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USCAR's Language Policy and English Education in Okinawa —Featuring High Commissioner Caraway's Policies—

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Abstract¹

This paper presents an investigation of language policies that USCAR enforced or tried to carry out in the first half of 1960s. Three controversial policies of High Commissioner Caraway shall be featured: establishment of the English Language Center, re-introduction of English education to elementary schools, and establishment of an English commercial high school. These policies were made in order to improve English education in post-war Okinawa, where the people were expected to have a good command of spoken English. Caraway's policies raised heated disputes and strong opposition from the Okinawa Teachers Association and their supporters, who wanted to educate Okinawan children as Japanese citizens.

Keywords: High Commissioner, English Language Center, Project ELES, English Trade School, Okinawa Teachers Association

The United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyus (hereafter USCAR) was established in December of 1950 by the General Headquarters in Tokyo. When Okinawa was "returned" to Japan in May of 1972, the administration was dissolved. From 1957, a succession of lieutenant generals were appointed as the high commissioner, USCAR's top official, by the Department of Defense. The commissioners, as the ruler of the Ryukyus, encouraged Okinawan people to acquire English in order to have a better life and have access to Western ideas and technology. However, there was a hidden reason for such encouragement: the administration needed people who were good at English to maintain U.S. military bases.

General Paul. W. Caraway was the most well-known high commissioner in Okinawa. Policies and plans that he implemented to promote proliferation of English in Okinawa raised heated disputes and strong oppositions from Okinawan teachers and their sympathizers. In this paper, I shall investigate what

High Commissioner Caraway did or tried to do to improve English education in Okinawa.

Caraway's Three Controversial Language Policies in the Early 1960s

Lieutenant General Paul. W. Caraway, the third High Commissioner, was in office from January 1961 to July 1964. Right after he took over his duties as the commissioner, he made the following remark about English education in Okinawa as given below.

English is taught in Okinawa. However, like foreign language education in the U.S., English education in Okinawa is introduced at too late a stage. They must begin teaching English prior to junior high school. It does not threaten Japanese traditions that people consider precious. In fact, Japanese students study English harder than Okinawan students do. English is a modern language, and if one is good at it, he can have a quality job. By improving English ability, the people of the

Ryukyus will be able to have transactions with the people of Southeast Asia who have employed English as their common language. (*Okinawa Times*, 4/25/1961, translated by the author)

What he meant by "[t]hey must begin teaching English prior to junior high school" was that English must be taught in elementary school. His idea was carried out as an experimental project referred to as Project ELES (English Language in the Elementary Schools). As I will mention in Section 1.2, this project raised strong opposition from the Okinawa Teachers Association (OTA) and their followers. He emphasized in his statement that teaching English would not hinder Japanization education, on which OTA had put priority. He seemed to have known what Okinawan people hoped for. It is interesting that he implied that Okinawan students had to study English as hard as Japanese students did. By referring to Japanese students, he indirectly addressed his remark to OTA, who had always mentioned that Okinawan students had to study what Japanese students did.

His view on English education in Okinawa is also shown in the following remark.

The teaching of the English language in the Ryukyuan schools must be made effective. In a small area where thousands of Americans reside, where English is not an academic discipline but is a vocational tool, a functional English program is a must. Many values of democracy can best be communicated through the semantics of English. (Cited from HICOM staff briefings presented to Congressman Steven Ailes on Feb. 13-14, 1963)

He viewed English as "a vocational tool" for Okinawans. According to his view, in other words, what the people needed were opportunities to brush up their skills in practical English, which they would use in their jobs. Up to that point, English education in Okinawa had not been effective because it was taught as an academic discipline.

With respect to English education in Okinawa, he had a clear intention to improve it. He carried out or tried to practice three controversial policies: establishment of the English Language Center; re-introduction of English in elementary schools; and establishment of an English Commercial High School, or English Trade School. The following sections will lay out each of the policies, explaining their purposes and reaction of Okinawan people against them.

