LANGUAGE ATTITUDES 
AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION IN HAWAI‘I

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Introduction

Sociolinguistic research that acknowledges the importance of viewing language as a human problem attempts to reconcile the facts of linguistic variation with those of social identity and inequality (Hymes, 1973). To date, this question has not been of primary concern to creolists, partly because of their deeper interest in language universals and the linguistic nature of pidginization and creolization. Neglect of sociolinguistic phenomena in creole communities has also resulted from the relative independence of pidgin/creole studies and the sociolinguistic and social psychological study of language attitudes in multiethnic settings (e.g., Milroy, 1982; Ryan and Giles [eds.], 1982). However, recent research (by, e.g., Le Page, 1980; Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985; Rickford 1985) has bridged these areas through systematic study of the relationship between linguistic variation in creole—typically, decreolizing—communities and the social evaluation of language by different groups of speakers in these communities. In this paper I present a case study of Hawai‘i which examines this relationship in a Pacific English creole continuum and, more specifically, calls attention to its dynamic nature.

I begin with a historical sketch (for fuller accounts, see Bickerton and Odo, 1976; Carr, 1972; Day, 1987; Reinecke 1935/1969; Sato, 1985) and a description of sociolinguistic variation in Hawai‘i. I then review recent public controversies surrounding the role of Hawai‘i Creole English (HCE) which have revealed competing sociolinguistic trends in the Islands: (1) a continued adherence to stereotypical attitudes toward Hawai‘i Creole English (HCE) and

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standard (US mainland) English (SE) by some segments of the community, and (2) a growing militancy in other segments of the community concerning the legitimacy of HCE use in institutional contexts. Finally, I turn to the question of how these trends may influence linguistic variation and the course of sociolinguistic change in Hawai‘i’s post-creole continuum.

A history of cultural diversity

Hawai‘i, with a population of about one million, is the only American state in which no single ethnic group is a numerical majority, and where most of the people are of Asian and Pacific rather than European or African origin (Nordyke, 1977). The population of the seven inhabited islands is roughly a quarter Japanese and a quarter Caucasian. Still another quarter is racially mixed (about 16% part-Hawaiian), and the remaining quarter is comprised of a number of groups, including Filipinos, Chinese, Blacks, Koreans, Hawaiians, Sāmoans, and other Pacific Islanders (Schmitt, 1982).

Hawai‘i’s cultural diversity is largely the result of massive labor importation, triggered by the development of sugar plantations by north Americans, during the late 19th and early 20th century. The islands were transformed from a Hawaiian kingdom with a subsistence agricultural economy into a plantation economy in which sugar became “king” (Fuchs, 1961; Kent, 1974, 1983). Political incorporation into the US began with the overthrow of the native Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 and annexation by the US in 1898, and was completed with statehood in 1959. The sugar plantations formed the basis of the islands’ economy until the mid-1950s, but since statehood, the economy has been dominated by tourism and, to a lesser extent, the US military and civil service bureaucracies (Beechert, 1985; Cooper and Daws, 1985; Kent, 1983; and Takaki, 1983).

Hawaiian society was radically restructured by the development of the sugar plantations. Native Hawaiians were politically subjugated and their language and culture systematically undermined (Day, 1987; Huebner, 1985; Trask, 1984/1985). By the end of the nineteenth century, they accounted for only one-fifth of the total population of about 154,000 (Reinecke, 1935/1969); they were outnumbered by the major immigrant groups: The Chinese, Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipinos. All of these groups lived and worked within the constraints of the socioeconomic hierarchy largely controlled by Caucasian plantation owners.
Today, this hierarchy has its counterpart in the ethnic stratification of workers in the tourist industry, which some observers have warily dubbed "a new kind of sugar" (Kent, 1974; Finney & Watson, 1974). Native Hawaiians, who earlier relinquished their land to meet the needs of sugar growers, have now grown accustomed to the "commodification" of their culture for tourism (Kent, 1974; Trask, 1984/1985). Currently, the bureaucratic-professional middle class is Caucasian and Asian, while the working class is primarily composed of native Hawaiians, Filipinos, and recent immigrant Asians and Pacific Islanders (Kent, 1983, pp. 180-181).

