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Linguistic Consideration of the Micronesian Ways of Life during the Japanese Occupation

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This paper describes Linguistic Consideration of the Micronesian Ways of Life during the Japanese Occupation through “School Life” and “Japanese and Micronesian Languages during the Japanese Occupation” based on field study interviews conducted in Micronesia.

1. School Life during the Japanese Occupation

Native Micronesian children entered not Shoogakkoo (Elementary School) but Koogakkoo (Public School). Education would be somewhat of a burden for their families, but as a matter of fact they were to be supplied stationary from Japan. Japanese education is valued on this aspect, no education expenses. (F,72, Pohnpei, Aug.15, 1995)

In Koogakkoo pupils had three hours study classes followed by one hour working time every weekday: sewing works for girls and agriculture works for boys. This program is sometimes evaluated by growth in economics, that is it introduced agriculture to the islands contrasting with the American education system. School studies during the Japanese Occupation were connected with practical exercises. America indeed has assisted economically, but Micronesians buy American goods with the money. It is hardly connected with promotions of Micronesian industry.

(M, 66, Saipan, Aug.12, 1995)

J : Noogyoo no jikan-te no ga aru wake?

(You have classes called agriculture?)

M : Arimasu. Nappa o ueru no to negi ueru no to, yappari oshieru no ne. Sorekara, koyashi no tsumikata, ano, taihi-tte, ano, nappa ni ageru koyashi. Are, minna oshiete kureru.

(Yes, we have. They teach us how to plant greens and leeks, too. And how to make manure, er, compost, er, to give it greens. They teach us that all.)

J : Ima, Saipan no shoogakkoo ja ne, Nihongo oshiete imasu ka? Eigo dake?

(Do they teach Japanese in schools of Saipan now? Only English?)

M : Eigo dakedo, chittomo shitte inai ne. Mukashi, Nihongo jidai wa ne, oshietara gakka ga aru. Jitchi ni iku. Gakka de naratta no ga jitchi de tsukau. Kore ga nai no ne, Amerika no hito ne. Ima, nai. Dakara... Kokumin Gakkoo kara saa ookiku natte sotsugyoo suru made, imo demo uerarenai, wakaranakereba...

(They teach only English, but pupils do not know anything. These days, during the Japanese Occupation there was a subject to go to practice. We used what we learned in the subject. They do not have this, Americans. Now we don't. So, ... Even when they graduate elementary school, they cannot plant even potatoes. If they do not know...)

It is supposed that school teachers came from various regions in Japan Islands. The old aged people still remember their teachers' names. Some of them state that they recognised differences of dialectal pronunciation of the principals who came from prefectures like Aomori, Kagoshima and Niigata. (M, Truk, Aug., 1994) (M, 66, Saipan, Aug.12, 1995)

Japanese principals had the biggest authority, as expected, among teaching staffs including Micronesian assistant teachers. (M, Truk, Aug, 1994)

J : Oshieru toki ni, tatoeba, sore wa are desu ka, anoo anoo, Nihonjin no sensei to issho ni oshieru n desu ka?

(When they teach, for example, that is, um, um, do they teach with Japanese teachers?)

M : Nihonjin no koochoo ga iru, de, yappari Nihonjin no koochoo no shiji ni yotte, shitagatte, oshieru, oshieru n desu yo. Kore o oshienasai tte ittara, "hai, wakari-

mashita.”

(There is a Japanese principal. And depending on, obeying his instruction they teach, yes they teach. When he told a teacher to teach this, then the teacher said, “yes, I understand”.)

J : De, koochoo sensei toka wa, tatoeba oshiekata, kooyuufuu ni oshienasai toka, kooyuufuu ni oshiete wa ikenai toka, sooyuu koto wa iimashitaka?

(And did the principal tell you, for example, to teach like this or not to teach like that?)

M : Iimashita.

(Yes, he did.)

J : Tatoeba, dooyuu koto ka oboete imasu ka?

(Do you remember how was that?)

M : Kono naka ni kaite aru mono wa, nanka, amari ki ni iranai, kooyuu mono wa oshiete ikenai, sore o koochoo ga yuu n desu.

(He said that they should not teach things like this because he did not like what was written there.)