Establishment of the English Language Center

Increasing the bilingual population in Okinawa was a major concern for the USCAR. Since the US maintained huge military bases on Okinawa, they needed to employ local people who had a good command of spoken English. The English Language Center (hereafter ELC) was established in 1963 by the USCAR in order to improve English education in Okinawa. However, the plan for establishing the ELC was based on other proposals to set up such a linguistic institution. For example, with a help of a Michigan State University advisory group, the University of the Ryukyus had made a couple of such proposals². Before looking into particulars of the establishment of the ELC, let us investigate some of the plans proposed by the university.

According to Ney (1963), the U.S. Military considered establishing an English Language Training center as early as 1957. As illustrated in Caraway's view of English as a vocational tool, Okinawans, especially those who worked on military bases, were expected to have a good command of oral English communication. However, the English proficiency of the people was not satisfactory, and inefficiency in English education was blamed for the fact. In a letter dated May 21, 1959, from Karl T. Wright, Director of the MSU Advisory Group, to Kenneth Harkness of the USCAR Education Department, Wright proposed setting up a program to train high school English

teachers. In the proposal, the following justification was given.

At present the Ryukyuan teachers of English in the junior and senior high schools are not adequately proficient in English to teach the language as effectively as is necessary to meet the employment requirements of the military forces. In addition, the inadequately trained entering freshmen are a major bottleneck to implementing the University of the Ryukyus' bilingual program—an important program in developing Ryukyuan leaders capable of understanding and communicating with Americans and other English speaking peoples. (Cited from "English Language Institute for Ryukyuan Teachers")

It is clearly stated here that inability of the English teachers to train students was hindering overall development in Okinawa. Thus, it was recommended by the Michigan State University Advisory Group that the University of the Ryukyus should have a large-scale program to train 100 high school English teachers annually with the help of the Education Department of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands (hereafter GRI). However, in his letter of September 1959 to Emory W. Morris, President of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Robert Geist, an English advisor, mentioned that the proposal was turned down by the USCAR. The proposal was not accepted by the civil administration probably because it was too ambitious and would require a large sum of money.

As demonstrated by the fact that Geist wrote a letter to the Kellogg Foundation, he considered it crucial for improving English education in Okinawa to train English teachers in practical English. He had been engaged in short-term intensive training programs that were carried out during summer vacations, and he knew that such short-term programs were not sufficient. He wrote:

To make such short courses unnecessary, I

cooperated with the USCAR Education Department in its plan to create an English Language Institute in which 6 Americans would teach 100 Ryukyuan English teachers for an academic year. The Ryukyuan teachers would be given leaves of absence in order to devote their full time to study. In 5 or 6 years all Ryukyuan teachers of English would have received a year of intensive training in English. Unfortunately, the official request for necessary funds has been rejected. (Cited from a Geist's letter of September 1959)

Michigan State University tried to implement this long-term intensive high school English-teacher training program by applying for an Asia Foundation grant to start the program. However, they could not get the funds, and therefore, the program was not enacted.

In 1962, the University of the Ryukyus made another proposal aimed at English teachers training. With a help of an MSU advisory group, the university made a plan to set up an ELC, which would be under their control. The purpose of the center was as follows:

The purpose for the Center will be to provide realistic and practical programs of teaching and research of the English language, and to contribute toward the general improvement in English instruction at all school levels in Ryukyu. (Cited from "A Plan for the New English Language Center")

It appears that the plan took over the idea of an intensive teacher-training program, which had been rejected by the USCAR in 1959. According to the plan, English teachers in secondary schools were the main target of the training programs to be undertaken by the center, although undergraduate students and adults would also be given an opportunity to brush up their spoken English. The university considered it its responsibility and mission to improve English education in the Ryukyus. The center was expected to bring

about a breakthrough in ineffective English education in secondary schools for the teachers who would go through training in modern English education methods, and who at the same time would improve their own proficiency in spoken English. In his letter dated December 27, 1962, Bonner M. Crawford, Director of the USCAR Education Department, requested that Civil Administrator Shannon McCune approve the plan so that the department would be able to "confirm the organizational plan with Government of the Ryukyu Islands educational agencies involved in order to continue to implement the construction of [the] English Language Center." In his letter dated February 5, 1963, McCune also recommended that the High Commissioner approve the plan so that the university would be able to establish the language center.

