

Interview with JN transcript

[BR1-29]

- 1 Brad: OK, so today is Monday, July 24th 2017. The time is 12:56 pm. Location: Pohnpei.
- 2 JN: I'm 26.
- 3 Brad: 26? Um, and where did you grow up? Like, where were you born?
- 4 JN: I was born and raised in Pohnpei until I was 18, and then I moved out to the States.
- 5 Brad: OK. Um, and what part of Pohnpei did you grow up in?
- 6 JN: Uh, we call it the Dolonier, Nett.
- 7 Brad: OK.
- 8 JN: Yeah, that's pretty much where I grew up.
- 9 Brad: OK. Uh, where did you go to school? Elementary school, high school.
- 10 JN: Elementary school, I think I started out at a K-5, and then after that, I went to Pohnpei Catholic School for elementary school.
- 11 Brad: OK.
- 12 JN: And for high school, I went to a Southern Baptist school called uh Calvary Christian Academy.
- 13 Brad: OK. And both of those are located in Kolonia?
- 14 JN: Uh, yeah, yeah they actu- (.) they're both technically located in Kolonia.
- 15 Brad: Um, and so did you travel at all as a kid? Outside of Pohnpei?
- 16 JN: Uh, let's see. None (.) my memories of traveling are not (.) were not a lot, so we- (.) not, not really. I only have pictures that show that we went on vacation and stuff. But, n- (.) they were not very often and I don't really remember a lot of it.
- 17 Brad: OK. OK. Um.

- 18 JN: And, when you say kid, you mean just like grammar school.
19 Brad: Yeah, so like before you moved off island. Like up to 18.
20 JN: Oh, OK. Uh, yeah I went to Guam quite regularly.
21 Brad: OK.
22 JN: 'Cause I had braces, so I had to go h (.) change them every couple of months.
23 Brad: OK.
24 JN: And I had the opportunity to go to Japan, uh for two weeks for Japanese language conference. And then I also went on a program called Close Up and I visited the whole West Co (.) West (.) no East Coast of uh, the United States.
25 Brad: OK. Um, and how long were you there?
26 JN: The United States?
27 Brad: Yeah.
28 JN: Uh, I think it was also around 2–3 weeks.
29 Brad: OK.
30 JN: Yeah.
31 Brad: OK, um yeah. So, what was the first language that you spoke at home?
32 JN: Pohnpeian, yeah, but it was also English, as well. Like they (.) they mixed them both.
33 Brad: OK. So you grew up speaking English? Like was there like a time when it started or was it always (.)
34 JN: Yeah there was certainly a time when I started, I think it was when I started school, that's when I started to learn English. And then my parents started speaking English to me. I don't (.) I don't really remember an exact time when I just was thinking, oh yeah they're speaking English to me, but it just came, yeah. I think it was both.
35 Brad: OK. Do you (.) do you remember the experience of learning English? What that was like?
36 JN: Uh, I remember certain parts of learning English, for example, reading.
37 Brad: OK.
38 JN: I wasn't good at reading at all.
39 Brad: OK.
40 JN: So reading was difficult, but as far as speaking it, it just came naturally at some point.
41 Brad: OK. And so you (.) so in school then, did you use mostly English, or Pohnpeian, or?

- 42 JN: Oh yeah, all the schools I went to were private schools so we
(.) they were required to speaking English.
- 43 Brad: OK. And how (.) how did the teachers enforce that?
- 44 JN: The teachers, um, well they would always speak English, for
one. And uh, I don't have the recollection of somebody actu-
ally speaking Pohnpeian and them (.) and then the teacher
correcting them to speak English. But I think English was
just a default and all the kids just knew it so they just spoke
in English.
- 45 Brad: OK.
- 46 JN: Yeah. But I don't remember (.) I don't know exactly how
the teachers would enforce it 'cause everything was just in
English and nobody (.) there wasn't anything (.) uh, nobody
spoke Pohnpeian.
- 47 Brad: OK.
- 48 JN: From what I remember.
- 49 Brad: OK, and what do you think about that? Having education
in English, like and your experience with it?
- 50 JN: Uh, in terms of what? Like uh (.)
- 51 Brad: Well in terms of it (.) or in terms of it not being in Pohnpeian,
or another language?
- 52 JN: I think for Pohnpeians, and Micronesians, just in general, I
think learning the English language is really important. I
think it opens a lot of doors and I think all (.) I was actually
thinking about this a long time ago. I think uh, it also kind
of changes your (.) kind of gives your mind a little bit of
flexibility. Like, I notice that a lot of Pohnpeians that (.)
that have a good command of the English language, have
um, I don't want to say Americanized, but I (.) I see that
they're (.) they're the kind of people that would go to the
States and they adapt really easily and uh they just have
different mindsets than the local people. So, I think in that
sense, I really think it's really important (.)
- 53 Brad: OK.
- 54 JN: (.) to learn the language.
- 55 Brad: OK. It (.) how do you see those mindsets being different?
Besides like being almost like Americanized, but like can you
give me like a concrete example of that?

