

Conservative and innovative behaviour by female speakers in a multilingual Micronesian society*

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Abstract

The focus of this article is the supposed ‘Gender Paradox’, proposed by Labov (1990, 2001), that women are both sometimes conservative and sometimes innovative in terms of linguistic variation and change. Here we explore the paradox from two perspectives: we both investigate its applicability to multilingual as opposed to multidialectal communities as well as question whether the paradox is methodological or real.

Although much sociolinguistic research on the paradox has been on *macro* studies of men vs. women in monolingual multidialectal communities, this paper presents quantitative analyses supplemented by in-depth ethnographic observation and data collection in communities of practice in a *multilingual* Japanese-Palauan community of the Western Pacific. What is more, and perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the ‘conservatism’ and ‘innovation’ of women in the community under scrutiny is represented by the use of the very same language –Japanese. For older Japanese Palauan women, the greater use of Japanese represents adherence to their heritage language. Among younger Japanese-Palauan women (most of whom are bilingual in Palauan and *English*), however, the use of Japanese represents a change towards a language highly valued in the economy as essential for the promotion of tourism and trade.

Since our results demonstrate that the effects of gender on language behaviour may appear in differences *within* sex groupings, we conclude that the paradox is methodological, rather than real, and is a result of the distilling of gender down to binary male-female categories of analysis, rather than investigating the complexity of gender more qualitatively; ethnographic investigation enables us to identify conservative or innovative linguistic behaviour in the local context as well as which men/women are members of which social groups on the basis of their social role and social practice in the community. Our ethnographic analysis of multilingual data from Palau presented here demonstrates that function as well as form is important in understanding seemingly paradoxical examples of language shift, as well as highlighting the need both for further research on the effects of gender in multilingual communities and the combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis in studies of language change.

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Introduction

Sex/gender is the social variable that has probably initiated the most prolific research activity, the most charged debate and the most widespread interest in sociolinguistics over the past four decades (see Labov 1972, 1990, 2001, Nichols 1979, 1983, Eckert 1990, 2000, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999, Cheshire 2001, Holmes and Meyerhoff, forthcoming). In the study of language change, the most prominent research questions have focussed upon an apparent paradox in gendered linguistic behaviour – the very consistent finding, across many speech communities, many languages and in many different studies that women, in comparison to men, sometimes demonstrate very conservative linguistic behaviour, yet sometimes are the leaders of widespread linguistic innovation. The evidence for the paradox comes from some of the largest, most well-respected, and most well-cited social dialectological investigations of the speech community. Its near-universality has led many researchers, including Labov, the pioneer of modern sociolinguistic dialectology, to search for answers to the paradox.

Very few studies of the conservative/innovative pattern, however, have explored multilingual communities. It is not always clear, therefore, in what form it would appear, if at all, in multilingual communities. One aim of the present study is to highlight an apparent example of the paradox, by examining language shift in the Republic of Palau in the Western Pacific. We focus our analysis on a Japanese-Palauan returnee community, whose first-generation was born and raised in Palau, but was forcibly expatriated from Palau to Japan after World War II and who had come back to Palau, after permission was given by the United States, the colonial power in Palau from 1945 to 1994.

We call this an *apparent* example, however, because our investigations suggest that the paradox is more methodological than real. Most of the research on the paradox in social dialectology has been based on macro studies of aggregated groups of men compared with aggregated groups of women. However, there is recent concern that in such large-scale quantitative surveys, where patterns in language data tend to be analysed with no connection to the *practices* of particular communities (i.e., sex is analysed rather than gender), we can at best obtain statistical correlations, but cannot provide explanatory accounts of the patterns we find. We demonstrate below that a thorough and sensitive ethnographic analysis of the community shows that to a large extent the paradox arises from the methodological aggregations of same-sex speakers, rather than from the activities and practices of individuals. Our ethnography helps us to detect distinct clusters of women in the community who behave differently - some conservatively, some innovatively.

We begin by briefly reviewing the gender paradox in greater detail, highlighting studies which have claimed to find it, in both monolingual and multilingual communities. We then draw a brief sketch of Palau, its history of language contact and the emergence of the Japanese-Palauan returnee community that we investigate here. We will then describe the methodology that we have adopted for this study. We will argue that it is necessary to examine not only the difference in language behaviour *between* men and women, but also the variation among men and among women separately. To fail to do so tends to obliterate different gender groups *within* sex groupings. Second, we will argue for the crucial role of an ethnographic approach, both in analysing and in interpreting data, in order to account for the paradox. It can provide the researcher with insightful information on the social practices of individuals in the community, so that he/she can locate which men/women are members of which social groups and identify what language use may represent conservative or innovative behaviour in the local context. The fourth section will present the findings of this study. We demonstrate that women (and men) actively use language in such a way that reflects the sociolinguistic options available to them within their particular communities, given their often complex social histories; specifically we show how some women exhibit linguistically conservative behaviour, while others display innovative behaviour. Importantly, they make choices in the context of a particular communal history, social role, labour market and institutional support structure, rather than as some generalised response to the universal condition of women.

Gender and conservatism/innovation in monolingual and multilingual speech communities

Labov (1990) highlights a paradox in the variable linguistic behaviour of men and women, based on considerable evidence from variationist research, largely in Western societies. His review of research at that time (and subsequently – see Labov 2001: Chapter 8) showed that, on the whole, women led linguistic changes (whether they be changes in formal styles towards prestigious norms, such as standard varieties, or changes in conversational styles towards new non-standard norms)¹, but used more conservative forms of stable linguistic variables. So, for example, while women in New York use a greater proportion of the incoming prestige [r] variant than men (a change from above, used more frequently in formal linguistic styles), and

¹ Evidence suggests that women's dominance of changes from above is more categorical than their dominance of changes from below, but that, nonetheless, it is highly significant and male-led changes of either kind are among a small minority (See Labov 1990, 2001).

fewer non-standard stop variants of (ð), fewer [In] variants of (ING) and fewer multiple negatives (all stable linguistic variables), they also raise (æh) and (oh) with greater frequency than men (both changes from below, used more often in conversational speech) (Labov 1966). As Labov comments 'It is not clear whether these...tendencies can be unified, or how differences between the sexes can account for the observed patterns of linguistic change...though these are valid and reliable findings, they do not fit into any larger framework that accounts for why men and women should be different in this way' (1990: 205-206). So how come women are occasionally highly innovative – regardless of the prestige of the innovation, yet sometimes highly conservative?²

Studies explicitly examining this gender paradox in bilingual or multilingual communities are rather lacking. A small number of studies have examined gender in the context of language shift, and have, similarly, discovered somewhat contradictory behaviours by the sexes (Holmes 1993, 1996). One significant finding is that first generation women in immigrant communities tend to use the ethnic language more than men in their daily communication at home and sustain it longer than men do (e.g., Fishman 1966, 1984, 1991; Holmes and Harlow 1991; Clyne 1982, 1991), while second generation women are apt to adopt a mainstream language more than men (e.g., Gal 1979; Horvath 1985; Clyne 1982, 1991). Various reasons have been put forward for this. It has been claimed that it is normally the role of first generation immigrant women to look after children and the elderly, and educate the children in matters connected to ethnic traditions and values. By contrast, it is the role of first generation men to seek work in the new society, where competence in the mainstream language is required (Holmes 1996: 721). In cases where women work, they tend to work part-time in small family retail businesses, in night bakeries, factories or office cleaning jobs, using their ethnic language with their own ethnic group (Johnston 1972, Aipolo and Holmes 1990, Goldstein 1992, Verivaki 1991). Thus, such differences in their *social roles* and *job environments* may account for the tendency that first generation women tend to use the ethnic language more than men in their daily communication at home and sustain it longer than men do³.

