Taking stances on family languages: A study of intergenerational language transmission among Native Hawaiians

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Acknowledgments

• Charlene J. Sato Center research assistants
  • Gavin Lamb
  • Monica Vidal
  • Lisa Houghtailing
  • Ricky Domingo
  • Bethany Schwartz

• UHM College of Languages, Linguistics and Literature summer grant program
Why research attitudes in families about Hawaiian?

- **RESILIENCE**
  - Family as a central site for language maintenance and attitudes about language

- Engagements with the community about the stories of people’s family languages
Singapore Voices exhibit, 2007

Figure 1: Singapore Voices: The Hokkien and Hakka Installations
Language attitudes are everywhere, of course.

Zip code for Kaneohe, `Oahu

Pidgin three = [tri]
Negative language attitudes

Language a barrier for tests at Hawaiian charter school

By Jennifer Sinco Kelleher / Associated Press

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Aug 26, 2013

58 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.
MalamaKaAina wrote:
Does anyone know any millionaires that are fluent in the Hawaiian Language?

on August 26,2013 | 02:58AM

Bdpapa wrote:
Yes!

on August 26,2013 | 04:59AM

hanalei395 wrote:
They may not become "millionaires", but students, people fluent in `olelo Hawai`i are very happy that they are keeping the language alive.

on August 26,2013 | 05:58AM

eoe wrote:
Yes, poor people are often happier than rich ones.

on August 26,2013 | 06:26AM

soundofreason wrote:
as they cash their "benefit" checks.
Research Questions

• How do the attitudes expressed towards indigenous languages by family members shape individuals’ own language attitudes?

or,

• **Discursively:** What stances do speakers take towards their family languages, and what stances do they take toward their family members’ stances?

• How do these language attitudes relate to language maintenance and language shift?
Context of the study

The Hawai‘i Linguistic Family Tree Project

Plantation-era languages (19th C)

- Hawaiian
- English
- Cantonese
- Portuguese
- Japanese
- Pidgin (Hawai‘i Creole)

Islands

- Big Island
- Kaua‘i
- Maui
- Moloka‘i
- O‘ahu

20th century: Vietnamese, Laotian, Marshallese, Chuukese, Mandarin, Tagalog, Ilokano, Visayan, Spanish
A SAMPLE LINGUISTIC FAMILY TREE

KALEO
42 years old
b. Wai`anae, O`ahu
Pidgin, English Hawaiian
Kaleo’s family tree

- Hawaiian
  - English
  - Pidgin
  - Father
  - Hawaiian
- English
  - Pidgin
  - Japanese
  - Maternal GF
- Pidgin
  - English
  - Maternal GM
- Hawaiian
  - English
  - Pidgin
  - Paternal GF
- Hawaiian
  - English
  - Pidgin
  - Paternal GM
- Hawaiian
  - English
  - Pidgin
  - Maternal GF
- Hawaiian
  - English
  - Pidgin
  - Maternal GM
- Pidgin
  - English
  - father
- Hawaiian
  - English
  - Pidgin
  - mother
- Hawaiian
  - English
  - Pidgin
  - children
Resilience in discourse

• Talk about family shows us how individual family members influence and are influenced by other family members

• Language maintenance requires RESILIENCE in families
Stances in discourse

C: Did your dad say things like “it’s really important to study, to be Hawaiian to learn Hawaiian,” to go and,

K: Dad he wasn’t really “study-,” but when we were younger, everything was “gotta go work, gotta get one job.” Cause dad grew up poor, and y’know it’s not his fault, his parents and his grandparents they all spoke Hawaiian. And I’m not su-he never really told me this but I kind of figured out like (.). He probably saw them speaking Hawaiian and how poor they became, so he y’know he kinda seen it as (.). y’know ‘you go study speak Hawaiian Olelo you gon be poor.’ So like for my dad everything that he bought was like a big, big thing for him and (.). but for the common person it might see it ‘oh that’s just one car brah.’ You come from one household like how he came from where he would have to walk two miles to go buy his mom his grandma cigarettes and walk back, like. Little thing I guess never realized it til recently.
Kaleo’s rejection of father’s stance

K: You know we live in Hawai‘i we gotta survive. For me what I found, it’s not it’s like we got to do both. Don’t just go one- You can can go one way. It works for some people y’know. It worked for my grandfather. Just American. And it kinda I guess it kind of worked for my dad. But for me it didn’t I needed the Hawaiian to, to I don’t know like now I could die right now and I feel like I’m at peace I did it I’ve seen it all and now the world makes sense now.
Moana
50’s
b. Honoka`a, Big Island
English, Pidgin
Moana’s family tree

Cantonese Hawaiian
Paternal GF

Hawaiian
Paternal GM

Japanese English Pidgin
Maternal GF

Hawaiian English
Maternal GM

Cantonese Pidgin English Hawaiian (words)
Father

Pidgin English Hawaiian (words)