- 56 JN: Yeah, um, so for example, the employees that my father uh, hire, um I notice that some of the most uh disengaged employees, uh, people that are really hard to motivate, are the ones that don't really have a good command of the English language. I don't know if that's correlated to having a really great education or anything. But I notice that the ones that do uh have a good command of the language are more flexible in their mindset and they (.) they uh, yeah they don't uh (.) they listen to management a little more, from my experience anyway. That's what I've seen, yeah.
- 57 Brad: OK. Cool. Um, yeah so are you (.) you said earlier that you um went to Japan. So do you speak Japanese as well?
- 58 JN: Yeah I speak a little bit of Japanese, I'm not fluent yet but (.)
- 59 Brad: OK.
- 60 JN: Yeah.
- 61 Brad: And, and where did you learn that?
- 62 JN: I (.) there was a Japanese teacher that started (.) there was a Japanese couple that lives on the island, so they started teaching in high (.) my high school. I took it as a elective and since then I studied it.
- 63 Brad: OK. And why did you take it as an elective? Like what was your interest in learning Japanese?
- 64 JN: Well, at first it was just the simple fact that there were not many electives that I was interested in. It was either calligraphy or um, something with computers. And I didn't want to do either of those. So I decided to take a language.
- 65 Brad: OK.
- 66 JN: But then I developed a genuine interest in it after I started becoming good at it.
- 67 Brad: OK. And what interests you now?
- 68 JN: About Japanese? I love (.) I love everything about the Japanese culture. I also like grew up watching anime, so their entertainment as well. Uh, Japanese food as well. And ever since, yeah, since I went to Japan I definitely like Japan (.) everything Japanese a lot more. @
- 69 Brad: OK. Um, do you find it useful to have Japanese (.) like for people to living here in Pohnpei?

- 70 JN: Um, useful? I would not (.) I cannot think of many instances where you would use the language, but it definitely, like in the long term, it definitely is useful. Example, it's really good if you can actually say that you're fluent in Japanese. Something that I wish I could say, at this point in time. But, um, yeah just a lot of Micronesians go to Guam or any other place and they could just say that they learned (.) that they know Japanese.
- 71 Brad: Mmm
- 72 JN: That (.) that'd be really great for them. Also I think uh, there are Japanese tourists that come every now and then, so it's really good to know the language, of course.
- 73 Brad: Mmm
- 74 JN: Yep.
- 75 Brad: Um, do you know any other languages besides those three?
- 76 JN: I know Dutch, cause I've been living in the Netherlands for two years.
- 77 Brad: OK.
- 78 JN: Uh, I'm still not fluent yet. My goal is to be fluent next year, in March. And yeah, that's pretty much it.
- 79 Brad: OK. Um, yeah so when you're back here in Pohnpei, um, where do you use Pohnpeian?
- 80 JN: Hm. Uh, it's basically everywhere. Back home it's both Pohnpeian and English. Um, yeah it's either at home, @ everywhere actually.
- 81 Brad: OK.
- 82 JN: With (.) with locals.
- 83 Brad: OK.
- 84 JN: Yeah. And people that I would think that just don't use English that much.
- 85 Brad: Um, is there a place where you definitely use English?
- 86 JN: Definitely use English? Um, actually on the island, uh I can't think of any place. @ No, I cannot think of any place #
- 87 Brad: OK.
- 88 JN: 'Cause I'm not in school anymore, so.
- 89 Brad: OK. So, in school is the place where you would mostly speak English before?
- 90 JN: Yeah. There are certain situations where I do speak English because it kind of seems silly, but I speak (.) I dream in English.
- 91 Brad: OK.

- 92 JN: I speak English more (.) better than I actually do than my mother tongue. I don't know (.) I think it's just because um I never had the opportunity to learn my language as much as I did uh in, in different aspects as I did (.) as I did with the English language. You know there's no school for Pohnpeian, and the (.) I studied the (.) basically English grammar since yeah, til like two years into college and everything, so.
- 93 Brad: OK.
- 94 JN: Yeah. I don't know why, but there are certain situations where I uh, actually speak English as a default because I just express myself better in that way. And I can ask questions better, as well.
- 95 Brad: OK.
- 96 JN: Yeah.
- 97 Brad: Do you think that there should be that kind of education in Pohnpeian, then?
- 98 JN: I (.) I (.) I do. Yeah.
- 99 Brad: OK.
- 100 JN: Uh, just because I think, preserving culture, I think that's really important for (.) for us, as Micronesians. Especially when uh, uh, you know certain things are westernized. It's always important to keep certain parts of your culture, and I think @ language (.) language is something that I think is also dying. It's the first thing (.) I think it's one of the most wonderful thing that goes away when, you know, after colonization and stuff like that. Yeah. I think it (.) I think it should, should be in school. Especially since, do you know Meing? They (.) that's only passed down by uh (.) that's only passed down by people uh when you live in a typical local place, and I think it'd be cool for Micronesians to learn how to speak how they would if they were politicians, or if they wanted to (.) it's basically another language. And I don't know how to speak that, so. Yeah I think that's (.) that would be nice.
- 101 Brad: Can your parents speak it?
- 102 JN: Uh, they know phrases. That's the thing, that's what I mean by it's like dying out. Um, my grandfather speaks it very well, and my grandmother as well. Um, but they're from an older generation, so, yeah.
- 103 Brad: Do you know any of your peers, here, that would speak it?

