

International Training Program (ITP)

On-Site Education of Practice Languages for Area Studies

Report in 2009

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Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies

Mariko Noguchi

On my research theme and Language Training

With recent advancements in medical technology and the improvement of healthcare services, many countries, including developing countries, face challenge of increasing population of elders in their societies. For example, rural areas of developing countries experience outflow of young generations. They leave their villages to urban areas to attend school, seek seasonal job or employment in the developing countries. They leave the elders behind in the rural areas where there are not enough medical and welfare services.

While academic interest in aging shows rapid increase recently, studies based on the economics and/or demographic perspectives are still imperative. Therefore we have not enough case studies that grasp the realities of the aged people in Africa. It is highly expected to start the study on aging issues in the changing societies of Africa through multi-disciplinary and multi dimensional approaches using area studies method.

The objective of this study is to illustrate the living of the elders in the rapidly changing socio-economic environment from social, economic and cultural perspectives. In this study, I purposely focus more on events that happens around elders than the social welfare policy and systems in order to search the key issues in “community based care.”

Features of the language

More than 80 different ethnic languages exist in Ethiopia [Gozalves *et al.* 2004]. Ari language belongs to the Omotic language of the Afro-Asian language family and there are about 200,000 speakers mostly in the southwestern Ethiopia.

Ari language doesn't have its own letters nor published textbook/dictionary. But they have the Bible translated into Ari with Amharic letters.

Contents of the course



Scene of the language course

The language course started in the South Omo Research Center, which is under the management of Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, located in Jinka city. Ari native teacher gave me an hour private language lesson per day. We attached much importance to the practice of conversation and all the conversation in the classroom was carried out in Ari language.

Staying in an Ari household during the training term, I spoke Ari language at daily bases. I recorded words or phrases that I did not understand and asked to the teacher in the next class. The combination of training in the field and the classroom lesson helped to learn vocabularies, the grammars, and Ari idioms.

After half of the term, I made a questionnaire with some help from my teacher. On the weekends or holidays when we didn't have a class, I visited Ari elder's households with the questionnaire and I asked about their household members, daily diet, trading in the market and working in their field, etc. At first, because I was strained and I couldn't understand very well, my teacher helped me understanding the conversation. Later I learnt to be able to visit and ask questions by myself without help of my teacher.

Overall impression of the course

Recently many young people learn Amharic, one of the official languages, and Amharic is becoming dominant even in Ari societies. Also, since many Ari people have seen foreigners who speak Amharic, they expect foreigners speak little Amharic but not Ari language. Therefore, Ari people see me so interestingly when I spoke Ari language and asked me questions such as "How did you learn Ari language?" "Why don't you understand Amharic?" etc.

I often tried to use newly learned phrases or words from daily conversation with Ari people. Sometimes I unknowingly picked up some local idioms and used it making people surprised by saying "Who taught you that expression?" When "I like her way of speaking!" others said, that made me proud and please.



Ari children teach me how to plait their hair.



With my host families.

field and

Self-assessment of the extent of achievement

My goal of this language course was to develop skills to communicate with Ari people without a translator and to understand conversation among Ari people. Through this training program, I developed speaking ability of Ari language but sometimes I need to stop conversation when I heard phrases or words that I didn't know. Moreover, I am able to understand rough idea of conversations among Ari people but sometimes I lost my concentration on dialogues and I occasionally misunderstood.

In order to improve my skills and avoid misunderstandings, I need more self-discipline on learning vocabularies and adapting the speed of conversation that Ari people normally speak.

References

Fco. Javier Gozalbez Esteve, Dulce Maria Cebrian Flores. 2004. *Touching ETHIOPIA*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Shama Books.