The emergence of a creole continuum

The linguistic consequences of plantation labor importation and Hawai‘i’s economic and political domination by the US have been complex. On the plantations, which were first worked primarily by native Hawaiians, a pidginized Hawaiian developed by the end of the nineteenth century (Bickerton and Wilson, 1987). This later gave way to a pidginized English—Hawai‘i Pidgin English (HPE)—with the addition of the Chinese, Portuguese and Japanese to the plantation workforce, and as a result of the political ascendancy of English in the islands during the early 1900s. Most scholars agree that HPE was rather unstable and highly variable, both ethnically and geographically (Bickerton, 1977; Reinecke, 1935-1969). In essence, it consisted of English and Hawaiian vocabulary combined with the phonology and syntax of its speakers’ first languages.

Hawai‘i Creole English (HCE) was initially created by the first Hawai‘i-born children of the plantation communities and further developed by subsequent generations of “local” people. It differs from HPE in many interesting ways (see Bickerton, 1977, 1981; Sato, 1978). One difference is that HCE has an elaborated system for marking tense, aspect, and modality which is minimally evident in HPE. An even more obvious difference is phonological: Whereas HPE speakers typically have an accent influenced by their first language, HCE speakers’ accent IS that of their first language. Hence, someone of Japanese ancestry speaking HPE can be identified by her Japanese accent, but a Japanese speaker of HCE could not be easily distinguished from a HCE speaker of any other Asian or Pacific Island background.

HCE appears to have become most “focussed” (Le Page, 1980) during the 1920s and 1930s through constant use in the closely-knit social networks of
locally-born Islanders, who, by then, had become a majority of the population. Thereafter, diversification of Hawai‘i’s economy, accelerated by US military and governmental needs during World War II, led to greater employment opportunities off the plantation. Public education, available since the late 1800s, also increased HCE speakers’ exposure to SE and, in certain segments of the community, contributed to rapid decreolization following World War II.

The extremely variable English in Hawai‘i resulting from the processes of language contact and creation sketched above has been the object of study for over fifty years now. Hawai‘i is one of the few places in the world where researchers have had access to both pidgin and creole speakers and have thus been able to describe empirically pidginization and creolization in a single community. Recently, attention has shifted to decreolization, the process through which a creole merges over time with its lexically related standard language.

Most studies of Hawai‘i either explicitly adopt or assume DeCamp’s (1971) creole continuum model. They take as uncontroversial the view that decreolization is occurring at the societal level, i.e., that there has been an increase over time in the use of more acrolectal, English-like linguistic variants by a larger portion of the community. A number of linguistic features have been described from this perspective, including segmental alternations and other phonological processes (Odo, 1975; Bickerton and Odo, 1976); the (zero-) copula (Day, 1972; Bickerton, 1977; Perlman, 1973), tense-aspect-modality markers (Bickerton, 1974, 1977; Neff, 1978; Sato, 1978); existential predications (Perlman, 1973); relativization (Bickerton, 1977; Peet, 1978); and various noun phrase features (Bickerton, 1977; Perlman, 1973).

In several studies, decreolization in HCE is reported to involve implicational patterning among HCE and SE variants of a linguistic feature. Such patterning was evident in Sato’s (1978) analysis of 26 HPE and HCE speakers’ marking of *irrealis* (i.e., future, hypothetical or conditional) events and actions with the preverbal auxiliaries: *go, gon, gona,* and *wil.* The following sentences, glossed as “I’ll leave it/them outside for you,” illustrate their use:
The implicational pattern observed among these forms was that speakers who used *wil* also used *guna*, and those who used *guna* also used *gon*. Interestingly, the use of *gon* did not entail the use of *go*. *Go* proved to be the least frequently used of the four irrealis forms and was favored by Filipino HPE, not HCE, speakers from Hawai‘i (also called the “Big Island,” arguably the least decreolized island in the state). Those speakers who preferred *gon* as an irrealis marker were either HCE speakers or HPE speakers from the more decreolized islands of Maui and O’ahu. From these results, it seems that *go* originated as the basilectal irrealis marker but has been rapidly losing ground to the other forms.

While the cross-sectional studies cited above do reveal clear evidence of decreolization at the societal level, it is important to realize that decreolization has not affected all individuals to the same degree. As a result, synchronic variation in the community is extensive, across speakers and within a single speaker in different communicative contexts (Bickerton, 1977; Perlman, 1973). A study of code shifting by children (Purcell, 1979, 1984) has shown, for example, that the relative frequency of HCE features in their conversation covaries with a number of situational factors, such as addressee, genre, and topic, and with psychological factors, such as the speaker’s emotional state.

Decreolization does not affect all linguistic features in the same way, either. Preliminary findings from longitudinal research on decreolization (Sato, 1986) indicates that linguistic features vary in their “susceptibility” to decreolization. Analysis of two samples of conversation obtained 13 years apart from a relatively basilectal Filipino HCE speaker revealed decreolization of two morphosyntactic features, but not of a prosodic feature.