- 104 JN: Ooh. Uh, if they would speak it, it would be because (.) yeah I know people who are my like (.) who are my peers, that spoke it, but they were also people who were, I don't know how to say it, they were just like (.) they lived in the rural areas, and they (.) either that or they knew somebody who was kind of culturally well-known, or has high status. So, they would always be in like uh certain gatherings and local (.) local traditional things. So they would have to know how to speak.
- 105 Brad: OK. So going back to your thing about Pohnpeian education. What would that look like, in terms of education? So, would it be school should be mostly in (.) in Pohnpeian, with a class in English? Or should it be mostly English with a class in Pohnpeian? Or (.) what is your like ideal?
- 106 JN: What is my ideal? Can you repeat the first part?
- 107 Brad: Yeah. So (.) before you said it's important to teach Pohnpeian right? To have classes on it. So how (.) how should schools be structured to teach it? Like what is your ideal model of education for that?
- 108 JN: Uh, that's a good question. Um, I think (.) I think it should be integrated into regular (.) regular school.
- 109 Brad: OK.
- 110 JN: Because, also with, uh I know from my experience, uh in elementary school they also teach social studies and history and uh (.) the certain things that kind of correlate with the culture in general, like art history. And so I think it's (.) it'd be very handy to, yeah, to integrate uh, Pohnpeian as an actual class. Um, but I would have to think more about it, actually how it would be structured because I kind of see like uh a teacher teaching Pohnpeian to you know certain (.) to Pohnpeian's who speak the language fluently, I cannot really see, like really clearly, how that's going to go.
- 111 Brad: OK.
- 112 JN: But I do think, uh maybe just, maybe the Meing, lokaihn Meing, the higher language, that should definitely be spoken. 'Cause I know for sure that a lot of (.) a lot of the students wouldn't be able to speak it.
- 113 Brad: OK. Do you think there's an interest for that?
- 114 JN: I think there can be an interest in it.
- 115 Brad: OK.
- 116 JN: Yeah.

- 117 Brad: OK. So how important is speaking Pohnpeian to you?
- 118 JN: Um, now more than ever, I think it's really important. Just last night (.) no two nights ago, uh, I kind of had like uh one of my cousins laughing at me because I was trying to sp (.) repeat words that my father was uh teaching me in Meing, and she was laughing and I asked why she was laughing and, she's made this comment before, she said that I sound like, uh, like a little bit like a foreigner when I say it. But she exaggerates, like I have a very, very minimal accent, and ye (.) but yeah. # you like to drink anything?
- 119 Brad: Uh no, I'm OK.
- 120 JN: ((speaking to waitress)) mwahu, mwahu # ((speaking to Brad)) Uh, but yeah. I definitely think it's really important because I think it's kind of shameful to, I don't know, it kind of bothered me that I had like a minimal accent. Granted, I've been living in the States for a really long time and I'm trying to learn different languages. I don't know if that comes into play with the fact that I have a slight accent. Uh, but I think also when I think about my future goals and my motivation to like play some part in making Pohnpei better, I think it's really important to learn the language, of course. 'Cause people won't take you seriously when you have like a (.) when you can't (.) when you don't have command of your own language. So yeah.
- 121 Brad: OK. Um, since you said you've been living abroad for a while, have you felt that you've lost any Pohnpeian, or any Pohnpeian has changed. Like you kind of mentioned it a little, some people say you might have a slight accent, like that. But, have you, yourself, noticed any like differences?
- 122 JN: In, in what way? My (.) just how I speak, or?
- 123 Brad: How, how you speak, or you know, vocabulary or anything.
- 124 JN: Well, that's the thing because uh, even before I left Pohnpei, when I was always here, I was always uh (.) just slightly a bit more, I don't know, for lack of a better word, Americanized.
- 125 Brad: OK.
- 126 JN: I never (.) I was never uh with peers that were um, I don't know how to describe it. I don't know, I guess I was really an introvert in the (.) when I was young, so I didn't really hang out with a lot of locals.
- 127 Brad: OK.

