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Multilingualism in Koegu: Interethnic Relationships and Language

Osamu HIEDA

Osaka University of Foreign Studies

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to examine multilingualism among the Koegu and to explain linguistic phenomena in light of the interethnic relationship between the Koegu people and their neighboring ethnic groups. The Koegu are a small ethnic group with a total population of only 500. Approximately 300 of them speak the Koegu (Nilo-Saharan) language as their primary language, while the remaining 200 people no longer speak Koegu but instead they speak the Kara (Afroasiatic) language as their primary language, as the result of having lived for a long time among the Kara people. The 300 people who speak Koegu as their primary language live in Kuchur village, located on the western bank of the Omo River in Southwestern Ethiopia¹). The 200 people whose primary language is Kara are dispersed in several Kara villages located to the south of Kuchur. This paper is based on data gathered during field research conducted on the Koegu-speaking population in Kuchur village²).

The Koegu society in Kuchur consists of only 300 members, and political and social power is not concentrated in any particular individual or any particular social group; it can be described as an "acephalous society" where all political decisions are reached by consensus of the members. In such a socially homogeneous society, where individuals are not organized into social strata, it is meaningless to attempt to explain linguistic phenomena by taking social class into account. It is more realistic to analyze them in light of the relationships between the Koegu and the various ethnic groups in the surrounding areas.

The ethnic groups neighboring the Koegu are: the Mursi to the north, the Hamar to the east, the Kara and Dassanetch to the south, and the Nyangatom (Bume) to the west. Among these ethnic groups alliances are precariously balanced. One group might form an alliance with another particular group at one time, and later change partners depending on political circumstances. Sometimes alliances may even be formed between former enemies. Until quite recently, the Koegu were in alliance with the Kara. But they broke that alliance and have since been in alliance with the Nyangatom. One can assume, therefore, that the Koegu have had closer relationships with the Kara and the Nyangatom than with other

peoples. For this reason, this paper will examine the interethnic relationships between the Koegu and the Kara and between the Koegu and the Nyangatom, in an attempt to explain the linguistic phenomena in Koegu society.

KOEGU, KARA AND NYANGATOM SOCIETIES

Differentiation in subsistence economy

Kuchur village, where the Koegu live, is located on the western bank of the Omo River. The Kara live in villages scattered along the Omo River to the south of Kuchur. Their population is approximately 2,000. The Nyangatom live in the savannah which spreads from the western bank of the Omo River to the border of Sudan. Their population is approximately 5,000.

The subsistence of the Koegu is based mainly on agriculture, and partly on hunting and gathering. Their staple food crop is sorghum. They can harvest sorghum twice a year by combining two methods of cultivation, namely river bank cultivation and flood plain cultivation. In addition to sorghum, they grow a few species of peas and a small quantity of maize. They store the harvested sorghum in elevated granaries.

The Koegu hunt wild animals in the riverain forest, using simple traps or rifles. However, they obtain only a small amount of game because of the scarcity of bullets. They cannot catch many animals in traps either.

On the other hand, they gather a large number of useful plants in the riverain forest at frequent intervals. These useful plants are extremely diversified in species. They are mostly consumed right on the spot during gathering, but some of them are brought back to the village to be cooked with sorghum or peas. Gathering honey is also widely practiced.

Fish from the Omo River provide the main source of protein for the Koegu. They fish throughout the year. As will be mentioned later, they not only have a rich knowledge of fish, but also a particular liking for it, as may be described as having a fishing culture.

The Koegu hardly keep any livestock. A few goats and sheep are grazed and some chickens are raised in the village. But the number is so small that one can conclude that pastoralism is not one of the constituent elements of Koegu subsistence. The Koegu insist that they have their own cattle which they place in the charge of neighboring ethnic groups for raising, but this has not been confirmed. As far as I could observe in the village, it can safely be said that livestock hardly provides a source of diet for them.

Agricultural products provide the main sources of energy intake for the Koegu. However, their culture is essentially characterized by cultural elements associated with hunting and gathering. For example, a godfather places a miniature bow and arrow made from tree twigs in the hands of a new-born baby, when he gives it a name. The literal meaning of the Koegu word "to name" is indeed "to give a bow."

