

Interview with DE transcript

[BR1-21]

- 1 Brad: Alright, great. Um, so, today is August 2nd 2016. The time is 9:54 AM. So, I just have, uh, a couple personal questions, if that's okay with you.
- 2 DE: Okay.
- 3 Brad: Um- Which, uh, village did you grow up in?
- 4 DE: Yeah, I, I grew up in (.) The name of the village is Tamworoaloang in Kittu.
- 5 Brad: Mmm. Okay.
- 6 DE: Yeah, so, the village name is Tamworoaloang.
- 7 Brad: Okay. Uh, how long did you live there?
- 8 DE: Well, uh, since I was born I, I, I lived there. And then, uh, I grew up, went to school. Then in 1977, I went out to, to high school for four years, then I came back, and stayed there ever since.
- 9 Brad: Oh, okay. Wow. Um, how old are you, if you don't mind?
- 10 DE: Now?
- 11 Brad: Yeah.
- 12 DE: I'm 54.
- 13 Brad: Okay. Um, where did you go to high school?
- 14 DE: Xavier High School-
- 15 Brad: Oh, okay.
- 16 DE: (.) in Chuuk.
- 17 Brad: Oh, okay. Nice. Um, have you ever traveled outside of the FSM before?
- 18 DE: Uh, yes, uh, I, first I went to the Marshalls through Natural. And then uh, after that I- I went to Guam. Then just recently last year I was in the Philippines for six months-
- 19 Brad: Mmm. Okay.
- 20 DE: (.) for a training.

- 21 Brad: Mmm.
- 22 DE: So, like I've been to the Philippines, to Guam, and then to Majuro, to Marshalls.
- 23 Brad: Mmm okay. Great. Um, So, when you were growing up, um, what language did you speak at home with your family?
- 24 DE: Pohnpeian.
- 25 Brad: Um, and then at school, like elementary school?
- 26 DE: Elementary school at the same, at Pohnpeian. Um, we were thinking like taking, uh, English, but not really. But like, what do they call that? (.)
- 27 Brad: Mmm.
- 28 DE: And then when I went to high school, then that's when, uh, we really-
- 29 Brad: Okay.
- 30 DE: Yeah.
- 31 Brad: And so at Xavier was it only English there, or-
- 32 DE: Yes, we were not supposed to speak our own languages. We were not allowed. In fact, if, uh, they find speaking our own language, then we, they give us, uh, they reprimand us and today we take like, we work in the afternoon, and then also, uh, take laps around the field if we speak our own languages. We were not allowed to speak, uh, so we're only English, Chuukese, we were, we were (.) it was like uh, we took Chuukese for how many]. Our first year. We were supposed to learn the Chuukese language. Then as part of the program we go out into the communities and live with parents and you know, these Chuukese people so we, we can learn the language.
- 33 Brad: Okay. How well do you speak Chuukese now? Or c- do you remember any of the Chuukese-
- 34 DE: Yeah some. Only some.
- 35 Brad: Some? Okay.
- 36 DE: Yeah. Only some.
- 37 Brad: So were you living in the dorms then at Xavier?
- 38 DE: Yes.
- 39 Brad: Or- but you also had a family that you-
- 40 DE: Yeah, yeah.
- 41 Brad: Okay.
- 42 DE: As part of our Chuukese program, language program-
- 43 Brad: Oh okay.

- 44 DE: We go out during weekends and live with the families, the sponsors.
- 45 Brad: Okay, okay. Um, what did you think of the English-only at Xavier part? Like when you were a student.
- 46 DE: Yeah, it was, it was uh, at least for us, it was good because we wanted to learn the language. Especially grammar and also uh, English literature. As part of the literature program we were always writing essays and term papers, like this. So uh, it was, you know (.) for somebody to survive and to learn something at Xavier, we really need to speak English.
- 47 Brad: Hm.
- 48 DE: Mmm.
- 49 Brad: Okay. Um, and then when you came back, did you uh, go to college anywhere?
- 50 DE: I was, I just attended the old, the former community college of Micronesia.
- 51 Brad: Oh okay.
- 52 DE: Mmm.
- 53 Brad: Um, and what languages were used there?
- 54 DE: English also.
- 55 Brad: English, okay. Mmm.
- 56 DE: No, only, I had only two Pohnpeian teachers but the rest were Americans, uh Indians-
- 57 Brad: Okay.
- 58 DE: Yeah.
- 59 Brad: Uh, did any of them speak Pohnpeian at all?
- 60 DE: No.
- 61 Brad: Okay, just English.
- 62 DE: Nah.
- 63 Brad: Okay. Um-
- 64 DE: Oh something, I sorry. One year, for one year at Xavier, at that time we had this Japanese scholastic from, from Japan. So for one year he taught us Japanese.
- 65 Brad: Oh okay.
- 66 DE: It was like uh, elective course for us. But uh, we (.) I, I took Japanese but I, it was really hard for me to learn it, you know that (.) but only the basic ones, at least for the grades. We did it for, for the grades but not to learn. (laughs)
- 67 Brad: Okay got you. (laughs)
- 68 DE: Yeah.

