

# **Re-inventing Hawaiian Identity**

## **Conception of Ethnicity and Language in the Language Revitalisation Movement**

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### **Abstract**

An indigenous language revitalisation movement is conspicuously one of the most overtly contested sites of cultural identities and language ideologies. In the Hawaiian language revitalisation processes, for instance, “Hawaiianness” is a main theme that is frequently left open to negotiation through discursive and other means. In this article, the focus will be placed on the cultural politics of identity that capture the fluid nature of race and ethnicity while emphasising the strategic ways language revitalisation activists manipulate the processes of constructing identities as a Hawaiian and a Hawaiian language speaker. Inevitably, the notion of Hawaiian language plays a central role during this process and the concept of scale and scale interpretation brings insight into this seemingly complex phenomenon. Based on linguistic data gathered at various revitalisation sites, the author carves out competing conceptions of Hawaiianess, Hawaiian language, and the relationship between ideologies of the Hawaiian language and construction of Hawaiian identities.

### **Keywords**

Identities, indigenous language, language revitalisation, language ideology, Hawaii

## **1. Introduction**

Language endangerment is a serious concern, which affects more languages than one might assume. Out of the estimated 6,000 to 7,000 languages presently spoken, it is often asserted that about half of these languages are endangered and may be lost by the next century (see e.g. Crystal 2002, Grenoble / Whaley 2006, Harrison 2007). Since 1960, 28 language families have gone extinct and approximately 10 per cent of all languages currently

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have fewer than ten speakers remaining (The Rosetta Project 2013). It is minority, indigenous languages that are mostly affected by language endangerment, and everything from language attitudes of individuals to government language policies can and does affect the process.<sup>1</sup> Language endangerment and language death are local as well as global issues and derive from individual as well as social components. Unfortunately, revitalising a language is an extremely challenging task and despite governmental as well as political support, it often fails. According to Lenore Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley (2006), the Hawaiian language is viewed as one of the most successful cases of indigenous language revitalisation worldwide; nonetheless, the revitalisation effort of Hawaiian is far from complete, with the UNESCO Atlas of World Languages in Danger listing the language as “critically endangered” (Moseley 2010). Observation of the Hawaiian revitalisation effort suggests that an important element of strengthening the language is the continued construction of what it means to be “Hawaiian”. Understanding identity construction processes should thus inform our understanding of the language revitalisation process itself.

In this article, discussion will move from more essentialist approaches to identity to approaches which highlight, following Bamberg et al. (2011), the negotiated, discursive sense of identity. Accordingly, the article begins by focusing first on the construction of collective Hawaiian identity from the perspective of race and ethnicity by the US government, a private school for Hawaiians, the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, and also indigenous Hawaiian epistemology. Secondly, I will examine various frequently used discursive representations of Hawaiians and Hawaiian language from language revitalisation sites.<sup>2</sup> Then the significance of these representations for the construction of Hawaiian identity in general and in the revitalisation movement in particular will be discussed.

## 2. Definitions of “Hawaiian”

One of the most common uses of the word “Hawaiians” is to refer to the indigenous people of Hawai‘i. The indigenous people of Hawai‘i enjoyed a long period of cultural stability and a steady population increase governed

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Anderson 2011, Bastardas-Boades 2011, Fishman 2010, Mühlhäusler 1996, Spolsky 2012.

<sup>2</sup> The Hawaiian language revitalisation sites that I have observed and worked in from 2008 include Hawaiian language immersion schools, the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo organisation, and the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo.

by an *'ali'i*<sup>3</sup> class in the chiefdom prior to Western contact in 1778. After the so-called discovery of Hawai'i by the West in 1778, the Kingdom of Hawai'i was established by Kamehameha I in 1795 and lasted until 1893, when it was overthrown by British and American elites with assistance from the United States military (McCubbin / Marsella 2009). Hawai'i was annexed to the United States in 1898 and became the 50th state in 1959. Some claim that the overthrow as well as the annexation and consequent occupation were illegal (Trask 1999, Sai 2008). The political significance of the legality of those events has been fiercely debated for decades and there are several competing discourses concerning the events as well as their aftermath and political implications.

As people from many parts of the world came to live in Hawai'i and as the indigenous population rapidly decreased due to diseases imported from the West, the question of who is "Hawaiian" became gradually more complicated. There have been various definitions proposed mostly by large institutions such as the United States government and the State of Hawai'i concerning what constitutes a "native Hawaiian". Attempts to construct a definition sometimes consider whether "native Hawaiian" is an internal, e.g. subjective perception or whether it should be prescribed externally from the state and/or nation. The question of who is "Hawaiian" involves not only personal level concerns such as individual identity but also institutional level issues including qualifications to live in the areas designated for native Hawaiians as well as to attend a prestigious college preparatory school in Hawai'i, specifically, Kamehameha School.