As far as the second generation's language behaviour is concerned, however, it has

² For example, we know of no published study of an Anglophone speech community where women are found to use higher proportions of the [In] variant of (ING) than men.

³ A few rather broad generalisations about men's and women's speech in (post-)colonial communities have also been made. Some research (Saville-Troike 1989, Williams 1988) shows that men adopt a 'new' language faster than women, due to the tendency for men to have initial contact with outsiders in colonial contexts. By contrast, other studies (Troy 1987; Medicine 1987) show that women adopt a 'new' language faster than men, because women 'act as mediators and domestic servants for the colonists' or as 'linguistic and cultural brokers'.

been found that second generation women are more enthusiastic about adopting the ‘new’ language than men, because it appears to be useful for them to *improve their social status*. This is particularly true in cases where the status of women in their traditional community is lower than that of women in the mainstream society (Gal 1979, Aikio 1992). As Holmes (1996: 723) maintains, “the higher status language may be perceived as a means of escaping from the rather restricting confines of the females’ role in the more traditional society”. Thus, second generation women’s enthusiastic adoption of the mainstream language reflects their will to promote or advance their social status in the wider society. The apparent paradox here then is that first generation women are conservative, but second generation women innovative – the former adopt the new language less, the latter adopt it more.

Labov has gone so far as to claim that changes from one language to another (as opposed to from one dialect to another) are conscious shifts and hence ALWAYS changes from above (Labov 1990: 214, 2001: 274). In this sense the paradox does not seem to translate in the same way to multilingual contexts as it does to monolingual, multidialectal speech communities. In his 2001 volume, he converts the gender paradox outlined above by classifying women’s lead of changes from above and conservative patterns of stable variation both as ‘conforming’ and their lead in changes from below as ‘non-conforming’ (Labov 2001: 366-367). This rewriting implies that any group which leads language shift is *always* ‘conforming’. But conforming to what/whom? Surely not to the core networks of local communities losing their languages? In many senses, as we will see in our analysis of data from Palau later, language shift at the local level often appears to be economically-driven *non-conformity*.

In a study on Greek Cypriot and Punjabi communities in Britain, Cheshire and Gardner-Chloros (1998) examine if women use more standard forms than men, taking the use of code-switching as a non-standard variety. They found that Punjabi housewives in Birmingham, for example, never have an opportunity to talk monolingually, and thereby do not have monolingual discourse as part of their linguistic repertoire. They were unable to ascertain, therefore, to what extent code-switching attracted social significance or stigma for them. They conclude by warning that we should be careful in building general principles and patterns that hold across all communities, as non-standardness is likely to carry different social meanings depending on the community as well as the individual. In conducting research on the gender paradox in multilingual communities, therefore, it is important to bear the following in mind during the analytical stages: (a) what social meaning does a particular variety convey *in the local context?* (b) what linguistic repertoire is available for the community as well as the different individuals within that community? and (c) what social life do speakers have? (do women work

outside the community or do they stay at home and have dense networks only within their community?, etc.).

Background to the Republic of Palau⁴

The Palau Islands are an archipelago located in the Western Caroline region of the Pacific, with a population of 17,000 (The Office of Planning and Statistics 1997, Table 1). The Austronesian indigenous language, Palauan, has, as a result of a century of colonial domination by Spain, Germany, Japan and the U.S., come into prolonged contact with a number of non-local languages. Table 1 summarises, in chronological order, the relation between the colonial contact languages and the factors that engendered language contact.

Table 1: Language contact history in Palau

<i>Period</i>	<i>Language in contact</i>	<i>Factors engendering contact</i>	<i>Administration</i>
1885 – 1899 (14 years)	Spanish	Christianity	Spanish administration
1899 – 1914 (15 years)	German	Commercialism Christianity Militarism	German administration
1914 – 1945 (30 years)	Japanese	Imperialism Commercialism Militarism	Japanese administration as Japan’s Mandatory authorised until 1933 by the League of Nations
1945 – 1994 (49 years)	(American) English	Politics Militarism	American administration as the US Trust Territories of Pacific Islands authorised by the United Nations
1994 to Present Day	Mainly English and Japanese	Politics Commercialism Cultural Hegemony	The Republic of Palau (Belau)

Although Palau finally became an independent nation in 1994, the impact of Japan and the U.S. still appears to be of significance for Palau. There seems to be three reasons for this: firstly, the recentness of their colonisation; secondly, prolonged financial support from both countries, upon which the Palauan economy still heavily relies; thirdly, the strategic social and educational reforms that Japan and America embarked upon in Palau during their administrations. More specifically, both countries introduced their own law and school systems using textbooks and teachers from their homelands. During each colonial era, their languages, namely, Japanese and English, were enforced as official languages in Palau. After independence

⁴ See Matsumoto 2001a for more details.

in 1994, English has remained as the official language along with the indigenous language, Palauan, while the teaching of Japanese as a foreign language has been set up in Palauan schools. Such past and present relationships between Palau and the former colonial nations have contributed to the formation of the current multilingualism. Most older Palauans are Palauan-Japanese bilinguals, but since 1945 competence in Japanese has diminished rapidly, leaving many middle-aged Palauans as 'semi-speakers', and the younger islanders, who are bilingual in Palauan and English, as L2 learners. The legacy of the Japanese language period, however, has been both dramatic and powerful, and, particularly in recent years, the growing Japanese tourist industry in Palau has promoted Japanese as a foreign language that assures job security in a fragile economy.

However, in terms of demography, the Japanese and American administrations each led to quite different outcomes. Firstly, there was a massive influx of Japanese *civilian immigrants* into Palau during the Japanese administration, while no immigration took place in the American period. Japanese immigrants outnumbered Palauans in an approximate ratio of four to one in 1941; in other words, about 24,000 Japanese and 6,000 Palauans were living in Palau (Nan'yō-chō 1942). Secondly, the majority of these Japanese immigrants were farmers and fishermen who were recruited from Japan as a major labour force and who worked with the islanders in Japanese enterprises in Palau. In contrast, the small number of Americans who were *temporarily stationed* in Palau were military and administrative personnel, missionaries, school teachers and members of the Peace Corps.

