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Author(s)	土岐, 哲
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Introduction

Satoshi TOKI

(tokiss@let.osaka-u.ac.jp)

This is a report of the overseas research project “Field Research on Japanese Language and Culture Remaining in the Former Japanese Mandate Pacific Islands”, supported by a Ministry of Education Scientific Research Grant (International Grant, Satoshi Toki, representative), 1994-1996.

1. Motivation for the Survey

From approximately 1914 to 1944 (with slight differences in length from one island to the next), Japan enacted a mandate from the League of Nations, establishing a South Seas Bureau (南洋庁) in Micronesia and colonizing the region.

During this time, schools were established for the primary level education of the islander children, and Japanese language education was carried out. Although more than 50 years have past since the defeat in the war and the evacuation of Japanese from the region, people who learned Japanese at the time as school children still speak Japanese with some fluency. Much to the surprise of the researchers, we encountered elderly females who, in spite of not having encountered any Japanese for decades, regained fluency before our very eyes while looking at photographs from that era. It may be that the relatively tranquil and placid nature of everyday life there is a condition favorable to the maintenance of such memories. At any rate, we were moved at the accuracy of the human memory, but up until now, no surveys have been performed concerning the state of these people's Japanese. One wonders why this is. It may be that people have avoided this topic out of a sense of repentance and guilt towards the “pre-war” era, that people were reluctant to tolerate memories which they did not wish to recall in order to record them. At any rate, it is difficult to deliberate “nama-kawaki” or half-dried history.

However, regardless of one's stance on the issue, it remains an objective

fact that over 50 years ago, the Japanese Empire was responsible for the establishment of a school system on these southern islands where numerous native children were taught Japanese and Japanese culture, producing numerous users of Japanese, and that in connection with this numerous Japanese words and phrases entered the local languages as loanwords, which the younger generations who have no relation to Japanese still use without realizing they are from Japanese.

The researchers saw it as their obligation, as people living in this time in history when such a task is still feasible, to accept these facts solemnly and record them, and we spent three years conducting surveys.

2. Survey Field and People Involved

The area of the surveys was the Federated States of Micronesia (ミクロネシア連邦共和国), the Republic of Belau (ベラウ共和国), Saipan and Guam.

The surveys began in 1994 and continued for three years, but the credit for the research activities proceeding relatively smoothly from the beginning is due largely to Professor Kazuhiko Komatsu of the International Center for Japanese Cultural Studies (国際日本文化研究所) (then, Osaka University Faculty of Letters), Professor Osamu Sakiyama of the National Museum of Ethnology, and Professor Ken-ichi Sudo of Kobe University (all co-researchers in the project). These people had been conducting field surveys of the Micronesian Federation and the Belau Republic previously and they provided us with various kinds of necessary information prior to the beginning of this project.

Furthermore, First Secretary to the Micronesian Embassy Mr. John Friz provided us with more than his share of assistance in our negotiations with the government. Looking back, this author knew John Friz well when he was a foreign student at Tokai University in the early 1980's, but I never dreamed at the time that we would meet again during this research survey.

After arriving at our respective sites, surveyors received the assistance of the staffs of the Chuuk State Historic Preservation Office, the Yap State Historic Preservation Office, the Belau National Museum of Yap, the Ponpei State Education Office, as well as the Department of Land, Ponpei State Government and Ohwa Christian High school.

The number of islands which the researchers on this survey covered in three

years numbered thirteen. Among these were islands far removed from the conveniences of modern civilization, and lacking in means of communication. It was through the cooperation of the aforementioned state government officials and those people who so kindly participated in our surveys that we were able to continue our duties safely and free of obstacle.

In addition, the Japanese language teachers assigned to the local high schools by the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (青年海外協力隊) provided us with great assistance. This survey would never have been possible without his assistance.

3. Informants

Since the informants in this survey were people who learned Japanese at least 52 years ago, they were older speakers. The immediacy of the need for such a survey came to bear on us in the second year of our fieldwork, when we found upon our return to the region that some of our first-year informants had passed away in the interim. Just of the people known to this author, four have died since the survey began. We would like to express our heartfelt sorrow in their passing.