J : Tatoeba, sono ki ni iranai koto tte, dooyuu koto ga ki ni iranai koto desu ka?

(What kind of things which he did not like, for example ...?)

M : Saa, wasuremashita. Tatoeba, Nihonjin wa meshi o tabete oru, sore o oshiete wa ikenai, Toomin wa meshi o tabete inai kara. Wareware wa yappari, panmochi toka ne, tabete bakkari dakara.

(Um, I forgot. For example, Japanese ate rice, which should not be taught. It is because Islanders did not eat rice. It is because we ate only breadcake, like that.)

During classes teachers were very strict. Pupils sometimes were punched on their heads and slapped on their buttocks. Some of informants refer to concrete teaching methods in school. (M, Truk. Aug, 1994)

J : Kaiwa wa dooyuufuu ni shite oshieru n desu ka?

(How do they teach Japanese conversation?)

M : Tatoeba ne, anta wa koko ni iru, watashi wa koko ni iru. Sensei ga ne, “hai, K, kotchi e kite kaiwa o shinasai”, de, minna no tokoro e mukatte keirei shite,

“ima kara kaiwa o itashimashoo.” “Hai, itashimashoo.” De, watashi ga “anta no namae wa?” “... desu”.

(For example, you are here, and I am here. The teacher says, “OK, K, come here and practice conversation”, then I salute to everybody and say, “now let’s practice conversation.” “Yes, let’s.” And I say, “what’s your name? “I’m...”)

Micronesian people favored songs like “Hato Poppo”, “Kimigayo”, “Hotaru no Hikari”, “Miyo, Tookai no”. Little children memorized War Songs (Gunka) better than soldiers, they recall. (M, Truk, Aug, 1994). Speaking of memory, we engaged in conversation such as the following:

J1 : Nan ka, sukoshi anshoo, ima anshoo dekimasu ka?

(Can you recite something now?)

F : Watashi, wasureta desu yo.

(I forgot...)

J2 : “Watashitachi no Nan’yooguntoo” tte, oboete masu ka?

(Do you remember “Our Nan’yogunto”?)

F : Nan’yooguntoo? Oo, “Kookoku no koohai kono issen ni ari...”

(Nan’yogunto? “Oh, It depends on this war for Imperial State to flourish or to perish...”)

J : (laugh) Furui uta desu nee.

(What an old song it is!)

Pupils who lived in the dormitory studied after school. (M, Truk, Aug, 1994)

J : Gakkoo wa asa nanji ni hajimarimashita?

(What time did the school begin?)

M : Gakkoo no asa no jikan wa, ano shichi-ji han kara desu ne, juuni-ji made. Yo-ji han made hataraitte ite, kishukusha e modotte ikimashite, sorede yoru no shichi-ji han kara ku-ji made o-benkyoo shimashita. Kaiwa toka hanashikata toka.

(In the morning school was from seven thirty till twelve. I worked until four thirty and went back to the dormitory, and then studied from seven thirty till

nine at night, for example, conversation and speaking.)

J : Sensei wa ita n desu ka, kishukusha ni?

(Were there any teachers in the dormitory?)

M : Sensei wa orimasu. Hitori Nihon no sensei, hitori Torakku no sensei.

(Yes, there were. One Japanese teacher and one Trukese teacher.)

Some pupils had jobs after school, which were supposed to be helpful for improving their Japanese. (F, 72, Pohnpei, Aug.15, 1995)

J1 : Hoshuuka wa hachi-ji kara juuni-ji made gakkoo no jugyoo. Gogo wa nani o shimashita?

(In the Supplementary Course you had classes from eight till twelve. What did you do in the afternoon?)

F : Watashi wa ichi ji kara shigoto ni itta, iku n desu yo. Ano, nani, porisu.

(I went out for work from one o'clock. Um, what, police.)

J1 : Keisatsu?

(Police?)

F : Keisatsu. Sooji ni sentaku. Yo-ji made.

(Police. Cleaning and washing. It was until four o'clock.)

J2 : Mainichi ikimashita ka?

(Did you go everyday?)

F : Mainichi. Kin'yoobi made. Doyoobi wa uchi ni kaeru.