In addition, the settlement pattern of these Japanese civilian immigrants in Palau seems to have strengthened the link between the Japanese and Palauans. It was different from that which took place in other former Japanese colonies in Asia, such as in Korea and China, in that they lived with indigenous Palauan residents in the same community, rather than establishing an exclusive Japanese community. There was no recruitment of comfort women in Palau; instead, marriages between Japanese men and Palauan women were encouraged and rewarded by the Japanese government. Thus, the degree and frequency of everyday interaction between Japanese and Palauans appear to have been far greater than between Palauans and Americans, and, as a result, a large number of marriages between the Japanese and Palauans occurred. Thus, a large Japanese-Palauan population has emerged in the small Palauan republic.

The Japanese-Palauans may be sub-classified into two groups on the basis of personal experiences resulting from a community-specific history during different political administrations. One group has Japanese citizenship since their parents were officially married

before 1945, and because of this, they were successively relocated between Japan and Micronesia during the U.S. administration (i.e. Japanese-Palauan returnee families). The other group does not own Japanese citizenship because their parents were not officially recognised as being married, and hence, could stay in Palau all their lives (i.e. the Japanese-Palauan resident families). In this paper, we will restrict our focus to the former group: the Japanese-Palauan returnee families.

Oral history collected during fieldwork suggests that the life style of the Japanese-Palauan returnee families was notably distinct from that of both the Palauans and those Japanese-Palauan families without Japanese citizenship. The Japanese-Palauans with Japanese citizenship lived in Palau largely within Japanese norms and values, and with a limited amount of contact with Palauan tradition and language. In particular, these Japanese-Palauan children attended schools exclusively for Japanese pupils, rather than those for Palauan islanders, and also higher education in Japan tended to be more open to them. Therefore, many of these Japanese-Palauans were not able to speak Palauan when they were raised in Palau.

Subsequently, since the end of WWII (the start of the U.S. administration), Palau has undergone a politically and socially transitional period, from Japanese to American domination. Many Japanese-Palauans with Japanese citizenship were expatriated to Japan, with their Japanese fathers and Palauan mothers, after the war as a result of U.S. policy. After a few years, however, those Japanese-Palauan families who were sent to Japan petitioned for permission to return to Palau. However, those who were lucky enough to be allowed to go back to Micronesia were actually sent not to Palau, but to Saipan, an island neighbouring U.S.-owned Guam, and on which the U.S. High Commissioner for Micronesia was based. Therefore, those Japanese-Palauan families were moved back and forth between Japan and Micronesia for several years, and finally settled in Palau only after being granted permission to return by the U.S. Navy. After returning from Japan to Palau, they began to adapt to Palauan customs and language, while retaining various forms of 'Japaneseness' to different degrees. Most of them learnt Palauan and took part in reciprocal exchange customs in Palauan society, whereas there are still a few first generation speakers who still do not speak Palauan, despite the fact that they have lived in Palau for more than 70 years.

Thus, during the last century, the Japanese-Palauan returnee community experienced dramatic socio-political, educational, economic and demographic changes (including successive relocations) creating intensive language contact between Palauan, Japanese and English. Palau thus provides an ideal community in which to observe changing language patterns associated with social change. We will now examine in depth how those social changes have contributed

to the formation of the current multilingualism of the returnee community with special reference to the apparent conservatism and innovation of women.

Methodology

This research forms part of a broader investigation into multilingualism, language maintenance and shift, language obsolescence, dialect contact and linguistic hegemony in Palau (see Matsumoto 1999; 2001a; 2001b; 2001c; Matsumoto and Britain 2000; 2001a; 2001b). A variety of data were gathered in the Palauan capital, Koror, in 1997 and 1998, involving six-months of participant observation; 121 ethnographic interviews; 233 ethnographic questionnaires; and 64 hours recording of spontaneous conversation, as well as many hours of informal discussions with Palauans of all ranks. For this article, however, we selected only the relevant data to investigate the gendered language behaviour in the returnee community. We chose to study the following social variables likely to affect language behaviour in the local context - namely, sex, generation, age, perceived ethnic identity, social networks, self-rated oral language ability in Japanese as well as actual language use in family conversation. As we will see later, however, the findings suggest that only sex and Japanese oral language ability produce significant results in the case of the returnee community. Therefore, this section will just briefly look at each variable (see Matsumoto 2001a for more details).

Sex and **generation** are the key variables, since whether each family has three generations and whether each generation has both males and females are criteria on selecting the families in the community. **Age** seems to be a particularly crucial variable that affects language behaviour in the case of Palau, because, with such a series of dramatic transitional periods, those currently at a particular life stage will have a different experience of that stage than those who were at that life stage a generation ago. Therefore, the subjects were classified into four age groups, in consideration of the speakers' experience of the major historical events that had occurred during the age span of the population⁵, while both sex and generation of the subjects are biologically determined. Table 2 shows the number of the subjects by sex, generation and age. This paper focuses on 15 people from 3 returnee families, taking 3 generations from each family.

Table 2. The number of subjects by generation and sex

⁵ See Matsumoto 2001a and 2001b for the in-depth examination of the relation of age groups to historical periods of social change in the community.

<i>Generation</i>	Grandparent (4)		Parent (5)		Child (6)	
<i>Sex</i>	Male (2)	Female (2)	Male (2)	Female (3)	Male (3)	Female (3)
<i>Age</i>	Above 68 (3)		56-67 (3)	26-55 (4)		Below 25 (5)

Ethnic identity also appears to be an important variable in a post-colonial context, since various personal experiences resulting from a community-specific history of different political administrations are likely to help create a perception of their ethnicity as ‘Palauan’, ‘Japanese’ and/or ‘American’, which may indirectly affect their language behaviour. Therefore, we examined the ‘perceived ethnic identity’ for the Palauan, Japanese and American, by directly asking the subjects to rate the extent to which they identified themselves as Palauan, Japanese and American separately⁶.

Self-rated oral language ability in Japanese, such as understanding and speaking ability, is also included as a variable, since having a high ability of Japanese seems to have special connotations in the local context. This is not only because Japanese is the ethnic language to the most of the Japanese-Palauan returnee family members, but also because Japanese used to be a colonial H language in the past and is now an in-coming foreign language taught in schools and required by the job market. Thus, it would be interesting to see whether and how those connotations of Japanese as ethnic language, the former colonial H language and the in-coming language for economic prosperity reflect the ability of male and female speakers to converse in Japanese. The subjects self-assess their abilities of speaking and understanding in Japanese, separately on an eleven-point scale, ranging from ‘not at all’ (0) to ‘completely’ (10). In the data analysis, ratings for understanding and speaking are combined to show ‘oral language ability’ in Japanese.

Social networks are also a vital variable in the case of Palau, due to a number of salient characteristics of Palauan society; i.e., a small rural non-industrial isolated island community with limited availability in the type of education and occupation; the matrilineal hereditary caste system involving the reciprocal exchange custom; and the distinct orientation of immigrant social practices. Therefore, we designed to study three types of networks; **exchange and interactive networks** measure the extent to which the immigrants’ networks are integrated into the vernacular Palauan culture, while **passive networks** measure the extent to which their networks still retain pre- or post-migration links. Thus, it is very likely that those

⁶ Data on both perceived ethnic identity and oral self-rated language ability were extracted from the ethnographic questionnaire survey (see Matsumoto 2001a and 2001b for more details).

three types of social networks reveal the degrees of 'localness' and 'Japaneseness' for the returnee families, which may indirectly influence their language behaviour.

