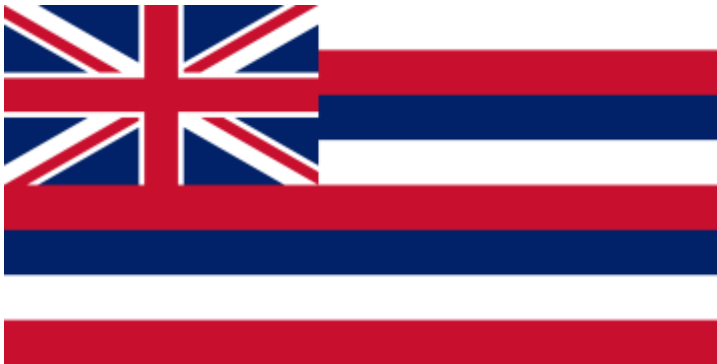


Hawaiian language

‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i



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Introduction

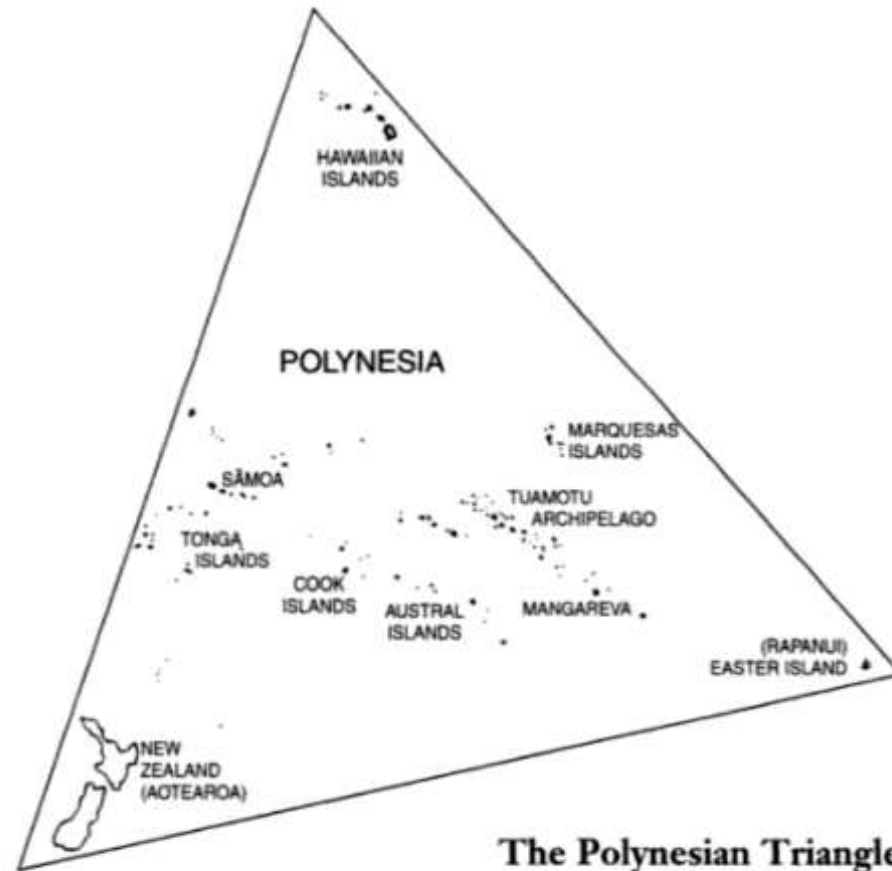
The island of Hawaii is best known for its fabled climate, its beaches, and its spectacular scenery. However, it is more than just a collection of geographical features – it has a culture of its own as well. One way to experience part of this culture is through the Hawaiian language.

(Schütz 1995: 1)



- The Hawaiian language is a member of the **Austronesian** language family. It is one of the largest and most widespread language families in the world.
- This family has more than **1.000 tongues** and is spoken by more than **250 million** people in *the Malay Peninsula: Madagascar, Taiwan, Indonesia, New Guinea etc.*
- The Austronesian language family is about **6.000 years old** and can attribute its present wide distribution to the perfection of open-ocean travel by the ancestors of modern day speakers.
- Many Austronesian languages are endangered today, and several already are extinct. Hawaiian is sadly also one of the endangered languages of the world.