- 69 Brad: Um, so do you know any other Micronesian languages? Besides Pohnpeian and a little bit of Chuukese?
- 70 DE: Uh no.
- 71 Brad: Okay.
- 72 DE: Sure. (laughs)
- 73 Brad: It's okay. (laughs)
- 74 DE: Okay, they speak Pohnpeian. And then those that are already grown, grown up they, they also speak English.
- 75 Brad: Mmm.
- 76 DE: And then Chuukese also, 'cause two of my, three of my kids (.) one is living in Chuuk, then two they went to school uh-one went to Xavier and then one went to this new college that the bishop, the Caroline College and Pastoral Institute. It's a college for the diocese uh run by Chaminade University.
- 77 Brad: Mm, okay.
- 78 DE: [crosstalk 00:07:44] so (.) so three of my kids they are just speak Chuukese.
- 79 Brad: Oh okay. Gotcha. Um, when you were, when they were little, um what languages did you want them to learn?
- 80 DE: Uh, only Pohnpeian.
- 81 Brad: Pohnpeian? Okay.
- 82 DE: Yeah.
- 83 Brad: Um, do you think it's um, or what, what is your view about uh, English here on the island? Do you think it's important for people to know? Not important? Um, a bad thing? A good thing?
- 84 DE: Yeah, yeah. Okay uh (.) it seems that in Pohnpei, or should I say in FSM, our uh, the only language that can connect us is English. Because Pohnpeian is different from Chuukese and Yapese and uh, Kosraean. So in order for us to communicate uh, we need to speak English, so that means English is our, what should I say (.) is it second or it's like, it's it's the language that uh make us (.) understand each other. So I would say that it is really important and it's a must that we learn English so that we can live together as a nation as the FSM government, in order for to understand each other and this we need to learn and speak English.
- 85 Brad: Mmm, okay. So it's good for um, talking to other people and joining together and-
- 86 DE: Yeah, yes.

- 87 Brad: Okay. Um, is Pohnpeian important or a good thing? Bad thing? For the island (.)
- 88 DE: Uh, it should be. It should be pohn- at least as a Pohnpeian, as a Pohnpeian I would say that it is, it's really important and I (.) I may be wrong but I think the younger generation, they're losing some of the languages sadly. Some of the Pohnpeian (.) some are mixing together English and Pohnpeian. It's like this uh, when, when, when they say, "Hey, turn on the lights." They speak Pohnpeian but they turn on the lights so (.) so it's uh, it's really important and I think we should do something about it. About the losing some of the important culture and this uh, this uh (.) especially language in Pohnpei.
- 89 Brad: Well what are somethings in specific that the young people are losing with Pohnpeian?
- 90 DE: Well, when they go out to school or to, to work, to work outside the FSM or Pohnpei and when they come back they (.) when they speak they, it seems that some of the, they, they completely forgot the language. Uh, or they're mixing the languages so (.) I would say that uh especially, maybe after 20 years we might not be speaking Pohnpeian anymore.
- 91 Brad: Okay. Um (.) how do you think you can change that? And if you could fix it, how would you fix it?
- 92 DE: Yeah. Uh (.) I, it's hard to (.) but I think, I personally think that the, the schools. The schools in Pohnpei specifically the elementary schools or the secondary schools they, they should incorporate something with the curriculum.
- 93 Brad: Mmm.
- 94 DE: And, and uh, not only the culture or custom of Pohnpei but, and the language also.
- 95 Brad: Mmm.
- 96 DE: The language side so that students will learn, not only learn English but also learn their own language so that they can uh (.) so that's, I think uh, it should start within the family. The immediate, their immediate family and then extend to the schools there.
- 97 Brad: Okay.
- 98 DE: That's my personal feeling, yeah.
- 99 Brad: So the school should be teaching the language?
- 100 DE: Yeah.