## 2.1 The US Census and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs

The Census of the United States Census Bureau is seen as one of the most reliable sources when it comes to analysing the population of various groups in the United States. The US government has been taking census data every year since 1790, whereby "the racial categories included in the census questionnaire generally reflect a social definition of race recognised in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically or genetically" (United States Census Bureau 2010a). Thus the racial categories employed are changed from time to time. For instance, until 2010, native Hawaiians were categorised with other Pacific Islanders and were not treated as a separate group. The most recent 2010 Census shows that among the 1,360,301 people who reside in the state of Hawai'i, 26.6 per cent

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<sup>3</sup> The word *'ali'i* is a Hawaiian word generally translated as "chief, ruler, noble, royal" etc.

indicated White alone, 37.7 per cent Asian alone, 10 per cent Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone, and 9.8 per cent Hispanic or Latino (US Census 2010b).

Moreover, the category “Hawaiian” was changed to “Native Hawaiian” beginning with the 2000 census. The option of selecting more than one race began with the 2000 census and this continued with the 2010 census, in which 23.1 per cent of the population in Hawai‘i indicated two or more racial categories (US Census 2010c). The overall population who self-identified as “Native Hawaiians” or “Other Pacific Islanders” in the United States as a whole amount to 1.2 million, or 0.4 per cent of the general population (US Census 2010d). The group classified as “Native Hawaiians” or “Other Pacific Islanders” was the group with the highest rate of reporting multiple races, with 56 per cent of them doing so. “Native Hawaiian” or “Other Pacific Islander” is thereby defined as follows:

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander refers to a person having origins in any of the original people of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population includes people who marked the “Native Hawaiian” checkbox, the “Guamanian or Chamorro” checkbox, the “Samoaan” checkbox, or the “Other Pacific Islander” checkbox. It also includes people who reported entries such as Pacific Islander; Polynesian entries, such as Tahitian, Tongan, and Tokelauan; Micronesian entries, such as Marshallese, Palauan, and Chuukese; and Melanesian entries, such as Fijian, Guinean, and Solomon Islander (US Census 2010d).

Because Hawaiians are included with other Pacific Islanders, it is difficult to determine the exact number of people who identify as “Native Hawaiians”. This is one of the reasons that the Office of Hawaiian Affairs also collects their own population data on Hawaiians. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs is a semi-autonomous department of the State of Hawai‘i created to “focus on strategic priorities for improving the conditions of Native Hawaiians in the areas of *‘āina*<sup>4</sup>, culture, economic self sufficiency, education, governance, and health”. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs distinguishes “Native Hawaiian” and “native Hawaiian” as follows:

“Native Hawaiian”: Native Hawaiian with a upper case “N” refers to all persons of Hawaiian ancestry regardless of blood quantum.

“native Hawaiian”: Native Hawaiian with a lower case “n” refers to those with 50% and more Hawaiian blood. (Office of Hawaiian Affairs 2014)

It is explained that “different designations are utilized due to the different level of entitlements and benefits accorded by one’s blood quantum” (Office

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<sup>4</sup> The word *‘āina* is a Hawaiian word generally translated as “land” or “earth”.

of Hawaiian Affairs 2014). Entitlements and benefits include the eligibility to live on land designated for Hawaiians. In 1921, in what is known as the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA), the United States set aside 200,000 acres for Hawaiians to live on and farm so as to re-establish and maintain traditional ties to the land. This Hawaiian home lands homestead lease is a 99-year lease with USD1.00 per year lease fee with an additional 100-year lease with a complete exemption from tax on land. On the homepage of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL), the eligibility requirements are explained as follows:

Eligibility Requirements. To be eligible to apply for a Hawaiian home lands homestead lease, you must meet two requirements: You must be at least 18 years of age; and you must be a native Hawaiian, defined as “any descendant of not less than one-half part of the blood of the races inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands previous to 1778”. This means, you must have a blood quantum of at least 50 per cent Hawaiian. This requirement remains unchanged since the HHCA’s passage in 1921 (DHHL 2014).

Of particular interest here is the use of blood quantum to define who is a native Hawaiian. As Kēhaulani Kauanui (2008) notes, this “50 per cent blood quantum” employed by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs turns out to be the definition most frequently used for a native Hawaiian. Further, the logic used is that the amount of “Hawaiian” blood correlates to one’s cultural orientation and identity. Concerning the Hawaiian Home Land lease, she points out that since 1921, only 8,000 persons have been granted leases; however, more than 20,000 “native Hawaiians” remain on the waiting list (Kauanui 2008).

Adding to this confusion around the various definitions of Hawaiians, the homepage of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs lists 19 different definitions used by federal and state agencies. However, the two definitions above – “any descendant of not less than one-half part of the blood of the races inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands previous to 1778” and “the descendant of pre-1778 inhabitants” – are the definitions currently in common usage (Benjamin 1996).

## **2.2 The sovereignty movement**

In the late 1960s and 1970s, there was a resurgence of interest in traditional Hawaiian music, hula and navigation, a time period which was later called the Hawaiian Renaissance. Laurie McCubbin and Anthony Marsella (2009: 374) argue that “the most recent four decades have encompassed a resurgence of Native Hawaiians’ reclamation of their traditional cultures and practices, and restoration of their indigenous identity”. In the words of

George Kanahale (1982), this movement inspired “greater pride in being Hawaiian”. Along with the Hawaiian Renaissance, several related movements arose, including calls for sovereignty and for the revitalisation of the Hawaiian language. Hawaiian identity in the sovereignty movement is different from the definitions proposed by the governmental institutions.