Moana

Pidgin English
Children

Pidgin English

English Pidgin Hawaiian
Mother

English Pidgin Japanese (school)
Daughters’ stances

11 I: Cause they have Hawaiian heritage, so?
12 M: Yeah and I kept pushing like hey hey
13 I: Oh so you were telling them that they should learn it.
15 M: Yeah, I really wanted them to.
16 I: I see.
17 M: Just the idea of you know learn the language.
18 I: Yeah, yeah. Why do you just think they weren’t interested?
20 M: Ha ha, one one well, one used to say “why should I learn Hawaiian? I look haole?”

33 M: It’s what you wanna do and and they just didn’t feel
34 you know the part.
Theorizing LA: Stance accretion (Dubois, 2002)

LA = fleeting stances that form dispositions toward languages and affiliations
The challenge of research design

• How to get a big picture view of attitudes with insights into maintenance and shift?

• What are the tools that we use?
  – Stance-taking
  – Appraisal theory

- **Affect** = evaluation through emotion
  - I *wasn’t really enthusiastic*, it was just, just for go school.

- **Judgment** = evaluation of people vis-à-vis social norms, systems of value (education, nation-states, institutions)
  - I *don’t* think he thought it was *his place* to learn Hawaiian.

- **Appreciation** = evaluation of objects through their aesthetic values
  - I just spoke *regular* English.
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20
33 M: It’s what you wanna do and and they just didn’t feel you know the part.
34
What about the younger generation?

GINGER
21
b. Lahaina, Maui

English, (Pidgin), (Hawaiian), Samoan, Spanish
Valuing and devaluing Hawaiian in the same breath

G: I like how my sister is teaching my niece in Hawaiian. And I appreciate the fact that I went to Punana Leo so like I would do the same. [...] I like it um I just like how they tea- like, the way that they teach the students is like really (.) really important like as Hawaiians and just like in general but um like if I was to have kids well I don’t know but I would like want to have them in Hawaiian immersion but I like um my (.) high school education at Kamehameha. Just cause it was more like college prep like more like not just like one frame of mind but you saw more things as you got older.

C: Do you think hav- have you ever met somebody who did the Hawaiian immersion who felt that they were prepared for college?

G: Um, Yeah some of them. But like they came to college to stick to like Hawaiian. Cause they didn’t like branch out. Like on Maui, a lot of the Hawaiian immersion kids like stayed home and they like live at home and they do like their Hawaiian stuff there.
REVITALIZATION

PUALEI

21

Kaunakakai, Moloka‘i

English, Hawaiian, Pidgin
Pualei’s family tree

- English
- Hawaiian
- English
- English Pidgin

Paternal GF
Paternal GM
Maternal GF
Maternal GM

English
Pidgin
"Basic" Hawaiian

father

English
Pidgin
Hawaiian

brother

PUALEI

English
Pidgin
Hawaiian

sister

Hawaiian
English Pidgin

niece
Responding to negative stances of the current generation

And it's so weird like we have um a bunch of my younger cousins they're all learning Hawaiian like so they’re all in immersion now. But, when they're together and my cousin is like, okay Olelo Hawai'i wale no (speak) just talk Hawaiian, They're like- they're shame.

Really?

[or they no like talk and- I don't know why like it's still like- WHY maybe they're scared they're going to say something wrong. But, I mean- I think that would be like, the coolest thing ever to just be around them you know like, just talking in Hawaiian that would be "super cool." That would be.
Youngest generations

Disalignment

RESILIENCE

Pualei

Hawaiian

"They’re like they’re shame"
"They’re scared they’re gonna say something wrong"

"That would be the coolest thing"
"It would be so cool"

Stance lead

Stance follow
The bigger picture?

• 95 interviews so far
• 25 Hawaiian
  – Just over half the data has been coded
• ‘Oahu, Maui, Kaua‘i, Hawai‘i, Moloka‘i represented
• Ages: 14-70
Appraisal types for LS, LM (counts)

Middle aged

Young adult
Attitudes towards Hawaiian by generation (%)
Concluding points

• LMLS can be understood as a series of small acts of stance-taking across one’s life, with attention to one’s own stances and those of their family members

• LM requires **positive stance follows** in the face of negative appraisals by family members

• LM appears to be associated with nearly 2x as many positive appraisals in the face of negative appraisals by others; is this what LM takes?
Some applications

• Modeling/teaching young people the art of stancetaking in the face of negativity

• Positive messaging about language is very necessary beyond the individual and the family (public exhibits, business, media, education, politics, etc.)


Language attitudes as stance-taking: 
A discourse analytic study on intergenerational language transmission among Native Hawaiians

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