With respect to past time reference (shown in Table 1 below), the speaker shifted from a strong preference for HCE markers (the preverbal auxiliaries *bin* and *had*), as in *hi bin kawl mi ap* and *hi had chro om aut*) in 1973 to a preference for SE regular and irregular past markers (as in ‘called’ and ‘threw’).
In referring to indefinite entities in discourse (as in ‘She wants a new bicycle’), the speaker also shifted from greater use of HCE markers (the zero-article or wan, as in shi laik ō/nyu baisikol or shi laik wan nyu baisikol) to greater use of SE a.

A discourse-prosodic feature was also examined: æh-tag utterances with rising terminal pitch, such as no mo jab fo yu æh (‘There isn’t a job for you, right?’), which typically function as confirmation checks from speaker to listener. To the SE ear, the æh-tag is a striking feature of HCE (akin to Canadian ‘ei’), one that would appear to be a prime candidate for
decreolization because of its perceptual salience. However, this proved not to be the case; the speaker did not demonstrate a loss of the *ah*-tag or a change in its accompanying intonational contour from 1973 to 1986.

These results suggest that, in general, prosodic features are more resistant to decreolization than are morphosyntactic features (see similar findings reported by Escure [1981] for Belizean Creole). Why this should be the case remains problematic. While important insights undoubtedly lie in psycholinguistic accounts of language processing and acquisition, it is also necessary to consider the sociocultural and sociopsychological underpinnings of language change (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Rickford, 1983, 1985; Romaine [Ed.], 1982; Sankoff, 1980).

We thus return to the question of why decreolization does not affect all creole speakers in the same way and to the same extent. Clearly, speakers make linguistic choices based on a number of conscious and not-so-conscious motivations and pressures. Certain speakers have greater loyalty to HCE and/or less inclination to acquire a mainland US variety of English. How such attitudes and preferences are developed by individuals in Hawai‘i is as yet poorly understood. Equally unclear is how HCE use reflects different dimensions of social identity in Hawai‘i: Ethnicity, class, and what might be termed “localness.” What is known at this point about these matters comes from a small set of studies on language attitudes in Hawai‘i.

Attitudes toward HCE and SE

Studies of language attitudes in Hawai‘i converge on the general finding, reported for other creole communities (see, e.g., Rickford, 1985; Wurm, 1985) that there is a negative attitude toward the creole variety of English and a positive one toward SE. Further, these studies indicate that HCE is associated with Asians and Pacific Islanders (including Hawaiians), low academic achievement, and low socioeconomic status. These are important insights. However, as discussion of the Hawai‘i studies will show, there is much more that remains to be described in the dynamic interrelationship of language attitudes, linguistic variation and decreolization.

Three attitude studies have focused on teachers (Choy and Dodd, 1976; Slaughter, 1982; Yamamoto and Hargrove, 1982), one on University of Hawai‘i faculty and students (Yamamoto, 1982), and two on students, at the elementary level (Day, 1980) and at the secondary level (McCreary, 1986).
Choy and Dodd (1976) reported on three Japanese-American teachers' evaluations of fourteen HCE-dominant and fourteen SE-dominant fifth grade students from their classes on various traits: Confidence-eagerness, ethnicity-nonstandardness, academic performance, classroom behaviors, and predictions of future occupation, academic endeavors, and social interpersonal relations. The results, reported as averages of the three teachers' ratings on each trait, indicated significantly higher ratings for the SE-dominant students on each scale. The HCE-dominant students were perceived as less confident and eager, and "more ethnic" (Ibid., p. 189) and nonstandard than the SE-dominant students. The former group's academic performance and classroom behaviors were downgraded relative to those of the SE group. As well, the teachers' predictions of the HCE group's future occupational, academic and social success were less optimistic than for the SE speakers.

The subjects for a later teacher attitude study (Slaughter, 1982) were 14 in-service teachers enrolled in graduate courses and 24 undergraduate education majors, i.e., prospective teachers. All were either born and raised in Hawai'i or had come to live here before the age of twelve. The subjects were presented with a stimulus tape containing speech samples from five adult men, and then asked to gauge each speaker's occupational level, his ranking in his high school graduating class, and his desirability as a friend. The subjects were also asked to describe each man's speech in a few words.

