LINGUISTIC REVITALIZATION THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A Case Study Of Ishigaki City

Kamel Boustani

Abstract: Ishigaki Yaeyaman, a heavily minoritized Southern Ryukyuan language, is not a language of commerce, education, media, or government validated by the socioeconomic center. Nevertheless, it holds a certain value for a group of people in Ishigaki City that is intangible and deeply personal. In keeping with the goal of this special issue—to step out of the established dichotomies that impede the vision and practice of Ryukyuan language learning—this work sheds light on the ideologies and practices of new speakers of Ishigaki Yaeyaman, who traverse a 'third space' in their use of the language between public-and-private, polite-and-rude, spoken-and-written, and Japanese-and-Ryukyuan. It builds on the author's findings, including field observations made during doctoral research at University of the Ryukyus. A participatory action research methodology is employed, drawing upon qualitative data from semi-structured personal interviews and the in-person observation of Master–Apprentice language learning sessions within a local grassroots initiative begun in December 2019. The analysis suggests a need to break away from the dichotomies dictating the environment and situations in which new speakers may interact with traditional speakers and among themselves. This is recommended to take the form of Master–Apprentice training in a context that encourages the transformation of language attitudes and awareness, creating a 'safe space' that is dialogic, collaborative, and transdisciplinary.

INTRODUCTION

Awareness of the continuous decline of linguistic diversity in the Ryukyus has steadily increased in recent decades. This is evidenced by the wealth of both academic literature and popular writing in the field. However, the disproportionate abundance of full-scale grammars, grammar sketches and

other descriptive linguistic publications on Ryukyuan varieties1 seems to suggest that discussing individual language varieties is at least more manageable than attempting to discuss the more interpersonal matters of Ryukyuan lan- guage epistemology, ideology, and importantly, pedagogy.

Key questions for language revitalization are often brushed aside or treated too lightly, but language ideological clarification is a key step in any language revitalization effort. For example, up to what linguistic domain should the language in question be revitalized? In contexts of language mixing and heavy contact with other minoritized languages, how important is verbal hygiene (Cameron 1995)? The importance of ideological clarification, and the 'language ideological debate' (Blommaert 1999) has been widely discussed in the literature.

Fishman (1991) puts forth that language shift and language revitalization occur in stages, each with their own set of challenges. Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1998, pp. 62–63) acknowledge that there is often a gap between verbally expressed goals and unstated but deeply felt emotions and anxieties regarding the minoritized language in question. Others point out the importance of understanding what is at stake in reversing language shift (RLS) by focusing on the internal struggles of those engaged in the activity (Kroskrity 2009; Costa 2016). However, the concept is not regarded as unproblematic by all scholars, see e.g., Costa (2016, pp. 98–99).

What value is there, then, in revitalizing Yaeyaman, one of the Southern Ryukyuan languages? The various youth organizations local to Ishigaki City inherit the traditional songs, dances, and other cultural practices of their respective communities. Yaeyaman has a key role in these activities, but fewer and fewer speak it, owing to the assimilative language policy of the Japanese government (Heinrich et al. 2015). During my years of involvement with the community, I encountered many who were interested to know more Yaeyaman, and more about Yaeyaman, both within and outside of Ishigaki. Many details about the language are still under-described: details in grammar, sociolinguistic details, and details about the language-identity nexus of jaima-pïtu (Yaeyamans) themselves.

Locally, Yaeyaman is referred to as sïmamuni (island/hometown vernacular), which is the analog of shimakutuba. Shimakutuba is a term that gained currency when formal lan- guage planning was started in the Okinawa prefectural government in 2006, and the term consists of shima (island/hometown) and kutuba (language/vernacular).

In the opening pages of his seminal work on the grammar of the Sïka variety of Ishi- gaki Yaeyaman, Miyara (1995, p. 13) explains that while this linguistic variety was at one time the lingua franca of the populous downtown region of southern Ishigaki Island, in- ward migration from other islands and prefectures led to a dramatic increase in situations where Standard Japanese (henceforth SJ) ought to be used, and a corresponding decrease in situations where Yaeyaman had been used. Some two decades following this report, the present author's direct experience living and working in the community

corroborates this. Among the most elderly, Yaeyaman is a we-code used among friends and relatives. For that generation's children, in their fifties and sixties at the time of this writing, the language is well-understood but seldom used in conversation. The first few lines of opening remarks at the general assembly of a senior citizens' association or neighborhood council meeting may be the only chance that a resident of this generation has to utter words of the language in a period of several months. Yaeyaman is also an integral part of the local O-Bon festival known as Sooron Angamaa, where youth club members and elders (ranging from those in their twenties to those in their sixties) masquerade as archetypal grandmother and grand- father figures who impart wisdom on spectators. With a quickly dwindling population of fully native speakers who can serve as resources of novel expressions, this domain of use is also highly threatened.

It is worth noting the emergence of new instances of the token usage of Yaeyaman. Token greetings may be heard during takeoff and arrival on JAL Airlines flights, and also from a number of beverage vending machines around the downtown area. A version of the popular radio calisthenics routine performed in the Arakawa variety of Sïka Yaeyaman (originally recorded and released on CD in 2010) is played to civil servants in Ishigaki city hall every morning immediately before the workday begins. All such examples can be characterized as postvernacular, that is, having a symbolic rather than communicative function, wherein their significance as speech acts is emphasized over the meaning of the words themselves (Shandler 2004; Hornsby 2017).

