

Reversing the Power Dynamic between Linguistics and Language Revitalization: An Example from Hawai'i

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This chapter describes the linguistics program at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo that endeavors to reverse the unequal power dynamic between the field of linguistics and language activism to promote the work of language revitalization. The program also provides outreach to other Indigenous and minority language groups throughout the world.

Although language revitalization has grown as an academic area of inquiry, there remains concern about a perceived divide between the field of linguistics and the language activism required to protect endangered languages. Unlike language activists, who focus on elevating the status of a language and its speakers, linguists are often taught as a part of their training to publish papers to advance their careers and to isolate a language from its speakers in order to analyze it as an object of academic inquiry (Leonard, 2018). Referring to this divide between linguists and language activists as “two solitudes,” Rice (2009, p. 37) notes that both groups have “their own ideas, even their own legends, about what a language is and what language revitalization is all about.” Owing to these differing approaches, linguists who enter an Indigenous community to gather information about a specific language have sometimes been depicted as “lone wolves” (Bowerm & Warner, 2015; Crippen & Robinson, 2013) whose main purpose in doing field research is to extract information for their own purposes without giving much back to the people in the community.

In order to bridge this divide, Rice and others have called for linguists and activists to work collaboratively for the benefit of communities, emphasizing that “it takes a community of people to revitalize an Indigenous language” (2009, p. 37). Leonard, however, notes an inherent power dynamic problem in the relationship between linguistics and language revitalization given that linguistics represents “the hegemony of academic fields” which “reproduce(s) colonial hierarchies by elevating named academic fields over the much broader sets of experiences and issues that underlie language documentation needs” (Leonard 2018, p. 57). While not ruling out the possibility of collaboration between the two groups, Leonard (2018, p. 58) emphasizes that “contemporary linguistic science privileges certain ways of defining language, particularly by structural units that can and often are described and analyzed separately from each other, but that are also disembodied from the people who use them, thus contradicting Indigenous values of interrelatedness as a framework for describing and interacting with the world.” It has further been suggested that this unequal relationship between linguists as describers of languages and the speakers of languages who function as informants reinforces the trauma felt by many Indigenous communities who saw their languages and cultures decimated due to colonization. As reported in Hinton, Huss,

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and Roche (2018, p. xxv), Crystal Richardson, a graduate student in linguistics from the Karuk tribe of California, describes such field linguists as “brain pickers” and explains that “the reality of broken relationships held between ‘informants’ and ‘researchers’ has left a bitter taste in the mouths of many Karuk people.”

This paper describes an academic program in linguistics that has attempted to reverse the power dynamic between linguists and language activists in order to promote endangered and other minority languages. The linguistics program of focus is at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo (henceforth, UH-Hilo) and primarily functions to support the movement to revitalize the Hawaiian language, a movement that has been recognized as one of the strongest revitalization movements in the world (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; McCarty, 2008). At the same time, as this paper explicates, the linguistics program at UH-Hilo also provides outreach to other Indigenous and minority language groups throughout the world.

In describing how a linguistics program can facilitate language activism, this paper builds on the work of linguists that have employed their positions of authorities as academics in institutions of higher learner to promote critical reflection on language-based social inequalities. This includes linguists such as William Labov, Geneva Smitherman, John Rickford, and John Baugh who have written and engaged in language activism on behalf of African American Vernacular English. Moreover, this paper also draws inspiration from the work of Mary Bucholtz and her colleagues, who have used their authority as educators and academics to develop school programs that promote sociolinguistic justice for minority students who speak languages other than English (Bucholtz et al., 2014; Bucholtz, Casillas, & Lee, 2015, 2016). Finally, this paper also acknowledges linguists who are increasingly using their positions to advocate for the work of language revitalization, including the development of programs such as the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program (Hinton et al. 2018).

Linguistics at UHH: A Resource for Hawaiian Revitalization

Gerds (2017, p. 612) notes that many linguistics departments were created in the middle of the twentieth century as a way “to distinguish themselves from the anthropology and foreign language departments out of which they were born.” By breaking away from related disciplines, linguistics has been able to establish itself as an autonomous field of study that itself consists of various subdisciplines ranging from syntax, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, historical linguistics, and also computational linguistics. Since the emerging area of language revitalization concerns language first and foremost, it seemingly falls naturally within already established programs of linguistics.