Contrary to Slaughter's expectations, the practicing teachers tended to assign higher occupational levels to the HCE speakers than did the teacher trainees. However, both groups did assign the lowest occupational level to the two speakers whose speech samples contained the greatest number of HCE segmental phonological and prosodic features. Results for the subjects' ratings of the speakers' rankings in their high school graduating class were mixed, as were the results for the "desirability as a friend" rating. Overall, Slaughter's results are difficult to interpret, largely because the data were analyzed without statistical testing and the findings were selectively reported.

A third teacher attitude study (Yamamoto and Hargrove, 1982) elicited

2 The teacher evaluations were obtained as part of a larger study of HCE- and SE-speaking students' performance on a listening comprehension task. The HCE and SE dominance of the students was determined by two trained bidialectal raters on the basis of the students' speech production during two interviews, one in SE and another in HCE. It is not clear from Choy and Dodd's account whether the teachers were told the results of these ratings.
ratings from 18 Asian-American teachers of speech samples from students at a public elementary school in a middle-to-upper income area in Honolulu. The teachers listened to taped speech samples from eight third to fifth graders, four boys and four girls from a range of ethnic backgrounds, then filled in response sheets on which they rated the quality of the speech and indicated speakers' ethnicity, academic ranking in his/her class, parents' occupational level, and highest predicted level of education. Yamamoto and Hargrove report that only the three speakers labelled SE by the teachers were perceived as Caucasian. In fact, only one of the three was Caucasian. The speaker ranked lowest on "quality of speech" and highest on creoleness was perceived (incorrectly) to be Hawaiian. In general, the speakers ranked highest for their speech (i.e., most SE-like) were also ranked highly on all other dimensions examined, and conversely, the speakers with the "worst" speech were downgraded on the other dimensions as well.

Perhaps of greater interest are the data obtained from the teachers' personal information sheets, which revealed some positive attitudes toward HCE. Fifteen reported being comfortable speaking HCE, and nine teachers even reported using HCE in their classrooms. Fourteen of the eighteen subjects felt that students should be allowed to use HCE in class for both academic and affective reasons. At the same time, all of the teachers felt it was essential for students to acquire SE.

A fourth study (Yamamoto, 1982) broadened the subject pool of the attitude studies by surveying forty University of Hawai'i at Manoa faculty, staff and students. These subjects were asked to react to the tape-recorded speech of six speakers by indicating their geographical origin (Hawai'i or Mainland US), ethnicity (Caucasian or Japanese), educational level, and occupational level. They were able to identify correctly place of upbringing but not ethnicity of the stimulus speakers. Results also indicated stereotypical perceptions of ethnicity and social class, with SE speakers identified as Caucasians with a high level of education and professional positions.

In the first of two studies of student attitudes, Day (1980) found a shift in attitudes toward HCE and SE in kindergarteners from the "less-advantaged" of two Honolulu schools in the study. Eighty-seven children were individually administered a matched guise task in which they listened to two "talking boxes," one speaking HCE and one speaking SE. On two separate occasions, each child chose to receive a present from one of the boxes and chose to give a
present to one of the boxes. Following each giving and receiving episode, each child was asked a set of questions intended to elicit their attitudes to the boxes (e.g., "Which box sounds nicer?" and "Which box talks better?").

Day found that the less-advantaged kindergarteners expressed a preference for HCE over SE, while the less-advantaged first graders and the more privileged kindergarteners held the reverse preference. The striking result was that, for the HCE-dominant children from the less-advantaged school, HCE was preferred by the kindergarteners but not the first graders. Assuming that the first graders were positively disposed toward HCE when they themselves were kindergarteners, a possible interpretation of these results is that children from this less-advantaged school were socialized into a preference for SE within the first two years of schooling. Day argues that a conflict is created for such children since they do not have a good command of the variety to which they are more positively oriented.

The subjects in the second study of student attitudes (McCreary, 1986) were 94 Honolulu high school students, 24 locals and 70 Asian and Pacific Island immigrants. The students’ evaluations of the HCE and standard Hawai’i English (SHE) were examined with reference to both status and solidarity traits, using the matched guise technique. They listened to what they thought were speech samples from eight speakers, which were in fact samples from four local students, each reading two versions of the same story, once in HCE and once in SHE. Each of these guises was evaluated on a rating scale in terms of nine bipolar adjectives (e.g., "very well educated - not at all educated"). The subjects also indicated on another scale how HCE- or SHE-like each speaker sounded.

