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### The Importance of Hawaiian Creole English

Following the migration of laborers from Japan, Korea, China, Portugal, Spain, and a myriad of other countries to Hawaii, Hawaiian Creole English, otherwise known as Hawaiian pidgin, emerged. Because of the variety of different languages were spoken by the laborers, Hawaiian Creole English developed as a common language. Thereafter, Hawaiian pidgin became an integral part of Hawaiian home life and became the mother tongue of many locals (Seigel). Even though Hawaiian pidgin was widely spoken by the locals, many people discouraged the use of the language because it was seen as low class and as “an obstacle to future advancements” (Higgins 45). Consequently, the language developed into a culture resisting the overbearing colonial system as well as “proper” English.

Although Hawaiian pidgin is more accepted today, present day educators, government officials, and employers discourage the use of pidgin through purposely discriminating against those who speak this kind of “broken” English (Hargrove et al). As a result of this injustice, many pidgin speakers became ashamed of speaking their native language because they do not want to be seen as inferior by the public. Instead of embracing their culture and identity, they tend to gravitate toward the mainstream English because it is seen as professional and superior. On the other hand, those who continue to express their Hawaiian Creole pride are forced to

endure the discrimination of being looked down upon or being the last pick for a job. Hawaiian pidgin is a language in its own right. Many Hawaiians view Hawaiian Creole English as an impediment to future development. However, it is essential to preserve Hawaiian pidgin in work and academic environments in order to create awareness for the language's society and culture. Consequently, the promotion of the language may alleviate some of the injustices these pidgin speakers face within these important areas.

In order to maintain the use of Hawaiian pidgin, Hawaiians must recognize that those who do not speak the Hawaiian Creole English bear a myriad of assumptions about the language. Because the language is seen as a modified version of English to Hawaiian residents, Hawaiian Creole English has "been viewed as 'broken,' 'lazy,' 'debased,' or in other ways highly inadequate versions of their European lexifiers" (Higgins 45). However, Hawaiian pidgin should be seen as its own language, not a dialect. Hawaiian residents are not accustomed to this type of language; thus, they look down upon the language because it is not similar to their own. Since Hawaiian pidgin were made by workers of different ethnic backgrounds, the language of Hawaiian pidgin is structurally different than mainstream English. To them, it seems like pidgin speakers are either mispronouncing English words or they are using a shortened version of English words. Therefore, they connect these "abbreviated" and mispronounced words to words that are "broken" and "debased." For example, pidgin speakers would pronounce "My sister is skinny now" as "Mai sistah is skini nau." Many of those whose primary language is English may consider this type of pronunciation as "incorrect." Thus, they believe that it is only just to treat them differently from other Hawaiian natives. Because of this stigma against pidgin speakers, a myriad of "locals must maintain and display their use of 'Standard' English among employers and certain authority figures. They realize that failure to speak in hegemonic English could place

their job, their livelihood, in jeopardy” (Nishimura 6). Those who speak “proper” English are demeaning the Hawaiian pidgin language to the point where the pidgin speakers’ livelihood are at risk. This pure discrimination shows that pidgin speakers cannot use their own expressions or even their own accent while talking to their employers. However, if Hawaiian Creole English is used more often, it will destigmatize Hawaiian Creole English, making pidgin speakers comfortable speaking in their native tongue. To eradicate the discrimination against Hawaiian Creole speakers, locals must recognize Hawaiian pidgin as not only a language, but also an identity.

Injustices faced by Hawaiian Creole English speakers can be seen in many scenarios that affect their day to day life. Many may even neglect their own individuality to avoid the discrimination against pidgin speakers. Since much of the public deems Hawaiian Creole English as a subordinate language to the public, “creole speakers regard their own language as backwards or inferior, leading many to deny the fact that they have a creole language as a mother tongue” (Higgins 46). Because of the absurd amount of discrimination against Hawaiian pidgin, native speakers are neglecting their own culture just to satisfy the public’s eye. Thus, it is essential to promote the language so that the Hawaiian pidgin speakers can pride themselves over their culture rather than being embarrassed of their mother tongue. Discrimination against pidgin speakers could be found within Hawaiian schools as well. Some Hawaiian residents still believe that using the Hawaiian Creole language in school will be an impediment to students’ education. Since educators believe consider Hawaiian pidgin as an offshoot of standard English and not its own original language, they do not think it is necessary to implement it in schools. Shown by a “letter to the editor” opinion in the *Honolulu Advertiser* newspaper, people still classify pidgin as a dialect rather than a language. In the article, the resident states that “Hawaiian Creole is a kind

of shadow language, without a fully developed grammar and vocabulary, that seductively undermines and corrupts the study of Standard English” (Nero 143). For this reason, instructors and educators think that it is best to ignore the pidgin language in schools so that they could get better at “Standard English.” However, blatantly ignoring the language in schools would cause students to gradually lose their sense of self, their social identity, and culture. School is a place where students go to express themselves; yet, educators still avoid the integration of the pidgin language.