At UH-Hilo, however, an essentially opposite process has occurred. Although the linguistics program originated at the university as a stand-alone major within the College of Arts and Sciences, it was moved in 2008 into the already existing Ka Haka ‘Ula o Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language (henceforth Ka Haka ‘Ula or the College) to function as a resource for the expanding movement to revitalize the Hawaiian language. The College of Ka Haka ‘Ula was mandated

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into existence in 1997 by the Hawai'i State Legislature to serve as a college that is administered through the medium of the Hawaiian language and devoted to the promotion and revitalization of the Hawaiian language. In addition to offering a B.A. degree in Hawaiian Studies, the College also created two M.A. programs, a Ph.D. program, and a graduate certificate in Hawaiian teacher education, all of which are taught primarily through the Hawaiian language. These degree and certificate programs are intended to provide Hawaiian speakers with a pathway not only to develop Hawaiian language fluency but also to receive the higher education and training necessary to be hired as educators of the Hawaiian language in the various Hawaiian communities. In addition to Ka Haka 'Ula, Hawai'i consists of a network of preschools, elementary, junior high, and high schools that operate as Hawaiian-medium schools and that require a staff that has been educated to teach different subjects via the Hawaiian language.

From the beginning, the intent of moving the linguistics program into Ka Haka 'Ula was so it could support the goal of Hawaiian language revitalization. In this sense, the basic structure in Ka Haka 'Ula contrasts with traditional hierarchies that place any and all focus on Indigenous languages and their speakers in linguistics departments and thus require adherence to the greater policies and frameworks created by linguists. At Ka Haka 'Ula, the linguistics program is required to follow the policies put in place by Hawaiian language activists whose foremost goal is promotion of the Hawaiian language and culture. In fact, one of the requirements for myself and the other linguist, Yumiko Ohara, who moved into the College with the program was to develop a proficiency in the Hawaiian language by going through the undergraduate program in Hawaiian with the regular students. Doing so was necessary so that the two of us could comply with the basic rule of the College, namely, that all interactions between and among members of the College, including faculty meetings and email exchanges, be accomplished through the medium of the Hawaiian language. This emphasis on using Hawaiian, as already noted, makes it clear that the movement of linguistics into the College was not done to promote the study of linguistics. Instead, the linguists were expected to accommodate to and further advance the larger goals of the College that include increasing the number of Hawaiian speakers.

The linguistics program at UH-Hilo still offers a stand-alone undergraduate major in linguistics that includes, among other courses, a focus on syntax, phonology, and historical linguistics, but in terms of administration, linguistics falls under the Hawaiian Studies Department. It was clear from the beginning at the time of the move in 2008 into Ka Haka 'Ula that the coordinator of the linguistics program (I served that role at the time) was, in terms of hierarchical structure, to answer directly to the Chair of the Hawaiian Studies Department, a position which falls directly beneath the Director of the Hawaiian Language College. Both of these higher positions continue to be occupied by faculty members whose primary focus is the promotion of the Hawaiian language; the linguistics coordinator thus remains in a position that is in a subservient power dynamic to the Hawaiian language educators.

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Moreover, soon after the move into Ka Haka ‘Ula, the linguistics major was revised to feature a focus on language revitalization. Although classes in language revitalization are taught primarily in English, they enable the students, many of whom are enrolled in Hawaiian language courses, to learn about the process of language revitalization and how the Hawaiian revitalization movement relates and compares to similar movements throughout the world. With the linguistics major more aligned with the goals of language revitalization after the revisions, many students majoring in Hawaiian have been able to add a double major in linguistics. Doing so enables students to continue to work on their Hawaiian language skills while also learning more about the process of language revitalization and how language works in general. In addition to providing students with valuable information, the addition of linguistics as a second major may help them in the future should they decide to apply to graduate programs outside of UH-Hilo consisting of more traditional hierarchies that put general linguistic knowledge above the study of an individual Indigenous language such as Hawaiian.