Haunani-Kay Trask (1999), considered one of the strongest proponents of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, notes that the power to define who are native Hawaiians and indigenous people in general has been taken away from indigenous people:

Because of colonization, the question of *who* defines *what* is Native, and even *who* is defined as Native has been taken away from Native peoples by Western-trained scholars, government officials, and other technicians. This theft in itself testifies to the pervasive power of colonialism and explains why self-identity by Natives of *who* and *what* they are elicits such strenuous and sometimes vicious denials by the dominant culture (Trask 1999: 43, italics in original).

This is how Trask defines native Hawaiians and their relationship to land:

Native land belongs to Native people. They are the only residents with a genealogical claim to their place. [...] For those who disagree, there is really no middle ground. Non-Natives, no matter how long their residence in Hawai‘i, should acknowledge their status as settlers, that is, uninvited guests in our Native country. Hawaiians are the only Native people. No other people – Asian, white, etc. – can or should claim Native status. Put differently, we are not all immigrants. Therefore, those who are Native Hawaiians have the only honest claim to decide what is researched and published about us and what is kapu (sacred) (Trask 1999: 132–133).

For Trask a “genealogical claim to their place” is what defines native people. She says non-Hawaiians with long residence in Hawai‘i are not natives and it is only Native Hawaiians who should decide what is to be researched and published about themselves. She also notes the close link between language and identity as she argues for the importance of one’s ancestral linguistic worldview by saying “language, in particular, can aid in decolonizing the mind. Thinking in one’s own cultural referents leads to conceptualizing in one’s own worldview, which, in turn, leads to disagreement with and eventual opposition to the dominant ideology” (Trask 1999: 43). She emphasises the importance of language in the process of “decolonisation” which can lead to freeing oneself from what she considers dominant ideology. We will come back to this notion of ideology in Sections 4 and 5. Let us, in the next section, continue to illustrate native Hawaiian identity from the perspective of indigenous Hawaiian epistemologies.

### 2.3 Indigenous Hawaiian epistemologies

Not surprisingly, there is no easy equivalent in the Hawaiian language to the English phrase, “native Hawaiians”.<sup>5</sup> A term frequently used in this sense is *kānaka maoli*<sup>6</sup> (“real people”) or *kānaka ‘ōiwi*<sup>7</sup> (“indigenous people”). According to Kauanui (2008), indigenous Hawaiian epistemologies define a person’s identity on the basis of one’s kinship and genealogy. The importance of genealogy in Hawaiian culture has been stated by many scholars (e.g. Kana‘iaupuni / Malone 2010, Valeri 1990). It was customary to state one’s own genealogy when visiting a new place through a formal speech incorporating one’s genealogy. In fact, incorporating genealogy into formal speeches appropriately is a part of the Hawaiian language curriculum at college level courses (Ohara / Saft 2014). The curriculum is based on the Kumu Honua Mauli Ola, a statement of native Hawaiian educational philosophy that promotes the *mauli Hawai‘i*, the unique life force, as the main characteristic of Hawaiianess:

At the core of the philosophy’s foundation lies the *mauli Hawai‘i*, the unique life force which is cultivated by, emanates from, and distinguishes a person who self-identifies as a Hawaiian. If tended properly, this *mauli*, like well-tended fire, can burn brightly. If not, like a neglected fire, it can die out. Four major elements of an individual’s life-giving *mauli* are identified in relationship to the part of the body where they are tended. The spiritual element, the language element, the physical behaviour element, and the traditional knowledge element (KHMO Committee 2009: 17).

In this view, the distinction of Hawaiians is not in their blood or genealogy but lies in the concept of the *mauli Hawai‘i*. It is noteworthy that this view of Hawaiians includes four elements which were not included in other perspectives we examined. The Kumu Honua Mauli Ola is the foundation of the education philosophy of the Hawaiian language revitalisation movement and it forms the basis of the curriculum in not only the programme at the University of Hawai‘i but also Hawaiian immersion programmes including ‘Aha Pūnana Leo and Nāwahī School.

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<sup>5</sup> There are many languages which lack a word specifically to refer to themselves. In the Ainu language of northern Japan and the Sakhalin and Kuril Islands, for example, the term generally used for Ainu people comes from a common noun *ainu*, meaning “human”.

<sup>6</sup> The word, *kānaka*, in *kānaka maoli* is a plural form of *kanaka*, generally translated as “person, human”.

<sup>7</sup> The word *‘ōiwi* is generally translated as “native” or “indigenous”.