(Hale, Hinton 2001: 129)

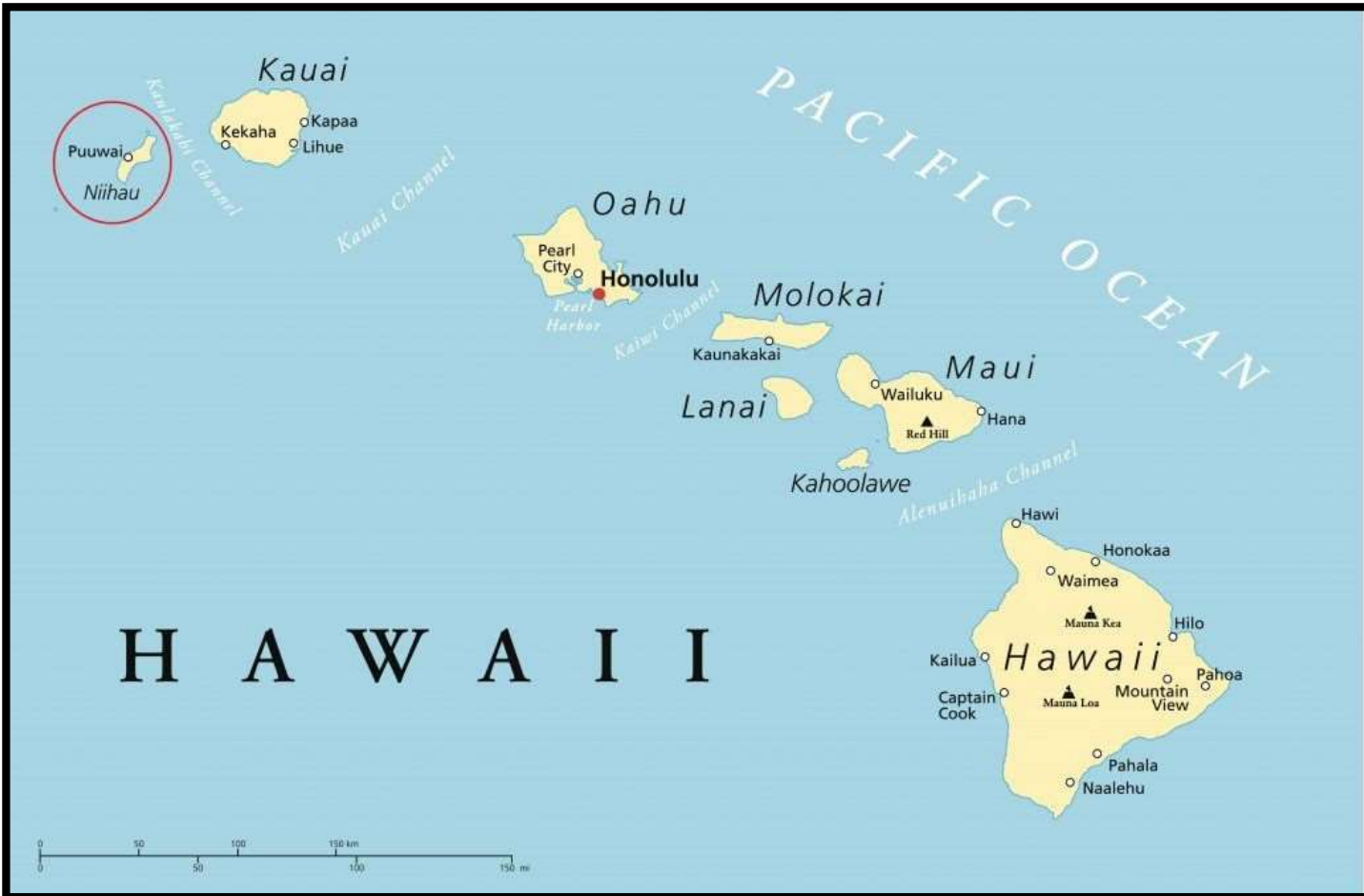


(Schütz 1995: 6)

It is important to note that Polynesians are a subgroup of Austronesians. This means Hawaiians, Samoans, Tahitians, Maori, Tongans, etc. are all Polynesian and Austronesian simultaneously. However, not everyone who is an Austronesian is Polynesian as well. Filipinos, Malays, Taiwanese Aboriginals, Indonesians, etc. are all Austronesians but they are not Polynesians.

- Hawaiian is not the main language of Hawaii, and not even a widely spoken one.
- Only around 18,000 of Hawaii's 1.4 million people speak it at home. (2019)
- There is only one place in the world where it is the native language and main language of the population: The island of Niihau (Which has a population of only 160 people)
- Even though it is not widely spoken a lot of Hawaiian words and phrases are popular:
 - **Aloha** (Hello/Goodbye/Love)
 - **Mahalo** (Thank you)
 - **Moana** (ocean path, path to the sea)





The Island of Niihau

Is Hawaiian just a dialect?