Caraway's reply to McCune was, "I cannot agree to the proposal on the English Language Center" (Memorandum from the HC to the CA dated April 19, 1963). He mentioned several reasons for the decision. The first reason was that he could not accept the idea that the ELC would be "given" to the University of the Ryukyus. He considered it too much a privilege for the university to have under its control such a center sponsored with funds provided by the United States. The second reason was that he did not like the idea that he would have only one vote on the committee while the GRI would have two. The third reason was that he wanted the proposed center to be constructed on the campus of the university or in its vicinity. He considered that the proposed site in Naha would "impair, if it did not completely destroy, the value of the Center by reducing its usefulness to the University," and that its prestige would be lost in the eyes of the local people. What he wanted was that the center stimulate English education in Okinawa, and he concluded that the proposed center would not fulfill that purpose. Caraway showed his ideas about the

center, and he said that if the University of the Ryukyus would not make satisfactory arrangements, the USCAR Education Department would talk to Okinawa University, or the construction fund would be returned to Bureau of Budget. This incident shows how powerful the High Commissioner was. Caraway turned down the proposal made by the university after a long consultation with the USCAR Education Department and the MSU Advisory Group even though he knew the importance of English in Okinawa and the necessity of improving English education.

According to a confidential report submitted by James W. Ney on July 28, 1964, Caraway requested the English consultant review the establishment of the ELC, particularly its administrative organization and location. Ney believed that if he could not make a plan that was acceptable to Caraway, the plan would be terminated. If this happened, there would not be any chance to set up a language center to train secondary school English teachers. Then, there would be no improvement in English education in Okinawa. He wanted to avoid such an undesirable situation. Thus, he made a new plan he thought would be acceptable to the high commissioner. In the new plan, the center would be built in the vicinity of the university but would be independent of the university and under USCAR's control. Caraway approved the new plan, and the ELC was established in August of 1963 as an agency of USCAR. The center had the following functions and missions:

- a. To contribute in every possible way toward the improvement of the ability of the Ryukyuan people effectively to use the English language;
- b. To encourage and direct the improvement of English teaching in the Ryukyu Islands;
- c. To conduct English language seminars and instruction for teachers and students;
- d. To produce and publish English language textbooks and other publications;

- e. To cooperate with the University of the Ryukyus, the Education Department of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands, and with other organization and individuals favoring the development of the effective use of English language;
- f. To engage in such other activities as may be directed or approved by the High Commissioner. (Cited from USCAR Proclamation No. 19, "Establishing the English Language Center")

As seen here, its main purpose was to improve English education in Okinawa, and as a consequence, to improve the English ability of the Okinawan people.

The ELC carried out several programs to fulfill its purposes and missions. Some programs were not successful. USCAR News Release: 70-273 reports that 6,319 Okinawan people attended English training programs held from 1964 to 1970. Of all the participants, the biggest group was made up of military-base employees, who numbered 1,537. The number of in-service teachers and future teachers who participated in English-teaching seminars and/or English training was 544, which was one-third that of military-base employees. Since the number included future teachers, the number of teachers who had been teaching English in secondary schools might not have been that big. If this were the case, the purpose of the center was not fulfilled. This situation had been anticipated when the center was established as an agency of USCAR. According to Ney's confidential report on the center, one young Okinawan faculty member in the English Department of the university worried that the GRI Education Department would withdraw cooperation. His prognosis was correct. Ney reports that "GRI [did] not extend anything but unwilling support of the Center." This fact shows that even though the center was established with approval of the High Commissioner, it could not fulfill its mission without a support from the GRI Education Department.