- 101 Brad: Um, so you (.) are you are a Deacon in the Catholic church.
Uh, how long have you been a Deacon?
- 102 DE: I was ordained September 2006, or September # it will be
ten years.
- 103 Brad: Oh wow.
- 104 DE: Yeah.
- 105 Brad: Um, and, and your role as a Deacon, what languages do you
use typically when, you know, talking with parishioners or in
that church-
- 106 DE: Pohnpei, Pohnpeian.
- 107 Brad: Pohnpeian? Okay. Um, what do you think the uh, churches
role with language and culture is?
- 108 DE: Yeah. Well I always believe and I will continue to believe that
the, the church should also take part as I, I said the schools.
They should take part. I think the church should also take
part. The church should continue to help the people not,
not only to grow spiritually but also physically and mentally.
Men- mentally meaning they should learn something uh, not
only about the faith or about god but also about their own,
you know, their own origins. They're uh, what they grew up
and also the language that they, they speak and (.)
- 109 Brad: Mmm.
- 110 DE: Mmm.
- 111 Brad: Um, how can the church do this? Like, do you have a, an
idea of a program or something that you know, the church
can implement?
- 112 DE: Yeah, like in our catechetical programs, uh teaching about
the faith and also about the sacraments and this. I think we
should uh, help with the (.) the language aspect of the, that
because some of these Catholics, some of, some of us, the
Deacons, we also when we speak, we speak like babies. Like
some young, young children. In Pohnpei there are different
uh (.) when you sp- you're speaking to uh, a nahnmwarki you
should speak this way. Or to your friend you should speak
this way. Or to little kids you should speak this way.
- 113 Brad: Mmm.
- 114 DE: So I think uh, yeah. I think with the church can come up with
programs that will you know, preserve, preserve the language.
Hm. Not only the, the spiritual growth of the people but also
their uh, physical and health.

- 115 Brad: Mmm. Okay, um, how well do you know the, you know, the higher languages?
- 116 DE: Not really. Not really.
- 117 Brad: Mmm.
- 118 DE: But when I speak to, like the chiefs and the nahnmwarkis then I, I try my best to, you know, to remember what I was taught, that I was taught and then so I used it uh, hm.
- 119 Brad: How did you learn it? Who taught you?
- 120 DE: Well I, I, it came down from my parents and also from m-some, some friends that I had along the way.
- 121 Brad: Hm.
- 122 DE: And also uh, as part of our diaconate training we were also learning how to speak with, you know, the higher (.) um, so (.)
- 123 Brad: Mmm. So is that an important aspect of your job? To know how to, to use the high language uh, appropriately with people that you interact with?
- 124 DE: It should be, yeah. For me it should be to um (.)
- 125 Brad: Hm, okay. Um (.) so some other people that I talked to um, brought up the word 'Respect' a lot. Um, especially with Pohnpeian. Um, what, what are your views on like, how you show respect in Pohnpei and how that in- correlates with, or how that interacts with the language? Um, cause you talked about the high language and that's a way to show respect um (.)
- 126 DE: Yeah. Well, with regards to respect (.) I, I am different from these other people when, when it comes to respect because uh, I believe that that word respect is uh, it should be for everybody.
- 127 Brad: Mmm.
- 128 DE: We, we, or I should not separate or what did I say? How should I say? When I, I should treat everybody with the same respect that they deserve, for they (.) so I think uh, at least for me (.) I try my best to show respect to everybody. Uh, if the high-ranking, if it's these high-ranking or the, the, the nahnmwarkis, I do that also. But for our, so for younger ones I, I try my best to do it also. So as not to (.) how should I put it? Let people think that I respect this guy more than this guy.
- 129 Brad: Mmm, okay.

- 130 DE: I, I believe that I should treat them and respect them equally. They, they should be equal. Yeah. There shouldn't be any like, discrimination or what, between the younger ones or the low, low people and the high, high, high-class people.
- 131 Brad: Mmm. Okay. Um (.)
- 132 DE: 'Cause (pause) we are all created by god. We were created in his image. So I believe that I should respect everybody uh, the same. It shouldn't be uh (.) even if they're nahnmwarki or small ones, but they're, we're all created by god and we were all created in his image. So we should uh, respect uh-
- 133 Brad: Okay.
- 134 DE: Mmm.
- 135 Brad: Um, do you feel that you can be equally respectful using English versus Pohnpeian?
- 136 DE: In speaking to people?
- 137 Brad: Yeah.
- 138 DE: Yes.
- 139 Brad: Okay.
- 140 DE: Yes, yes.
- 141 Brad: Okay. Um so (.) a little bit different train of thought here. Um, but in what situations in daily life would you use English over Pohnpeian?
- 142 DE: Hm well (.) like, there are times that uh (.) like in, in gatherings. In gatherings of the community or something uh (.) if we have to say like, if we have to speak Pohnpeian or speak English, it depends on, on the context of what is going on. Like if it's a meeting with mixed, or if it's a workshop with this, mixed people or if it's all Pohnpeian then (.) when it's all Pohnpeian then we speak Pohnpeian. But when we're like a mixed group it's better to speak English so that everybody uh (.) we understand each other.
- 143 Brad: Mmm.
- 144 DE: So it depends on the context of um (.)
- 145 Brad: Would there ever be a situation when, if you were at a group with all Pohnpeians that you would speak English with them?
- 146 DE: Say yes, in some cases we do that also.
- 147 Brad: Mmm. Um, why is that?
- 148 DE: As I said, for the younger generator- generation, it is easier for them to speak English than Pohnpeian.
- 149 Brad: Mmm. Okay.