- 128 JN: Just my family. And there was not very much opportunity for me to be really, um, to experience like my own culture, the most, you know, the stereotypical things, the very, uh (.) for example, going to like a Nahnmwarki and drinking sakau en Pohnpei. I also developed certain id- id- (.) certain opinions about certain aspects of my culture that really um kind of distanced myse- (.) that I kind of decided to distance myself away from.
- 129 Brad: OK.
- 130 JN: For example, sakau en Pohnpei, I think it's important, but I kind of the (.) think it's uh (.) it's part of our culture, but I don't think it's part of our culture to sell it on the roads and stuff like that. Yeah, I just have different opinions about my own culture so I kinda distance myself away from it.
- 131 Brad: OK. And when did you really start to develop those opinions, like how old were you?
- 132 JN: I think it was through my teenage years. I just yeah (.) I just started realizing that (.) 'cause for me, I'm a very privileged person, I'm not um poor in any sense. I think the majority of people in Pohnpei are, by uh, by a certain standard. Um, and when (.) I say that because I notice that a lot of uh people who are (.) well, just other people, they uh, they either had really f (.) screwed up priorities and I kinda always associate it with local people.
- 133 Brad: Mmm
- 134 JN: And, yeah just lots of things in general. I don't know if I should list them off but yeah I just noticed (.) I just started realizing that there are a lot of things about Pohnpei that I didn't like. And especially when I went outside and I saw how different it was. Yeah I (.) my opinions became even stronger.
- 135 Brad: OK.
- 136 JN: Yeah. But there is the mentality of Pohnpeians in general, um corruption in government, all these other things yeah, those just cemented my opinions I guess.
- 137 Brad: OK. And, so what is it like coming back?
- 138 JN: Coming back?

- 139 Brad: Like having that time, like you said that you have those disagreements with certain parts of Pohnpei culture and that personal, like, separation from that, and then living abroad for a while, right, I'm sure that adds to it as you said, and then, so what is it like then coming back here?
- 140 JN: I'm (.) well I've kind of adjusted myself to it, but I do remember when I was (.) when I went away for the first time to Florida, um I came back and I def (.) I definitely did experience like a reverse culture shock.
- 141 Brad: Mmm
- 142 JN: I definitely was one (.) they were uh these like diff (.) these things, my opinions that I had about (.) these opinions that I had about uh Micronesians, uh they were definitely, how do you say, uh they were very clear, like I definitely, yeah I experienced reverse culture shock because I thought to myself "Oh wow, yeah I remember this is actually how things are here and that's kind of weird for me because I was kind of used to how things were, the fast paced in the States and everything.
- 143 Brad: Mmm
- 144 JN: Yeah.
- 145 Brad: OK.
- 146 JN: And in other (.) and in other small things. I can't really think of them now, but.
- 147 Brad: Yeah, and how was that in terms of (.) like, what role did language play in that reverse culture shock, if any?
- 148 JN: Language? P-
- 149 Brad: Yeah, like when you were living in Florida, were you speaking Pohnpeian regularly, or?
- 150 JN: No. I had no contact with Micronesians so I didn't have an opportunity to speak my own language.
- 151 Brad: OK.
- 152 JN: But your question was uh how (.)
- 153 Brad: So you came back to reverse culture shock. So what role did language play in that? Like was it hard to go back into speaking Pohnpeian or?
- 154 JN: Oh yeah. It was actually, yeah. Because I didn't practice it for about two years, it's (.) Um, yeah I did realize that it was a little more difficult to express my views, and stuff like that, in my own language.
- 155 Brad: Mmm

- 156 JN: Yeah.
- 157 Brad: OK. Now do you ever, like living abroad, and miss speaking Pohnpeian or miss certain parts of the island or ways that you try to like preserve that sense or not?
- 158 JN: Uh, I don't necessarily miss the language, mo- (.) actually, I don't know. Sometimes I do just miss speaking to another person that does from (.) is from home, naturally. So, yeah, in that way I do miss speaking my own language every now and then. Uh, what was the question again though. What was the question again? Can you repeat it?
- 159 Brad: Yeah if you (.) so if you miss speaking Pohnpeian or like miss having it around, or um, or if there's certain parts of like your culture or language that you try to maintain being like the only person (.) being the only Pohnpeian wherever you're living?
- 160 JN: Certain aspects of my culture that I miss?
- 161 Brad: Yeah. Yeah.
- 162 JN: Uh, most definitely. Um, well for example when I'm in the Netherlands, um there's a stark difference between the cultures between there and here. It's very individualistic and there are certain times when I think to myself um (.) oh yeah and the Dutch are very direct and uh, I was having a conversation with my teacher the other (.) well one of my friends the other (.) uh when I was (.) when I was still in semester 2 of college. That's um it definitely took some adjusting because there (.) it's very small, but certain things that I would consider disrespectful uh, the Dutch would sa (.) just brush off their shoulders. You know? And uh I think, I was actually surprised to realize that uh I was (.) those really deeply rooted things (.) Micronesian things about me came up when I was in the Netherlands.
- 163 Brad: Mmm