Furthermore, there is a richness of expression unique to the Yaeyama region in its char- acter, showing diversity from district to district and village to village on Ishigaki Island. However, because of the above-mentioned assimilative language policy, in addition to the nationalist sentiment inadvertently spurred under the occupation by the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands during 1945–1972, the region's push toward modernization was paid for with the lessening of heritage language and customs (Ander- son 2014). Considering this detailed background, one can arrive at the ontological stance that there is emergent momentum from both within the local community and from with- out (in the prefectural government) to attempt to steer Yaeyaman off of its present course toward absolute disuse and total silence. Joining this emergent movement, young aca- demics and activists are now looking to methods of heritage language revitalization that have shown success globally, and one such method is introduced here.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The 'Master–Apprentice' Heritage Language Reclamation Model

On 7 December 2019, Dr. Madoka Hammine of Meio University (henceforth MH) and I held a briefing and workshop in Ishigaki City to introduce the concept of a Master– Apprentice language learning initiative to local residents. Master–

Apprentice was initially established by Dr. Leanne Hinton of the University of California, Berkley, in collaboration with the NGO Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival (AICLS). Since then, variations on this model (from this point on, "MA") have gradually spread around the world and are now being used for a number of indigenous languages in British Columbia, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, and Australia (Hinton et al. 2018). The original format for this initiative paired youths with elders who were fluent in the target heritage language to pro- mote language acquisition by engaging in activities that encourage the formation of direct, personal relationships through fun pastimes like playing traditional games, making crafts, hiking, or doing light work together. In many cases, linguists and specialists employed by academic institutions or advocacy groups provide the various resources necessary for the acquisition of grammar and possess considerable funding. The Ishigaki MA initiative was launched with funding from the UK-based Foundation for Endangered Languages for the purpose of creating flyers and procuring handheld recording equipment for the participants to use in their sessions.

The two main objectives of the 2019 briefing and workshop were to introduce Ishi- gaki citizens to the broad concept and significance behind MA, and to recruit volunteers for a pilot initiative. Ancillary goals included emphasizing the importance of goal-oriented learning, providing a taste of immersion education, and giving an opportunity for partici- pants to share opinions and ask questions.

Following the workshop, three rounds of personal interviews and direct researcher observation of language learning sessions (each such session/interview ranged from 5 to 85 min in length) were conducted between July 2020 and December 2021. The result of this process was a type of heterogeneous grassroots knowledge creation, which fits in well with other initiatives of the participatory action research framework introduced in Kapoor and Jordan (2009). Bottom-up language learning such as the kind observed within MA is interdisciplinary, dynamic, and accessible in a way that traditional top-down (e.g., institu- tionalized) learning is not.

The present analysis is qualitative and exploratory in its design. Its main purpose is to shed light on both the social boundaries to reclaiming a specific Ryukyuan heritage language and the positive aspects that initiative participants derive from gaining exposure to that language. This was done by identifying major themes in the language ideology held by initiative participants and inspecting those themes. The following subsection briefly delineates three major themes that emerged from the analysis of interviews.

Primary Themes Derived from Qualitative Data

Because this is research for, and research with the subjects that seeks to intervene in the process of language shift, it is emic in nature and puts at the forefront the spontaneous creation of local knowledge that occurs between research participants. Because this knowl- edge pertains to internalized social boundaries that have contributed to a language shift, it would be most

appropriate to examine the knowledge by transcending those boundaries, e.g., the constricting hierarchical relationships that tend to frame it in our subconscious.

Politeness and Social Etiquette

In Ishigaki City, social etiquette includes respect for the elderly and the need for clear communication. Because of the breakdown of intergenerational transmission of Yaeyaman in the community during the postwar decades, local residents roughly under age 75 at the time of this writing have not had the opportunity to acquire honorific forms of the lan- guage, rendering them what Anderson (2009) describes as rusty speakers and semi-speakers. Although they can understand Yaeyaman to some extent, they rely almost exclusively on SJ to save face and ease communication in their daily lives. Some of the participants in this initiative consider it inappropriate to introduce the Yaeyama language into all areas of daily life, while others try to increase the domains of use, such as in the workplace.

The Present-Day Role of Yaeyaman

Central to the participants' attitudes and practices toward the Yaeyama language is its role in the region and in contemporary society as a whole. Even in social contexts where it was once widely used, local residents of the rusty speaker generation and younger have fewer and fewer opportunities to practice, hear, and be heard in Yaeyaman among their peers. Nevertheless, in every generation, there are those who feel that the Yaeyama lan- guage is an important part of their local culture and identity, and they possess a sense of mission as inheritors of traditional culture. Among members of generations roughly un- der the age of 75 years, the use of Yaeyaman is predominantly ceremonial in nature and is most often heard in the O-Bon festival and in the general address given by the chairperson at community council meetings.

It is also crucial to mention here that some participants in the present revitalization initiative refer to Yaeyaman as hōgen, a Japanese word usually translated into English as "dialect". Although they seem to use it interchangeably with the term sïmamuni and in a positive context, it has been asserted in the literature that the term hōgen/dialect contributes to the crisis of language endangerment and delays revitalization (Fija 2016, pp. 175–76). Because interview data for this research indicated that the participants' definition of hōgen may not be in a one-to-one correspondence with the English term "dialect", it shall not be translated as such here and shall thus be left in its Japanese form.

Acquisition and Usage Issues

As participants in this initiative adapt the MA method of language learning to their respective social contexts, they often encounter challenges related to language acquisition on the one hand, and usage on the other. All participants in the initiative are accustomed to the formal classroom environment for

second language acquisition and are unfamiliar with the informal and decentralized nature of MA. When apprentices want to know the meaning of a vocabulary word or expression, they rely on the master to translate it into the dominant language, SJ. This is thought to negatively affect the learning process in two ways. First, participants resort to interpreting the language they are supposed to be practicing with a meta-awareness that is removed from active communication. They are no longer speaking Yaeyaman but speaking about Yaeyaman. Second, the master must translate directly—an unnatural act when using Yaeyaman for communication. Even if they enjoy doing this, it does not serve the original purpose of getting everyone accustomed to speaking Yaeyaman.

BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCES OF THE MASTER-APPRENTICE INITIATIVE PARTICIPANTS

This section introduces the format of the MA initiative as documented during the two-year period of December 2019 to December 2021. During the course of the long nego- tiation process with prospective masters following the initial 2019 workshop, the Ishigaki MA took the form of two teams consisting of multiple apprentices learning from one mas- ter simultaneously in sessions. Upon examining the Session dates row in Table 1 below, one can see how the regularity of sessions was heavily influenced by the impact of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 on the relatively small community beginning in March 2020 and by the subsequent request to refrain from spending time outside the house, issued by the central government. It must be noted that both masters were over the age of 89 at the time of data collection, and therefore considered at-risk persons. Another distinctive feature of the Ishigaki MA is the presence of participants who serve as "coordinators" to each team. In the case of Team Ishanagira, they provided the meeting space, and in the case of Team Arakaa, they organized MA session content and kept track of progress. All such partici- pants served as facilitators and encouraged active communication between masters and ap- prentices. They can be identified as members of the rusty speaker generation, who, despite possessing near-native productive capabilities, lack the full range of honorific expressions characteristic of a traditional speaker2. Furthermore, due to time and resource constraints, only three participants in each team were subject to interview, including both masters.

Team Arakaa

In March 2020, the apprentices and the coordinator set a target to compete in the lyri- cal authorship section of the annual Tubaraama song competition that year. Due to the in- fluence of COVID-19, however, the competition was canceled, and that goal was stymied. In the face of looming social restrictions on meeting up, they formed a group on the so- cial media application LINE and

started practicing Yaeyaman on a regular basis, primarily through exchange of texts. This is seen to have become a forum for linguistic interdepen- dence and translanguaging. Lewis et al. (2012) provide an in-depth discussion of these concepts, which refer specifically to the alternation between speech varieties in contexts of language acquisition. Hammine (2019) also highlights translanguaging as a prominent feature of community multilingualism among traditional speakers in Ishigaki City.

Table 1. MA team formation and sessions recorded.

	Team *Arakaa*	Team *Ishanagira*
Masters	1f, participant F	1m, participant G
Apprentices	2f, participants K, B	3 (1f, participant L) (2m, participants A, C)
Coordinators	1f, participant D	1 to 3, depending upon session
Date initiated	8 December 2019	4 July 2020
Session dates	8 December 2019 10 February 2020 24 February 2020 11 February 2021 21 March 2021 28 November 2021 Without master: 23 March 2020 21 November 2020 4 December 2021	4 July 2020 15 August 2020 12 September 2020 17 October 2020 21 November 2020 12 February 2021 27 November 2021 Without master: 20 March 2021 4 December 2021

Traditional Speaker Participant F (Born 1924)

Participant F is possessed of ten decades of life experience in pre- and post-war Japan and Taiwan, experience as a schoolteacher, postal worker and chair of her community coun- cil, and a deep appreciation of tradition and the written word. She credits her grandfather, her legal guardian (following the early death of her parents) and a polymath knowledge- able in many fields, as a major inspiration. As master of Team Arakaa and an author in her own right, she has been an inexhaustible well of cultural knowledge to the apprentices, but stresses time and time again that she is not a "teacher" of Yaeyaman.

> (1) I know it sounds strange for me to say, 'I'll teach you,' but it is also inappropriate for me to say, 'I'll impart [some knowledge] on you, so come on over.' If someone says, 'I would like you to do that,' however, I will be happy to impart [what I know] (3 July 2020).

Because Ryukyuan languages are not a formal component of the Japanese education sys- tem in Okinawa, and because the Ishigaki MA is a volunteer-based initiative, there is no particular sense of obligation on the part of the masters to conduct the sessions in a certain way or with any certain frequency. F has, in fact, been called on to teach Yaeyaman in the past,

however. She related a number of difficulties that arose from attempting to teach in a classroom-style setting that have implications for Ryukyuan language education as a whole:

> (2) When [name withheld] was the chair of the youth association, he said, 'I want to keep sïmamuni alive,' so several [young local learners] got together at the youth association and I went as a lecturer several times. And I said, 'Well, say this, this, and this,' and when they did, the flow, intonation, and stress were totally different. I asked, 'Where are you all from? That's like how people from other prefectures [pronounce] it' [. . .] because even if you [teach the younger generations something] and have them remember it, when they get home there is no one to use it, no one to listen to, no one to speak with, and the words just fade away. So, [the learner trying to] do it by ear alone will probably have forgotten it the next time they come back, unless they have written it down. As you say, I think the original meaning of words is to be learned naturally, as we go through our daily lives (3 July 2020).

F's recounting of her past experiences and observations delineates the limitations of the tra- ditional hōgen kōza "dialect class" model for revitalization and its tendency to relegate lan- guage learning to specific times and places within periods that are often too infrequent to facilitate thorough language acquisition. I emphasized to her that the relationships within MA are not necessarily "teacher–student", and that the focus need not be exclusively on the language itself, but rather some relevant activity that all members can share in. However, the combined situation of F's advanced age and the social limitations of the global pan- demic meant that virtually all in-person MA sessions were held within a well-ventilated room of her own home.

When asked about what role she perceived the future of Yaeyaman to hold, F used an analogy of holiday decorations that are unique to Ishigaki Island, passed down through the generations since ancient times. Commercial vendors attempt to standardize these decorations so that they may be sold anywhere, but "it is a shame that [locals] don't have the intelligence to resist it, and that [they] just accept it and go along with it". Discussing methods for learning Yaeyaman, she lamented that it is not a matter of formal education that takes place in a classroom. It is not something for the notebook or the blackboard, but an oral tradition handed down from generation to generation, from mouths to ears. F expressed the hope that a "culture of language and lifestyle" could be preserved as it was but also noted that without a "matching up" of speaker and listener, communication of such knowledge is not properly achieved.