In addition to providing a double major, the move of linguistics into Ka Haka ‘Ula enabled the Hawaiian language revitalization movement to advance in at least two ways. First, since Yumiko and myself were required to obtain proficiency in Hawaiian, we have been able to teach through the medium of Hawaiian in the M.A. and Ph.D. programs and we have likewise been able to chair and serve on students’ thesis committees. When the M.A. and Ph.D. programs were first implemented, there was a shortage of faculty fluent in Hawaiian with the required higher degrees to teach at the graduate level, especially in the Ph.D. program. Since the two of us already possessed a Ph.D., Ka Haka ‘Ula was able to provide the instruction in Hawaiian that would allow more fluent speakers of Hawaiian to obtain higher graduate degrees. Like so much else in language revitalization, language activism goes well beyond the individual. Ka Haka ‘Ula was not necessarily interested in our ability to engage in linguistic research; instead, we were viewed as two more resources that could make contributions to the tremendous amount of work required to revitalize a language.

The second way the inclusion of the linguistics program in the College has supported Hawaiian revitalization is the usage of Yumiko and myself in the development of a heritage language program at the Hawaiian medium school Ke Kula ‘o Nāwahīkalanī‘ōpu‘u, which functions as a laboratory school of the College and provides Hawaiian medium education from grade one through high school. This heritage language program starts from the first grade in elementary school and focuses on the teaching of languages such as Japanese, Chinese, and Latin through the medium of Hawaiian (Wilson & Kamanā, 2011). These languages have been chosen because they fall into the category of heritage languages for many of the Hawaiian speaking children who are of mixed ethnicity (often with Japanese, Chinese, and Portuguese). The program does not necessarily aim to create fluent speakers of these heritage languages but rather is meant to take advantage of and further develop their metalinguistic understanding about how language functions. As Wilson and Kamanā (2011, p. 50) state about the Latin heritage program, “metalinguistic skills developed from contrastive analysis

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with Latin provide Nāwahī students with tools to consciously improve overall vocabulary development and language performance, be it in Hawaiian, English or other languages.” The heritage language program is partly based on the research of Bialystok and others on bilingualism and multilingualism showing the cognitive benefits of learning multiple languages at a young age (i.e., Kroll & Bialystok, 2013; Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012). Since both Yumiko and I possess backgrounds in Latin and/or Japanese, we have worked as teachers of Latin and Japanese at this laboratory school. Linguistics and linguistics faculty here as well are seen as tools for the promotion of the Hawaiian language. Currently, the heritage program centering on Japanese is making use of double majors in linguistics and Hawaiian Studies who speak Japanese to serve as teachers and assistants. For the linguistics faculty and the double majors, the primary purpose is not to engage in the study of linguistics. It is to use our skills as linguists to contribute in as many ways as possible to the movement to revitalize the Hawaiian language.

Linguistics and Outreach to Speakers of Other Indigenous Languages

While the work of Ka Haka ‘Ula focuses squarely on the revival of the Hawaiian language, the move of the linguistics program was part of a larger vision of the College to provide assistance to speakers of Indigenous languages other than Hawaiian who are seeking to preserve and revitalize their languages. One way the College has done this, as part of the revisions to the linguistic program, is through the creation of an academic certificate within the linguistics program entitled “Contemporary Indigenous Multilingualism.” Academic certificates require fewer credit hours than majors and allow students to pursue specific academic topics without necessarily pursuing majors (though it does turn out quite frequently that students pursue certificates related to their majors and often earn the certificate as a part of fulfilling the requirements for their major). The certificate in “Contemporary Indigenous Multilingualism” is intended for students who already speak or have a background in an Indigenous language. The requirements (21-25 semester credits) necessary to fulfill the *Certificate in Contemporary Indigenous Multilingualism Certificate in Contemporary Indigenous Multilingualism* are as follows:

Required Courses (6):

- LING 102 Introduction to Linguistics (3)
- KIND 240 Culture Revitalization Movement (3)

Core Electives (6-8), taken from:

- LING 133 Elementary Indigenous Languages (3)
- LING 233 Intermediate Indigenous Languages (3)
- KHAW 103 First Level Transitional Hawaiian Immersion (4)
- KHAW 104 First Level Partial Hawaiian Immersion (4)
- KHAW 133 First Level Hawaiian for Speakers (4)
- KHAW 233 Second Level Hawaiian for Speakers (4)

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Transfer semester hours in an indigenous language other than Hawaiian (i.e. Lakota, Samoan) from a tribal college or other college

Related Electives (9-11), taken from:

LING 442 Languages in Hawai‘i (3)

LING 347 Pidgins and Creoles (3)

LING 331 Language in Culture & Society (3)

Courses in indigenous languages other than Hawaiian.