When a boy has grown up, and has hunted a large animal for the first time in his life, he customarily sings a special song in front of his father. On this occasion, the father is required to entertain neighbors by serving honey mead. There are also many songs whose motifs are related to fish.

The Koegu language has a lot of specific terms for referring to wild animals and fish in detail according to their sex, size, etc. For example, it has a general term for buffalo plus nine specific terms depending on a combination of categories such as sex, size, and age. (They are: *gide* for "a young male buffalo"; *c'encela* for "a small male buffalo"; *kobor* for "an adult male buffalo"; *dimak* for "a big male buffalo"; *bush* for "an old male buffalo"; *kaura* for "a young female buffalo"; *mogosh* for "a small female buffalo"; and *carkeilban* for "an adult female buffalo"; *gogura* for "an old female buffalo.")

The same is true of fish. The Koegu have a peculiar concept, *cene* (siblings), for categorizing fish. They recognize a particular kind of fish to be the *cene* of another. These kinds of fish are generally seasonal metamorphoses of the same species, though this is not always the case. For example, they recognize the fish called *dowada* and another one, *barujuguma*, as siblings. The *dowada* and the *barujuguma* are actually seasonal metamorphoses of the same species of fish. The difference between the two is that the *dowada* has white fins while the *barujuguma* has red fins. In my field research, fifteen pairs of *cene* were recorded. Furthermore, some species of fish have different names as they grow up. A kind of catfish with the general name *kuwada* is given different names as it grows up. First it is called *worca*, then *kankaca*, and finally *purundo* (Hieda 1992a). The various facts cited above suggest that the Koegu culture is essentially characterized by cultural elements associated with hunting, gathering, and fishing.

The Kara describe their life by the expression "Cattle in the right hand and sorghum in the left hand" (Matsuda 1988: 53). Since the right is superior to the left in their concept of the universe, they consider that pastoralism is more important than cultivating. In fact, the Kara own cattle, sheep and goats. They graze sheep and goats on the foothills of mountains 10 to 20 km away from the Omo River. Cattle are placed in the charge of their neighboring ethnic group, the Hamar.

The Kara are not so dependent on cattle for their subsistence as the Hamar, who are totally dependent on them for their lives. The Hamar culture is characterized by cultural elements associated with cattle raising. On the contrary, the Kara are dependent mainly on agriculture for their existence. The Kara mainly grow sorghum on the riverbanks and in the flood plains by the Omo River, and they harvest enough crops to be self-sufficient. Furthermore, they barter surplus sorghum for livestock (Matsuda 1988).

In spite of this, they consider that cattle pastoralism is more important than agriculture. In fact, they have a rich store of customs which are related to cattle pastoralism. For example, they are named after castrated oxen, and they hold wedding ceremonies symbolized by cattle. These cultural elements of cattle pastoralism are principally identical to those of the Hamar culture. Actually, the

Kara have had a close relationship with the Hamar for a long time and they borrowed a culture which is related to cattle pastoralism from the Hamar.

The Kara are considered to have brought new agricultural technology to the lower Omo River basin, as indicated by the fact that the Koegu language has borrowed a lot of technological terms for agriculture from the Kara language. Some examples are shown below³⁾.

Koegu	Kara	Meaning
<i>haamu</i>	<i>haami</i>	cultivated land
<i>ac'aariyaa</i>	<i>c'aara</i>	to cut grass
<i>gaita</i>	<i>gaita</i>	a hoe
<i>apatiiyaa</i>	<i>pata</i>	to harvest
<i>ashakamiyaa</i>	<i>shaakuma</i>	to thresh sorghum by hand
<i>a 'dii 'diyaa</i>	<i>diismo</i>	to grind into flour

The Nyangatom can be divided into two groups according to their geographical distribution and their means of subsistence. One group lives in the region along the Omo River, and mainly cultivates crops on the riverbanks and in the flood plains for its subsistence. The other lives in the savannah to the west of the Omo River, and mainly raises livestock for its subsistence. The Nyangatom have adapted to the environment in this region by bartering products between the agricultural group and the pastoral group⁴⁾. However, their culture is characterized by cultural elements associated with cattle pastoralism. It is a typical cultural complex, the so-called "cattle complex," which can be observed in the pastoral societies of northeast Africa.