Finally, it is essential to mention our field research strategies⁷, in order to demonstrate to what extent we engaged in the activities and practices of the local community in an attempt to obtain in-depth ethnographic data. During the six months of field research, the first author handled a variety of participant modes, ranging from active participation to passive participation, by combining three social roles with the role of a researcher working in the community. Firstly, as a member of the family that she stayed with, she fulfilled family obligations. On traditional ceremony occasions, for instance, she helped to prepare food, organise the meeting place and distribute food to guests. Also, whenever there was a need in their family business, she worked as a waitress, translator or deliverer. Second, after frequently visiting the Ageing Centre⁸, she was asked to co-operate in traditional Palauan dinner shows for tourists that the elderly Palauans held. She assisted them by checking the Japanese in their speeches, posters and programmes, and also went with them to Japanese-owned hotels, in order to obtain permission to distribute the advertisements for the shows to the Japanese tourists. Thirdly, she worked as a volunteer in the Palau Conservation Society, where she co-operated in marine-biological research and took part in boat patrols with sea rangers to warn Japanese tourists/fishermen who had entered nature preservation areas without permission. It was through those social roles and activities that she acquainted herself with those returnee families, observed and took part in their social networks and communities of practice, and recorded their family conversation⁹. As we will see later, such ethnographic approaches can provide explanatory accounts of the patterns of linguistic innovation and conservatism that we found. In total, a corpus of 18 hours of casual and spontaneous conversation conducted between 15 returnee family members was gathered in a variety of situations, such as at home, at work, in restaurants, pubs, schools, the Ageing Centre, Sakura-kai (the Japan-Palau Association) and outdoors. SPSS version 9.0 was used for the statistical analysis¹⁰. The family trees of the 15 returnee family members are shown in Figure 1 below.

⁷ Fieldwork was conducted by Matsumoto.

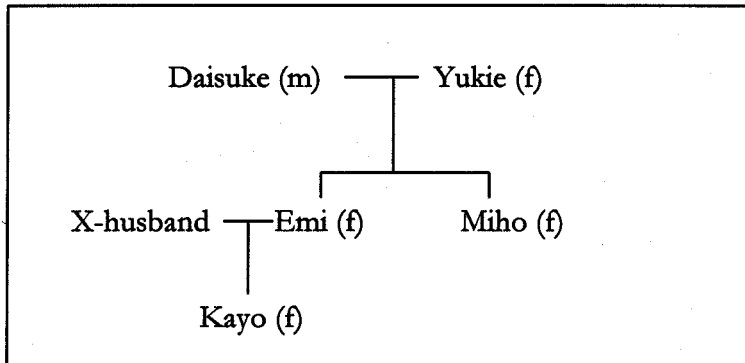
⁸ The Ageing Centre is the public gathering and recreational place for the elderly. There is a free transportation service in the morning to take them to the Ageing Centre and to bring them back home in the afternoon. Lunch is provided free of charge. Activity programmes are organised, such as physical exercise or traditional craft making.

⁹ See Matsumoto (2001a) and Matsumoto and Britain (2001b) for detailed research methodology.

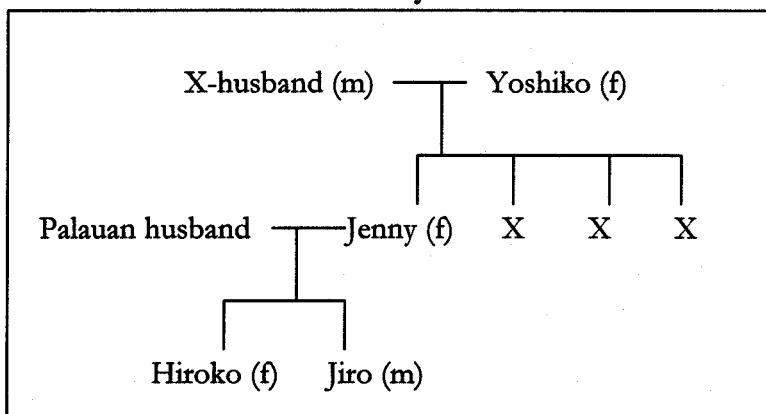
¹⁰ See Matsumoto 2001a for details on how the individual speaker's language use was calculated and encoded for statistical analysis.

Figure 1: Family trees of the three returnee families

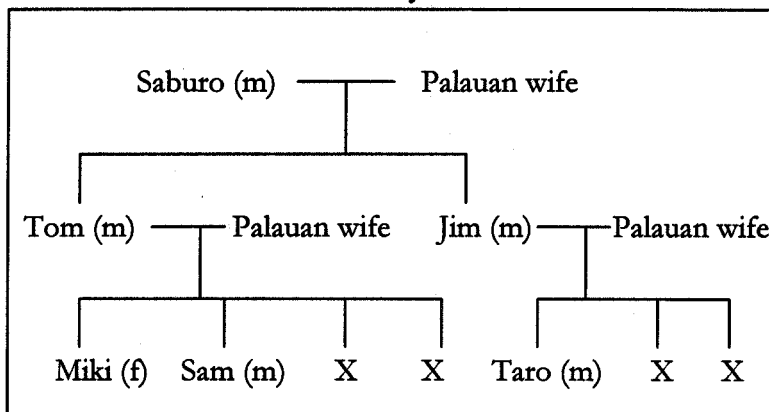
Sato Family



Suzuki Family



Sasaki Family



Results

In order to investigate the factors shaping language choice in this Palauan community, we have taken four different approaches to analysing our data. Firstly, although our main focus is upon gender, it is not our intention to take sex as the primary factor, treating other variables only as secondary effects upon language behaviour. This is because there is always a possibility that other variables, such as age and ethnic identity, *independently in no relation to sex*, impinge upon social relations influencing behaviour. Thus, the data should be analysed giving equal weight to each variable under analysis. Therefore, our first approach is to employ *Stepwise Multiple Regression* in order to demonstrate which variables most strongly correlate with actual use of Japanese language by returnee families; all the variables included have an equal chance of being selected by this test. Included among the social variables are sex, age, generation, the perceived ethnic identities as Palauan, Japanese and American, social networks (exchange, interactive and passive networks as well as combined networks), and self-rated oral language ability in Japanese.

Next, with the specific aim of pursuing the nature of gender effects, our second approach is to examine *the interaction of sex together with other relevant variables upon language behaviour*. This is because ‘gender is most likely to emerge when speaker sex is examined not in isolation, but in interaction with other social variables’ (Eckert 1990; 2000; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999). By statistically analysing the interaction of sex and networks, sex and identity, for instance, we may discover that it was certain sex-distinct social network patterns or identity formations that affected their language behaviour through the variable of sex (i.e., a gender effect). For this purpose, we conducted a *General Linear Model, Univariate Analysis of Variance*.