### 3. Hawaiian language past and present

The Hawaiian language is the only indigenous language of Hawai‘i. Even before 1795, when Kamehameha I unified five independent islands and established the Kingdom of Hawaii, Hawaiian language was spoken by all local ethnic groups and was also the administrative language (Wilson 1999). The literacy rate was high among the population. According to Jonathan Osorio (2006), the literacy rate was close to 100 per cent in 1893 when the Kingdom was overthrown. The first newspaper was produced in Hawai‘i in 1834 (Chapin 1996) and there were over 100 newspapers in the Hawaiian language published around the end of the 19th century (Furukawa 2010).

However, it was “the change in educational policy which helped accelerate the demise of Hawaiian from 1850 onward” (Mühlhäusler 1996). The 1896 law required that English “be the only medium and basis of instruction in all public and private schools” (Lucas 2000), an enactment that has been defined as “linguistic genocide” by some scholars such as Richard Day (1985) and Larry Kimura (1985). For various political and social reasons, because language shift was taking place very rapidly, some scholars even predicted in the 1980s that the Hawaiian language would be the first Polynesian language to become extinct (Benton 1981). Concerning the declining nature of the language, Wilson et al. (2006), for instance, states that there were less than 50 people under the age of 18 who spoke the language fluently in the early 1980s, when the revitalisation began.

Much like the attempts to identify the number of Hawaiians, it is not an easy task to estimate the number of Hawaiian language speakers. According to the report by the United States Census Bureau published in 2010 concerning languages spoken by people who are over 5 years old in the United States, there are 24,642 people who are reported to speak Hawaiian (United States Census Bureau 2010b). According to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, only about 1 per cent of Hawaii’s population speaks Hawaiian, which – based on 2010 data – amounted to approximately 14,000 speakers. Other estimated numbers are much more conservative. For instance, Eric Kaponō’s (1998) estimate is about 5,000 speakers while Anatole Lyovin (1997) states that there are about 2,000 speakers. William Wilson (1999) also estimates the number of native and neo-native speakers (those children who are in a Hawaiian immersion school) combined to be around 2,000. The UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger estimates it to be 1,000 and it is labelled as critically endangered (Moseley 2010).



### **3.1 Hawaiian-language schools and Hawaiian identity**

In this section, the focus will be placed on how schools attended mainly by Hawaiians – the Kamehameha school, the Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u school and the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo – conceive of Hawaiian identity. Kamehameha school was established in 1887 by the Hawaiian princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, who was the great-granddaughter of King Kamehameha I. The school provides classes from Kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) and has three campuses in the state of Hawai‘i with a total of over five thousand students. The school’s mission is to “fulfil Pauahi’s desire to create educational opportunities in perpetuity to improve the capability and well-being of people of Hawaiian ancestry” (Kamehameha School 2015). Concerning admission, this is what the homepage of the school states:

Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop’s vision was to help Hawaiians become good and industrious men and women through education. In keeping with Pauahi’s wishes, Kamehameha Schools (KS) gives preference to applicants of Hawaiian ancestry to the extent permitted by law. To be considered for this preference, you must verify your Hawaiian ancestry by registering with the Kamehameha Schools Ho‘oulu Hawaiian Data Center (Data Center) (Ho‘oulu Hawaiian Data Center 2016).

Once a person’s Hawaiian ancestry is verified by using the Hawaiian ancestry registry request service provided by the school on its homepage, she or he can be considered for preference on admission. Thus, for Kamehameha Schools, Hawaiians are simply those with Hawaiian ancestry; no particular blood quantum is required.

Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u school, commonly called Nāwahī school, is one of the K-12 public charter schools in Hawai‘i where the instructional as well as administrative language is Hawaiian. There are around 200 students and over 95 per cent of them identify themselves as native Hawaiians (Wilson et al. 2006). The school has been featured in the local news and the principal of the school says the following about the mission of the school:

When we think about language, we think about culture, when we think about culture, we think about authentic reality. So we are not really talking about language methodology but instead re-establishment of Hawaiian identity for Hawaiian people and for all people who identify with Hawaii as their home (Kamanā 2011).

Kauanoē Kamanā emphasises the interrelatedness of language, culture and worldview, as well as the school’s mission to focus on the “re-establishment of Hawaiian identity”. Importantly, she says that this notion of Hawaiian identity is for “Hawaiian people and for all people who identify with Hawai‘i as their home”. This mission is thus much more inclusive than that of Kamehameha School. Being a public charter school might be one of the

reasons for this inclusiveness. The homepage of the school lists the following as their education mission:

Students of Nāwahīokalani‘ōpu‘u are educated upon a culturally Hawaiian foundation. This foundation is the basis upon which students are impelled to: Bring honor to ancestors; Seek and attain knowledge to sustain family; Contribute to the well-being and flourishing of the Hawaiian Language and culture; Contribute to the quality of life in Hawai‘i (Nāwahī School 2016).