McCreary found that both the local and the immigrant groups rated HCE lower than SHE with respect to status traits, such as wealth, education and intelligence, as well as solidarity traits, such as friendliness, honesty and trustworthiness. The results on the solidarity traits are somewhat surprising, since previous work has shown that minority varieties are evaluated positively on these traits (Milroy, 1982; Rickford, 1985; Rickford and Traugott, 1985). However, McCreary (Ibid., p. 62) notes that her results may have been conditioned by the formal situation in which the study was conducted (group administration of the rating tasks in the students’ classrooms). Alternatively, she (Ibid., p. 63) argues, "HCE may be overrated as a symbol of solidarity" in
present-day Hawaiʻi: Since several ethnic groups use HCE, HCE speakers may not be perceived as a unitary group which would elicit strong responses on the solidarity dimension.

McCreary also asked her subjects to identify the ethnicity of each of the stimulus speakers. Of the four, all of whom were born and raised in Hawaiʻi, one was Samoan-Japanese, another was Portuguese-Hawaiian, and the remaining two were Caucasian. The HCE guises of the two Caucasian speakers were most frequently identified as non-Caucasian. Further, all four SHE guises were identified most often as Caucasian.

The general conclusion that may be drawn from the studies reviewed above is that teachers and students alike evaluate HCE negatively relative to SE or SHE. While the results might be taken simply as confirmation of community stereotypes concerning varieties of English in Hawaiʻi, these studies warrant careful interpretation.

Rickford (1985) has pointed out that language attitude studies, in general, have tended to elicit the attitudes of middle-class or socioeconomically privileged subjects, not the predominantly creole-speaking segments of the communities. As a result, the "standard" view of language attitudes in creole communities probably underestimates the strength of positive attitudes toward creole varieties. Where the attitudes of working class, creole-speaking subjects have been examined (e.g., in Rickford, 1985), clear evidence of the "solidarity" value of the creole has emerged. The HCE preference expressed by the "less-advantaged" kindergarteners in Day's (1980) study confirms this observation.

It is also important to note that all of the attitude studies were conducted in Honolulu, i.e., in an urban setting where mainland U.S. institutions and values are most pervasive. It remains to be seen what similar studies would yield in rural, working class areas on Oʻahu and the other Hawaiian islands, areas with a high proportion of native Hawaiians, or areas with a low proportion of Caucasians.

The studies used roughly the same research methods, essentially, elicitation of subjects' attitudes in (quasi-) experimental settings. If only as a corrective to the biasing effect of institutional contexts (Carranza and Ryan, 1975), observational data are needed on language socialization in HCE speakers and the community-at-large that either clarify or belie the stereotypical behavior revealed by elicitation studies. Also needed is information on perceptions of intraspeaker variation as well as interspeaker
variation. How would subjects evaluate the social significance of a single speaker's use of HCE and SE in a range of speech events? Not only would such studies be more likely to yield evidence of positive attitudes toward HCE, but they would also enhance the validity of attitude research in general.

A rather dramatic point of departure for observational language attitude studies has been provided by recent educational and legal controversies concerning HCE and SE. During the late summer and fall of 1987, heated and prolonged public discussion erupted over (1) the state Board of Education's (BOE) language policy for Hawai'i's public schools and (2) the employment discrimination trial of two local weather forecasters (Kahakua et al. v. Hallgren). For the first time in Hawai'i's history, positive attitudes toward the use and maintenance of HCE were explicitly articulated by different segments of the community and implicitly endorsed by some elements in the local mass media. A full account of these events is presented elsewhere (Sato, in preparation); here, it will suffice to point out some important links between language attitudes and sociolinguistic variation in Hawai'i.

HCE in the classroom

Late in the summer of 1987, Hawai'i's Board of Education (BOE) formulated a policy on "Standard English and Oral Communication," a preliminary version of which mandated that "Standard English [would] be the mode of oral communication for students and staff in the classroom setting and all other school related settings except when the objectives cover[ed] native Hawaiian or foreign language instruction and practice." Immediate opposition to the policy was voiced by many: Parents, teachers, university faculty, native Hawaiian professionals and community activists, and even some elements of the mass media. It was directed at the policy's implicit denigration of HCE, as well as at Board members' unprofessional rejection of research in creole languages, second language acquisition, and language teaching which uniformly discredited the assumptions and directives of the policy (see Sato, 3

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3 The BOE is an elected body of thirteen members entrusted with the development of educational policy and with fiscal control over the state's public school system. It appoints the Superintendent of the Department of Education (DOE), who implements the Board's policy and administers the public school system. Much of the Board's work is accomplished through sub-committees which draft reports and make recommendations to the full Board. However, meetings at which decisions are taken are open to the public, and members of the community are encouraged to present formal testimony.
During the final four-hour meeting at which the Board voted on the policy, all but a few speakers testified against it. Several who argued that HCE was a vital aspect of local identity, and that the acquisition of SE should not result in the loss of HCE, drew rousing applause from the audience. Not having anticipated this strong support of HCE and negative reaction to the policy, the BOE eventually adopted a much weaker version which simply "encouraged" the modeling of SE by Department of Education (DOE) staff.