In 2021, I met with F to provide an informal progress report and brought a handful of considerations to the discussion which had been generated in the previous year's ses- sions. These included the subject of liberating language learning from confined spaces and times, and of differentiating between honorific and non-honorific forms. At this stage, F summarized the importance of learning Yaeyaman in the following:

> (3) Learn from the past3: Asking about the past to learn about the present. I believe that people who were born and raised on the island, who value their ancestors, and who want to carry on the language and lifestyle used by their ancestors, are the ones who want most to receive the inheritance of sïmamuni (8 February 2021).

At the heart of the expression at the start of (3) above is the concept that one can learn about the past and apply that knowledge to the present in some way. It is clear that F highly val- ues the uniqueness of Yaeyaman culture and is ready to impart her knowledge on anyone who is ready to inherit those traditions. However, she also recognizes the challenges of reconnecting local participants with this knowledge, the intergenerational transmission of which has already been interrupted. To overcome this, she recommends a "matching up" of the provider and receiver of knowledge, which she delineates as a closer relationship including more regular, day-to-day interaction.

Passive Native Speaker Participant D (Born 1960)

Participant D did not attend the 2019 briefing and workshop but was invited directly by master F the following day. This indicates that she already had a relationship with F to converse using Yaeyaman. In her childhood, D lived in a household of nine, together with her grandparents, parents, and siblings, and heard the older generation's Yaeyaman on a regular basis. It was during her elementary school years that the distinction between Japanese and Yaeyaman became apparent. After graduating from high school, she moved to Tokyo for further education and employment, but after six years returned home, re- portedly, in frustration. D self-identifies as someone with native-level comprehension, but less-than-native production skills, in that she cannot say just anything. In other words, there are limits to what she can express; there is a rupture between her daily life and her ability to express it in sïmamuni. As a passive native speaker with more conversational skills than the two apprentices, D plays the role of team coordinator, in charge of schedul- ing and goal setting.

Early on in the program, D shed light on the negative perception associated with Yaeyaman with regard to politeness and social etiquette. She spoke of local community members who, while possessing speaking skills, chose not to use them openly when in the presence of those speaking Japanese [planning meeting, 23 March 2020]4. She also showed hesitance regarding Yaeyaman in expressing that, had she not known of F's Yaeya- man ability, she would think that it might be rude to speak in hōgen since F has "such fluent Japanese" [interview, 6 July 2020].

What seems to have been particularly influential on D's perception of Yaeyaman was her mother's pride in having been born and raised in Arakawa, with its rich heritage traditions, despite simultaneously being embarrassed to interact with her in Yaeyaman. During the annual harvest festival of Puurï (SJ: hōnensai), a song and dance arrangement is performed by local women in front

of the Maitsuba-On shrine known as the zai. According to D, beginning in the late 1980s and continuing through the 1990s, the local women who were able to sing and dance the zai aged out of the role, and she began to notice the gradual loss of Yaeyaman within that domain. In this way, she became keenly aware of its endangered status from several decades ago. It is because of this that around the year 2000, she eventually began taking action to expose herself to more of the traditional culture.

> (4) So sïmamuni and [traditions] are linked, I guess. It wasn't that I originally just wanted to take care of sïmamuni. I just wanted to take care of the island's performing arts and things that are disappearing here. Anyway, just going to the place where [the elders] were singing [junta and zirabaa] was a very hard thing for me personally, so I tried to go there and just 'learn' or 'listen'. (30 November 2021)

This example illustrates that the loss of language, of intergenerational transmission, can be directly tied to the loss of traditional culture as well. Within the participatory framework of Heron and Reason (1997), it can be said that D explored propositional and practical knowing in order to address what she perceived as the loss of something valuable in the community. Possessing of this propositional awareness, she was then inspired, in recent years, to engage in new experiences that reaffirm her connection to traditional Yaeyaman culture and language, including participation in the MA initiative. It was through this par- ticipation that she was able to connect with new experiential knowledge which identifies an "accepting", "forgiving", or "compassionate" quality to Yaeyaman that is not so readily employed in Japanese discourse.

> (5) I mean, [words that] open up your heart . . . your own words, and sïmamuni, no less [. . .] Words that open your heart, aren't they? Like 'forgiving words' [. . .] In Japanese, we speak politely so that the other person can understand, but in sïmamuni, I feel that we speak from our hearts. After all, it's not something that everyone can use right away (6 July 2020).

The accepting and forgiving quality that Yaeyaman discourse imparts upon the participants may also be directly linked to the prerequisites of safe space creation, particularly 'suspension of judgement' and 'qualities of listening'. The relevant common thread through these two prerequisites is the willingness to put aside for a time the etiquette required within Japanese discourse and be fully present to the emotional aspects of the experience (Kisfalvi and Oliver 2015). D further embodied these safe space prerequisites when inter- acting with the present author in sessions. Hearing a non-native speaker carefully produce an utterance in Yaeyaman, she allowed herself to put aside the ideas of "rudeness" and "incorrectness", and directly personify (perhaps unconsciously) the accepting quality of Yaeyaman she had previously described.

> (6) When I saw you, I felt it was not so rude, after all, for you to try your best to speak sïmamuni like this. There are times when what you say is incorrect, right? But it's not that I want to point it out, just that it's apparent to me that you try your best to choose the right words to convey your message. So, I realized it's not so rude after all, and I began to toss around [sïmamuni] here and there, even if just isolated words. (29 January 2021)

Acknowledgement of a sympathetic quality to Yaeyaman language communication was, as we will see, not limited to D's observations. Indeed, the suspension of judgement she demonstrated appears in both the in-person and online interaction for both teams.