- 164 JN: Yeah. For example, my boyfriend, like, sometimes he just says things and, in the Pohnpeian culture, it'd be considered either rude or very disrespectful, and for them there it's just (.) it's just normal to say. Yeah. And also uh, I don't know. I also realized (.) I also saw th (.) uh the def (.) the hierarchy that we have here, the kind of hierarchal culture, I notice the difference in the Netherlands as well because uh the Dutch people w- (.) the Dutch people definitely don't have as, for lack of a better word, respect, or they don't have to think about losing face or things like that and I noticed that (.) I was thinking (.) I was really thinking about that when I was there, whereas Dutch people just were very chill about it.
- 165 Brad: Hmm, OK. Do you think that respect is a (.) a good thing or, like ww (.) how do you evaluate that? Like do you miss it, or you just like a thing that you notice? Is it a bad thing? Good thing? Neutral?
- 166 JN: Uh, I just think it's different.
- 167 Brad: OK.
- 168 JN: You know. It's not (.) it's what I learned is that # for differences in culture there's no black and white, white (.) right and wrong. Um, I think uh, yeah in certain instances when los- (.) the concept of losing face is so emphasized then it can (.) it can get a little bit uh ridiculous in my opinion, every now and then. But you can't yeah, you can't necessarily say that's wrong, that's just how things are.
- 169 Brad: OK. OK. So what do you think is the future of the Pohnpeian language, here in Pohnpei?
- 170 JN: Hmm. Um, I think as (.) I think undoubtedly we (.) we are going to be even more and more westernized, I think. Along (.) sometime along uh in a few years, whether it's 20 years from now or 50, whatever, uh they # #improve and I think people (.) I think in my opinion, people will use English a little (.) a little bit more than Pohnpeian. I think there will be fewer and fewer and fewer people who uh speak Meing, and I think English will be more common. I d (.) well, that's (.) that's one of the reasons why I thought in some way integrating Pohnpeian language in schools is important because I do think if we're not careful it might die out. Or, yeah, yeah.
- 171 Brad: OK. Um (.)
- 172 JN: It might change as well.

- 173 Brad: Mmm. OK. How do you think it will change?
- 174 JN: Well I think uh for example, I sometimes think that maybe one day along the road uh (.) well actually starting now (.) starting already now, people sometimes, especially when they speak both English and la (.) uh and Pohnpeian, they mix them both, like the Filipino's do. Not to the extent that the Filipino's do, with Tagalog, like the Filipino's they speak (.) they pretty much sp- (.) become their language, like Filipino and English together, Tagalog, but I think that that could be something that happens in the future. Like uh Pohnpeians, the (.) there's not a distinction between (.) well not that but (.) Pohnpeian English together becomes an actual language.
- 175 Brad: OK.
- 176 JN: Yeah. That could be possible.
- 177 Brad: OK. Um, what do you think about the westernization that you call (.) that you said is happening more so (.) more so on the islands?
- 178 JN: I think westernization is (.) there is goods and bads.
- 179 Brad: OK.
- 180 JN: Yeah. Um, I think that's one of the reasons why I think culture preservation is important, because there are certain aspects (.) there are certain things that happens to a culture and (.) to just a (.) people when, yeah, an entire race of people when they get colonized, like I think uh, you don't see it imm (.) immediately, but later down the road you see there are good (.) there are good reasons (.) there are good points and bad points for westernization of a-
- 181 Brad: OK, and can you give me some examples of those?
- 182 JN: Let's see. Well for example, uh the Pohnpeians have become (.) food. The Pohnpeians have become completely dependent on uh canned foods and stuff like that. We don't (.) We're not people that live off the land anymore. We don't fish as much anymore. Um, yeah, I think (.) I think that's actually a big thing. A lot of people (.) well naturally (.) before you know, there's a saying people say, "There's no such thing as being poor in Pohnpei because we could live off the land", but as we become more and more westernized, that doesn't really hold true anymore. I think people are just dependent on foods that are uh imported and nobody actually lives @ off the land anymore. And that's something that we lost because of westernization.