The level of public response to the Board’s actions was unprecedented. Letters flooded the newspapers, and radio talk shows and television news programs carried the controversy every day for a week in September, featuring interviews with BOE members, DOE administrators, teachers, students, and university researchers. One of the two major newspapers commissioned a special week-long series on HCE which proved informative and generally quite supportive of HCE as a marker of local identity (Brislin, 1987; Hartwell, 1987; Hollis, 1987; Keir, 1987; Matsunaga, 1987; Reyes, 1987a–g). Student newspapers at various high schools around the state debated the policy and the role of HCE in schooling. Never before in Hawai‘i’s history had such widespread, frequently rational, discussion of language politics consumed the community.

Various officials in the DOE made public statements supporting the BOE’s policy following its adoption. At the same time, however, it was widely acknowledged that implementation and enforcement of the policy were virtually impossible, given the policy’s failure to specify what it meant by the term “standard English” and how “violators” of the policy would be identified and sanctioned (Hikida et al., 1987; Reyes, 1987d, 1987f). It is difficult to imagine how DOE officials might monitor several thousand classrooms on a daily or even weekly basis for HCE use. Perhaps most importantly, the BOE

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4 On a number of occasions, BOE members explicitly stated that the policy was not intended as an attack on HCE. However, in light of Board members’ comments contradicting this claim during public meetings and in media interviews (see Hikida et al., 1987, and Reyes, 1987) and the logical entailments of the policy statement, many in the community perceived an intent to ban HCE.

5 A September 18, 1987 memo from the BOE curriculum committee to the chair of the BOE states: “Although no field input was obtained, major arguments against the [English only] policy are not anticipated inasmuch as there appears to be general public recognition of the problem.”
mistakenly anticipated wholehearted endorsement by teachers. While some appear to be complying with the policy by punishing students for using HCE in the classroom (Reyes, 1987g), many others have indicated their wariness of any policy which would stifle student participation in classes (Hikida et al., 1987). Although no quantitative data exist on what proportion of Island teachers oppose the BOE's policy, it is worth noting that the Hawai‘i State Teachers’ Association, the major teachers’ union, adopted a resolution at their annual meeting in March, 1988, asking the DOE to develop a comprehensive kindergarten to twelfth grade language arts curriculum to meet the needs of HCE-dominant children. Shortly thereafter, the State Legislature adopted a (non-binding) resolution requesting that the DOE “evaluate language arts programs for Hawaiian Creole-speaking students with limited English proficiency” and “study the feasibility of obtaining federal funds for such programs” (H.R. No. 371, 1988, p. 2). Given its negative reaction to a similar legislative resolution adopted in 1979 (for discussion, see Sato, 1985), the DOE is unlikely to comply with the directives of the present resolution.

A difference of opinion about the Board’s policy exists among students as well. Several months after the BOE’s action, an informal survey of 986 graduating students at public and private high schools across the state was conducted by a major Honolulu newspaper to gauge student sentiment about the role of HCE in the classroom (Verploegen, 1988). Whereas only 26% of the private school students surveyed felt that HCE use should be allowed in school, 54% of the public school students supported this idea (Ibid., p. A1). Comments ranged from “Pidgin English fosters illiteracy; Pidgin is a lazy way to talk; it promotes backward thinking;” and “Correct English will get you anywhere;” to the polar opposites of “banning pidgin would violate our freedom of speech; Pidgin is a natural language;” and “it’s our way to make Hawaii different from anywhere else in the United States” (Ibid., pp. A1 and A8).

The survey’s results seem to reflect general social class and rural-urban differences, with the working-class students attending rural public schools showing much stronger loyalty to HCE than the urban private school students from middle- and upper-income families. Moreover, the openly defiant attitude of some of the students indicates increasing political awareness among young HCE speakers today, a distinct shift from the historical pattern of self-denigration in matters of verbal ability (Sato, 1985).
HCE on trial

During the same week in September that the BOE language policy was debated, a federal lawsuit filed by three National Weather Service (NWS) employees against the US National Weather Service went to trial in US District Court in Honolulu (Kahakua et al. v. Hallgren). Although it did not receive as much media coverage as did the BOE policy debate, in some ways the lawsuit was a more critical event with respect to the status of US minority groups since it represented a crucial test of national civil rights legislation.