Regardless of what the public believes, Hawaiian pidgin is still a huge part of many locals’ lives. Those who speak pidgin have immersed themselves within the language, building a communal foundation that has highly affected their persona. Not only is Hawaiian pidgin a language, it is also “a linguistic and cultural collective, invested with an established historical perspective that... celebrates a demarginalising resistance to the formal linguistic demands of a colonial economic system” (Marlow 62). The Hawaiian pidgin culture keeps the history of Hawaii alive. Hawaiian pidgin speakers not use this language as a medium of communication, but they also use it as an identity. These speakers recognize themselves as a part of this organization of people who have endured through similar problems and experiences. Pidgin speakers use these communities to support one another and obtain a sense of belonging. Through these communities, pidgin speakers develop significant relationships that highly affect their lives. However, if the public does not promote the language, these communities may inevitably be destroyed. Hawaiian pidgin speakers may forget their ancestors’ history and where they came from; thus, the Hawaiian pidgin culture and history may dwindle due to the lack of use of the language.

Because the existence of Hawaiian culture and history heavily depends on the relevance of the language, it is essential for locals to continue the language. Some may believe that Hawaiian residents could still maintain the culture's history through "Standard English." However, keeping the language relevant will "validate the experiences of Local people, providing a different world perspective, with meaning constructed on Local terms rather than Euro-American terms" (Nishimura 11). Hawaiian pidgin speakers need to be able to explain their own history with their perspective, and not the European perspective. Their own identity is engraved within this culture. This language reminds these locals where they came from. In an email interview with Jeff Seigel, a former professor at the University of Hawaii and researcher of pidgin creole language contact, he states that "More positive attitudes to [Hawaiian Creole] would improve some people's self-esteem and have positive educational implications" (Seigel). If Hawaiian pidgin is used in the educational process, it can increase the educational development of those who do not speak creole and have a positive significance on those who speak creole. By destigmatizing the use of Hawaiian pidgin, Hawaiian pidgin speakers will be able to embrace their culture and their identity. To do this, Hawaiian residents must be informed of the prejudice faced by these Hawaiian pidgin speakers, and why Hawaiian pidgin is considered as a language and not just a dialect. By apprising the public on this issue, communities will be more open to the use of Hawaiian pidgin in places other than the household.

In order to eradicate the discrimination against Hawaiian pidgin speakers, residents must encourage the use of the language to validate their culture. Promoting the use of Hawaiian pidgin in public areas get immensely benefit not only Hawaiian pidgin speakers, but also the public as a whole. One way of encouraging the use of the Hawaiian Creole language is to start speaking it in the workplace and classrooms. That way, the stigma of speaking Hawaiian Creole in public areas

can diminish. In a research book called *Hawaiian Pidgin Demarginalised*, the authors discuss the importance of the promotion of Hawaiian pidgin. After presenting observations from their interviews with Hawaiian pidgin speakers, they state that despite the local language norms in Hawaii, “Pidgin is preferred in familial and social settings, yet also enhances professional task efficiency by enhancing social rapport between co-workers, clients or other colleagues” (Marlow 63). Not only will the use of Hawaiian pidgin in the workplace encourage Hawaiian Creole English pride, it will also benefit the productivity and performance of the workers. Because workers will be speaking in the language is most convenient, they will easily be able to comfortably work without having to worry about other people’s perception of them. When the language is spoken more often, Hawaiian residents will become more invested in the language, thus, fostering the culture itself.