Courses pertaining to indigenous multilingualism with prior permission from the Hawaiian Studies department chair.

Hawaiian language courses; however, no more than a total of 8 credits may be applied to this certificate

Note: This certificate may be taken by linguistics majors or any other major.

As indicated above, Hawaiian language courses count, so the certificate is open to Hawaiian speaking students. However, the Hawaiian language students tend not to pursue this certificate, which is probably owing to the fact that a major in Hawaiian Studies will provide them with a much more detailed study of their language.

For students focusing on Indigenous languages besides Hawaiian, the courses LING 133 and LING 233 are key to the certificate as it is in these courses that they work closely with the linguistics faculty to explore the structure and socio-linguistic situation of their languages of focus. These courses are taught by the two of us who moved into the College, and, while we are almost never proficient in the languages focused on by students, we are able to direct them in terms of analysis and description. For instance, we are able to push students to examine structural facets of their languages such as pluralization, tense and aspect, and transitivity, and we can likewise direct them to examine language policies and other events that may have lead to language shift. Students then present different aspects of their languages in class in front of each other and the instructor, which allows students to view their languages through a comparative lens and also develop a capacity to explain their languages to others. These courses do, then, encourage students to engage in work typically associated with linguistics, namely the examination of structural features such as phonemes, morphemes, and grammatical categories. However, it does not treat them merely “as objects to be described in scientific materials” (Leonard, 2018, p. 56) but instead does so as part of an attempt to seek the means to support, maintain and revitalize languages that may have a minority or even endangered status. Among the languages focused on by students who have completed the certificate or are currently in the process of completing it are Ojibwe, Sāmoan, Tahitian, Marquesan, Nahuatl, Uchinaaguchi, and Sonorolese, a language of the Pacific Islands. Some of the students who completed this certificate have returned to their own communities to work with the people there to promote and preserve their languages.

In addition to this certificate program, the linguistics program provides assistance in other ways to minority languages. For instance, Yumiko works closely with a community-based group in Hawai‘i that is endeavoring to reconnect with Ryukyuan languages and cultures. The Ryukyuan languages, which includes

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the language Uchinaaguchi mentioned above, are the Indigenous languages of the Ryukyuan Islands, a set of islands off the coast of Japan that, prior to being forcibly annexed by Japan in 1879, functioned as an independent kingdom. Since annexation, the six recognized languages of the islands have become endangered as the Japanese embarked on the process of colonization, which included forcing people of the islands to be educated in Japanese. There is a close connection between the Ryukyuan Islands and Hawai‘i owing to the arrival of Ryukyuan beginning in 1900 to work as plantation laborers. Accordingly, there are many descendants of these laborers still living and working in Hawai‘i, which means that these languages should be recognized as heritage languages. A group of these descendants have been holding monthly workshops that feature Ryukyuan language and culture classes, and Yumiko has been involved for several years in a leadership role. We have also encouraged many of linguistics majors to participate, and some have come to play active role and to participate in larger conferences devoted to Ryukyuan languages and cultures.

The linguistics program has also been involved in a similar relationship with another Indigenous language group in Japan, the Ainu. Ainu is indigenous to the island Hokkaido, which is now a part of Japan. Ainu educators at Sapporo University in Hokkaido have brought members of its Urespa club, which was established in order to provide students with a safe place to study Ainu language and culture, to Hawai‘i to participate in a cultural and linguistic exchange with Hawaiian language students at UH-Hilo. This cultural exchange also included short homestays with Hawaiian families. Yumiko also traveled with several Ka Haka ‘Ula Hawaiian language students to visit Hokkaido for further linguistic and cultural exchange, and she also accompanied faculty and students of the Urespa club to New Zealand to visit several sites of Māori revitalization. The relationship between the UH-Hilo linguistics program and the Urespa club progressed to a point where Ka Haka ‘Ula and Sapporo University signed an agreement to support each other’s efforts. Through this agreement, we have begun plans to host a summer institute offering courses in Hawaiian, English, and language revitalization, but such plans were interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. We are currently hoping to make this institute a reality for summer 2024.