- 150 DE: Yeah, so it's uh, it's easier to conduct uh, the meeting or workshop (.) anything, in English than Pohnpeian.
- 151 Brad: Okay, okay. Um, so you said, like, again that the, the young people uh, you know, have this mixed language.
- 152 DE: Yeah.
- 153 Brad: Is that only in young kids living in Kolonia? Or do you think that's all over the island?
- 154 DE: All over the island.
- 155 Brad: Mmm.
- 156 DE: Mmm.
- 157 Brad: Um, and where, where does that come from? Like the, the school or other sources?
- 158 DE: Yes so, okay. I think the first is school. But then there are families that also they (.) even that they're Pohnpeian, but they don't speak Pohnpeian at their house they speak English. So it's, it's, it came from that also. From school, gong abroad for school and this. Then also within the family. They chose, they choose to speak English instead of Pohnpeian.
- 159 Brad: Mmm.
- 160 DE: So I know, I know some families that, at- at home they don't speak Pohnpeian. They speak English. That's also part of, so that the students, their children can learn English and then when they go out for like education it will be easier for them.
- 161 Brad: Hm, okay. So it's all about getting a good education.
- 162 DE: Yes mmm.
- 163 Brad: You know, a good job later.
- 164 DE: Yeah.
- 165 Brad: Mmm. Interesting.
- 166 DE: Hm. They- uh (.) there are (.) oh oh, like, the news. The newspapers (.) sorry. And then there are like at least for me I, I, I read the newspapers and then I also read the books that are written by some people about the history about these I, I- one of my teachers in high school was my favorite friend, Frank Isles. I got to go see this (.)
- 167 Brad: And those would be in, in English typically? These papers-
- 168 DE: Yes.
- 169 Brad: Okay. Um (.) did you ever um, learn as part of schooling how to write Pohnpeian using the like, official government writing way? Official orthography?

- 170 DE: During our time when we were still in elementary we were, we were taught only like uh (.) not writing. Yeah I think it's not writing. It's also like, or a part of the (.) hist- history or Pohnpei and also the customs, and you know, the customs and their cultures that we should learn. The, the way to speak or so to speak to people. Uh and what else? There was this program on (.) was it on (.) reading. Reading Pohnpeian. I cannot remember if we were taught how to write um (.)
- 171 Brad: Okay.
- 172 DE: Mmm.
- 173 Brad: Um, do you- what are some things that you read in Pohnpeian? Like are there many things written in Pohnpeian that people read typically? I know the bible, it's a common one.
- 174 DE: Beside the bible what else? (laughs) Hm (.) well like this, short-stories written in Pohnpeian for like for, these myths] and also stories about, about Pohnpei, about when it was, when they started the (.) so but this is all like short-stories. Not really uh, like a, a book or what. Uh and short-stories on different topics and, and how, the, how Pohnpei was uh, came to be. Those boats that came in and then found # so it's uh (.) I think those are the things that I can remember reading but not uh, not really like, like this a book. Like (.)
- 175 Brad: Okay. Um if someone, if someone wrote a book in Pohnpei do you think people would read it here?
- 176 DE: Sure. Yeah, I think so. I think they would read it here.
- 177 Brad: Okay, great. Um well those are all the, the questions that I have. Do you have any other comments you'd like to share about Pohnpeian or English or you know, how people use it or your opinions about them or not?
- 178 DE: Yeah. No my, my only concern is (.) or like, what are you, want is? I wanted uh (.) I want people, like Pohnpeians to treat the language, languages, English and Pohnpeian (.) equally.
- 179 Brad: Mmm.

- 180 DE: They're both important. Plus one, Pohnpeian so, my roots. And then English when I learn it shows that I, that, you know for me to communicate with other people I need English. So I think it should be (.) we should treat it uh, equally important. One will show my roots and then one will show that as I am growing up I learn something else to help me live. So I think that's all I (.)
- 181 Brad: Okay.
- 182 DE: I don't know if I make sense or what but uh-
- 183 Brad: This is very good. Thank you so much.
- 184 DE: No problem.