In order to normalize the use of Hawaiian pidgin, students must also be able to comfortably use the language in classrooms so that they learn that it is acceptable to express themselves. A Mooznah Auleear Owodally emphasizes the significance of including creole languages within the education system. By incorporating the Hawaiian language in schools, the author suggests that students can develop “greater cognitive benefits in language that children easily understand, ... greater self-esteem, and a motivation to learn” (353). Not only does the integration of pidgin in classrooms promote self-esteem and identity, it also bears positive educational advantages that could ultimately assist students in school. In an article written by Jeff Seigel called “Pidgin in the Classroom,” Seigel explains the importance of implementing the pidgin into Hawaiian schools. He states that “accommodation and awareness programs for creole-speaking students help rather than hinder acquisition of the standard language of education” (Seigel). By slowly implementing pidgin programs, students will feel like they belong

at school, thus, positively affecting the student's self-esteem and their school work. Through awareness programs, educators will be able to gradually destigmatize the use of Hawaiian pidgin, making students more comfortable speaking in their own language. However, these programs should not be forced upon teachers, they should be slowly integrated in through increments. By gradually implementing Hawaiian pidgin accommodation programs into schools, both the teachers and students will not be overwhelmed by this positive change. Schools in Hawaii may also choose to merely teach the students about the language and culture or implement a Hawaiian pidgin language class.

Rather than forcing the Hawaiian population to accept the implementation of Hawaiian pidgin in their daily lives, Hawaiian Creole speakers must educate the public first. Although many Hawaiians see Hawaiian Creole English as an "abbreviated" version of English, Hawaiian pidgin advocates ought to increase their efforts to destigmatize the employment of the language. By promoting the use of the language among locals, discrimination against these pidgin speakers in the workplace, in schools, and in public areas could potentially minimize. In order to demolish the discrimination of Hawaiian pidgin speakers, Hawaiian residents must be apprised of the importance of the culture and identity that associates with the Hawaiian Creole language. Many Hawaiian Creole speakers feel the need to tell the history of their ancestors through their own language and perspective; however, by putting a stigma against the language, these pidgin speakers are ashamed of speaking in their mother tongue. Through active campaigns advocating for the normalization of Hawaiian pidgin and school programs that teach other students about pidgin, the Hawaiian community could potentially remove the disgrace that comes with Hawaiian pidgin. Programs like these will be able to widen the world view of children while validating the self-esteem of the creole speaking students. Like Seigel suggested, the lack of

knowledge of Hawaiian pidgin inhibits students from reaching their potential in school. Critics believe that there implementing Hawaiian Creole Programs in school may inhibit students' future; however, these programs are likely to have positive implications on the educational development of these Hawaiian students. However, much more research must be conducted about the successes and failures of other pidgin language programs that have been implemented in different countries. By administering studies like these, Hawaiian schools can learn from other programs' mistake to ensure student achievement. Additionally, by publicizing Hawaiian Creole English, locals can potentially get support local officials and social media influencers. Working with esteemed leadership can make a lasting impact on the public. Through campaigns and public awareness, Hawaiian pidgin speakers will not only be able to escape the injustices they face as a Hawaiian Creole speakers, but also freely express themselves, their culture, and identity in a safe and educated environment. Advocates must not only inform Hawaiian residents of the culture of Hawaiian Creole English, but they must also advise pidgin speakers that it is acceptable to speak their language in public.

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## Abstract

This paper addresses the discrimination Hawaiian Pidgin speakers face on a daily basis. Hawaiian Creole English consists of words that are similar to standard English, however, Hawaiian Pidgin words are pronounced differently; thus, Hawaiian residents look down on pidgin speakers because they use what people deem “broken English.” Nevertheless, Hawaiian Pidgin is a language in its own right. Not only is Hawaiian Creole English a language, it is also an identity and culture that a community of people utilize. Because the public considers the language of Hawaiian Creole English as “low class,” Hawaiian Pidgin speakers often are the last pick for jobs and are forced to endure maltreatment from other Hawaiian residents. Thus, Hawaiian Pidgin speakers are obliged to avoid speaking their mother tongue and expressing their identity and culture. I argue that it is essential to preserve Hawaiian Pidgin in work and academic environments in order to create awareness for the language’s society and culture. Consequently, the promotion of the language may alleviate some of the injustices these pidgin speakers face within these important areas. Normalizing the pidgin language in Hawaii can increase students’ self-esteem and their motivation to learn as well as benefit workers’ productivity and performance at their jobs. In order to destigmatize the use of Hawaiian Pidgin, Hawaiian schools must implement Hawaiian Pidgin support programs to encourage the free use of Hawaiian Creole English in public and to validate the self-esteem of pidgin speakers. In addition, the public must be informed of the Hawaiian Pidgin culture.