Finally, in terms of outreach at the undergraduate level, the linguistics program has recently implemented a dual credit program to offer training in translation to high school students in Hawai‘i who speak multiple languages. This project, termed “student translators,” began in 2021 with less than 10 students from two different high schools and is now in its third year with over 30 students from three high schools. This program provides students with training in translation so that students can develop skills that will allow them to assist their families and others in their communities, many of whom are not highly proficient in English. As part of the program, the students translate notices from their schools and pieces of information included on the schools’ websites as a part of preparing them to use their home languages to serve their communities. Thus far, the students who enrolled in this program have been speakers of languages such as Marshallese, Chuukese, Kosraean, Ilocano, Tagalog, Thai, Japanese,

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Chinese, and Spanish. In particular, speakers of languages such as Marshallese, Chuukese, and Kosraean constitute an underserved minority group in Hawai'i whose children sometimes struggle to graduate from high school (Saft, 2021). In addition to teaching the students translation skills, the program is designed to make students aware that they, just by speaking a language in addition to English, already possess a very important skill. By encouraging students and by simultaneously providing college credits, the program intends to show the students that they have the ability to engage in academic work at the college level and thus hopes to urge them to consider attending college after high school.

Linguistics and Outreach at the Graduate Level

Linguistics at UH-Hilo also plays a crucial role in providing outreach at the graduate level to Indigenous communities outside of Hawai'i. In fact, while the Hawaiian language remains the focus at the graduate level, the M.A. and Ph.D. programs have been designed to allow speakers of other Indigenous languages to enroll. As alluded to previously, the College has traditionally had two M.A. programs administered through Hawaiian, one of which focuses on Hawaiian language and literature and the other on Hawaiian culture and education. Recently in 2020, though, the College consolidated the two Hawaiian M.A. programs together into one M.A. degree and added a third track to the M.A. program designed to allow students to focus on other Indigenous languages. The students in this track take courses with the Hawaiian speaking students through the medium of Hawaiian, which requires them to study Hawaiian and work with the faculty and classmates to receive translation, but they also enroll in courses focusing on language revitalization that are conducted in English. This program is still in its beginning stages, but it has recently had one student, focusing on the Ryukyuan language of Uchinaaguchi who graduated with his master's degree. In addition, we currently have two other students in the program studying Uchinaaguchi, another student from Palau focusing on Sonsorolese, and a group of students from New Mexico from the Jemez Pueblo community who are seeking their master's degree so that they can strengthen their language within their community.

While this type of outreach at the M.A. level is relatively new, the Ph.D. program has been providing outreach to Indigenous communities outside of Hawai'i for nearly twenty years. The title of the program is "Hawaiian and Indigenous Language and Culture Revitalization," and since the first cohort began in 2005, it has featured speakers of other Indigenous languages. The first cohort, in fact, began with four speakers of Hawaiian and one speaker of Māori, who went on to finish her Ph.D. dissertation in 2008 on language testing in the Māori language. Since that time, the Ph.D. program has accepted speakers of other Indigenous languages in each subsequent cohort of students. To date, graduates of the Ph.D. program include speakers of Tlingit, Mohawk, and Dakota (in addition to the first Māori graduate), and we currently also have students in the program focusing on Arapaho, Chamoro, Cree, Lakota, Mohawk, Ojibwe, Oneida, Marshallese, and Uchinaaguchi.