Interethnic relationships and history

It seems that the Koegu came into direct contact with the Kara only two or three generations ago. The historical occurrences are recorded by oral traditions, which have been handed down by the Kara and by the Omo-Murle, who have been absorbed by the Nyangatom as a territorial group⁵⁾. According to the Omo-Murle and Nyangatom oral traditions, the Koegu occupied the lower Omo River basin before the Kara migrated to the area from the mountainous regions located to the east of the river. After the Kara occupied the land, they started cultivating it. The Koegu, who had lost their land, began cultivating land which they now had to lease from the Kara. According to the Kara oral traditions, the Koegu had not cultivated crops before the Kara moved into the area. The Koegu started agriculture after learning agricultural technology from the Kara (Matsuda 1994: 53). The Koegu, however, have their own oral traditions to explain the origin of their agriculture. Their explanation of the origin provides us with a different version.

We can find linguistic evidence to explain the origin of agriculture among the

Koegu. As mentioned previously, the Koegu language has borrowed a lot of words related to agriculture from Kara. However, we can find some Koegu words related to agriculture which do not seem to have been borrowed from that language. These words support the idea that the Koegu people had some kind of agricultural technology before the new one was introduced by the Kara people. For instance, the Koegu words for sorghum, *ruubu* (*ishing* in Kara), and for to cultivate, *akohiyaa* (*pak'idiina* in Kara), are indigenous words.

When the Kara migrated to the Omo River basin, a relationship with the Koegu was established based on the kind of bond-partnership widely observed in various societies in the southwestern part of Ethiopia. This partnership is called *belmo* (friend) in Koegu and *bel* in Kara. The bond-partnership is established between two households which exchange commodities and gifts with each other. A Koegu man presents sorghum and honey to his Kara bond-partner, while the Kara man presents goats, sheep and rifle bullets to his Koegu bond-partner. A Koegu man sometimes cultivates, and chases birds away from, the land of his Kara bond-partner. Though they would never admit it, the Koegu are subordinate to the Kara in this bond-partnership. In fact, the cultivated land is considered to be owned by the Kara, and the Koegu are only given permission to utilize it. There is no intermarriage between the two peoples. The Kara share neither food nor drink in the same vessel with the Koegu.

The interethnic relationship, in which the Kara are superior to the Koegu, is also reflected in linguistic phenomena. The Kara language is dominant and Koegu subordinate in this region. For example, Koegu men and women without exception acquire Kara as a second language. On the other hand, the Kara seldom learn Koegu. Loan words are borrowed from Kara by the Koegu language, but not vice versa (Hieda 1993). This agrees with our linguistic knowledge that loan words are generally borrowed from a dominant language by a subordinate one.

The Koegu and the Nyangatom have been in a close relationship since February 9, 1989. Before that time the Koegu were in alliance with the Kara, and the Kara were in conflict with the Nyangatom. Therefore the Koegu people were hostile to the Nyangatom until February 1989. But one cannot conclude that the Koegu had had no contact with the Nyangatom. According to the Nyangatom oral traditions, they were in constant contact with the Koegu before the Kara migrated to the lower Omo River basin.

As mentioned previously, interethnic tensions have always existed in this region. However, the area around Kuchur village in which the Koegu, an extremely weak ethnic group, live, formed a buffer zone among larger ethnic groups. Individuals belonging to various conflicting ethnic groups freely visited Kuchur village to exchange information. When they had to travel across enemy territory, members of other ethnic groups would have Koegu men accompany them as guides.

For one or two years before the Koegu made an alliance with the Nyangatom in 1989, they had been in conflict with the Kara over land ownership⁶. The Kara intended to take the right to cultivate the land away from the Koegu, and to drive

them off. The Koegu claimed their right to own the land. At that time the Nyangatom were expanding their territory, taking full advantage of possessing a large amount of firearms from Sudan. As they expanded their territory, the Nyangatom absorbed other ethnic groups into their society. With the expansion of territory and the accompanying population pressure, the Nyangatom were forced to obtain cultivated land in the region of the lower Omo River basin. Therefore, the conflict between the Koegu and the Kara attracted the attention of the Nyangatom people, who intended to advance into the lower Omo River basin. The Koegu language has not borrowed as many words from Nyangatom as it has from Kara. It has borrowed only some words related to pastoral technology, such as "brand mark," which is *macar* in Koegu and *emacar* in Nyangatom (Hieda 1991b).