- 183 Brad: OK. Um, and a positive?
- 184 JN: Well I like (.) I like the fact that we have Wi-Fi. I think westernization also brought education to the islands, of course. And yeah certain, what we say first world comforts, that are good. Um, yeah I think (.) yeah I think uh (.) yeah that's pretty much what I think about it.
- 185 Brad: Who's driving these changes? Or is anyone driving it?
- 186 JN: Well that's the thing about Pohn (.) we're just speaking about Pohnpeians? Or?
- 187 Brad: Yeah.
- 188 JN: Pohnpeians? Um, only a few people do it, we have a democracy but we don't have the kind of democracy that facilitates change in terms of like lots of people doing things. It's mostly just a select few people in power and of course the business sector as well. I don't think the average Pohnpeian uh, I don't think we uh (.) they're not as uh informed or engaged in you know, political matters. And I think that's also go back to respect, I think for example, we can talk all we want about like equality and everything, but if a politician is doing something really bad, he gets (.) in our culture they get away with it more because there's (.) they don't (.) people don't want to lose face, kind of seems weird, but lose face by calling them out or you know, as they w (.) in America, if somebody (.) they're (.) they're definitely whistle blowers. Here, not as much, because people either (.) people are either (.) I wouldn't say (.) I don't want to say uh content, but they just don't want to lose respect for the people that are up there. I think that's just part of our culture.
- 189 Brad: OK. So, um if someone moves to Pohnpei, let's say another Micronesian moves to Pohnpei, is it important for them to learn Pohnpeian?
- 190 JN: Another Micronesian?
- 191 Brad: Mmm.
- 192 JN: Hm, yes. I think so, definitely.
- 193 Brad: OK.
- 194 JN: Otherwise, @ you won't be able to communicate.
- 195 Brad: Yeah, so why is it important? Just for communication, or?
- 196 JN: Uh, communication, uh integration.
- 197 Brad: OK.

- 198 JN: You know, we're f (.) four island states but we do have our own individual cultures, and if you want (.) if you want to live here you have to adapt in some sort of way. We are very similar cultures, so there's not a lot of adaptation that needs to be done. But of course, you do have to learn the culture (.) uh the (.) both the culture and the language.
- 199 Brad: OK.
- 200 JN: Just to live in general.
- 201 Brad: OK. Um, should everyone living in Pohnpei learn English?
- 202 JN: I believe so, yeah.
- 203 Brad: OK, why?
- 204 JN: Like I said before, I think English (.) learning (.) having a good command of a language opens up a lot of opportunities and I do think, I cannot pinpoint the reason why, but I do think it allows people to be more flexible and not so, uh, you know it kind of broadens their horizons in a way.
- 205 Brad: OK so who (.) if you could picture like a stereotyped person here living in a bubble, what would they look like? Where would they be living, what would they be doing?
- 206 JN: Um, they would drink sakau en Pohnpei every night.
- 207 Brad: OK.
- 208 JN: Um, they would be living in a tin roofed house. They would have also like one of those traditional houses, you know with the uh coconut roofs. Uh, they would have (.) they would gather over there in their little coconut roof house, the huts, um. What they would look like? I don't know @, just brown @. Um, yeah I cannot think of (.) oh yeah, of course betel nut stained teeth, uh and they would wear very raggedy clothes.
- 209 Brad: OK. What part of the island would they live in?
- 210 JN: They would uh (.) they would live in places where (.) they would definitely not live in the Kolonia area or actually ((speaks Pohnpeian to someone across the restaurant)) Um, yeah I guess I'm going back on what I said because (.) just because you're in Kolonia doesn't mean you're going to look a certain way. I guess you'd be kind of far away from Kolonia, but that's just my (.) I guess that's what I'm trying to say.
- 211 Brad: OK.

- 212 JN: Yeah. They live on (.) on the side of the road. Uh in you know (.) yeah I guess you've seen them before. And they would (.) yeah, they would just live in norm (.) normal either cement (.) yeah, in cement houses, cement roof tops and stuff like that.
- 213 Brad: OK.
- 214 JN: And they would have um their dead relatives buried in their backyard. And they would probably have the big sakau stone somewhere on their yard, something like that. And they would also have a pig pen, not too far away from their house. And they could also live alongside a river as well.
- 215 Brad: OK. Um, let's see here. Um, so int (.) for these people like you just described, what would their education be like? And what languages would they speak or not speak?
- 216 JN: They would definitely speak Pohnpeian, I mean, just because they look a certain (.) that (.) that certain way (.) or they live in those areas, doesn't mean they would (.) wouldn't speak English, but I think just generally speaking, they wouldn't be completely fluent in English. They would know some words, of course, uh, but only Pohnpeian. And uh, yeah, the question was how many languages they would speak?
- 217 Brad: Yeah, what languages would they speak or not speak, and education level and where would they go to school?
- 218 JN: Oh, education level. Um, the typical person that I'm describing would not go to a private school. They would not go to the Pohnpei Catholic School or CCA, the Baptist school. Um, yeah, they would just go to the public elementary schools that are (.) there's usually just one main one for each municipality or they would actually (.) they actually have other schools, like uh kind of hidden away around uh certain neighborhoods. You know usually when it's kind of inconvenient for people to go all the way to Kolonia just to go to school.
- 219 Brad: OK. Do you think you would be friends with someone like this?
- 220 JN: Yeah. @ I have friends like uh, (.) I do have friends who have different backgrounds and everything, so. There's no reason why I wouldn't be a friend with somebody. Um, but, yeah (.) I kinda, I don't want to say associate myself with, but I have better conversations with people who (.) who are a little bit more like me, or who are not typical Pohnpeian.