Our third approach is to separately analyse male and female data, as this can spotlight variation in language use *among* female speakers and *among* male speakers. Our underlying assumption is that the effect of gender on language behaviour may appear in differences within sex groupings (see, for instance, Papazachariou 1998) and that the notion of male or female speech as ‘more or less conservative’ is too simplistic. Therefore, we split all the data collected from the returnee families by sex and employed *Pearson r Correlation Tests* in order to examine whether there is a relationship between social variables and actual use of Japanese language *among* females and *among* males, separately.

The final and most important approach we took is ethnographic investigation. It enables the researcher to identify what language use may represent conservative or innovative behaviour in the local context as well as which men/women are members of which social groups on the basis of their social role and social practice in the community. As we show, this

can provide vital clues in accounting for the apparently paradoxical behaviour in the multilingual returnee community, and offer explanatory accounts of it; i.e., in the same community why do some female groups exhibit conservative behaviour, and why do other female groups display innovative behaviour?

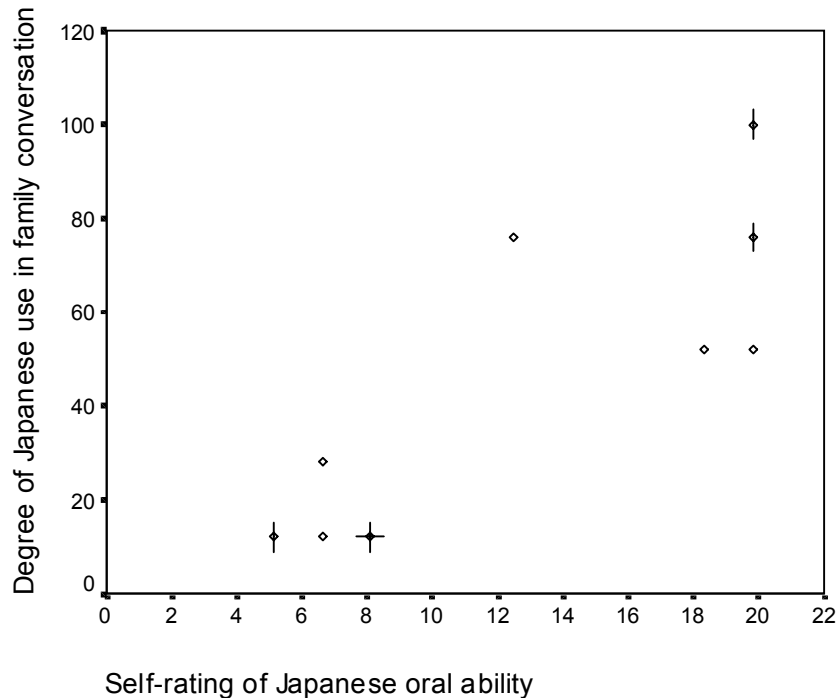
Approach 1: Independent effects of social variables upon language use

We begin by examining the independent effects of social variables upon actual language use. *Stepwise Multiple Regression* was employed to demonstrate which variables most strongly correlate with Japanese use by the returnee families, among all the variables examined in this study. The result shows that ***self-reported Japanese oral language ability*** and ***sex, independently***, most highly correlate with Japanese language use (R square 79%, F=48.448, **P<.0005** and R square 92%, F=66.553, **P<.0005** respectively). This result may suggest that sex and Japanese language ability are very likely to play important roles in complex social practice in the local context that most strongly affects language use.

We now in turn explore what those significant relationships between Japanese oral ability and use and between sex and Japanese use actually mean. Firstly, the relationship between self-rated Japanese oral ability and actual Japanese use is illustrated in Figure 2¹¹. Figure 2 shows a clear pattern that the higher their ability in Japanese, the more Japanese is used in family conversation; conversely, the lower their ability in Japanese, the less Japanese is used. The gap in the graph – between two visible clusters – is reminiscent of speech communities undergoing language death, as demonstrated, for instance, by Mohan and Zador (1986) in their study of the Trinidad Bhojpuri. In a language death situation, it is common to have a discontinuity between a high ability group, which is usually the older, and a low ability group, often younger. In other words, if the subjects in the high ability group are, in fact, old, and the subjects in the low ability group are young, then this graph may indicate the death of the Japanese language among the returnee family community in Palau. This is because the future generation will represent individuals who only use Japanese for occasional code-switching, and their children may not use Japanese at all. However, notice that neither age nor generation were picked up by the *Stepwise Multiple Regression*, suggesting that statistically speaking, neither contribute to the pattern of Japanese language use and ability. We will come back to this point later.

¹¹ In Figure 2 each dot and line represents one person.

Figure 2: The relationship between Japanese oral ability and Japanese use.
 (Degree of Japanese use: 0=never used, 100=the dominant language).
 (Self-rating of Japanese oral ability: 0=not at all, 20=fully competent).

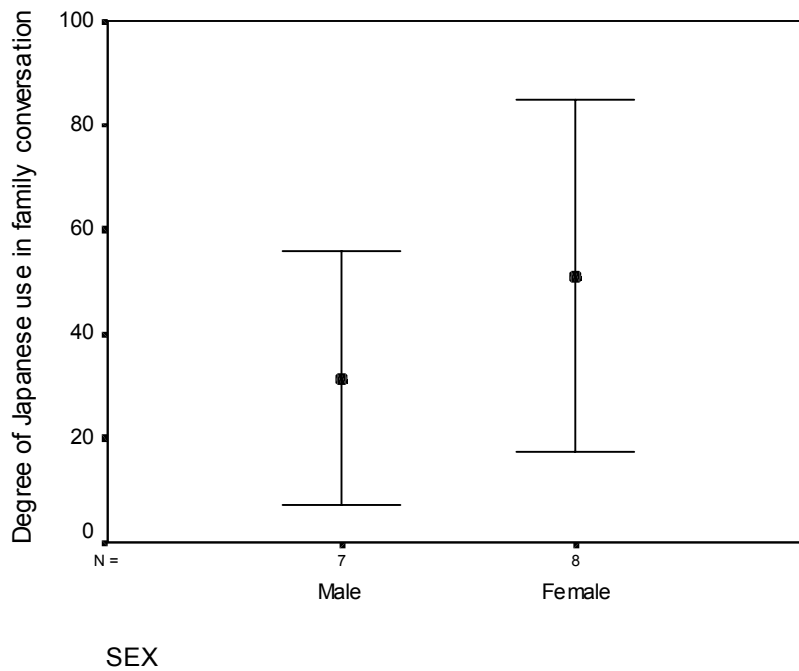


Next, the relationship between sex and use of Japanese is illustrated in Figure 3. It shows (a) the average use of Japanese among female speakers is higher than that of males; and (b) females exhibit wider degrees of Japanese use. However, this graph only provides a simplistic view of sex effects on language behaviour. As stated above, sex is not directly associated with language behaviour, but mirrors complex social practice (Eckert 1990: 245). Therefore, the effects of gender on language behaviour that often appears in differences within sex groupings need examining. Therefore, in the following sections, we will scrutinise the gender effect by firstly investigating the interactive effects of sex together with other variables upon Japanese use; and secondly by analysing women and men separately.