(Yes, everyday. Until Friday. On Saturday we went back to our homes.)

J2 : Itsuka kan de ikura moraemashita ka?

(How much did you get for five days?)

F : Nana, shichi-en goji-ssen.

(Seven, seven yen and fifty sen.)

2. Japanese and Micronesian Languages

As expected children had to use Japanese in school.

F : Gakkoo dewa Ponape no kotoba tsukawanai. Nihongo bakari. Ponape tsukau to Tachiban.

(In school we did not use Ponapean. Only Japanese. If we used Ponapean, we were commanded to do Keep Standing.)

J : Tachiban. (laugh)

(Keep Standing.)

F : Nnn. Tachiban. Uchi ni kaettara Ponape. Watashi no o-toosan, o-kaasan, wakaranai kara, Nihongo ne.

(Um, yes, Keep Standing. After going back home we used Ponapean. Because my father and mother did not know Japanese, you know.)

Some children went to Hoshuuka (Supplementary Course) other than their own islands. For example, Trukese and Pohnpei pupils went to school in Saipan, and Kosaie, Yapese and Trukese children went to schools in Pohnpei, where Japanese was their lingua franca. It is said that this phenomena expanded from schools to general society, and Japanese became the lingua franca among Micronesian islands. However, we could not confirm the present situation during our fieldworks. It is reported that during the War some Indonesian captives were lead away to Saipan, and they talked with Micronesians by gestures and signs. (M, 66, Saipan, Aug.12, 1995)

Some Micronesians have kept contacts with Japanese after WWII but some have had no chance to use Japanese. Nevertheless, we meet a lot of people whose fluent Japanese gradually comes out from their mouths even though they say, "oh, I've forgotten it." Moreover, we come across those who use their native languages with the younger generation and Japanese with the same generation. It might be a special case, which is introduced below:

J : Ichiban benri na no wa nanigo desu ka?

(What language is the most convenient for you?)

M : Nihongo.

(Japanese.)

J : Tatoeba byooki ni natta toki toka, nani ka bikkuri shita toki toka, yume no naka de hanasu toka.

(What language do you use when, for example, when you get sick, when you are surprised, or when you talk in the dream?)

M : Nihongo ga deru.

(Japanese comes out.)

J : Nihongo desu ka. Chamorogo dewa nai.

(Japanese, not Chamorro?)

M : Nai, nai.

(No, no.)

J : Kazu o kazoeru toki wa nan desu ka?

(When you count numbers, what language do you use?)

M : Sanjutsu suru toki, imademo ne, keisan suru toki wa, ni kakeru ni wa yon deshoo. Ni-san-ga-roku tte. Hayai kara. Amerika no "Times, one" chotto koo nagai nee. Nihongo, ni-san-ga-roku, ni-shichi-juushi. Nareta kara. Uchi ni asobi ni kuru no, tomodachi ga ne. Boku gurai no hito. Nihongo tsukau no, imademo.

(When I calculate, still now, when I do figures, two times two equals four, right? Two times three is six, like that. Because it is fast. "Times, one" of American way takes a little longer, right. In Japanese two times three is six, two times seven is fourteen. Because I am used to it. My friends come to see me to my house, they are the same age as me, and we use Japanese still now.)

J : Sensoo ga owatte kara ima made wa, Nihongo doo yatte tsukatte ita no desu ka?

(After the War, till now how have you used Japanese?)

M : Sake nomu toki, tsukau. Tomodachi to atsumatta toki, tomodachi mo Nihongo tsukau kara.

(When I drink, I use it. When my friends meet together. Because they also use Japanese.)

J : Kazoku to hanasu toki wa?

(How about when you talk with your family?)

M : Kazoku wa tsukawanai, Chamorogo.

(They do not use it. They use Chamorro.)

J : Kazoku no naka de Nihongo ga hanaseru hito wa?

(Who can speak Japanese among your family?)

M : O-toosan, o-kaasan, minna hanasemasu. Kyoodai, minna hanasemasu.

(My father, my mother, they can speak it. All my sisters and brothers can.)

J : Demo, kazoku de hanasu toki wa?

(But when you talk with your family?)

M : Chamorogo.

(Chamorro.)