Passive Native Speaker Participant B (Born 1961)

Participant B spent a great deal of time with her four grandparents during childhood, and although she could understand the entirety of the Yaeyaman used around her, she avoided spontaneous use in front of adults because hers was what she herself termed jabure sïmamuni [broken Yaeyaman], lacking in honorifics. Her entire family including her hus- band was born and raised in Arakawa. Like participant D, B left the island as a student, residing on the mainland for several years before returning to Ishigaki in her mid-twenties.

> (7) As I grew older, the people around me became less and less talkative, so I thought it would be nice if I could speak sïmamuni, and since I have been in an environment where I hear [. . .] sïmamuni [in traditional events, etc.], I thought, 'Well, then!' I went to the first [workshop] at the civic center, and that made me more conscious. I need to be able to speak! I need to use it!' After that, my awareness changed a little (6 July 2020).

It can be seen that the apprentices felt some sense of crisis when they compared the decline of Yaeyaman between their childhood and now. B also mentioned an episode in which she experienced a particular sense of discomfort in the environment where Yaeyaman is used, as follows:

> (8) A lot of Okinawan hōgen has come into Ishigaki, gets mixed up [with Yaeyaman], and it gives the illusion, or misconception, that the speech of Okinawa Island is the original, [. . .] I was concerned about that, too. I hope that by reviewing sïmamuni and using it more consciously, we can make a 'distinction' or teach [others] about what Okinawan and Yaeyaman are originally like (6 July 2020).

Prior research has dealt with the notions of linguistic purism and authenticity in heritage language communities (Florey 2004), which may discourage some participants from speak- ing the language and may thus need to be broached with great caution (Olko and Sallabank 2020). In particular, Langer and Nesse (2012, p. 621) point out that for any particular ex- ample of

puristic activity, only one set of "corrupting" influences is targeted. If we are to look at B's utterance with a linguistic purism lens, we can see that the perceived "Ok- inawan" elements become the object of verbal hygiene. In B's contribution, as elsewhere among participants in the initiative, we observe the need to assert the distinct linguistic and cultural identity of Yaeyama. In a geopolitical context in which multiple varieties of Ryukyuan came into direct contact in small island communities such as those found in the Yaeyama region, it can be said that the question of what is authentically Yaeyaman is relevant to many promoters of RLS.

Additionally, D noted that B had acquired vocabulary by actively posting in the team's LINE group on a daily basis, and by exchanging information with other members of the team about daily events and issues at home. She was praised as the participant whose conversational skills improved the most among the Team Arakaa members over the two years.

Team Ishanagira

At the time of the meeting with the researcher in March 2020, there were several ideas for activities such as basket weaving and gēto bōru (a low-impact sport resembling croquet that is popular with the elderly), but all of them were considered unsustainable, and there- fore initiation of the team was put on hold. As a result of discussion with the prospective master, it was decided that it would be more sustainable to hold meetings on a monthly ba- sis over alcoholic drinks and appetizers. A dedicated LINE group was also formed at this time, in which the present author is also a member and provides consultation on grammar and usage. This has also become an active forum for translanguaging free of concern for lexical gaps, errors, and honorific speech.

Traditional Speaker Participant G (Born 1932)

Participant G is the master of Team Ishanagira, a traditional speaker born during the pre-war period, and patriarch to a large extended family in which he is a father, grandfa- ther, and great-grandfather. G has a reputation in his community as someone who openly opposed the assimilative hyōjungo reikō undō [campaign to promote the use of Standard Japanese] language policies of the government, which permeated daily life from the time of his youth and feels more comfortable using Yaeyaman than Japanese. His early child- hood was spent in a monolingual Yaeyaman home environment, which he reports contin- ued until his third grade of elementary school, when he began to acquire and use Japanese regularly. To this day, his Japanese language ability is jokingly called into question by other community members. When queried about the source of this rumor, he recounted the following:

> (9) Regarding hyōjungo reikō undō, huh? Because I spoke sïmamuni, my teacher always rapped me across the head with his knuckles [. . .] The dialect tag? That happened to the previous generation. As for me, my teacher said, 'You spoke in dialect! Sit in seiza [with legs folded under body] until the end of class!' [laughing] School was militaristic in those

days. That's why, wherever I go now, I speak sïmamuni. I do understand Japanese, but sïmamuni is easier to speak (5 December 2021).

G was initially approached about the MA initiative via telephone in December 2019 but declined to participate at that time. It was only several months later, when MH and I were able to visit Ishigaki, that G was approached in person and an introductory gathering was held in which he was able to gain a greater understanding of the nature, motivations, and goals of the initiative from the (at that time, prospective) apprentices.

Through interview and session observation, a recurring theme in G's contributions is his lament of the loss of a certain richness of expression in Yaeyaman. This theme is characterized mainly by his reaction to hearing Yaeyaman that lacks honorifics on the one hand, and that which is insufficiently "compassionate" on the other. When asked what he most wishes to impart upon the apprentices, G did not hesitate to raise these issues.

(10) Young people these days, they don't know to distinguish between elder and younger [in their Yaeyaman] [. . .] They can't use honorifics, right? I want to tell them, 'Respect your elders, and speak properly!' (12 February 2021)

Following this, G was informed of the process by which younger members of the local community were often scolded for using Yaeyaman without honorifics and called "rude" or "cocky" by their elders. These community members were merely mimicking the lan- guage that they heard, at first unaware that the register used between their elders was inappropriate for themselves. This is a major hindrance to language reclamation experi- enced by the semi-speaker and rusty speaker generations during the formative years of their youth. G understood this process to mean that, "They were shocked into not speaking it" and relented his insistent view in the following statement.