- The first Hawaiian people migrated to the islands from other parts of Polynesia.
 - We don't exactly know when this happened, but the first wave of migrations came from the **Marquesas Islands** (400 CE) followed by a second wave of migration from **Tahiti**, several centuries later.
 - As a result of that, Hawaiian shares a lot of similarities with the Marquesan and Tahitian language despite the geographical distance.
 - European explorers noticed these similarities and they thought that all these languages were dialects of a single Polynesian language, but now there are a plenty of differences too.
- (Langfocus 2020)

English	Hawaiian	Marquesan	Tahitian
house	hale	ha'e	fare
canoe	wa'a	vaka	va'a
woman	wahine	vehine	vahine
fish	i'a	ika	i'a
thing	mea	mea	mea
bird	manu	manu	manu

(Schütz 1995: 7-8)

There is a tremendous amount of similarity between the three languages – above there is a lexical similarity data, showing words that look very identical.

Reduction in population

- When British Explorer Captain James Cook reached Hawaii in 1778 the population was about 300.000 and they all spoke Hawaiian.
- Then, American missionaries arrived, as well as American businessmen who established sugar cane plantations.
- Along with them came diseases such as smallpox, which wiped out much of the native population.
- By 1860 there were only 60.000 native Hawaiians, and by 1920, there were only 24.000.
(Langfocus 2020)

Immersion schools

- In 1896 a law was passed, which made English the language of instruction in Hawaiian schools.
- It wasn't illegal to speak Hawaiian, but at school children were disciplined if they spoke it.
- This, along with the largely decimated native population, put the Hawaiian language at serious risk of dying out over the next century.
- It's a language many predicted would be dead by now, but in recent decades there's been more attention to preserving and promoting the language.
- In the 1980's, new Hawaiian immersion schools began to be established, including immersion pre-schools.
- In 1979 – there were 800 native speakers, but now around 18.000 people speak Hawaiian at home.
- That doesn't necessarily mean that it's their first language, but they're fluent speakers, and many of them have to be those people who study at these immersion schools.

(Langfocus 2020)

Key Features of The Language

Pronunciation & orthography

- When Captain James Cook discovered the Hawaiian Islands in 1778, he also discovered that they had a totally oral tradition.
- There was, up until western contact, no written version of the Hawaiian language. In 1820 western missionaries living in the islands first standardized a written version of the Hawaiian language.
- The written Hawaiian language is based on English letters.
- **There are eight consonants and five vowels, so the alphabet has only 13 letters.**
- Certain letters can represent two different sounds, depending on the dialect, but spelling is now standardised to these particular letters.

Vowels	Consonants
a, e, i, o, u	h, k, l, m, n, p, w, and ‘ (glottal stop called <i>okina</i>)

Consonants

h	as in English
k	as in English
l	as in English
m	as in English
n	as in English
p	as in English
w	after i and e pronounced v after u and o pronounced like w at the start of a word or after a pronounced like w or v
'	'okina - a glottal stop (more about this later)

Vowels

a	like the <i>a</i> in <i>far</i>
e	like the <i>e</i> in <i>bet</i>
i	like the <i>y</i> in <i>city</i>
o	like the <i>o</i> in <i>sole</i>
u	like the <i>oo</i> in <i>moon</i>

Conclusion:

- Every syllable ends with a vowel, and no syllable can have more than three sounds.
- The stress of the word usually falls on the penultimate syllable (second last).
- There are no consonant clusters in Hawaiian, meaning there are never two consonants in a row.

- Since Hawaiian has no sibilants (s-like sounds) it makes the language sound smooth and melodious.
- Some words of the same letters and syllables by change of accent can change the meaning of the word, as we can see from the chart below.

á-ka	a shadow	a-ká	but, a conjunction
ka-ná-ka	a man	ká-na-ka	men in general, people
ma-lá-ma	a month	má-la-ma	take care

Special Symbols - the 'Okina and Kahakō

- These two symbols change how words are pronounced.
- The '**Okina** is the apostrophe mark and is a glottal stop - or a brief break in the word. As an example, think of the English **oh oh** (oh'oh).
- It appears in front of a vowel, and never before another consonant, and will never be the last letter in a word - but will always appear between letters or at the beginning of the word.
- The **Kahakō** is a stress mark (macron) that can appear **over vowels only** and serve to make the vowel sound slightly longer. The vowels ā, ē, ī, ō, and ū sound just like their non-stress Hawaiian vowels with the exception that the sound is held slightly longer.
- Missing the 'Okina or Kahakō can greatly change not only how a word sounds, but also its basic meaning. = For example, the word *kāne* (kaa-nay) means *male* while the same word without the Kahakō, *kane* (ka-nay), means *skin disease*.
(“How To Speak Hawaiian Like A Haole,” n.d.)

