

言語学

- (1) 「どこにあるかどうかが問題となる」というような言い方が最近行われているが、これについてどのように思うか、意見を述べなさい。
- (2) 日本語の動詞には、「進む」と「進める」、「折る」と「折れる」、「繋ぐ」と「繋がる」、「動く」と「動かす」のように、自動詞と他動詞が対応するものが多くある。どのような対応関係にあるか説明しなさい。
- (3) 次の文を読んで、論旨を要約しなさい。

At first glance, a linguist's interest in preserving languages seems both self-evident and self-serving. For scientific reasons alone, languages are worth preserving. Linguists need to study as many different languages as possible if they are to perfect their theories of language structure and to train future generations of students in linguistic analysis. Thanks to the efforts of linguists, at least there will be some record of Ubykh with its unusual sound system containing 81 consonants and only 3 vowels. (Compare English with only 24 consonants and approximately 20 vowels, depending on the combination of sounds in a particular variety; or Rotokas, a language spoken on Bougainville island in Papua New Guinea, with the smallest number of sounds in any language, only 5 vowels and 6 consonants.) Yet, descriptions based on the last living speakers can usually capture only a fragment of what that language must have been like in its full-blown version in active use by a living community of younger and older speakers. One consequence of declining use of a language is a loss in its complexity and richness of expression.

New and exciting discoveries about language are still being made. There is every reason to believe that what we know now is but the tip of the iceberg. For many years linguists thought Ubykh to be the world record-holder for number of consonants. Now it seems that some African languages surpass Ubykh in this respect — if only there is time to find out. Many African languages are dying rapidly too. Only in the 1970s did linguists discover the existence of a language called Hixkaryana, which has about 350 speakers. It is one of many languages spoken by small numbers of speakers in Amazonia. Structurally speaking, Hixkaryana and its neighboring languages are interesting because they represent the only known cases of languages which construct sentences by putting the object first, as if we were to say in English, for instance, *a book*

read Mary instead of *Mary read a book*. Other languages, for example Japanese and Guugu Yimidhurr (spoken around Cooktown in north Queensland, Australia), typically have the order Subject Object Verb (SOV), as in *ngayu Billy nhaadhi* (literally, *I Billy saw*). Modern English has the order SVO, although that has not always been the case. Around 10 percent of the world's languages put the verb first, like Irish: *is cailin og Maire*, meaning *Mary is a young girl*, translates literally as *is girl young Mary*. Hixkaryana and other object-initial languages may not survive into the next century. Except by chance, we might not have known that it was possible for human languages to have OSV word order.

Satisfying answers to many current puzzles about languages and their origins will not emerge until linguists have studied many languages. To exclude exotic languages from our study is like expecting botanists to study only florist shop roses and greenhouse tomatoes and then tell us what the plant world is like. Linguistic diversity gives us unique perspectives into the mind because it reveals the many creative ways in which humans organize and categorize their experience.

In fact, from the evidence we have to date, it would appear that the most grammatically complicated and unusual languages of the world are often isolates — unrelated to any other language — and often spoken by small tribes whose traditional way of life is under threat. The majority of “world” languages such as Chinese, English, Spanish, and Arabic, spoken by 50 million or more people, are, by contrast, not isolates and they are also not as grammatically complex as many of the world's smaller languages. There is a strong tendency for languages to simplify upon expansion and contact with other languages. After the Norman Conquest, for example, English absorbed much vocabulary from French and over the centuries has lost much of the grammatical complexity still found in more conservative Germanic languages such as German and Icelandic. The differences are obvious when we consider that a modern Icelander can still read the Icelandic sagas, while the language of Old English epics such as *Beowulf* is a completely different language to modern day English speakers. Majority languages have been grammatically streamlined. Moreover, the world's major languages are becoming more like one another through the process of intertranslation and culture contact. Most languages have borrowed English terms for words in the field of science and technology.

Speakers of isolated languages only rarely use their own languages to communicate with outsiders. Such languages are generally learned only by children growing up in the local community and almost never as second languages. Languages that are used only for in-group communication in small groups can afford complexity. We can observe the

same tendency towards complexity among close friends or members of the same family who communicate regularly with one another. They often have conversations that are hard for outsiders to understand because they contain many references to things shared only by that group. In-group jokes, teenage slang, and professional jargon are some examples. When weather forecasters talk to one another at meteorological conventions they use terms such as *positive vorticity advection* — which, in lay terms, means that conditions are favorable to rain.

The complexity found in some of these small languages spoken in out of the way places may come as a surprise to some people, because non-linguists often think of some of these languages and communities as primitive. Consider the hundred or so people who live in the remote village of Gapun, which lies roughly midway between the Sepik and Ramu rivers in Papua New Guinea. In this isolated village most people support themselves through hunting and agriculture. They speak a language called Taiap. Up until the 1970s no linguist had worked on the language of Gapun. In fact, in 1938 a German missionary, who was the first European to discover the language, predicted that no linguist would ever want to bother with it because the village where it was spoken was so small and located in a relatively inaccessible mosquito-infested swamp. We now know that Taiap is an amazingly rich language in terms of its structural diversity and particularly distinctive vocabulary, unlike any other in the Sepik. It is not clearly related to any other language in the area or indeed to any other language in Papua New Guinea as far as we can tell. While further research might provide clues about the precise genetic relationship between Taiap and other languages, this is unlikely to happen.

Taiap is dying. The younger generation of villagers grow up speaking Tok Pisin (*talk pidgin*, or pidgin English) and are no longer fluent in Taiap. What has happened? We will see how contact with the outside world has brought many changes to the village. Roads, schools, Christianity, and the new ideas brought with these things have changed the way people think in Gapun. They see Tok Pisin as a language that will give them access to the modern world and so they shift their allegiance to it, and no longer speak exclusively in Taiap to their children. When Taiap dies, it will leave a black hole. Closer study of it may reveal a vital clue to the huge puzzle of human origins in New Guinea, an island rich in biodiversity.

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