Project ELES

As mentioned above, Caraway had an English education policy according to which English education in Okinawa had to be introduced in elementary school. His policy was implemented by the English Language Center in 1963 as an experimental project. The project known as English Language in Elementary Schools, or Project ELES, was initiated by Caraway. According to a report made by James Ney in November of 1963, preparation began in March of that year at the request of Caraway. In another report submitted to MSU on July 28, 1963, Ney mentioned that the high commissioner had requested consultation on the introduction of English education in elementary schools on March 1, 1963, when he met with Ney. Caraway asked him what he had to do to introduce English in the elementary school.

A pilot English language class was started at Josei Elementary School located near the ELC, in March of 1963. William W. Cobb wrote in a memo dated May 23, 1963, that the pilot class was making good progress. According to his memo, Caraway was interested in the feasibility of introducing English language instruction in fourth grade classrooms throughout the Ryukyus, or throughout the Island of Okinawa, or on some lesser scale. The program was expected to begin in September of that year. However, there were several problems to be solved: approval and cooperation of the GRI Education Department; teacher training; and creation of textbooks to be used in the classes. Training teachers with the approval of the GRI Education Department was crucial for the success of the program. English was taught in elementary schools in Okinawa from 1948 to 1952 as a regular subject. This teaching was a failure mainly because there were not enough qualified teachers. The new program should not be another failure.

In June of 1963, the Michigan State Advisory Group sent a memo to Caraway and recommended

that a small program to introduce English instruction at the fourth grade level be set up in schools in Naha in September of 1963. They did not recommend introducing English in all the elementary schools throughout the Ryukyus since it would have been too costly and there were not enough teachers who could teach spoken English. According to Ney's report, the pupils would learn to listen and speak; they would not learn to read and write. Since they would have plenty of time for reading and writing in junior and senior high school, they should concentrate on listening and speaking in elementary school. Following the recommendation, the ELC made a detailed plan, part of which is presented below.

1. Aim:

The primary aim of the English Language Program in elementary schools shall be to develop audio-oral skills of a standard suitable to the physical, mental, and emotional development of the pupils for whom they are intended. Such skills shall be a basis for learning to read and write in later stages. It is further hoped that the development of such linguistic skills along with the basic understanding of the culture of the English-speaking people, may contribute toward pupils' individual, social, and vocational competence.

2. Class Attendance:

Attendance at the classes will be voluntary with the consent of parents, teachers, and principals concerned. The instruction will be offered as curriculum enrichment, and shall be an integral part of the school work.

3. Duration of English Course:

The Elementary School English Language Program shall be for three years, ranging from grades four through six, which shall be a part of an integrated six-year English language sequence (grades four through nine). (Cited from "English Language Program in Ryukyuan Elementary School")

It should be noted here that the program was intended to contribute toward the social and vocational competence of participating pupils. Caraway considered English as a vocational tool, and it seems that his idea was reflected in this program. If a pupil who attended this program were to go to high school in the future, he or she would have learned English for nine years. If a high school graduate had had proper training in spoken English for nine years, then his or her command of English might have been such that it would meet the employment requirements of the military forces. This seems to have been what was expected of the Project ELES.

The program began in September of 1963 with ten elementary schools, and the number of participating schools rose to 19 in 1964. At every participating school, the instruction was offered as curriculum enrichment, and attendance was on a voluntary basis. Such an arrangement was made since it was feared that there might be opposition from the OTA and their supporters to this project if English were introduced as a regular subject and participation was forced on every pupil from grades four through six. The MSU advisory group and ELC were both well aware that the OTA was at the center of a nationalistic reversion movement. English instruction in elementary schools would go against the movement since English was not taught in elementary schools in Japan. The OTA did not want to have curriculum that was different from that of Japan.

English Commercial High School

Caraway initiated another plan aimed at improving the English ability of the Okinawan people. According to a memo titled "A Newly Established Trade English School" (who wrote and when it was written are unknown), the GRI "had previously intended to cultivate a businessman skilled in English. Education Department of [the] USCAR supported this

idea and appropriated \$155,000.00 in the fiscal year 1965 as school building expenses." The USCAR decided that the school would be built in Yogi in Naha City. However, the GRI Education Department opposed this location because there had been a plan to build a park on the site. Instead, the department was planning to establish a commercial high school in Ginowan City. It seems that the officer who wrote the memo took the GRI's plan into consideration and wrote:

It is, therefore, largely desirable to establish the Trade English School in Ginowan City supported by GRI. As the school administration and operation is quite the same with those of senior high schools maintained by GRI, it is strongly hoped that the Trade English School would be under the administration and operation of GRI.

