったばよぼねべ。

Saito : *KyoboUbuBabaKabaRibiZu*  
*buMubuSabaNbuToboHabaJibiMebeTebe*  
*AbaTTabaNbuDebeSubuKebeDoboSubuG*  
*oboKubuJibiFubuKubuGabaKabaWabalbi*  
*KabaTTabaYoboNebe.*

佐々木 : 「きょうバカリズムさん  
とはじめてあったんですけれどすごく私  
服が可愛かったよね」って言った。

Sasaki : 'Kyou Bakarizumu-san to  
hajimete attandesukedo sugoku jifuku ga  
kawaikattayone.' tte itta.

Sasaki : She said that 'Today is the  
first-time meeting with Mr. Bakarizumu,  
the outfit is funny isn't it.'

(沼にハマってきいてみた  
from Saitou Kyouko YouTube Channel  
eps.02, 00:53 – 01:02)

## 4. Conclusion

The formation of *babigo* on single vowel sounds, long vowels, and semi-vowel consonants is by inserting the syllable 'ba bi bu be bo' after each syllable. If the vowel sound is 'a', then 'ba' is inserted, if the vowel sound is 'i' then 'bi' is inserted, if the vowel sound is 'u' then 'bu' is inserted, if the vowel sound is 'e' then 'be' is inserted, if the vowel sound is 'o' then 'bo' is inserted. However, if there is a nasal consonant /N/, then 'bu' is inserted after it. Then if there is a double consonant sound marked with lower 'tsu' letter, it is said just like that without any insertion of *babibubebo* syllables.

Basically, *babigo* is a young people's language that is used mainly by females as a secret language. In addition, *babigo* also has a function as a language game or play. To play this language game is usually by guessing the sentence from *babigo* form into the original word or sentence, or vice versa. This *babigo* language game when viewed from its formation is very easy, but its pronunciation and understanding are not as easy as its formation.

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