In the next section multilingualism in the Koegu society will be examined. We shall see what role the Kara and Nyangatom languages fill as second languages in the Koegu society.

MULTILINGUALISM IN THE KOEGU SOCIETY

The Koegu speak Kara (Omotic) and Nyangatom (Nilotic) as second languages in addition to their primary language, Koegu (Surmic). The Koegu and Nyangatom languages belong to the Nilo-Saharan phylum, one of the four major language phyla in Africa. In the Nilo-Saharan phylum, Koegu belongs to the Surmic language group, while Nyangatom belongs to the Nilotic. The two languages are mutually incomprehensible. The Kara language belongs to the Omotic language group in the Afroasiatic phylum. It differs structurally and genetically from both Koegu and Nyangatom. Therefore, the Kara language is not comprehensible to the Koegu or the Nyangatom. The aim of this paper is, as already stated, to examine what role the Kara and Nyangatom languages fill as second languages in the Koegu society. When minor languages come into contact with major ones, some become extinct and others are maintained. For example, the Omo-Murle language is now spoken only by nine aged persons in the lower Omo River basin, and is destined to disappear. On the other hand, the Koegu maintain the Koegu language as their primary one. Why do some minor languages become extinct, and why are others maintained? It is also within the scope of this paper to try to answer these questions.

In order to examine the above issues, the following three surveys were conducted.

Survey 1: Two hundred and eighty-six men and women (from infants to adults) were interviewed, and were asked whether they could speak and understand the Koegu, Kara and Nyangatom languages.

Survey 2: Forty-six persons were chosen from the above-mentioned two hundred and eighty-six, and were asked whether they could understand fifty selected words in the three languages. They listened to a tape recording of the fifty words, which was recorded by three native speakers of the three languages. This

survey shows the actual ability of the informants to understand the three languages, while Survey 1 shows the self-assessment of the ability which they expected to have in understanding the languages. Furthermore, the informants were asked to translate the fifty Koegu words into the Kara and Nyangatom languages. This survey shows the actual ability of the informants to speak the two languages, while Survey 1 shows the self-assessment of the ability which they expected to have in speaking the languages.

Survey 3: Thirty adult men and thirteen adult women were asked which language they switched to according to different types of listeners, and were asked which language they selected to use according to different types of conversation topics.

Language acquisition and interethnic relationships

The results obtained from Survey 1 do not show the actual linguistic competence of the Koegu people, but rather the linguistic competence which they expect to have. The following is a summary of the conclusions that can be drawn from the results of Survey 1.

All the Koegu who answered that they could speak either the Koegu, the Kara or the Nyangatom language claimed that they could also understand that language. Those who answered that they had acquired the Nyangatom language claimed to have already acquired Kara. Only one young man, who had grown up among the Nyangatom, answered that he had acquired the Nyangatom language, but not yet Kara. Those who answered that they had acquired Kara naturally answered that they had already acquired their primary language, Koegu. As to the order of language acquisition, Koegu, their primary language, came first, and then Kara, while the Nyangatom language was the last to be acquired. Thus, the Koegu can be classified into seven groups according to their acquired linguistic competence as shown in Table 1.

group (0)— Those who have not acquired either Koegu, Kara or Nyangatom.

Table 1. Group categorization according to linguistic competence

	Koegu language		Kara language		Nyangatom language	
	ability to understand	ability to speak	ability to understand	ability to speak	ability to understand	ability to speak
group (0)	—	—	—	—	—	—
group (1)	+	—	—	—	—	—
group (2)	+	+	—	—	—	—
group (3)	+	+	+	—	—	—
group (4)	+	+	+	+	—	—
group (5)	+	+	+	+	+	—
group (6)	+	+	+	+	+	+

+ : has the ability, — : does not have the ability

- group (1)— Those who can understand their primary language, Koegu, but cannot speak it. Naturally they have not yet acquired Kara or Nyangatom.
- group (2)— Those who can speak and understand Koegu, but have not yet acquired Kara or Nyangatom.
- group (3)— Those who have already acquired Koegu, and can also understand Kara, but not yet speak it. Naturally they have not yet acquired Nyangatom.
- group (4)— Those who have already acquired Koegu, and can also speak and understand Kara, but have not yet acquired Nyangatom.
- group (5)— Those who have already acquired Koegu and Kara, and can also understand Nyangatom, but not yet speak it.
- group (6)— Those who have already acquired Koegu, Kara and Nyangatom.