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The Ph.D. program consists of rigorous academic study and it requires a dissertation to graduate, but the goal is ultimately to promote the practical activity of language revitalization. This is accomplished as shown below through a curriculum that places an emphasis on linguistics. Graduation requirements for the Ph.D. Program in Hawaiian and Indigenous Language and Culture Revitalization include:

1. KIND 730 Research Methods in Hawaiian and Indigenous Language & Culture (3)
2. Eight Credits in Advanced Study of Language of Focus:
 - KLAN 701 Semantics/Pragmatics of Indigenous Languages (1)
 - KLAN 702 Stylistics/Domains of Indigenous Languages (1)
 - KLAN 703 Semantics/Pragmatics of an Indigenous Language (3)
 - KLAN 704 Stylistics/Domain of an Indigenous Language (3)

These credits are directed toward improved analytical and fluency skills in the student's language of focus and its culture. KLAN 701-702 are seminars taken by all students to develop common understandings and form the basis for KLAN 703-704, which focus specifically on Hawaiian or other indigenous languages depending on student interests.
3. Additional Language Requirement: For students whose language of focus is Hawaiian, the additional language requirement will be met by demonstrated fluency and academic knowledge of any approved second language equivalent to the 102 level as taught at UH Hilo. For students whose language of focus is other than Hawaiian, the additional language requirement will be met by demonstrated fluency and academic knowledge of Hawaiian equivalent to the 102 level as taught at UH Hilo.
4. Two Areas of Specialization: Students will focus on two of the four areas of specialization provided in the program: (a) Indigenous Language and Culture Education, (b) Indigenous Language and Culture in Society, (c) Language Planning, and (d) Hawaiian Language and Culture.
 - KED 794 Indigenous Language and Culture Education (3)
(Prerequisite: KED 660 Indigenous Culture-based Education (3),
KED 662 Indigenous Well-being Through Education (3) or equivalent)
 - KIND 794 Indigenous Language and Culture in Society (3)
(Pre: KIND 601 Language Maintenance and Shift (3), KIND 602 Meth/
Resou Indig Lang Comm
Blg (3) or equivalent)
 - KLIN 794 Language Planning (3) (Prerequisite: KIND 601 Language
Maintenance and Shift (3),
KIND 602 Methods/Resources Indigenous Language Community Building
(3) or equivalent)
 - HWST 794 Hawaiian Language and Culture (3) (Prerequisite: HAW 631
History of Hawaiian Language & Literature (3),
HAW 654 Advanced Hawaiian Grammar (3),
HWST 663 Traditional Hawaiian Literature (3),

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- HWST 665 Ethnological & Historical Narratives (3) or consent of instructor)
5. Students may take up to six semester credits (or equivalent) at another accredited university in courses pre-approved by the program chair and transfer the credits to the University of Hawaii at Hilo in place of any of the listed program courses.
 6. Completion of all graduate courses with a grade no lower than “B.”
 7. Successful completion of a comprehensive examination consisting of oral and/or written questions, after the student’s Graduate Committee determines the student has had sufficient preparation in the field of study to begin work on the dissertation.
 8. Submission and approval of a portfolio which documents the student’s work to improve public opinion and/or government policy concerning the revitalization of the student’s language and culture of focus. The portfolio may include newspaper or periodical articles or oral presentations aimed at the student’s indigenous community or the larger public; it may include written material or oral testimony given at government forums concerned with indigenous language and culture revitalization.
 9. Successful completion of a dissertation, with enrollment in a minimum of six credits of KIND 800 Doctoral Dissertation Research (1–6) (V) during the writing of the dissertation. A final oral examination in defense of the dissertation is then required upon completion of the dissertation.

The emphasis on linguistics is evident in the courses listed above in requirement #2. The first two courses in the list, KLAN 701 and KLAN 702, bring students from the Hawaiian language side together with Indigenous students from the non-Hawaiian side to consider the application of pragmatics, semantics, and stylistics and domains, all concepts used in linguistics, to Indigenous languages at a general level. The other two courses listed under #2, KLAN 703 and KLAN 704, are divided into two sections each, one consisting of only the Hawaiian-speaking students and the other for speakers of other Indigenous languages. This is done to encourage the students to begin applying the linguistic concepts to their own languages and cultures and also to enable to Hawaiian students to receive instruction through the Hawaiian language.