However, Caraway did not accept this recommendation. *The Okinawa Times* (June 25, 1964) reports that "in the House Appropriations Committee held on March 18, 1964, he said that the school would be under administration and operation of USCAR for a while, and it would be an American style high school." Caraway was encouraging foreign investment in Okinawa, and expected a lot of American corporations would do business in Okinawa. In order for such foreign business operations to succeed, there had to be plenty of Okinawans who were good at business English. Thus, it is clear that there was a good reason to establish a school to train future employees of foreign companies. Caraway's plan of establishing an English Commercial High School in Naha City was not implemented because there was strong opposition from the OTA and the GRI.

Reactions from the Okinawans toward Caraway's Policies

While Caraway was in office from February of 1961 through July of 1964, the nationalistic reversion movement gained momentum. The OTA was at the center of the movement, and one major demand was to educate Okinawan children as Japanese citizens. They considered the High Commissioner's policies aimed at improving the English abilities of the Okinawan people as not being able to "co-exist" with their primary policy of education. They also considered Caraway's education plans to be unjustified intervention in the jurisdiction of the GRI Education Department that was responsible for managing public education.

As described above, the English Language Center was established as an agency of the USCAR. The administrative status of the ELC meant for the OTA that its training was not approved by the GRI Education Department. They thought that the center was conducting colonizing education, and it was a denial of democracy (*Ryukyu Shimpo*, July 23, 1964). Project ELES was programmed by the ELC and introduced without the approval of the GRI Education Department and the Board of Education. This was clearly a denial of the democratic process in educational policy implementation. Because of the hasty introduction of English instruction into elementary schools, the OTA considered it as being aimed at fostering elite Okinawans. They might have been concerned about the possibility that such pupils would be pro-American. Thus, they raised strong objections to the program. In the end, only a few elementary schools offered to cooperate with the program, and the ELC could not train enough elementary school teachers to teach English without the understanding and help of the GRI Education Department and the OTA. As a result, Project ELES was another failed attempt to introduce English education in elementary schools in Okinawa.

Conclusion

The fact that Caraway carried out or tried to implement his policies on English shows that he had a strong intention to improve English education in Okinawa. He was the only high commissioner that initiated such ambitious programs as establishment of the English Language Center and introduction of English instruction in elementary schools. However, his strong-arm methods of implementing his policies were not welcomed by Okinawans even though his intentions may have been good. He might have underestimated the longing of the Okinawan people for their ethnic identity as Japanese. On the other hand, Okinawans, especially the OTA, who opposed his policies were obsessed with their policy of implementing a one nation one education system in Okinawa and their policy of educating Okinawan children as Japanese citizens. They could not accept the possibility of the co-existence of Japanese and English languages in Okinawan elementary schools. Thus, it can be said that there was a mismatch of educational prioritization between Caraway and the GRI as well as Caraway and the OTA. The fact that two of Caraway's policies, Project ELES and Trade English School, were not successful shows that even the high commissioner could not enforce his policies without the consent of the Okinawan people, and he had to listen to the people's voice.

Notes:

¹ This paper is part of a larger paper, "USCAR's Language Policy and English Education in Okinawa," that the author presented at the University of the Ryukyus-UC Davis Symposium, *Cross-cultural Contact between the U.S.A. and Okinawa*, held at UC Davis on November 7 and 8, 2003.

² Michigan State University sent advisory groups to the University of the Ryukyus, founded in 1950 by the

U.S. Military Government, for seventeen years from 1951 to 1968. Each group stayed in Okinawa for two or three years and give advice to the newly established university on curriculum and university management.

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