Tables 2 and 3 show the relation between age and language acquisition. The linguistic competence is indicated on the vertical axis and age on the horizontal axis. Table 2 shows the relation between age and language acquisition for males, and Table 3 shows the same for females. It should be noted that the ages were provided by the informants or their parents. They were apt to exaggerate their actual ages, judging from appearance. Adults in particular had a strong tendency to claim an older age. With regard to the age of informants in the younger generation, I made use of the Koegu age-set system (*haaria*) in order to estimate their ages. Members of an age-set are considered to be of the same age. For example, I selected a family with many children who had been born almost in consecutive years and luckily survived, and I used the ages of the children as a scale. When an informant answered that he belonged to the same age-set as one of the children, I could estimate the age of the informant to be the same as that of the child.

The following findings can be summarized from Tables 2 and 3. a) Boys begin

Table 2. Language acquisition (male)

group	number of informants																	
(6)																		
(5)																		
(4)																		
(3)																		
(2)																		
(1)																		
(0)																		
age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11~20	21~30	31~40	41~50	51~60	61~70	71~80	81~91~

to learn the Kara language at the age of about three, and have already acquired it at the age of about eight. This is evident from the fact that only a few boys who are more than eight years old belong to groups (0)–(3). Girls also begin to learn the Kara language, but not a few females who are more than eight years old belong to groups (0)–(3). b) Boys begin to learn the Nyangatom language at the age of about eight. Many males who are more than eight years old answered that they can speak Nyangatom. This is evident from the fact that many males who are more than eight years old belong to group (6). Some females who are more than twenty years old belong to group (6).

As mentioned before, the above findings indicate what they considered their linguistic competence to be. So, is there any discrepancy between their actual linguistic competence and what they considered it to be? If any, it will offer a hint for us to examine the role of Kara and Nyangatom as second languages in the Koegu society.

Survey 2 was intended to examine the actual linguistic competence in the languages. Fifty lexical items were randomly selected, and tape recorded in the Koegu, Kara and Nyangatom languages. In order to examine their ability to understand Kara, I had the informants listen to a tape recording in Kara and then translate it into Koegu. In order to examine their ability to speak Kara, I had the informants listen to a tape recording in Koegu and translate it into Kara. The test words were recorded by native Koegu, Kara and Nyangatom speakers, so the Koegu informants probably experienced some difficulty in understanding the Kara and Nyangatom words. The test words were limited to fifty because it was feared that the informants could not endure a longer interview. Table 4 gives the English translation of the fifty test words.

Table 5 shows the actual ability of the Koegu to understand and speak Kara. Table 6 shows the actual ability of the Koegu to understand and speak Nyangatom.

Table 3. Language acquisition (female)

group	number of informants																		
(6)							1			1	2	7	4	3	1	4	10	3	4
(5)								1			1								
(4)					3		1		1	4	1				1				
(3)	1	3	6	4	5	13	2	2	2	10	10	5	3			1	1		
(2)	1			1															
(1)	4	8	2	3	3	2													
(0)	3	1																	
age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11~ 20	21~ 30	31~ 40	41~ 50	51~ 60	61~ 70	71~ 80	81~ 90	91~

The rate of correct answers given by individual informants is indicated in percentage. Informants who are assigned identical codes in Tables 5 and 6 are the same individuals. For example, M5 in Table 5 and M5 in Table 6 are the same informant. There are some blanks in the tables because either the ability to understand or the ability to speak was not tested.

I could not examine the Kara language competence of boys and girls younger than three. They refused to answer all the questions. M1 in Table 5 repeated "I don't know" from the beginning to the end of the interview. The following findings can be summarized from Table 5.

The Koegu boys and girls whom I interviewed had already acquired a real ability to understand the Kara language by the age of about eight (note that there is no available data for boys aged eight and nine). This is evident from the fact that the boys and girls above eight years old scored more than 90%. Furthermore, they had almost acquired a real ability to speak Kara by the age of eight. This is evident from the fact that most of the boys and girls above eight years old scored more than 80%. As mentioned previously, the Koegu people consider that they should acquire actual linguistic competence in the Kara language by the age of about eight. Therefore we can conclude that there is little discrepancy between their actual linguistic competence in Kara and their self-assessment of it. We can point out, however, that Koegu men showed a stronger tendency than women to exaggerate their linguistic competence in Kara. This fact can be easily explained by social factors. The Koegu men think that they should obtain a higher linguistic competence in a second language than women because they are in closer contact with external ethnic groups.