Yet, while linguistic terminology is employed, the purpose of these courses and of the Ph.D. program is not to engage in the work of linguistics per se. It is to use linguistic concepts to provide graduate students with the knowledge, skills, and training so that they can consider, discuss, and research the best practices for revitalizing the Indigenous language(s) of their communities. To be sure, of the twelve graduates from the program to date, six of whom have focused on Hawaiian and six on other Indigenous languages (one on Māori, three on Mohawk, one on Tlingit, and one on Dakota), there have been some that have concentrated on linguistic topics. One graduate focused on relative clause constructions in the Hawaiian language and their usage in Hawaiian literature (Cabral, 2016) and another graduate on a comparison of Hawaiian speakers from two different generations at the discourse level (Kimura, 2012). Moreover, there have been

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dissertations written on topics that, if forced to categorize, would fall under the umbrella of “applied linguistics,” such as the language testing and assessment in Māori (Edmonds, 2008), language pedagogy in Mohawk (DeCaire, 2023; Green, 2020), and immersion education and school construction in Tlingit (Twitchell, 2018). At the same time, there have been topics that seem well-removed from linguistics. For example, the program has had graduates focus on conflict resolution in Hawaiian medium schools (Kamanā, 2010), Hawaiian literature (Perreira, 2011; Warfield, 2020), Hawaiian performing arts (Harman, 2020), and the art of tattooing in Mohawk (Hemlock, 2023). Although these topics vary, the one constant is that all topics are meant to apply to and contribute to the promotion and revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultural practices. For example, the dissertation on Hawaiian relative clauses featured an analysis but also concluded with a discussion of how to teach these complex structures to learners of Hawaiian. Likewise, the dissertations on Hawaiian literature aimed to uncover cultural knowledge to be passed on to learners of Hawaiian. Hence, despite a linguistic leaning in the curriculum, linguistics is ultimately treated as just one resource toward realization of the greater purpose of the Ph.D. program, language and cultural revitalization.

Linguistics and the Navigation of Standard Language Ideologies at UH-Hilo

Linguistics is able to provide support to the Hawaiian language movement and to other Indigenous languages largely because the larger UH-Hilo university structure enables Ka Haka ‘Ula to focus on Hawaiian revitalization. In short, UH-Hilo allows Ka Haka ‘Ula, for the most part, to stipulate to its faculty, staff, and students that Hawaiian is to be the primary language of interaction within the College.

At the same time, though, it should be noted that the university does function on the basis of a mostly understood rule that English is the official language of the university. Although both Hawaiian and English stand as official languages of the state, only English is required as a part of the general education curriculum established by the university. All students at the university must pass an English composition class in order to graduate. Even students choosing to major in Hawaiian Studies must pass the English composition course. In contrast, students are not required to take any Hawaiian language courses before graduation. This means that all students must take at least one English course, but they can graduate without taking any courses in Hawaiian. There is a general education requirement that students take one course in a category designated as “Hawai’i Pan-Pacific” so that they can take advantage of their time in Hawai’i to learn about the language and/or culture of the islands. However, even though there are Hawaiian language courses that count toward the satisfaction of this requirement, the majority of the courses in this category are taught through English (see discussion in Lockwood & Saft, 2016). By making English the only mandatory language, and by enabling English to serve as the de facto language of the university, the university falls in line with and continues to reinforce the

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general belief that English is “the” most important language.

In order to navigate the university’s focus on English and ensure that students have an opportunity to study and develop other, lesser-studied languages, the linguistics program has implemented its own language requirement for students who major in Linguistics. Majors are required to engage in 16 credits of “second/auxiliary language study” that must come from at least two different languages. Since language courses are typically four credits per course, this means that majors are generally expected to take four semesters of language study, with many students opting to take three courses of one language and one of another or to take two semesters each of two languages. Students may also take more than two languages; they may, for instance, take one semester each of four different languages.

To fulfill this requirement, students can take the language courses offered at UH-Hilo; UH-Hilo offers Hawaiian, Japanese, Mandarin, Filipino, and Spanish. While the program is strict about enforcing the language requirement, it does offer flexibility for students who enter the program with proficiency in languages other than English. For instance, we regularly have students who are first language speakers of languages in the Pacific (i.e., Sāmoan, Tongan, Marshallese, Palauan, Chuukese, Kosraean) and Asia (i.e., Japanese, Korean, Chinese), and in those cases, we give them eight credits of language study, four for their first language and four for English since they have already demonstrated proficiency in English by passing the university’s mandatory English course. Especially for students who speak languages that are not typically considered to be very prestigious in Hawai‘i, for example, languages of the Pacific such as Sāmoan, Tongan, Marshallese, Palauan, Chuukese, and Kosraean, this policy can let speakers of these languages know that their languages are recognized and of value.