The suit was a complex one involving various charges against the NWS. Here, I will be concerned with those brought by two of the plaintiffs regarding discrimination on the basis of race and national origin, specifically, as reflected in their HCE accents. The plaintiffs were two meteorological technicians, one Japanese-American and the other, part-Hawaiian-American (hereafter, referred to as G and J, respectively), both of whom had worked for the NWS for several years and who applied for two vacancies, one in April, 1985, and the other in October, 1986, in the Public Service Unit of the NWS’s Honolulu office. On each occasion, they were asked to submit an audiotaped weather forecast as part of the application process. Both vacancies were ultimately filled by Caucasians with mainland English accents, and it was G’s and J’s claim that their applications were downgraded because of their HCE accentedness and in spite of their superior qualifications and exemplary employment records with the NWS. The NWS claimed that the Caucasians were selected because, although they were less experienced and had far less training than either G or J, they “sounded better” than G and J.

Newspaper headlines such as “Suit says men rejected because of ‘pidgin’ use” (Oshiro, 1987a) and “Complaints about ‘pidgin’ told in job bias trial” (Wiles, 1987) strongly suggested that G and J spoke such basilectal HCE that they were unintelligible to mainland English speakers. As an expert witness called to testify during the trial, I countered this view on the basis of a phonetic analysis of taped weather forecasts by G and J such as those they had submitted as part of their applications (Sato, 1987). The HCE features observed were the following, given in decreasing order of their frequency in the transcripts:
(1) Full vowels where many mainland varieties of English reduce vowels: /u/ rather than /o/ in ‘today’
(2) /d/ where many mainland varieties of English have /ɔ/ as in ‘with’
(3) Monophthongs where many mainland varieties of English have diphthongs: /o/ rather than /ou/ in ‘low’
(4) Ø where many mainland varieties of English have a sulcal /r/, as in ‘afternoon.’

Whereas the first two features were usually present for both G and J, the latter two were infrequent, i.e., G and J usually produced the SE variants. These results, together with an analysis of conversational speech from both men, demonstrated that these men were far from basilectal in all of the data examined. This is not to say that they were not in fact capable of using basilectal HCE, of course. The point at issue was that, in carrying out their professional duties, they could and did use standard Hawai‘i English of the sort spoken by the majority of highly educated, locally born professionals, including the present part-Hawaiian Governor and Filipino Lieutenant Governor of the state and several members of the state Board of Education.

That a simplistic view of “good” vs. “bad” English was being conveyed by the local media became clear through a radio interview of G and a TV news program where G presented a weather forecast as part of a story on the case. Listeners called in during the radio interview to remark with some surprise on how “well” he in fact spoke. Several university colleagues of mine had similar reactions upon seeing G on the TV news. Local professionals (teachers, doctors, lawyers, news reporters, etc.) who speak like G were particularly troubled by the implications for their own careers of the negative evaluation of G’s and J’s communicative abilities by an agency of the federal government.

The presiding judge (who had been brought in from California for the trial) apparently had no such qualms. Rather than taking a few weeks or longer for deliberation (which is common practice), the judge announced his ruling immediately following closing arguments in the three-and-a-half-day trial. He ruled that the NWS had not discriminated against the G and J and even suggested that these men put more effort into improving their speech. The case is currently on appeal.
Attitudes and sociolinguistic variation

Neither large-scale survey data nor in-depth interview data are available as yet on community reaction to the educational and legal controversies reported above. However, a certain amount of analysis is possible on the basis of my own participant observation in critical events surrounding both the BOE policy and the court case, including many subsequent discussions with BOE and DOE staff, teachers, students, and various community groups. First of all, it is undeniable that negative stereotypes of HCE and positive stereotypes of SE are still held by many in the community. This is at least partly due to the World War II experience of the nisei (second generation) Japanese in Hawaiʻi, many of whom were deeply affected by the “Be American” and “Speak American” (i.e., English) campaigns launched in reaction to anti-Japanese hysteria during the 1940’s (Kotani, 1985). As this generation of now middle-class Japanese-Americans has largely controlled government and education in post-war Hawaiʻi, it should not be surprising that language policy in the school system should reflect their strongly assimilationist viewpoint (for further discussion, see Huebner, 1985).