We came to know our informants through various circumstances. In some places, we had to adhere to local customs in obtaining formal introductions in order to conduct a survey, but in more than a few cases, people who struck up conversations with us on the street or in supermarkets subsequently readily agreed to become our informants. We could see the pride on informant's faces as they conversed with us in Japanese in front of younger islanders who had no reason Japanese. Several times were at quite a loss when informants asked us "give my best to Mr./Ms. So-and-so when you return to Japan".

Of course, of the informants, some had little contact with Japanese people while others have frequent contact with Japanese as guides. It is entirely plausible that people, especially of those who have frequent contacts with Japanese, began learning Japanese again after their schooling was completed, this time through natural language acquisition.

Thus it is important to note that in many instances the difference is not always clear between the Japanese these people learned as children and the Japanese which they acquired later in life.

Moreover, with this survey we received the cooperation of several high

school students who are currently studying Japanese. We wished to use their data to analyze whether the interlanguage characteristics in our informants' Japanese are the products of language change which occurred during the 50 years since they stopped learning Japanese, or whether it is possible that these characteristics have existed from the time that they studied Japanese.

The contents of this report are only a part of the data which we were able to collect thanks to the support which a great many people lent to the survey. We plan in the future to continue our reports on this survey, but we felt it necessary to proceed with this initial effort.

4. Contents of This Report

The construction of this report is outlined below :

- 1) The educational system (for all of Micronesia) during the colonial period
- 2) "language life", Japanese phonetics and phonology as interlanguage which are currently observable (centering around Chuuk or truk) Japanese grammar (potential ex-pressions on Yap)
- 3) Japanese lexical items which have entered the local languages (regarding Trukese, Ponapean, Kusaiean)
- 4) from a different point of view, a Ponape word list observed and recorded according to the ear and orthography of a 19th century native Japanese speaker

The contents of the papers are outlined below :

Kikuko YUI "The Formation of Micronesian Japanese: Teaching Japanese in Public Schools in Nan'yogunto." This paper describes the Japanese language education system in the colonial period based on both written materials from that era and information collected from fieldwork surveys. We see from this how the circumstances under which a Japanese-speaking populace was systematically created.

"Linguistic Consideration of the Micronesien Ways of Life during the Japanese Occupation" by Tatsuo MIYAJIMA and based on field work surveys, examines the every life of the islanders during the colonial period as pertains to language. We get a concrete conception of the ways in which these times very different from the present bore their influence.

“The Remnants of Japanese Phonology in the Micronesian Chuuk” by Satoshi TOKI examines the current state of the Japanese phonetics and phonology learned as an interlanguage during the colonial period. At the same time, it attempts a comparison with the Japanese pronunciation of students currently taking Japanese languages courses at high school.

“Grammatical Aspects of an Interlanguage: The Potential Expressions of Yapese Japanese.” by Katsumi SHIBUYA uses data from field surveys to examine the Japanese grammar of Yap people who learned the language during the colonial period, focusing on potential expressions, and examining in detail how these took hold as interlanguage forms.

“Characteristics of Japanese Loanword Vocabulary in Micronesian Languages” by Shinji SANADA looks at the state of loanwords adopted from Japanese into languages of the Micronesia (Trukese, Ponapean, Kusaiean). It examines the form of loanwords which remained in use among the younger non-Japanese speaking generations even after the Japanese left following their defeat in the war.

Finally, “A Study of the Nineteenth Century Pohnpeian Word-List Collected by a Japanese Explorer” by Osamu SAKIYAMA analyzes items from a Ponape word list written down from the observations of 19th century native Japanese speaker. His phonemic (phonological) examination sheds light on the subject of Micronesian speakers’ usage of Japanese by approaching the subject from the opposite direction.

These articles are only a part of the massive written and phonetic materials data which were amassed during the pilot surveys and the three years of the main survey. The personnel involved with these surveys plan to continue presenting oral presentations and reports on this work in the future, and we would appreciate other scholars sharing their opinions and specific information regarding this and related topics.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the following people who lent their cooperation to these surveys.

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