I was not able to test the Nyangatom language acquisition of children under ten years old. Those who were not confident of their linguistic ability reacted unfavorably to the survey. Those who strongly refused to cooperate were considered not to be confident of their linguistic ability. In the survey of Nyangatom language acquisition, those who scored nearly 80% were men more

Table 4. Sample words

1 dog	2 cattle	3 ox	4 cow	5 to castrate
6 milk	7 goat	8 baboon	9 leopard	10 spot
11 claw	12 elephant	13 buffalo	14 tail	15 to hunt
16 to chase	17 bow	18 spear	19 to stab	20 meat
21 fish	22 harpoon	23 to fish	24 fish-hook	25 fish scale
26 honey	27 mosquito	28 fly	29 termite	30 tree
31 to cut	32 flour	33 sorghum	34 grass	35 bark of tree
36 branch	37 seed	38 to grow	39 field	40 to cultivate
41 to seed	42 to harvest	43 to spread to dry	44 to grind	45 to lie down
46 to sleep	47 to stand up	48 to sit down	49 to see	50 to speak

Table 5. Linguistic competence (Kara)

male			female				
informant	(age)	ability to understand (correct answer %)	ability to speak (correct answer %)	informant	(age)	ability to understand (correct answer %)	ability to speak (correct answer %)
M 1	(4)	0					
M 2	(5)	58					
				F 1	(5)	74	56
M 3	(7)	90	0	F 2	(6)	76	72
M 4	(7)	78	66	F 3	(6)	0	
				F 4	(7)	80	50
				F 5	(7)	72	50
				F 6	(8)	96	84
M 5	(10)	98	86	F 7	(9)	86	82
M 6	(10)	94	88	F 8	(9)	90	88
M 7	(10)		92	F 9	(10)		90
M 8	(10)	98	94	F10	(10)	78	68
M 9	(10)	90	70	F11	(10)	82	64
M10	(10)	96	94	F12	(12)	88	92
M11	(14)		100	F13	(15)	86	
M12	(15)		98	F14	(15)	96	94
M13	(15)		94	F15	(15)	96	94
M14	(16)	100	100	F16	(16)	88	90
M15	(16)		92	F17	(16)	88	0
M16	(18)	100	96	F18	(18)	84	88
M18	(20)	98	96	F19	(19)	94	92
M19	(27)	100	100				
M20	(28)		84	F21	(40)		98
				F22	(60)		98

than eighteen years old and only one woman, F18. Survey 1 shows that the Koegu think that they have already acquired the linguistic ability to speak Nyangatom by the age of eight. However, the Nyangatom language usage ability was quite poor, especially for those under eighteen years old. Even many of the adults more than eighteen years old did not have sufficient Nyangatom language usage ability. It is clear that there is a great discrepancy between the Koegu men's actual linguistic competence in Nyangatom and their self-assessment of it. The gap is far greater for Nyangatom than for Kara. The Koegu women had quite poor language usage ability in Nyangatom, and they also did not consider it to be sufficient. The gap

Table 6. Linguistic competence (Nyangatom)

male			female				
informant	(age)	ability to understand (correct answer %)	ability to speak (correct answer %)	informant	(age)	ability to understand (correct answer %)	ability to speak (correct answer %)
M 5	(10)	50	58				
M 6	(10)	28					
M 7	(10)	32					
M10	(10)	44	32				
M11	(14)	60	46				
M12	(15)	52		F14	(15)	40	
M13	(15)	62					
M14	(16)	72	58				
M15	(16)	30					
M16	(18)	74	76	F18	(18)	30	88
M17	(20)	86	82				
M18	(20)	80	80				
M19	(27)	64	54	F20	(25)		78
M20	(28)	42					
M21	(45)	88	86	F22	(60)	68	

between the two estimates among the Koegu women was quite small even for the Nyangatom language.