‘Aha Pūnana Leo is the name of a non-profit, private organisation that offers pre-school education in Hawaiian. The first one was established in 1983 and currently, there are 11 Pūnana Leo pre-schools in the state of Hawai‘i and together they generally serve approximately 1,000 students annually. The pre-schools take infants as young as six weeks old and immerse them in the language. Two of the main founders of the organisation note that the children not only become fluent in the language but also come to see Hawaiian language as “the normal language” of daily interaction. Furthermore, they see themselves as a vital force to revitalise the language for their community (cited in Wilson / Kamanā 2001: 15). The homepage states that “Pūnana Leo is a place where the Hawaiian identity is fostered” (‘Aha Pūnana Leo 2016a).

#### **4. Hawaiian language and the revitalisation movement**

The previous two sections (2 and 3) show how the identity “Hawaiian” has been constructed in different ways to fit the needs of different people and institutions. This fits with the view of Bamberg et al., who note that “reality” including identities “is an intersubjectively reached agreement that is historically culturally negotiated. These agreements are never fixed but subject to constant renegotiation – in which the forms of discourse that negotiators rely on play a major role” (Bamberg et al. 2011: 178). Let us now turn to the question of how people involved in the revitalisation movement continuously construct and negotiate their identities through discourse, focusing on frequently used expressions. In analysis, two frameworks will be used, one related to concepts concerning identity, from Bamberg et al. (2011), and the other being the notion of “scale” from Jan Blommaert (2006) and Immanuel Wallerstein (1998). The three “dilemmatic positions” presented by Bamberg et al. – namely 1) agency and control, 2) difference and sameness, and 3) constancy and change – will be employed. Concerning agency, I will illustrate how identity as a “Hawaiian” is expressed through the repetition of concepts of difference and sameness which are internalised

and used by students, how “other schools” are discursively constructed to demarcate “our school”, and how concepts of constancy and change resonate well with the ideologies from old newspapers published at the end of the century. Also, success stories of Hawaiian immersion schools and their students will be noted as part of this.

At this juncture, an illustration of the notion of “scale” is in order. Although the notion of “scale” was initially utilised in disciplines such as history and geography, Collins et al. (2009) describe a recent change in understanding scale not just as a matter of spatial gradation and scope but as a social process. It has also recently been applied to the analysis of linguistic interactions. Scales can involve, for example, the progression from local to trans-local or from temporary to timeless. Jan Blommaert points out two important dimensions of scale, one being that “it merges time and space into one complex unit” and another that “it offers a vertical spatial (or spatio-temporal) metaphor in which stratification – the non-equivalence of scales – is central” (Blommaert 2006: 2). “Scale-jumping” refers to a jump from one scale to another scale and it can convert a situational description of an event into “statements that index social order”. One of the illustrative examples given is a conversational interaction between a PhD student (S) and a tutor (T) in which the tutor performs an example of “scale-jumping” (see Blommaert 2010: 35):

S: I’ll start my dissertation with a chapter reporting on my fieldwork.

T: We start our dissertations with a literature review chapter here.

The student uses terms such as “I” and “my” while expressing local and situated meaning. The tutor’s response uses “we” and “our” and invokes “practices that have validity beyond the here-and-now – normative validity” (Blommaert 2010: 35). Furthermore, the student’s use of the future tense, as opposed to the tutor’s use of the timeless present, assists in constructing “normative validity”. Importantly, Blommaert asserts the tutor’s move as a vertical one – the tutor jumps from the student’s local and individual idea up to a higher scale of institutional norms and community practice (ibid.: 5). John Western (2008) applies this to social identity and discusses the idea of “scale-skipping” which refers to “an immediate leap from one scale to another, widely separated one without passing through the hierarchy of any intermediate scales” (ibid.: 532). The concepts of “scale”, “scale-jumping” and “scale-skipping” will be important in the following analysis of commonly observed expressions in various sites of the revitalisation of the Hawaiian language.

Before noting current ideologies of the Hawaiian language in various sites within the revitalisation movement, it is important to recall that teach-

ing in the Hawaiian language in both public and private schools in Hawai‘i was outlawed from 1896 until 1986. However, due to the revitalisation effort, there are currently 21 Hawaiian-medium public schools in the state of Hawai‘i that serve approximately 2,000 students annually (‘Aha Pūnana Leo 2016b). Prior to the language shift to English, speaking in Hawaiian was seen as something that needed to be prevented for the sake of the children’s future and was even seen as a behaviour that needed to be punished (cf. ‘Aha Pūnana Leo 2016c, Wilson / Kamanā 2006). Lenore Grenoble states that a vast majority of language loss occurs not because the population of the speakers diminishes but because of “language shift, when speakers cease to speak their own native tongue in favour of the language of what is usually a politically and/or economically dominant neighbouring culture” (Grenoble 2011: 27). However, there are now more recent and interrelated language ideologies attaching a positive value to the language, which have been re-introduced from traditional Hawaiian perspectives or created anew as a part of strategies of language revitalisation. These language ideologies concern the value of the Hawaiian language as a code for the re-construction of ethnic identities, the cultural significance of engagement in the Hawaiian language revitalisation movement, and the Hawaiian language as a vehicle for success and achievement.

