

Dialect usage of residents in Hansen's disease (Leprosy) sanatoriums

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There were discriminated people who struggled in leprosy. As it caused permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs and eyes, Japanese government did the segregation of patients into sanatoriums based on leprosy prevention laws of 1907, 1931, and 1953, and, hence, it intensified leprosy stigma. Now the discrimination might disappear as its law was repealed in 1996. However national sanatoriums still exist, especially Nagashima-Aiseien and Oku-Komyoen in Nagashima, Okayama prefecture.

The aim of this study is to explicate the dialects' usage of segregated people in two sanatoriums. We collected 29 person's discourse (13 Aiseien, 16 Komyoen, 70-90s) in 2014-2015 and analyzed them.

The results of this analysis are as follows:

(1) Usage of Okayama dialect

All of the residents understand several Okayama dialects. However few residents use them. Even they use them, Okayama dialects shown in their discourse are small.

(2) Usage of common language

No residents talk all of their discourse in common language.

(3) Characteristics of Aiseien

As Aiseien was the first National Leprosarium, patients came from various prefectures of Japan, such as Yamagata, Mie, Aichi, Hyogo and Tottori. There are two tendencies. ① Residents who were born in Kansai district (including Tokushima) still use Kansai dialect (words, expressions and accent). ② Even residents who were not born in Kansai use words and expressions of Kansai dialect except one resident. In addition, their usages are the mixture of Kansai dialect, their native dialect, common language and Okayama dialect. It is called Nagashima dialect among residents.

(4) Characteristics of Komyoen

As Komyoen was reconstructed (previous leprosarium was in Kansai), most of the patients came from Kansai. Therefore most of the residents use Kansai dialect except two residents who were not born in Kansai. In addition, two residents do not use words and expressions of Kansai dialect often although they were born in Kansai.