It may be misleading, however, if we consider that women are more honest than men. It is my opinion that these results reveal the unique position of Nyangatom as a second language in the Koegu society.

Now I would like to analyze the linguistic phenomena mentioned above in the light of the interethnic relationships among the Koegu, Kara and Nyangatom, which were described in the previous section. The Koegu and Kara are now hostile to each other, and the Koegu are attempting to have close ties with the Nyangatom. Historically, however, the Koegu enjoyed a close relationship with the Kara. Therefore the Kara language is well established as a second language in the Koegu society. That is why the Koegu are likely to acquire linguistic competence in the Kara language at such an early age. In addition, men and women have acquired linguistic competence in Kara by about the same age, and there is little difference in the Kara language competence between men and women. Also, since Kara is no longer a prestigious language in the Koegu society, no discrepancy can be observed between their actual linguistic competence and self-assessment of it.

On the other hand, it is only recently that the Koegu have established a close relationship with the Nyangatom. Therefore the Nyangatom language is not

mature as a second language in the Koegu society. However, it is now a prestigious language. The Koegu have been trying to form a close alliance with the Nyangatom, while they break their alliance with the Kara. In the Koegu society, where political participation is restricted to men, men are under pressure to rapidly acquire a second language in order to be in communication with other ethnic groups. Consequently the Koegu men have to acquire Nyangatom and they actually have done so at an earlier age than women. That is why men have a higher linguistic competence in the Nyangatom language than women. Moreover, a larger discrepancy can be observed between the men's actual competence in Nyangatom and their self-assessment of it than in the case of women.

The following conclusions can be drawn regarding the role of Kara and Nyangatom as second languages in the Koegu society.

- a) Whereas Kara is well established as a second language, Nyangatom is not mature in the Koegu society.
- b) Whereas Kara has lost its prestigious status, Nyangatom is now a prestigious language in the Koegu society.

The social positions of the two languages in the Koegu society can explain the following linguistic phenomena: men and women acquire Kara at about the same age; little discrepancy can be observed between actual linguistic competence and self-assessment of it either for men or women; men acquire Nyangatom at an earlier age than women; a larger discrepancy can be observed between men's actual competence in Nyangatom and their self-assessment of it than in case of the women.

Language use and interethnic relationships

The aim of Survey 3 is to examine which of the three languages the Koegu switch to according to different types of listeners and topics. The informants were thirty men (fourteen years old or older) and thirteen women (fifteen years old or older).

Table 7 illustrates which language the Koegu choose and use according to type of listener. Since the Koegu language is primary, and all of the informants

Table 7. Language use (listeners)

Types of listeners	language chosen and number of informants (male: 30)		language chosen and number of informants (female: 13)	
	Kara	Nyangatom	Kara	Nyangatom
men of the same generation	30	26	13	2
women of the same generation	30	3	13	3
men of an older generation	30	14	13	3
women of an older generation	30	2	13	3
men of a younger generation	30	1	13	3
women of a younger generation	29	0	13	3

answered that they use it with all types of listeners, it is omitted from Table 7. The listeners were classified into six types in relation to the speaker: men who belong to the same generation, women who belong to the same generation, men who belong to an older generation, women who belong to an older generation, men who belong to a younger generation and women who belong to a younger generation. This classification is valid since there is no social class in the Koegu society. It is impossible to classify people according to social class. The informants answered that when they speak to the Kara and Nyangatom, they would preferably use either the Kara or Nyangatom language according to the listener.

Major results of Survey 3 are as follows. All 30 men answered that they use the Kara language with men and women who belong to the same generation. While twenty-six men answered that they use the Nyangatom language with men who belong to the same generation, only three men answered that they use it with women who belong to the same generation. The following findings can be summarized from Table 7.

- a) The Kara language is used by the Koegu men and women for all types of listeners.
- b) The Koegu men frequently use Nyangatom when listeners belong to the same generation, but they seldom use it with female listeners or listeners who belong to a younger generation than theirs.
- c) The Koegu women seldom use Nyangatom, regardless of the type of listener.

What we should note is that the Koegu men use Nyangatom more frequently with listeners of the same generation than they do with those who belong to an older generation. This fact suggests that Nyangatom is not a polite language and it is used by the Koegu men in order to raise their prestige. They seldom use it with female listeners or those who belong to a younger generation than theirs, since they have no need to display their prestige towards such listeners.