(11) Putting aside 'elder and younger', they should learn [sïmamuni] first [. . .] Isn't it better to just say 'Yeah, that's right' [in casual speech]? At first, make sïmamuni your own, to about 80%, then picking up honorifics later will be easy. (12 February 2021)

G is heard praising the participants, but he is also quick to correct them when Japanese lexical items for which there is a Yaeyaman equivalent come up. Furthermore, while G has adopted a certain leniency toward his apprentices' struggles with honorifics, he ac- tively encourages them to use expressions that convey sympathy and gratitude. What follows are two contrasting examples, provided without elicitation during interview.

(12a) Pima turaree kiraridaa? Waa maifunaa saa. Ukinaa kara kanzi pima sitii, maifunaa doo. [You got some time-off and came here [on your own]? How gracious of you! So gracious to use your time-off [to come here] from Okinawa.]

(12b) ja, waa kiraridaa? icu du kiidaa? [Hey, you came here [on your own]? When did you come?]

G prompts us to guess which of these sounds more sympathetic. He laments further that there is no flavor in the speech of young people doing traditional performance art. The fla- vor, or richness that G speaks of, is connected to the warmth and consideration contained in his "preferred" example. It can also be described as longer, wordier, and more com- plex. We see, therefore, that warmth and consideration can be conveyed in more complex utterances, even if they contain no honorifics. Additionally, this account serves as another example of language loss negatively impacting traditional culture. G further echoed F's quote of the importance of learning from the past, displayed in (12) below, and voiced his desire for the apprentices to find commonalities across different eras.

(13) 'One learns something new by knowing something old' [. . .] When you know the old, as for the new, you can remember it, you can study it. (12 February 2021)

Team Ishanagira faces the same issues hampering acquisition as other groups within and without the present MA initiative—the relegation of learning to a specific time and place, and the acquisition of honorifics. What distinguishes this team, however, is a master who promotes compassionate, heartfelt interaction above what is prescriptively "polite" in the language. His own learning process in the initiative is serving to relax one of the strict social constructs which, until now, have made the acquisition of Yaeyaman a traumatic experience for many.

New Speaker Participant A (Born 1956)

Participant A's family is of Okinawan descent, and he reports the ability to understand the Okinawan language to some degree. He first came upon an opportunity to interact with elderly native speakers of Yaeyaman after age 50, upon joining his local community council. He reported that he gained a sense of mission at this time, that he "must be able to speak hōgen". However, A's hōgen strongly resembles the Okinawan language in its morphology, and at the start of the initiative, he was apparently not able to distinguish Yaeyaman from Okinawan forms. The following interaction in (14) between the two of us provides an example of his language.

(14a) A: If I say simamuni naratoo siga [I am learning Yaeyaman, but . . .] would that be Okinawan?

(14b) MT: In Yaeyaman, we would say sïmamuni narai sunga [I am learning Yaeyaman, but . . .]

(14c) A: Yes, it would be good [for me] to learn those Yaeyaman suffixes (3 December 2021).

Presented with this self-imposed challenge, A is keenly aware of the effort required to fully internalize the grammar and vocabulary of a minority heritage language vis-à-vis the dom- inant Ryukyuan heritage language of Okinawan. He noted that if the team is not conscious of their relationship and daily connection, MA will become a simple "sïmamuni meeting" and will have little relevance to the participants' daily lives, which could negatively impact sustainability. Team Ishanagira then followed the example of their sister team and began an online chat group in LINE in April 2021 (without the master). One positive takeaway from the experience of text-based communication includes the fact that everything posted remains in the chat, allowing all members to track their progress. However, A noted that it is more difficult to acquire the less explicit aspects of the language in this way, such as pitch, intonation, and prosody (what are known in descriptive studies as 'suprasegmental' features).

Concerning the ideological facet of revitalization, A provided a nuanced answer which has implications for both the social etiquette theme and present-day role theme within the language ideology. When asked how far toward official status A would like to take Yaeya- man, he responded as follows:

> (15) There must be social rules and regulations, there are many situations where it will not work if you do things based on your own lifestyle, so you have to adapt. If you use sïmamuni for everything, it may be considered rude. I don't think it would be a problem if everyone were to use sïmamuni, but that's not going to happen, is it? [. . .] Sïmamuni is a good way of communicating with the local community, like, a way of connecting hearts and minds [. . .] I think there is something good about being able to share feelings with each other using sïmamuni, so [how about] using each [variety, SJ and Yaeyaman] based on the situation? In city hall, I think it would be great to create an atmosphere where employees can talk to each other in [. . .] at least broken sïmamuni, just not in front of the visitors (3 July 2020).

In this passage, we can see at once the restriction of domain first described in Miyara (1995), and an echoing of the experiences of both D and G with regard to a kind of sharing in sympathy and an opening of the heart. When questioned about the meaning of this, he ex- pressed a connection with honorifics and how their lack results in an affront to established social conventions between full speakers. Participant A described a bottleneck occurring in MA sessions and daily interaction wherein apprentices trying to interact with the mas- ter either run out of things to say or fall into the habit of attempting to directly translate everything. I advised him on the benefits of starting with greetings and fixed expressions.

New Speaker Participant C (Born 1985)

Participant C was born into a family with roots in Itoman, Okinawa on his mother's side, and Ishigaki on his father's. For this reason, the language of the

home was SJ. During the formative years, he was active in his district's youth club and professed some compre- hension of both the Okinawa and Yaeyama languages. This comprehension would steadily decrease from 2003 onward, when he moved to the Kanto region to go to university. C returned to Ishigaki in 2015, and has chaired both his district's youth club and citywide Council of Ishigaki Youth Clubs.