Approach 2: The interactive effects of sex and other variable upon language behaviour

In order to examine the interactive effects of sex together with other variables upon language use, a series of statistical tests (i.e., the *General Linear Model, Univariate Analysis of Variance*) was conducted. For this test, it is important to find a sensible way to divide the scales of continuous variables (ethnic identity, social networks and language ability in the case of this

Figure 3: The relationship between sex and Japanese use.
 (Degree of Japanese use: 0=never used, 100=the dominant language).



study) into emic clusters. The first step is to search for a natural break in the distribution and/or cross-classification, so that, for example, it is possible to divide the scores for ‘Japanese ethnic identity’ in such a way that there are at least two groups with high scores for identity, and two groups with lower scores among both females and males. If there are no natural breaks and/or no cross-classification, this test is rarely worth attempting (Scholfield p.c. 2000). In this study, we emically divided the scales of the three variables, and then conducted this test in pairs: i.e., the interactive effects upon Japanese use of: sex and age; sex and generation; sex and social networks; sex and ethnic identities; and sex and language ability. By statistically analysing the interaction of sex and networks, sex and identity, for instance, we were hoping to discover that it was certain sex-distinct social network patterns or identity formations that affected their language behaviour through the sex factor (i.e. a gender effect). However, the results of the *General Linear Model, Univariate Analysis of Variance* show that only Japanese oral ability and sex have an interactional effect upon Japanese use in family conversation (**P=.036**, F=5.727). This suggests that in the case of the returnee families in multilingual Palau, there may be sex-distinct language ability patterns in Japanese that influence their language

behaviour¹². Yet, this does not give us a whole picture of why such sex-distinct language ability patterns may have arisen in the first place. It should be emphasised that there are other aspects of possible sex-distinct social roles, socialisation and so forth, which were difficult to quantify and statistically analyse in this study, and which may have contributed to such sex-distinct language ability patterns in the local context. The final approach, the ethnographic investigation, therefore, will help to provide explanatory accounts for these results later.

Approach 3: Separate analyses for women and men

We now conduct separate analyses for women and men, assuming that the effects of gender on language behaviour are likely to appear in differences *within* sex groupings. Firstly, both the conversational data (i.e. actual language use) and the self-ratings of Japanese ability collected from the returnee families were split by sex. Thus, we now have two sets of data; the female data and the male data. *Pearson r Correlation Tests* were then employed to examine whether there is a relationship between Japanese language use and Japanese oral ability *among* females and *among* males, separately. The results for both men and women were significant (**P=.001**, Pearson r Correlation=.960 for males; **P<.0005**, Pearson r Correlation=.961 for females), suggesting that there is great variation in Japanese use and ability *among* female speakers and *among* male speakers. Thus, the relationship between Japanese ability and use exists strongly for each gender, separately, indicating that there may be different subgroups within males and within females, respectively, on the basis of their Japanese ability and use.

Figure 4¹³ nicely illustrates the interactional effect of sex and Japanese oral ability upon Japanese use, particularly, highlighting some patterns of variation in Japanese use and ability *among* females and *among* males. The subjects in the graph fall into a natural division of two groups for both Japanese oral ability and Japanese use. One group consists of those who claimed to have high Japanese ability and who very often use Japanese in family conversation;

¹² It should be noted that we conducted a series of *Independent Sample t Tests* to examine the relationship between sex and each of the variables examined in this study; i.e., between sex and age; between sex and generation; between sex and social networks; between sex and Japanese identities; between sex and Japanese ability. However, all the results show no significance. This includes the result that sex and Japanese ability have no significant relationship, despite all the results demonstrated in this paper that (1) sex independently affects Japanese use, (2) Japanese ability independently affects Japanese use, and (3) sex together with Japanese ability have an interactive effect upon Japanese use.

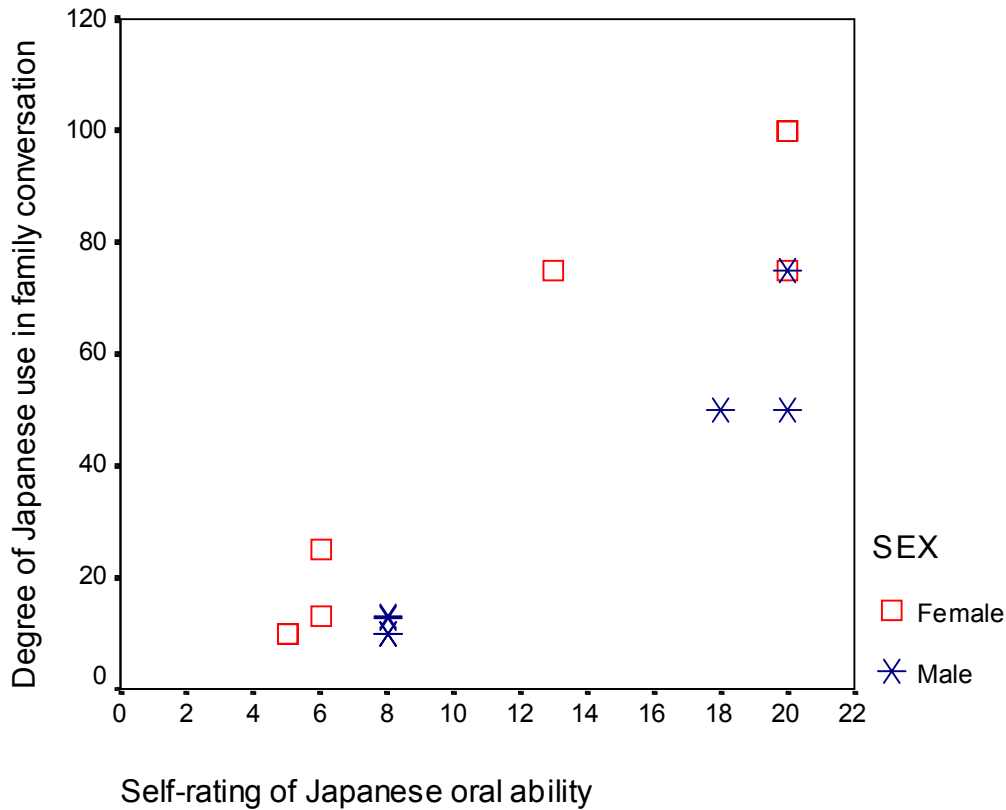
¹³ Figure 4 is also a scatterplot, but different from Figure 2, in that each square and star may stand for more than one person. In cases where we include a third variable ('sex' in this case) in addition to two other variables ('language use' and 'language ability' in this case), the Scatterplot created by SPSS is not capable of presenting exactly how many subjects have identical language ability and use, (and who, therefore, should be on the same spot in the scatterplot).

Figure 4: Interactional effect of Japanese ability and sex upon Japanese use.

(Degree of Japanese use: 0=never used, 100=the dominant language).

(Self-rating of Japanese oral ability: 0=not at all, 20=fully competent).

(Generation of speakers: 1=grandparent, 2=parent, 3=child).



and another contains those who reported weaker Japanese ability and who use Japanese less frequently. In the former high ability group, the females have a similar command of Japanese but use it considerably more often than the men, whereas in the latter lower ability group, the females claim a poorer command of Japanese but still use it slightly more than their male counterparts. Thus, in *both* high ability and low ability groups, the females use Japanese more than males. We must not, however, as we will see, conclude that the greater use of Japanese by women has a similar function in the two ability groups.