Additionally, students are given credit toward the language requirement for languages they have studied at other institutions outside of UH-Hilo. This includes other major world languages such as French and German, but the linguistics program particularly wants to encourage students with a background in Indigenous languages to major in linguistics at UH-Hilo. Accordingly, students who come to UH-Hilo from Native American communities and who have studied a language (or languages) at tribal colleges are given credit for their study of Indigenous languages (and if they have a demonstrated proficiency in an Indigenous language without taking courses, they are also given up to eight credits toward the linguistics major). As a program, the goal is to make sure that all students have exposure to at least three languages to satisfy the Linguistics major, and whenever possible, the program promotes the study of Indigenous languages amongst its students. The institution of a flexible language requirement that seeks to promote Indigenous and under-represented languages whenever possible is part of the mission of the linguistics program since it was moved into Ka Haka ‘Ula in 2008. By creating a curriculum that consists of a focus on language revitalization, that includes a certificate program in Contemporary Indigenous Multilingualism which encourages students to appreciate and to learn about their own Indigenous languages, and that features a flexible language requirement, the

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linguistics program looks to circumvent the default focus in Hawai‘i on English in order to serve and assist speakers of Indigenous and other minority languages.

Conclusion

In their contribution to an edited volume focusing on linguistic discrimination in institutions of higher education in the United States, Wolfram and Dunstan (2021, p. 171) assert that “linguists and sociolinguists can play a prominent role in confronting linguistic inequality in higher education.” They describe in their chapter an “intervention program” called “Educating the Educated” that led their university to put more emphasis on language in their diversity initiatives. At UH-Hilo, the emphasis in Ka Haka ‘Ula is not on diversity per se, but the College is concerned with inequality, namely, that Indigenous languages and particularly Hawaiian have suffered as a result of unequal relationships with majority languages such as English. The move of linguistics into the College in 2008 was intended to assist Ka Haka ‘Ula in fighting against the inequalities that had left the Hawaiian language in a highly endangered state. From the outset then, linguistics, even though it maintained its own academic major, was to serve as a resource for the Hawaiian revitalization movement. In fact, as noted previously, from the very time it joined Ka Haka ‘Ula, linguistics was in a subservient role to the Hawaiian language as the two linguists who joined the College with the program were expected to report directly to the two Hawaiian language activists who occupied the highest academic positions in the College.

From its position within Ka Haka ‘Ula, linguistics was also tasked with providing outreach to speakers of Indigenous languages other than Hawaiian. This was apparent through the revisions made to the linguistics curriculum, particularly the creation of focus on language revitalization in general and also the addition of an academic certificate on Contemporary Indigenous Multilingualism. Furthermore, linguistics also occupies an important place in Ka Haka ‘Ula’s graduate work at the M.A. and Ph.D. levels. Students at the graduate level can engage in linguistic research if they desire to do so, but the basic goal in the College is not the production of publications in linguistics; rather, it is to provide as much support as possible to language revitalization movements across the globe. Likewise, the two of us who came to Ka Haka ‘Ula with linguistics are free to continue with our programs of research, but our work has been primarily judged based on the degree of service we provide to the Hawaiian language movement and also to other Indigenous language groups.

To be sure, a program in linguistics would not necessarily have to be in a deferential role to Indigenous languages in order to “play a prominent role in confronting linguistic inequality” (Wolfram & Dunstan, 2021, p. 171), but nonetheless it is hoped the organization described in this paper, with linguistics in a hierarchically lower position vis-a-vis a program of study of a specific Indigenous language, provides a potential model for the development in the future of academic programs of study focusing on the language revitalization of Indigenous languages. The place of linguistics within Ka Haka ‘Ula shows that, instead of

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assuming already existing linguistics departments to be the natural academic home for language revitalization efforts, it is possible to place linguistics in a subservient and supportive role to the work of language activism. Doing so, in fact, may be one way to implement a power dynamic that ensures that the academic analyses of languages does not take priority over the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages.

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