Through his current work with the municipal board of education, he reports extensive contact with knowledge related to the history of Yaeyama, both tangible (through excava- tion of archeological sites) and intangible (through interviews with elderly survivors of wartime Yaeyama). These experiences, including his integral role in the youth club, can be viewed as reinforcing a strong sense of responsibility he feels toward the traditional culture of Ishigaki. The extent of the necessity he feels for Yaeyaman language commu- nicative ability and the dedication he holds to the cause of revitalization can be easily read from the following extract.

(16) I'm looking at Okinawa Island and other places, and I think the most important thing is to preserve the hōgen as culture [. . .] Hōgen is our culture. I don't want to lose it. If someone doesn't preserve it, it won't remain. I'm grateful that you are doing this [MA initiative], but isn't it sad that we who were born and raised here in Ishigaki can't speak it? Don't you hate to see it disappear? It's like losing another part of [our] identity [. . .] It's going to take a very long time, but I hope to increase the number of people who can speak it by studying and learning it properly. For example, when I am 60 or 70 years old, I would like to see people in their 20s and 30s, like us now, be able to hold Angamaa properly in hōgen, and I would like to preserve the fact that people speak in it (3 July 2020).

C entered the MA initiative in July 2020 with a very limited understanding of the parts of Yaeyaman grammar which are significantly different from his mother tongue variety of SJ and did not use Yaeyaman outside of his activities with the local youth club. Nevertheless, since that time he shows a genuine effort to immerse himself in the language whether interacting with me or his MA counterparts, in person or in the online context. Similar to participant A, he has asked for guidance on how best to utilize the grammar element within the 2003 dictionary by Miyagi Shin'yū, and in the past has expressed interest in a supplementary grammar lesson. He is particularly concerned with his acquisition of honorifics, owing to his increased contact with the very elderly in his community. The following extract shows this, and factoring in master G's assertion that the Yaeyaman of the youngest generation "has no flavor", we begin to get an idea of the deficiency that some community members perceive regarding the way that language is currently used in the traditional festivals of the community.

(17) At work, [. . .] I have conversations with many [elderly people], but [. . .] sometimes I can't understand them [. . .] But if I'm going

> to use it, I want to learn the proper honorifics. I don't want to learn that crass hōgen from Angamaa, I want to learn the more beautiful kind (3 July 2020).

Here, C places a strong value judgement on Yaeyaman lacking honorifics, in contrast to the appealing quality of language that contains them. It is important to note here that G has permitted C to use the casual register of Yaeyaman with him during this initiative, since he acknowledges that it takes considerable time and dedication to fully acquire honorifics. This demonstrates a softening of the politeness rules and social etiquette necessary for intergenerational communication and works toward the fostering of a safe space, which is also a new domain in which to use Yaeyaman.

Toward the end of the data collection period, C reported new activity in using Yaeya- man with his peers, cementing the language as a we-code that may be employed in a context where one is at low risk for judgement and criticism. With regard to acquisition and us- age, it seems that he is taking full advantage of the opportunity to build his fluency while engaging in face-to-face interaction, if not acquiring new expressions.

> (18) [I'm now] using sïmamuni with my friends from Miyara.6 It's not [MA], but we [can still practice] as a group of young people who are at low risk of infection [from COVID-19]. Rather than learning new expressions, we get ourselves accustomed to expressions we are already somewhat familiar with. This is also because none of us are great at typing [sïmamuni] in LINE [laughing] (3 December 2021).

Given the above input from participant C, we can say that the learning process for him is a deeply personal matter. Yaeyaman is an inextricable part of his cultural identity as a man born and raised in Ishigaki and must be inherited and bequeathed as such. The effect of MA on this participant can be summarized as follows: It is not about frequency of use, possibility of use, or being perfect, but about making the most out of the resources at one's disposal. C is actively traversing the 'spoken/written' and 'polite/crass' domains of Yaeyaman in order to learn collaboratively and methodically. For him, it is not simply about speaking Yaeyaman but about being jaima-pïtu 'Yaeyaman'. As the youngest member of the initiative, he embodies these qualities and is poised to become a representative of this cultural identity through language reclamation.

CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The present article introduced three themes in the language ideological negotiations of six individuals engaged in the reclamation of a Ryukyuan heritage language in Ishigaki City, Okinawa. It introduced these themes of 'politeness/social etiquette', the 'present-day role of Yaeyaman', and

'acquisition/usage issues' through the qualitative analysis of per- sonal interview data collected between July 2020 and December 2021. It revealed that there is something deeply personal and interpersonal about Yaeyaman, a kind of unfurling of compassion and scorn, comfort, and discomfort that is inaccessible with Standard Japanese.

Social pressures have both driven the participants to speak Yaeyaman and impeded them from doing so. There are what are perceived as valid domains of use it in public, and those which are not valid. For participant D, the distinction is nebulous, and she is unafraid to use it among total strangers. Conversely, participant A seemed more eager to maintain a safe space for Yaeyaman in which we can avoid judgement and miscommuni- cation. Whether it is acceptable to use Yaeyaman with people one meets for the first time, or not, seems a key question for not only 'the safe space' and the 'domain of use' for Yaeya- man, but for language reclamation and decolonization of the mind itself. The two elderly masters of this fledgling, volunteer-based Master Apprentice initiative did not, through- out their long lives, give in to the social tide of using SJ everywhere all the time. By simply being who they are, they serve as a model for reclamation to the apprentices, and to the Yaeyaman-speaking community at large.