Table 8 illustrates which language the Koegu switch to according to the topics they talk about. The informants are the same as those appearing in Table 7. The following five topics were chosen: girlfriends (boyfriends for female informants), politics, daily work, daily meals and gossip. For example, twenty-eight men use Nyangatom when they talk about politics, while no man uses it when talking about girlfriends. The following findings can be summarized from Table 8.

- a) Kara is used for all types of topics, since it is well established as a second language.
- b) The Nyangatom language is frequently used for topics of politics and gossip.

Almost the same response was given by both men and women in this survey. Even though women seldom use Nyangatom, they consider that they should use it for topics of politics and gossip. Gossip plays a particular role in the Koegu society, where political decisions are reached not only when men are discussing them in political meetings, but also when they are chatting over tea or during a meal. In such a small society as the Koegu, individuals are inextricably bound by its politics. Discussions about politics inevitably center around rumors associated

Table 8. Language use (topics)

Topics	language chosen and number of informants (male: 30)		
	Koegu	Kara	Nyangatom
girlfriend	30	29	0
politics	30	30	28
daily work	30	30	1
daily meals	30	30	2
gossip	30	30	28

Topics	language chosen and number of informants (female: 30)		
	Koegu	Kara	Nyangatom
boyfriend	13	13	1
politics	13	13	12
daily work	13	13	0
daily meals	13	13	2
gossip	13	13	12

with individuals. Therefore it can be concluded that the Nyangatom language is used by the Koegu especially when they talk about politics.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Multilingualism among the Koegu has certainly played a major role in their survival under the difficult circumstances created by hostile interethnic relationships. It is also noteworthy that in the process the Koegu language has been preserved. The Kara were able to adapt themselves to the severe natural environment by making use of the Koegu who were subordinate to them. They did not assimilate the Koegu into their society, but have kept them out of it. On the other hand, the Omo-Murle were assimilated by the Nyangatom. Due to the complete shift to Nyangatom, only nine elderly members of the Omo-Murle still speak the Omo-Murle language (Hieda 1991a). The strategy for survival adopted by the Nyangatom is to expand their territory. As they did so, the Nyangatom assimilated many ethnic groups such as the Omo-Murle into their society. In this region probably a lot of languages such as Omo-Murle have become extinct. When two languages come into contact with each other, it is not the structure of the individual language but the interethnic relationship between the two societies that determines the fate of the languages.

This paper has also illustrated that though Kara was established as a second language in the Koegu society, no language shift occurred from Koegu to Kara. The various linguistic phenomena observed in this paper can be well explained by

the interethnic relationship between the Koegu and Kara people on the one hand, and between the Koegu and Nyangatom on the other. I believe that the linguistic phenomena observed in the lower Omo River basin should be described and analyzed in light of the entire interethnic relationship among all the ethnic groups in the region, not only among the Koegu, Kara and Nyangatom.

The scope of this paper, however, is limited to the interethnic relationships among the Koegu, Kara and Nyangatom.

NOTES

- 1) Before they established a village in Kuchur, the Koegu lived scattered along the banks of the Omo River in small groups composed of a nuclear family. When the author conducted field research, they happened to have gathered in Kuchur village in order to cope with a threat from the neighboring ethnic groups. Thus, they were faced by many problems, such as the great distance between the cultivated fields and the village. They were forced to abandon some of the fields. If the threat had disappeared, they would preferably have lived scattered. Now they live scattered into small groups again along the banks of the Omo River.
- 2) The field research on which this paper is based was a part of the research project, "Comparative Studies on the Systems of Subsistence Economy in North-East Africa: Folk Models and Their Applicability," headed by Dr K. Fukui at the National Museum of Ethnology. The project was sponsored by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (No. 63041135) of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture. The field research was conducted from December 1987 to February 1988, from January to March 1989, and from January to March 1990.
- 3) See Hieda (1993) for details about Kara loan words in the Koegu language.
- 4) See Tornay (1981) for details about the subsistence of the Nyangatom.
- 5) See Hieda (1991a) for details about the oral traditions of the Omo-Murle, and Matsuda (1994) about the oral traditions of the Kara.
- 6) On February 9, 1989, a meeting was held to proudly announce the alliance between the Koegu and Nyangatom in Kuchur village.

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