#### **4.1 Language and cultural identity**

Using conversational data gathered at various sites of Hawaiian language revitalisation, I will illuminate the assumptions and significance of such expressed ideologies to gain a closer understanding of what is at stake in the revitalisation movement. The expression, *‘O ka ‘ōlelo ke ka’ā o ka maui* is generally translated into English as “language is the fibre that binds us to our cultural identity” and is one of the most frequently repeated expressions in the revitalisation movement of the Hawaiian language. The fact that it was used in the main speech given at the groundbreaking of a new Hawaiian language building at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo indicates its significance (Big Island Video News 2011). This building, for which the leaders of the revitalisation movement had waited for close to three decades, marked an important step forward in the revitalisation movement and the expression can be seen engraved into a stone at the entrance of the college building as well as on the wall next to the administrative office. The expression is also written at the very top of the College of Hawaiian Language’s vision and mission in the catalogue of the university. This expression is used to evoke the close relationship between language and identity by teachers at various immersion schools including Pūnana Leo and is used in turn by the students.

For instance, it is frequently used in speeches by students at the university. This illustrates “agency and control” as asserted by Bamberg et al. – the fact that people involved in the revitalisation movement, including both teachers and students, take active roles in constructing themselves as active agents in the formation and maintenance of the ideology.

The expression also appears on the back cover of the Hawaiian language textbook written by Kamanā and Wilson (2012). This textbook is one of the most comprehensive and current Hawaiian language textbooks and includes information concerning how to behave linguistically with pragmatic and meta-pragmatic guidance as well as a brief history of Hawai‘i and the Hawaiian language. Traditional knowledge is carefully woven into the curriculum in the textbook through a Hawaiian perspective. It shows that language brings people to the culture and that, without the language, people will not have their culture or identity. It discounts genealogy and blood quantum as markers of identity and links language and identity via culture. This contrasts greatly with the genealogy-based approach applied by the US Census and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

“A human being is recognized as belonging to a particular people by the language he or she uses. If a people loses its mother tongue, that people will disappear” (Akana 1917). This expression quoted by William Wilson and Kauanoē Kamanā (2006) is from an editorial in a Hawaiian language newspaper which was written almost 100 years ago. It is similar to *‘O ka ‘ōlelo ke ka’ā o ka maui* and explicitly summarises the view of the Hawaiian revitalisation movement. This expression shows “consistency” (Bamberg et al. 2011) in the ideology concerning the close relationship between language, people and their culture over the span of 100 years.

## 4.2 Valuation of the Hawaiian language

Another expression, “you are not worthy of being spoken to in Hawaiian” is also frequently repeated in various revitalisation sites. I have observed it as it is used both in the telling of anecdotes or in response to certain behaviour. As a part of an anecdote, it describes a criticism of someone’s actions, as in “and he said to him, you are not worthy of being spoken to in Hawaiian”. When it is used as a direct response to undesirable behaviour, one simply remarks “You are not worthy of being spoken to in Hawaiian”. It is often used as a response to a disruptive behaviour.

Concerning this expression, it is crucial to note that prior to the use of the expression, an interaction has taken place in the Hawaiian language. The expression is then uttered in English. It is a vertical move on a scale as language is changed from Hawaiian to English. An addressee’s linguistic

and/or behavioural action is counteracted and responded to with language change, fitting Blommaert's description that a "specific case is measured against categories of cases" (Blommaert 2006: 5). In this case, the addressee is in the category of those not worthy of being spoken to in Hawaiian, hence the change of language, from Hawaiian to English, taking place at the same time. As in the tutor and student interaction described above, up-scale scale-jumping is performed by someone who has an access to the higher level discursive resources – in this case, as an anecdote; it is generally employed by a senior language revitalisation activist and when it is used as a response to a particular linguistic or behavioural concern, it is uttered by a teacher at an immersion school, for instance. In this interaction, the dominance of English is challenged while the higher value of Hawaiian is being asserted. This expression can also be seen as an illustration of "difference and sameness" (Bamberg et al. 2011) by discursively constructing what behaviour is consistent with Hawaiian identity and what is not.

### 4.3 Importance of the language revitalisation movement

"If you do not want to engage in the revitalisation of the language of our ancestors, then you can go to any of those regular schools" – variants of this sentence are frequently heard and re-produced in Hawaiian immersion schools. I have often heard this and similar expressions at Nāwahī schools, said to students by their teachers.<sup>8</sup> This expression can also be seen from the perspective of scale. While assuming Hawaiian to be the addressee's ancestral language, it places value in being involved in the revitalisation of Hawaiian. It up-scales Hawaiian immersion schools in general and engagement in the revitalisation movement in particular as being of higher value than "regular schools". What the expression does is to separate behaviour into that which is aligned with and that which is not aligned with the revitalisation of the ancestral language. When a certain behaviour of an addressee is seen as not in alignment with the revitalisation effort, he or she is reminded of the fact that there are other schools she or he can go to. The expression certainly reinforces one's choice – "agency and control" (Bamberg et al. 2011) – in the involvement.

