

A Role of Mother Tongue

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In my presentation, I will talk about my personal experience of language revitalization in English and in my language.

My name is Yukie Matsumura. I'm 61 years old. I spoke only *Hyoomuni*, a dialect of Okinoerabu-Ryukyuan until I was five years old. *Hyoomuni* is my mother tongue. I started speaking Japanese when I entered an elementary school. I spoke it easily without any trouble. I kept speaking Japanese and *Hyoomuni* every day until I left the island. I moved to the mainland when I was eighteen (1975). Since then I was no one who spoke *Hyoomuni*.

I returned to my island at the age of fifty (2007). I was sad that I couldn't speak *Hyoomuni* very well. So I started communicating with the elderly in my village and continued to do so up until now. We always spoke *Hyoomuni*. We enjoyed local songs and dances too. When I read folklores in *Hyoomuni*, they were very amused and they look very happy about it. It was the first time for me to write and read in *Hyoomuni*, so it was fun for me too. Gradually, my activities extended to the other communities. It was a training to talk in *Hyoomuni* in front of a large audience.

In 2012, NINJAL came to Okinoerabu island. At the time, I realized that my activities would lead to language revitalization. Next year, I started fieldwork with Akiko Tokunaga. In 2016, I collaborated with Masa Yamada's research team to create a picture book. It is a very useful textbook for self-learning. When I followed the fieldwork with Masa's team, I thought about the success of language revival of Okinoerabu island. Last year, I participated in the international conference held the University of Hawai'i with them (ICLDC5). At that time, we shared an ambition to revitalize our language. The number of friends who share the ambition increased rapidly in a year. There are four families who are working in three generations now. They are our hope.

I'm a nurse. I'm going to start a new study. My research theme is a relationship between psychotherapy and mother tongue. I now think I returned to my home island to complete my psychotherapy. When I was six years old, I was in an accident and lost my voice. Since then it became difficult to communicate in words. Now I rebuilt my life by reviving my mother tongue. While I continued to have fun in order to speak *Hyoomuni*

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well, I completed my treatment without medical doctors. Through this experience, I think that mother tongue has a very important role. I thank to my mother tongue, thank to my land, and thank to my ancestors. I wish to give a special thanks to the linguists.