J : Tomodachi to hanasu toki wa?

(How about when you talk with your friends?)

M : Nihongo.

(Japanese.)

J : Dooshite desu ka? Dooshite Chamorogo ja nakute Nihongo de hanashi o suru?

(Why? Why do you talk not in Chamorro but in Japanese?)

M : Moo, sore ga nareteru. Bero ga ne, hayai. Nihongo de ieba hayai. Mata, boku wa Amerikago wa yappari narete inai kara, bero ga warui. Nihongo wa moo hayai. De, boku ga sake yamete kara, moo Nihongo wa tsukaenaku natta. Moo tomodachi ga uchi konai kara.

(I am used to it. My tongue, it is faster. It is faster in Japanese. And because I am not used to American English, of course, my tongue doesn't work good. In Japanese it is much faster. Then, after my quitting drinking I don't use Japanese any more, because none of my friends comes to my house.)

J : O-sake nomani to Nihongo ga.

(When you don't drink alcohol, Japanese doesn't...)

M : Sake nondara hayai yo. Kanji mo yomeru yo.

(When I drink I can speak fast. I also can read Kanji characters.)

This person says he learned Japanese naturally before entering school through playing with Japanese children living in their neighborhood. On the other hand there are some informants who recall that they were forbidden from playing with Japanese by Japanese parents and felt sorry for not playing with them. (Pohnpei)

Generally speaking Micronesian people are very good at speaking, and reading and writing Kana letters, but poor at Kanji characters. However, there is a person who worked at the seal shop and remembered very special forms of writing for Kanji characters. Micronesia was a good market for personal seals because workers at the army needed them to receive their salary. This person still write a letter in Kana and Kanji.

(M, Truk, Aug. , 1994)

M : Watashi wa, ano, hankoya ni tsutomete imashita. Natsushima desu. Hanko o horu, ano mise ni kimashita. De, hanko o horu no o naratte, maa, hantoshi de moo hankoya ni narimashita.

(Well, I worked at a seal shop. In Natsu Island. I came to the shop at which they worked for engraving the seals. Then, I learned to engrave them, well, in a half year I became a seal engraver.)

J : Hanko o tsukuru no wa, are deshoo, ironna kanji o...

(When you engrave them, um, various characters...)

M : Hai, naraimashita. Hachi shurui no Nihon no ji o naraimashita. Jitai, shotai desu. Katakana, Hiragana, sorekara, Yamatokana, sorekara, Kanji niwa Kaisho, Gyoosho, Soosho, Reisho, Kointai to yuu ji ga atta. Kointai. Furui in no tai. Omo ni toshiyori no hoo ga suki desu, sore ga.

(Yes, I learned many. I learned eight kinds of Japanese characters, that is characters and scripts. There were Katakana character, Hiragana character, Yamatokana character, and as for Kanji character Kaisho script, Gyoosho script, Soosho script, Reisho script and Kointai script: old seal script. Mainly older customers preferred it.)

J : Kono kinpen de, sono hanko to naru to, tatoeba, Torakku no hito nanka no namae no hanko nado mo horu wake desu ka?

(As for the seal around here, for example did you engrave for Trukese names?)

M : Torakku no hito nara, ano Katakana de. Ano Kanji no namae nakatta kara. De, Nihonjin niwa, juubun dekimasu. Watashi no namae wa kore desu to itte. Ji no shotai wa nan desu ka ittara, Gyoosho, Soosho, Reisho ni sukina toori ni horanai to warui kara, sukina shotai o, ano chuumonsho ni oite, tsukuru toki wa sore o miru.

(For Trukese it is in Katakana character. Um, they didn't have names in Kanji. Then, for Japanese I could do it sufficiently. They said, like, my name is this. I asked them what kind of script do you like, because I felt sorry if I did not engrave them as they like, I asked them to choose the script they want in the order form, and I looked at them in engraving them.)

Our purpose in conducting this fieldwork was to describe Micronesian Japanese and we concentrated on recording natural conversations. For this purpose we did not select any special topics and we were unable to collect systematically a complete picture of their daily language use. However, we realize that we should have prepared a language use research sheet to compare language which was used during the occupation with the language spoken today.