Another example of expressions concerning the value of engaging in the revitalisation movement comes from a speech given by a Hawaiian language student at the University of Hawai'i. The giving of such a speech

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<sup>8</sup> The variants of this expression were observed often during my assisting teaching at Nāwahī School during 2011.

at the morning gathering, termed *piko*, is a part of the college curriculum (Ohara / Saft 2014):

When I tell people I study Hawaiian language, people ask me why not study something useful like math or science. They ask me what are you going to do after you graduate. I tell people that Hawai'i needs more Hawaiian speakers and more teachers. Learning Hawaiian is more important than learning math or science. All of us can and should become teachers in order to revitalize the language.<sup>9</sup>

This belief seems to be a common sentiment among students who are learning the Hawaiian language. The student challenges the hierarchy of academic disciplines where liberal arts including language studies are considered lower and math and sciences are deemed at a higher level and asserts the importance of learning Hawaiian. The expressions above can be seen as representing “agency and control” and at the same time “difference and sameness” (Bamberg et al. 2011) by highlighting and emphasising the importance of positioning oneself in the revitalisation movement.

#### **4.4 The Hawaiian language as a precursor to success**

Another idea commonly expressed in various revitalisation sites is that an immersion education through Hawaiian brings higher academic achievement for the students compared to conventional education offered by other public schools. There are many varieties of expressions but the main idea is that if you speak Hawaiian, you have a bright future. This idea stems from frequently observable commentaries in newspaper articles, interviews, websites and conversations about the Nāwahī School. There are four related components in the commentaries. One is that the school has had a 100 per cent graduation rate and another is that 80 per cent of the graduates continue on to college or university. The third point is that their rate of college entry is not only higher than the state average but also that they go on to prestigious universities including Stanford University in the United States and Oxford University in Britain. Another common notion is that the students score better in both reading and mathematics achievement tests than their peers at non-immersion schools. Nāwahī School continues to hold true to these figures since it first graduated students in 1999 (Hawai'i Island Journal 2011, Wilson et al. 2006).

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<sup>9</sup> This speech was a part of a student speech given at University of Hawai'i at Hilo in 2015. It was originally given in the Hawaiian language and I have provided an English equivalent here.

In the public school system, in contrast, native Hawaiians generally have a higher dropout rate from high school than the state average. In 2012, the graduation rate for Hawaiians was the second lowest at 65 per cent and the group that had the lowest graduation rate was that of non-native speakers of English at the rate of 52 per cent.<sup>10</sup> In the same year, the state average for graduation rates was 81 per cent. In addition, native Hawaiians had the lowest rates of timely graduation in 2014 according to the Hawaii State Department of Education. Concerning post-secondary education, 25.7 per cent of native Hawaiians go on to college and university while the figure for the statewide average is 35.7 per cent (Kamehameha Schools 2014). Given these facts, the results obtained by Nāwahī School are impressive and thus it is not surprising to see the figures repeated frequently in various forms in the media as well as in publications and conversations. A strong correlation between cognitive achievement and economic well-being has been pointed out by many scholars (e.g. Hanushek / Woessmann 2008, Heckman 2011, Reynolds et al. 2008) and it is a part of the general public's understanding of the current social and economic situation. Also, Nāwahī School serves as a counterexample to the idea that bringing up children in more than one language is cognitively ineffective and also detrimental to their development. This idea very likely stems from arguments against bilingual education made in the 1960s. The myth says that learning more than two languages will confuse children and impair their development of cognitive skills (see Garcia / Jensen 2006, Krashen 2000/2001). Thus, repeating the positive results at Nāwahī School in terms of graduation rates seems an effective means of raising people's appreciation of bilingualism in general and immersion education in particular (Bamberg et al. 2011).

## 5. Conclusion

Language revitalisation is a complex phenomenon to say the least and cannot be achieved merely by attending to one or a few factors involved in language shift and loss (Edwards 2003). Furthermore, as asserted by Vignoles et al. (2011), we do not yet understand the conditions under which individuals will be more likely to internalise socially constructed identity categories nor do we understand under which conditions they resist them. This article has attempted to show that there are competing discourses concerning Hawaiian identity and Hawaiian language since there are still old

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<sup>10</sup> The top four languages spoken at home in Hawai'i – after English – are, in order, Tagalog, Japanese, Illocano and Chinese (Hawaii Economic Issues 2011).



assumptions which remain in effect, while at the same time various other conceptions have emerged. Admittedly, there are numerous ways to represent the Hawaiian people and language; however, active participants of the revitalisation movement carefully choose the most effective means for their purposes. The expressions examined above not only occur commonly but are also reproduced in various sites of Hawaiian language revitalisation. They are some of the more frequent usages and are becoming a part of the common sense, or ideology (Fairclough 2001, van Dijk 1998), among people who are involved in the revitalisation of the Hawaiian language. These ideologies are reproduced in opposition to the older ideology concerning the insufficient nature of the language or the government definition of who is “Hawaiian”.