So far, then, we have seen that separate analyses for men and women are essential to identify sub-groups among the male speakers and among the female speakers. In the next section, ethnographic investigation will scrutinise what social meaning or norm ‘use of Japanese’ is likely to convey to each sex sub-group in the local context, and what social roles, practices, job environments and institutional support each sub-group is involved in.

Approach 4: Ethnographic investigations

Now, our final approach to the gender question, ethnographic investigation, will help us to understand these patterns in the Palauan context. Since a number of important social political developments, spanning a period of over one hundred years, have occurred, *different norms* of language use seem to exist amongst *different generations*. That is to say, as Nichols (1979: 105) demonstrates in her study of coastal North Carolina, there is a possibility that use of a given language “may represent *conservative* behaviour within one social group and *innovative* behaviour within another”¹⁴. For the elderly returnee family members, Japanese is a *mother tongue* acquired natively and naturally in the home environment. For the middle-aged members, who experienced political turmoil by being moved back and forth between Japan and Saipan during their infancy or adolescence, Japanese represents an *ethnic home language*, while English became the mainstream language taught at school and spoken among peers in Saipan. For the young members of returnee families who were born in Palau, Japanese is a language to which they have been exposed primarily as a foreign language at school and which provides them with jobs in the Japanese tourist industry. According to the information that was given during field research, most of the youngest generation did not acquire Japanese at home, but learnt it later through formal education, used it at work, and came to use it in family conversation. Thus, use of Japanese by the grandparent and parent generation may represent *conservative* behaviour, in the sense that it indicates maintenance of an obsolescing mother tongue or ethnic language. However, use of Japanese by the children’s generation may be seen as *innovative* behaviour, in the sense that it indicates the adoption of an in-coming overtly prestigious foreign language, which assures their job security.

Such different norms of ‘use of Japanese’ existing among different generations are closely related to changes in the status of Japanese in diglossic Palau over the last century. Under the Japanese regime, Japanese was recognised as an H language, but after 1945 came to be used in L-domains and face-to-face interaction, such as in the local neighbourhood, in non-governmental jobs, family conversation (as a secret language between (grand)parents!), food cultures, music and life style, particularly in the form of numerous L borrowings (e.g., everyday objects, such as names of kitchen utensils, gardening equipment and clothes; and numerous core Japanese adjectives that express ‘feelings’, such as ‘good’, ‘happy’, ‘glad’, ‘funny’,

¹⁴ Nichols (1979: 105-6) took the use of [ɪŋ] variants of (ɪŋɡ) as one general example for this, since it may stand for ‘preservation of an older form for a White middle class group, but introduction of a new form for a Black working class group’.

‘interesting’, ‘lonely’, ‘tired’, ‘sorry’, ‘tasty’, ‘simple’, ‘crazy’ etc.)¹⁵. However, due to the recent growing value of the Japanese tourist Yen to the local economy, Japanese is becoming an important H language again, although now it is economically rather than politically driven. So, the grandparent generation natively acquired Japanese as a mother tongue in the home environment when it was recognised as a colonial H language, while the parental generation maintained Japanese as an ethnic home language when Japanese no longer had official H status, but was used exclusively in L-domains. Grandchildren came to use Japanese in family conversations, after Japanese started to be taught in schools and required and used in tourism-related jobs. Thus, in multilingual communities, it may be important to examine the norms or social meaning of language use both for the community and for individuals.

We turn now to make a cross-examination of the behaviour of women and men and generational behaviour patterns, referring now to individual speakers’ (See Figure 5). The Figure reveals that in the high ability group, which consists of the grandparent and parent generations, the female speakers may represent conservatism, in the sense that the *grandmothers and the mothers maintain their mother tongue or ethnic language by using it more than the grandfathers and the fathers*. Note that this supports claims in the literature that first generation women use their ethnic language more than men in their daily communication at home and sustain it for longer than men (e.g., Fishman 1966, 1984, 1991; Holmes and Harlow 1991; Clyne 1982, 1991). On the other hand, among the low ability group, which mostly contains the largely Anglophone children’s generation, female speakers represent innovation, in the sense that *the daughters more willingly adopt and use more often an in-coming foreign language*, namely Japanese, than the sons. A functional knowledge of Japanese has become important in the job market. Thus, the female speakers in each group may represent conservatism and innovation, respectively. This brings into question the possibility of finding patterns of generalisable language use for male and female speakers that would apply across different speech communities with different social structures and different sociolinguistic histories.

Moreover, Figure 5 uncovers that what makes this pattern one of gender, rather than age or generation, is a very wide range of Japanese use and ability exhibited by the *parent generation*. Firstly, Emi, Miho and Tom belong to the parent generation that is in the high ability group. Emi and Miho work in their father’s business as waitresses, tour guides and diving instructors; mostly dealing with Japanese tourists from Japan. Tom works as an agent, negotiating agreements in the export and tourist business between the Palauan and Japanese governments, using both Japanese and Palauan. Jenny and Jim, on the other hand, are among

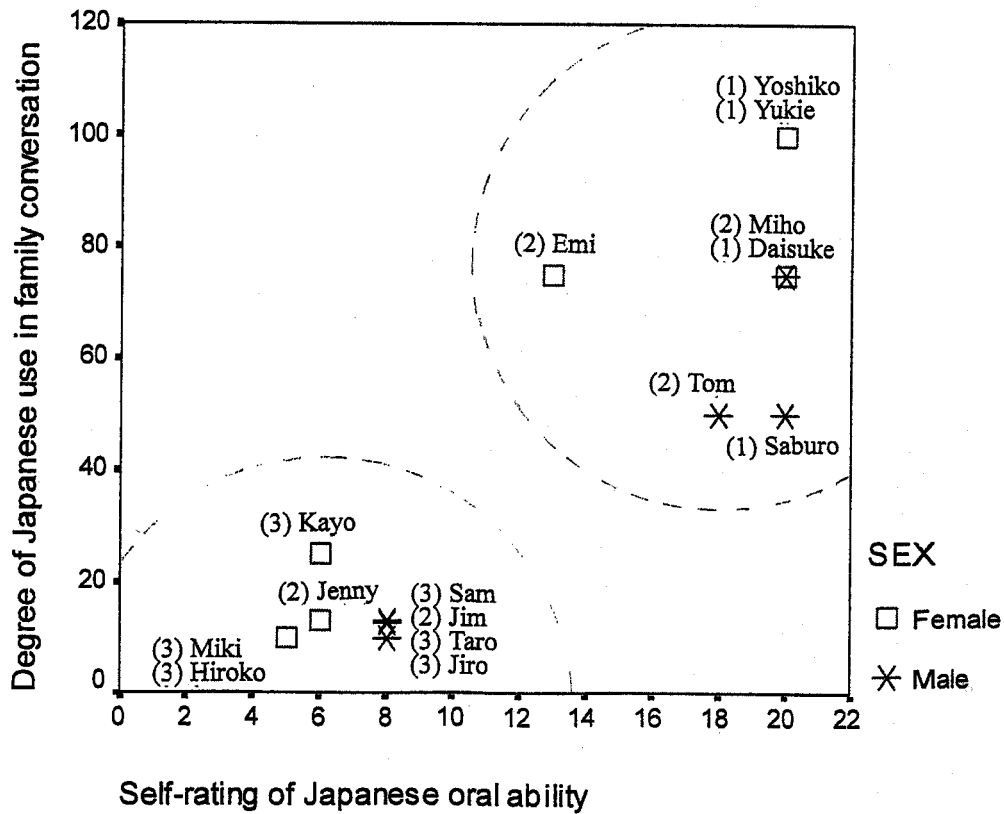
¹⁵ See Matsumoto 2001 and Matsumoto and Britain 2000 and 2001a for more details.