Simple Secrets

There are a couple of simple tricks to help figure out Hawaiian words quickly and pronounce them properly:

- Hawaiian words may start with any letter, vowel or consonant.
- Hawaiian words will never end with a consonant.
- Syllables in Hawaiian words are only one or two phonemes, never longer.
- Syllables must end with a vowel, or can be a single vowel, but can never be a single consonant.

How do the rules mentioned help? Let's consider one of the longest words in Hawaiian (the word for rectangular triggerfish, which is the official fish of Hawaii):

humuhumunukunuku'āpua'a

If we remember the rules about syllables we can quickly break it up into syllables like this:

hu-mu-hu-mu-nu-ku-nu-ku-'ā-pu-a-'a

It becomes much easier to read 😊



(“How To Speak Hawaiian Like A Haole,” n.d.)

Word order

- If the predicate is an adjective:
 - **Nani** (*predicate*) **ka wahine** (*subject*) = **The woman is beautiful.**
(beautiful-the-woman) – Full sentence.
 - **Ka wahine** (noun) **nani** (adjective) = **The beautiful** (adjective) **woman.** (noun) – Not a full sentence. There is no predicate. It is simply a noun phrase.

In Hawaiian noun phrases, the adjective comes after the noun, whereas in English it comes before it.

Other examples:

- **Nui** (*predicate*) **ka hale** (*subject*) = **The house is big.** (big-the-house) – Full sentence
- **Ka hale** (noun) **nui.** (adjective) = **The big house.** (the-house-big) – Not a full sentence.
- *If we add a verb, we can see that Hawaiian is VSO.*
 - **Aloha** (love) **au** (I) **iā 'oe.** (you) = **I love you.**
 - **au:** first person singular subject pronoun
 - **iā 'oe:** second person singular object pronoun

All About Ke and Ka

- Both **ke** and **ka** are equivalent to the English word the, therefore **they are definite articles**.
- The choice to use ke versus ka has to do with the word that immediately follows it.
- If the next word begins with K, E, A or O you would use ke, otherwise you would use ka (there are a couple of exceptions to this such as a few words that begin with an 'okina).
- Examples: **ka** – ka wahine = *the woman*; **ke** – ke kumu = *the teacher*
(“How To Speak Hawaiian Like A Haole,” n.d.)

Verbs

- There is no verb which has the English meaning 'to be'.
- **Verbs are not conjugated for person or number, they stay the same regardless of the subject.**

Himeni au.	I sing.
Himeni 'oe .	You sing.
Himeni 'o ia.	He/She sings.

- **Tense/ aspect/ mood markers are used before or after the verb to indicate the relationship of the event to time.**
 - **Ke** + verb + **nei**: present continuous = **Ke** hana **nei** au. = I am working.
 - **Ua** + verb = perfective aspect (the action is completed) = **Ua** hana au. = I (have) worked.
 - **E** + verb + **ana**: imperfective (the action has not been completed, often translates to the future tense in English) = **E** hana ana au. = I will work./ I was working.
 - **E** + verb = imperative = **E** hana! = Work! / It can also function as the infinitive = **e** hana = to work
 - **Mai** + v = negative imperative = Mai hana. = Don't work.
- (Langfocus 2020)

Some Basic Phrases

- **Aloha** = Hello/ Goodbye/ Love
- **Aloha kakahiaka** = Good morning. (6am-10am)
- **Aloha awakea** = Good day. (10am-2pm)
- **Aloha 'auinalā** = Good afternoon. (2pm-6pm)
- **Aloha ahiahi** = Good evening. (6pm-10pm)

The real meaning of Aloha in Hawaiian is love, peace, and compassion. The Aloha Spirit is also a state “law” to remind people to treat everyone with the same respect.



- **Pehea 'oe?** = How are you?
- **Maika 'i au.** = I am good.
- **'O wai kou inoa?** = What's your name?
- **'O John ko'u inoa.** = My name is John.

Notice here that kou = your and ko'u = my are two completely different words, so the glottal stop is very important!

- **Mahalo** = Thank you.
- **He mea iki.** = You're welcome. (It literally means '*a little thing*'.)



Sample text in Hawaiian

Hānau kū'oko'a 'ia nā kānaka apau loa, a ua kau like ka hanohano a me nā pono kīvila ma luna o kākou pākahi. Ua ku'u mai ka no'ono'o pono a me ka 'ike pono ma luna o kākou, no laila, e aloha kākou kekahi i kekahi.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oSdXETH9P9b-HW-gyIxEcbV3qPzGvute/view?usp=sharing>

A recording of this text by Tamati Taylor

Translation

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

(Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

Thank you for your time!



I would also like to express my gratitude to my teacher György Rákosi, head of the Department of English Linguistics, who took the time and effort to review my presentation and correct my mistakes.

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