That many Islanders do not share this viewpoint today is surprising. Even as a marker of working class and ethnic (actually, non-Caucasian) identity in the past, HCE was arguably perceived as more of a stigma than an asset (Sato, 1985). However, the recent educational and legal controversies seem to have sharpened the community’s sense of HCE as a marker of local identity. This historic shift was evident in public testimony before the BOE, which frequently referred to HCE as a vital part of local culture needing protection from harmful influences, in much the same way that the islands’ natural resources require protection from land speculators and developers.

Open advocacy of this sort on behalf of HCE has never been characteristic of local people, particularly in direct confrontation of the educational and legal establishment of Hawaiʻi. It certainly puts in a new light the generally negative evaluations of HCE and HCE speakers reported by the attitude studies reviewed earlier. In a time of crisis, it appears that Islanders who might otherwise subscribe to a status-based interpretation of linguistic diversity in Hawaiʻi will be moved to reject it in favor of one which more accurately reflects the social and political reality of their lives. As Milroy (1982) has argued, the existence of contradictory attitudes in socially stratified,
multilingual communities is to be expected, given that both status and solidarity ideologies motivate and/or sustain sociolinguistic variation. Creole communities such as Hawai‘i’s are no exception.

Significantly, none of those who argued against the BOE’s policy denied the importance of acquiring academic English and, particularly, literacy in SE. However, questions were raised concerning the inherently political definition of standard English (cf. Milroy and Milroy, 1985). In the discrimination case, the court’s ruling that the weather forecasters’ accents were unacceptable made clear that Islanders who speak standard Hawai‘i English, not only those who speak basilectal or mesolectal HCE, are vulnerable to sanctions in the workplace based on the sociolinguistic preferences of their employers.

As for the question of how attitudes toward different varieties of English in Hawai‘i are related to variation, it must be concluded that an extremely polarized view of HCE and SE as “bad” and “good” English still prevails in spite of the tremendous variability evident in the post-creole continuum. In the debate over the BOE’s policy, the central issue was often presented as a choice between HCE and SE, as if one could easily draw linguistic boundaries between these varieties. This mismatch between social perception and observable linguistic behavior was also illustrated well by inaccurate media accounts of the local plaintiffs’ speech in the discrimination case.

It must also be noted, however, that stereotyped perceptions were frequently challenged, not least by the sociolinguists and educational researchers who participated actively in public meetings and served as resources to the educational and legal bodies, the media, and various community groups. As a result of our involvement, much information about pidgin and creole languages and about second language education was repeatedly brought before various public officials and the community at large. Use of the term “Hawai‘i Creole English” (rather than, e.g., “broken English”) by public officials and several members of the media was, in itself, a significant change, for it entailed treatment of HCE as a legitimate object of scientific study and, hence, of rational discussion.
Conclusion

The events of fall 1987 mark an important turning point in Hawaiian social history. Public discourse concerning English in Hawai‘i has been transformed, and public policy can no longer ignore the linguistic systematicity and cultural significance of HCE. This is not to say that social and political conservatism in the community have ceased to operate on questions of language in educational and legal domains. However, it is clear that any future efforts to undermine local language and values will meet with more informed, organized and vocal opposition from various groups in the community.

What effects, if any, the heightened consciousness about language politics will have on sociolinguistic change is the central question to be addressed in future research in Hawai‘i. Most creolists would probably predict that, in the absence of radical socioeconomic restructuring of Hawaiian society, decreolization is likely to continue for generations to come. Still, it is simplistic to view convergence with mainland SE as the only, or the most interesting, direction of change in Hawai‘i. To the extent that speakers choose to accentuate their localness linguistically, there will be some degree of refocussing of HCE (Le Page, 1980; Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985). Within dense, multiplex social networks (Milroy, 1980, 1982) HCE may even increasingly diverge from mainland SE as American Black English appears to have done (Labov, 1980).

It will be particularly interesting in future work to examine linguistic variation across different kinds of occupational networks, e.g., those which are organized around employment in the tourist industry as opposed to those based in governmental bureaucracies at various levels (city, state, federal). In such comparisons, it may be discovered that class interests motivate greater refocussing of HCE among tourism industry workers as opposed to bureaucrats. By this I mean to suggest that the former may increase their use of particular features of HCE (e.g., prosodic markers), reflecting their alienation from the middle and upper class tourists they serve and resulting in greater divergence of HCE from SE in these networks.

Whatever the outcome of such studies, they will give us a better sense of how English variation in Hawai‘i reflects different dimensions of social identity (ethnicity, class, localness) as the larger economic and political context
changes over time. Such knowledge, in turn, should continue to be used by and on behalf of those seeking remedies for economic, educational, and social inequality in Hawai‘i.

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