Figure 5: The interactional effect of Japanese ability and sex upon language use.

(Degree of Japanese use: 0 = never used, 100 = the dominant language).

(Self-rating of Japanese oral ability: 0 = nil, 20 = fully competent).

(Generation of speakers: 1 = grandparent, 2 = parent, 3 = child).



the parent generation that is in the low ability group. Jenny works as a manager in the largest Japanese resort hotel on the island, where she mostly uses English for business reports and Palauan for handling Palauan workers. As a manager, she rarely needs to communicate with Japanese customers. Jim works in the Palauan government office where most of the conversation is conducted in Palauan, as almost all of the colleagues are Palauan, but occasionally English is used, particularly for written reports. Thus, in accordance with claims by Lippi-Green (1989), Milroy (1987), Nichols (1983) and Eckert (1990), this highlights that language use in the workplace, rather than sex, seems to have a dominant effect upon Japanese language ability and use among the second generation.

Although statistical analysis did *not* suggest that age and generation significantly affect their Japanese use and ability¹⁶, an ethnographic investigation spotlights that if we exclude the

¹⁶ The possible reason why 'generation' was not picked up by statistical tests is that norms of marriage and child-rearing are somewhat different in Palau than in many Western societies. In Palau, marrying several

parent generation from Figure 5, there is a clear division between grandparent and child generation in their Japanese use and ability. All the grandparents are in the high ability group, while all the children are in the low ability group. Thus, this indicates that Japanese language death is, in fact, taking place among the returnee families in Palau.

Discussion and conclusion.

A binary male-female category of analysis of language shift in the multilingual returnee community in Palau firstly shows that the average use of Japanese among female speakers is higher than that of males. However, unsatisfied with the simplistic description of so-called male or female speech as ‘more or less conservative’, we took a further step to examine differences in language behaviour within each sex grouping. With a separate analysis for male and female speakers, we could identify two sub-groups among male and among female speakers on the basis of their language ability and use (i.e., high ability/frequent user group vs. low ability/less frequent user group), but a cross-examination of interactive effects of sex and Japanese ability upon language behaviour suggest that in both high and low ability groups, the females use Japanese more than males. Only after this was supplemented by in-depth ethnographic observation and data collection in Palau, were we able to fully uncover the meaningful patterns of Japanese language use by the different gender groups. By contextualising what social meaning ‘use of Japanese’ may convey to different generations, we understood that ‘use of Japanese’ by the grandparent and parent generations may represent conservative behaviour, in the sense that it indicates maintenance of their mother tongue or ethnic home language, while ‘use of Japanese’ by the children’s generation may be seen as innovative behaviour, in the sense that it indicates the adoption of an in-coming overtly prestigious foreign language, which assures job security.

Our findings, therefore, question both the near-universality of the gender paradox, and the possibility of finding patterns of generalisable language use for male and female

times is quite common, so, for example, Matsumoto met a first generation Japanese-Palauan man aged 73, who had daughters aged 50, 13 and 2. By definition, all his daughters are categorised as being ‘second generation’. However, of course, they do not share common experiences during Palau’s recent rather dramatic social change. On the other hand, the possible reason why ‘age’ was not picked up may be that the length of stay in Japan, Saipan or other parts of Micronesia varied enormously from family to family. Therefore, although age groups are determined on the basis of *emic* methods, those who are of similar ages have not necessarily experienced the same socio-political and economic changes in the same place or at the same time. This may provide further evidence that ethnographic investigation enabled us to explain why age and generation were not picked up, despite the general expectation that those factors normally most strongly correlate with language behaviour related to on-going language death.

speakers that would apply to different speech communities with different set-ups and different histories. With regard to the former issue, what appears to be similar linguistic behaviour by both old and young, is in fact motivated by entirely different and divergent social and economic considerations, demonstrating that linguistic function is equally as important as form in understanding the nature and direction of linguistic change. At a monolingual level, it suggests that we should at least investigate whether, for example, older women's greater use (compared with older men) of [ɪŋ] variants of (ING) **functions** similarly to the equally greater use by young women (compared with younger men) of the same variant of the same variable. To our knowledge, this has rarely been demonstrated in any study of a phonological variable. In virtually all past studies, a linguistic variant is assumed to have the same function across the whole speech community across apparent time.

Our ethnographic investigation demonstrated that the Japanese-Palauan returnees actively use language in such a way that reflects the options available to them within their particular community environment. Grandmothers made choices in the context of *both* a particular communal history in which they acquired a colonial H language in their home environment, *and* the social role that they played (i.e., to educate their children in matters connected to ethnic traditions and values). Grandfathers made choices in the context of changing colonial policies, from those which encouraged them to acquire Japanese as a mother tongue, to those which gave them no choice but to learn English in order to support their families in Saipan after being deported from Palau. Daughters made choices in the context of *both* the institutional support of schools teaching them Japanese as a foreign language *and* private job sectors where a functional knowledge of Japanese has become an economic imperative. Sons made choices in the context of public governmental job sectors where a mastery of the official language, English, is still indispensable. Thus, they make choices in the contexts of particular communal histories, social roles, job environments and institutional support systems, rather than as some generalised response to the universal condition of being women or being men. Moreover, our ethnographic investigation of the parent generation reveals that language use in the workplace, rather than sex, seems to be a dominant factor affecting Japanese ability and use.

This study provides two significant implications for sociolinguistic research. First, it is important to emphasise that social location is a crucial factor in understanding the interplay between language and gender (see Eckert 1990, 2000; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999). Research should attempt to locate which women (and, of course, which men) are members of which social groups *in the local context*. In the case of the returnee families, a distinctive local

history involving a number of important socio-political developments spanning a period of over a century has led to the two distinct generational cohorts.

Secondly, when discussing *innovation* and *conservatism*, the researcher needs to be aware of the possibility that use of a given language may represent conservative behaviour within one group and innovative behaviour within another. Without ethnographic investigation, it would have been impossible to discover that ‘use of Japanese’ by the grandparent and parent generations may represent conservative behaviour, in the sense that it indicates maintenance of their mother tongue or ethnic home language, while ‘use of Japanese’ by the children’s generation may be seen as innovative behaviour, marking the adoption of an in-coming overtly prestigious foreign language, which assures a secure position in local labour markets.

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