- 221 Brad: OK.
- 222 JN: Yeah. But that's just me though. Whether that's because
(.) yeah I guess it's just because we're (.) we're different.
For example, uh if I want to have meaningful conversations,
I speak English and if I can (.) if somebody can't speak
English that well, to the level where we can have a meaningful
conversation, then it's kind of difficult to have real friendships
with those people. But (.)
- 223 Brad: Could you have a meaningful conversation in Pompeian?
- 224 JN: Uh, yeah, sometimes.
- 225 Brad: OK.
- 226 JN: But my English is definitely more (.) is better than to express
myself in that regard.
- 227 Brad: OK.
- 228 JN: Yeah.
- 229 Brad: OK, cool.
- 230 JN: I kinda wish that I did. Because if I did have a really (.) if I
was good at speaking Pohnpeian as much as I am at English,
then I feel like I would connect with people who are different
from me, or more typical Pohnpeian than I am.
- 231 Brad: OK. Is there a way that you think you could be better at
Pohnpeian?
- 232 JN: Yeah. I would have to stay here for a longer time and just
force myself not to speak English.
- 233 Brad: OK.
- 234 JN: And force the people around me to speak only Pohnpeian to
me. It (.) oh yeah (.) as a good example, one of my cousins,
he lived in Nevada for the longest time, they (.) they're
(.) they're brothers. NAME his name is. He comes back, he
speaks completely like (.) he sounds like the American priests
in Catholic (.) when they're giving sermons and they speak
with a complete American accent. Yet the brother stayed
here for just about a year or two and he doesn't even have
an accent anymore. So it's possible, yeah. But the thing is I
speak Eng (.) I depend on English all the time for everything
now. So, for my communication with other people and people
outside Pohnpei for my education, so I don't know (.) I would
have to (.) I would put myself back in a bubble for a while.
- 235 Brad: OK. Do you ever regret those choices that led you down this
route?

- 236 JN: No, because I am very privileged and I g (.) definitely had a lot more opportunities than the typical local person would. Um, yeah I never (.) I never foresaw it as a problem, me knowing English more than my own language, so. Um, yeah there's no way I could have prevented it, but if I did, then yeah I would definitely have told myself (.) I went back in time and tell myself to speak Pohnpeian more.
- 237 Brad: OK. So on a kind of related question, um so I've heard of families around that have decided, you know, English is the language of opportunity so therefore, I'm only going to speak to my kids in English and not Pohnpeian. What do you think of that?
- 238 JN: I think you're (.) I think you're limiting your child. Yeah, I mean of course you (.) there's (.) children can learn more th (.) they have the (.) definitely have the mental capacity to learn five languages at once, so why can't you speak both to them? Of course, just watch over them to see (.) kinda see their progress and everything and help them as much as you can with English. I mean, you're talking about Pohnpeians here, right? If you know they're going to a school, more likely or not they're going to be spending more of their time speaking English. And more often than not, they're going to be watching American TV programs, which is what helped me learn English really fast. Um, so just speak both languages. There's no reason why you should just speak only English to your child. That's my opinion, anyway.
- 239 Brad: OK, cool. So, shifting gears slightly to Pohnpeian language, um there are different varieties, different dialects of Pohnpeian, right?
- 240 JN: Is there? I only know (.) oh you mean like the outer islands?
- 241 Brad: OK, yeah, the outer islands. So in your mind, what are the local differences here in Pohnpei?
- 242 JN: The local differences?
- 243 Brad: Yeah, between different parts of the island.
- 244 JN: The dialects? Um, I actually do not know if the languages of the outer islands are technically dialects, or they are languages on their own. But the people who are outer islands (.) on the outer islands who speak the dialects of Pohnpeian, for example Pingelapese, they're definitely more laid back @ even more than Pohnpeians are. Um, certain people (.) yeah. Can you just repeat the question again?