The manipulation of ideologies of language and identities of people might be one of the most significant parts of the revitalisation movement. It is, in fact, ideologies concerning language that cause people to decide not to teach their native tongue to their children or, on the contrary, to restore their ancestral language through intergenerational transmission. Moreover, Hawaiian identities are discursively reproduced strategically by language revitalisation activists, including not only teachers of language and culture and community leaders but also learners of the Hawaiian language as well.

In the data presented, we saw how some language ideologies were emphasised while others were challenged. The repeated use of the first expression that we examined – “Language is the fibre that binds us to our cultural identity” – emphasises the ideology that there is a strong connection between language and identity. In the expression “you are not worthy of being spoken to in Hawaiian” the contrast of the value of the Hawaiian language versus English directly challenges the dominant language ideology of the hierarchy of languages. The expression plays with the tension between the ideology that English is the dominant and desirable language and the ideology of the revitalisation movement that Hawaiian should be a language of equal or higher position than English. The ideology concerning the value of involvement in the revitalisation effort is reproduced in the third expression that we looked at, the admonition that “if you do not want to engage in the revitalisation of the language of our ancestors, then you can go to any of those regular schools”. Finally, the idea that “learning Hawaiian is more important than learning math or science” challenges the dogma from the previous century that switching from Hawaiian to English would bring a bright future for the people. This expression is an attempt to replace such ideology with the ideology of Hawaiian language as a resource of greater value. We saw that “scale-jumping” is indeed a source of power (Smith 1993).

Two issues that surfaced in the examination of Hawaiian identity above are the fluid nature of ethnic identities in Hawai‘i and the Hawaiian language revitalisation movement. It is difficult to deny that one’s cultural identity is intimately linked to the ability to speak the language of one’s ancestors (see Fishman 1991, Grenoble / Whaley 2006, Harrison 2007). Observing students at Nāwahī School, Helen Slaughter (1997), for instance, concludes that the students in a Hawaiian immersion programme were not only proud to be speakers of the Hawaiian language and to have a deep knowledge of Hawaiian culture and history but they were also able to establish strong cultural identities as Hawaiians.

The fact itself that a certain group of people are defined in various ways may not be so interesting. However, from the perspective of language revitalisation, it is one way to manipulate the process to their advantage. Hawaiians as a group are multi-ethnic as a result of extensive interracial partnerships and marriages. James Davis (1995: 125) has observed that “the tradition of racial and ethnic tolerance, including treatment of racially mixed progeny as equals was accepted by new arrivals”. He also noted the special nature of ethnic identity by explaining that “some persons with native ancestry claim the Hawaiian identity while others do not. Many mixed-race islanders, not just part Hawaiians, change their ethnic identification as they move from one situation to another” (Davis 1995: 127). Ines Miyares also makes a similar observation, that “Hawai‘i residents commonly make daily choices concerning their situational ethnicities and insider-outsider status” (Miyares 2008: 530).

In this regard, Wilson and Kamanā (2001) discuss an interesting survey result in one of the large public high schools in Hawai‘i. Students were asked to pick one ethnicity that they most identified with from 13 choices listed. The ethnicity chosen the most was Hawaiian at 26.1 per cent while 24.9 per cent of all students who indicated primary identification ethnicity other than Hawaiian also indicated that they have Hawaiian ancestry. Over half of the students in the school had Hawaiian ancestry but half of these Hawaiians primarily identified with another ethnic group. In this social setting, the ideological representation of Hawaiians, the Hawaiian language and speakers of Hawaiian language have a deeper meaning and impact. Repeated discursive constructions of positive “Hawaiianness” are replacing old representations and interpretations. Language revitalisation activists, including teachers, community leaders and language learners, are continuously reclaiming new “Hawaiianness” and it seems to be seeing some positive results.

Hawaiian is being revived and is assuring the future existence of a distinct Hawaiian people and a distinct Hawai‘i, just as the words of Ke Mele A

Pāku‘i [Pāku‘i’s song]<sup>11</sup> assured their creation in antiquity, I ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i i ke ola, “life rests in the Hawaiian language” (Wilson 1998: 135).

The ‘Aha Pūnana Leo homepage gives a contemporary interpretation to the similar traditional proverb, *I ka ‘ōlelo no ke ola, i ka ‘ōlelo nō ka make*, through the translation “In the Hawaiian language we find the life of our race, without it [the Hawaiian language] we shall perish” (‘Aha Pūnana Leo 2016a). Over 100 years ago, the manipulation of language ideology was used to encourage people to abandon the Hawaiian language and replace it with English. Now, the language revitalisation activists are using the same strategy to place an importance on the language for the people and for future generations. This strategy might have some significance to other indigenous languages that may undergo a revitalisation process, given that there are languages such as Irish which have strong governmental support as well as an official status but are still struggling with endangerment (Carnie 1995). Each language has its own unique setting and challenges; however, it seems that the modification of language ideologies is one of the strategies that is actively being utilised by the Hawaiian language revitalisation activists and that seems to be successfully replacing people’s attitudes with new sets of ideologies concerning the Hawaiian language and the Hawaiian people.

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<sup>11</sup> This is the name of genealogical chant that celebrates the birth of the Hawaiian islands (e.g., Silva 2014).

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