While the spread of COVID-19 arguably hampered the original vision for this MA initiative begun in December 2019, participants in both teams praised the benefits of prac- ticing via online social media. It allowed participants to track progress, study the subtler points of the grammar, and most importantly, it allowed them to translanguage. The safe space that is the LINE chat group precludes any criticism one would face in other domains, whether he or she omits honorifics or mixes elements of Okinawan and Japanese origin. Linguistic interdependence and translanguaging in this way have allowed participants to produce utterances of considerable length, fill in gaps in knowledge, and build confidence.

Future issues to address include the development of a grammar resource that is practi- cal and accessible to laypeople, as well as the fostering of attitudes that promote the expan- sion of linguistic domains. This may best take the form of periodic community workshops that address the hurdles faced by new speakers, as described in this work. Above all else, I would like to emphasize here the compassion and understanding required of the native speaker and rusty speaker generation toward new speakers, the bravery required to flex and accentuate one's identity by speaking Yaeyaman, and the importance of getting accus- tomed to speaking from the heart.

REFERENCES

1. Anderson, Mark R. 2009. Emergent Language Shift in Okinawa. Sydney: University of Sydney. Anderson, Mark, ed. 2014. Language Crisis in the Ryukyus. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars. Blommaert, Jan. 1999. Language Ideological Debates. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

2. Cameron, Deborah. 1995. Verbal Hygiene. London: Routledge.
3. Costa, James. 2016. Revitalising Language in Provence: A Critical Approach. Revitalising Language in Provence: A Critical Approach. Chich-
4. ester: Wiley Blackwell.
5. Dauenhauer, Nora Marks, and Richard Dauenhauer. 1998. Technical, emotional, and ideological issues in reversing language shift:
6. Examples from Southeast Alaska. In Endangered Languages Language Loss and Community Response. Edited by Lenore A. Grenoble
7. and Lindsay J. Whaley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 57–98.
8. Fija, Byron. 2016. Ucinaaguci (Okinawa-go) wo rekisi-ninsiki de fukkō saseru kokoromi-Kamurī (Uēruzu)-go, Katarūnya-go, Hawai-
9. go fukkō no Minamoto, syūkyōryoku ni kawaru tikara. In Minority Language Revitalization: Contemporary Approaches. Edited by
10. John C. Maher and Takao Katsuragi. Tokyo: Sangensha, pp. 174–99.
11. Fishman, Joshua A. 1991. Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages. Philadel-
12. phia: Multilingual Matters.
13. Florey, Margaret. 2004. Countering Purism: Confronting the Emergence of New Varieties in a Training Program for Community
14. Language Workers. Language Documentation and Description 2: 9–27.
15. Hammine, Madoka. 2019. Our way of multilingualism: Translanguaging to break a chain of colonialism. In Embracing Multilingualism
16. Across Educational Contexts. Edited by Corinne A. Seals and Vincent Ieni Olsen-Reeder. Victoria: Victoria University Press,
17. pp. 101–25.
18. Heinrich, Patrick, Shinshō Miyara, and Michinori Shimoji, eds. 2015. Handbook of the Ryukyuan Languages: History, Structure, and Use.
19. Handbooks of Japanese Language and Linguistics. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, vol. 11.
20. Heron, John, and Peter Reason. 1997. A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm. Qualitative Inquiry 3: 274–94. [CrossRef]
21. Hinton, Leanne, Leena Marjatta Huss, and Gerald Roche. 2018. The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization, 1st ed. London:
22. Routledge. [CrossRef]
23. Hornsby, Michael. 2017. Finding an Ideological Niche for New Speakers in a Minoritised Language Community. Language, Culture
24. and Curriculum 30: 91–104. [CrossRef]
25. Jones, Mari C., and Ishtla Singh. 2005. Exploring Language Change. London and New York: Routledge.
26. Kapoor, Dip, and Steven Jordan, eds. 2009. Education, Participatory Action Research, and Social Change: International Perspectives. New
27. York: Palgrave Macmillan.
28. Kisfalvi, Veronika, and David Oliver. 2015. Creating and Maintaining a Safe Space in Experiential Learning. Journal of Management
29. Education 39: 713–40. [CrossRef]
30. Kroskrity, Paul V. 2009. Language Renewal as Sites of Language Ideological Struggle: The Need for "Ideological Clarification". In In-
31. digenous Language Revitalization: Encouragement, Guidance & Lessons Learned. Edited by Jon Reyhner and Louise Lockard. Flagstaff:
32. Northern Arizona University, pp. 71–83.
33. Langer, Nils, and Agnete Nesse. 2012. Linguistic Purism. In The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics, 1st ed. Edited by Juan Manuel

34. Hernández-Campoy and Juan Camilo Conde-Silvestre. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 607–25. [CrossRef]
35. Lewis, Gwyn, Bryn Jones, and Colin Baker. 2012. Translanguaging: Origins and development from school to street and beyond.
36. Educational Research and Evaluation 18: 641–54. [CrossRef]
37. Miyara, Shinshō. 1995. Minami ryūkyū Yaeyama isigaki hōgen no bunpō [A Grammar of Ishigaki Dialect of Yaeyama, Southern Ryukyu]. Tokyo:
38. Kuroshio Publishing.
39. Morohashi, Tetsuji. 1982. Kōshi Rōshi Shaka “Sansei Kaidan”. Kōdansha Gakujutsu Bunko. Tōkyō: Kōdansha.
40. Olko, Justyna, and Julia Sallabank, eds. 2020. Revitalizing Endangered Languages: A Practical Guide. Cambridge and New York: Cam-
41. bridge University Press.
42. Shandler, Jeffrey. 2004. Postvernacular Yiddish: Language as a performance art. The Drama Review 48: 19–43. [CrossRef]
43. Shimoji, Michinori. 2017. A Grammar of Irabu: A Southern Ryukyuan Language. Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press.