- 245 Brad: Yeah so what are your views of these differences (.) different varieties of Pohnpeians, so um, I mean like Kittu has a somewhat different version.
- 246 JN: Oh the accent.
- 247 Brad: That's what I mean, like the different accents and stuff.
- 248 JN: OK.
- 249 Brad: Yeah so what are some of the ones that you know of, like differences like that and what do you think of them?
- 250 JN: Uh, I think it's (.) I think in general it's cool that we have diversity, in that sense but will that bother? ((blender starts))
- 251 Brad: Hm?
- 252 JN: Will that interfere with um (.)
- 253 Brad: Um, a little, but we can (.) we can still talk.
- 254 JN: OK. @. So um let's see, I think it's yeah (.) I think diversity's cool even in my own culture. So I think it's cool that we have so (.) a group of people that speak an accent. I also think that for some reason people from Kittu, if I were (.) if I were to say any of the municipalities are more cultural, more typical Pohnpeian, it would be people from Kittu. They (.) even Pohnpeians actually say that people from Kittu, you know the accent is actually how we spoke a long time ago. I don't know if that is actually true, but. ((blender stops))
- 255 Brad: Does anything come to mind when you hear like a Kittu speaker? Like any images or things come to mind immediately?
- 256 JN: Um, um, well just anything?
- 257 Brad: Mmm
- 258 JN: My classmate, her name is NAME in the (.) from Calvary Christian Academy. She would (.) she always make me laugh because of her accent, and I would just always make fun of her, but uh, yeah and I also, because of the accent, I always uh (.) there's always a point (.) I always make fun of it and I always uh kind of exaggerate it with anybody. Oh and I also think that my friend NAME, she (.) her father is actually an (.) right now an important person in the government and she's in Japan at the moment. But yeah, those are the only things I think about.
- 259 Brad: How would you make fun of it? Like as an example.

- 260 JN: @ I would just (.) I just uh, I just draw (.) draw it out more. Like uh, if I say a word wieh, I would say weioah you know I would just (.) and I would like emphasize it more in front of their faces, to just m (.) mock them a little bit.
- 261 Brad: OK. Do other people do that? Like is it a common thing like for people to make fun of the differences between Kittu and other parts of the island?
- 262 JN: Uh, actually no, people definitely don't get bullied for it (.) or, you know, to, they's not a (.) if they do it, it's very minimal.
- 263 Brad: OK.
- 264 JN: Yeah. Because I think there is a (.) maybe a little sense of pride in having the accent.
- 265 Brad: OK. What about with outer island speakers? Um, like Pingelapese or Mwokilese? Um, what do Pohnpeians think (.) what do you think of those languages? Like, when you hear someone speaking Mwokilese or Pingelapese, what comes to mind?
- 266 JN: (.) What comes to mind? Uh (.)
- 267 Brad: Anything.
- 268 JN: Well the thing is I never experienced (.) I never been to those outer islands, so I cannot really think a lot of (.) I think maybe for example, Pingelapese people I think of the physical characteristics of the people. Pingelapese people usually (.) they actually have this eye condition where they kind of squint a lot. Well my grandfather is also Pingelap, Pingelap (.) half Pingelapese, I think. Um, Mwokilese, yeah I don't think much about it, I just think yeah, other than the language and their physical characteristics that (.) that are typical, I don't think (.) I cannot think @ the first thing that comes up to my mind. Other than the people.
- 269 Brad: OK. Should they also learn Pohnpeian? If they're living in Sokehs or wherever.
- 270 JN: If they're living in here?
- 271 Brad: Mmm

- 272 JN: Yeah, I think so. Um, to be honest, I don't th- (.) I cannot think of (.) I really cannot think of any Mwokilese that doesn't speak Pohnpeian. I think it's already (.) because they're very similar. And I think in one way or another they learn it very easily. I think Pingelapese, I have a little bit more difficulty. They (.) they even speak Pingelapese to some Pohnpeian sometimes. Um, but yeah I think they should le (.) of course learn Pohnpeian when they're here.
- 273 Brad: OK.
- 274 JN: I think when you go to any country, you should have, make an effort (.) or in different place, make an effort to learn the culture, and the (.) and the big part of that is the language.
- 275 Brad: Yeah, so I think those are all the formal questions that I have.
- 276 JN: OK.
- 277 Brad: Um, is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experience with language or um, living abroad and (.) or anything else about that?
- 278 JN: Hm, not much. Maybe if I want to emphasize anything it's the (.) the fact that I do think that learning English broadens (.) well, yeah, not only broadens your mind as a Micronesian, but that it also provides opportunity, if anything, or at least (.) kinda makes the adaptation to other cultures easier.
- 279 Brad: OK.
- 280 JN: Yeah. But that's it, I cannot think of anything on spot.
- 281 Brad: OK. umm just another question, so with the (.) one of the official languages of the FSM is English. Um, (.) do you think that's a good thing? Or, like what would be if instead of English, they just picked a random language here and say like Pohnpeian the official language of the FSM?
- 282 JN: Uh, I don't think that's a good idea.
- 283 Brad: OK.
- 284 JN: I think the lingua franca is English and while there (.) one of the reasons why we have English as the official language is because uh, well we all speak different languages, and like the Micronesian (.) the FSM all the different states, and also the government. Like I think it's easier to have things in English and since we're dealing with government and international affairs, it has to be also in English. Yeah I cannot think historically why they (.) why they chose English as one of the official languages, but I think it's a good idea.
- 285 Brad: OK.

- 286 JN: Yeah. I (.) I don't think it's a good idea to uh have only Pohnpeian as an official language. Even if it is our capital or anything cause I think it's limiting.
- 287 Brad: OK, well thanks.
- 288 JN: Thanks. @