

Language Policy in American Education: Standard English vs. Hawai'i Creole English in Hawai'i's Classrooms

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The 1987 Hawai'i State Board of Education policy on "Standard English and Oral Communication" is analyzed in terms of the effects it has had on people's lives, the beliefs and attitudes that shaped its creation, modification, and implementation, and the actual situation in the schools for which it was intended. Public school principals are focused on as a source of information: face-to-face interviews with five principals are reported, and questionnaire data from thirty-three principals are analyzed.

Key Words : standard English, Hawai'i Creole English, language policy

INTRODUCTION

It is quite common in multilingual communities for authorities to make decisions regarding the functions that they believe the various languages should or should not serve. Such attempts at language policy extend as well to the roles of different varieties of one language in more or less monolingual situations. Though the United States has been and remains a country of immigrants from many different language backgrounds, legislation about language use has been remarkably rare. The pragmatic value of learning and using English has been an overwhelming incentive for virtually all immigrants, and Americans have traditionally been relaxed about the range of English that they find acceptable.

Two notable exceptions to the relaxed attitude toward different varieties of English concern varieties that exhibit more distinctiveness than most other varieties of American English, due mainly to a period of relative isolation from more homogenized varieties: Black English (recently in the news under the name Ebonics), and Hawai'i Creole English. Both varieties developed on large plantations, the former in the American South among the descendants of slaves brought from west Africa, the latter in Hawai'i among the children of immigrant workers from China, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Portugal, and elsewhere. In both cases, members of the same linguistic group were intentionally separated as much as possible from each

other, and simple pidgin languages based on English developed for communication among members of different linguistic groups and with their overseers. Children learning these pidgins as their native language elaborated them into fully functional creole languages. As mobility gradually increased for each of the groups, their language varieties began to lose some of their distinctiveness, but because of social distance from mainstream society, many features remained as markers of identity. For a host of reasons beyond the scope of this paper, these varieties have become stigmatized in the context of mainstream American society. This stigma is especially problematic in the educational system: how should school authorities deal with children who come to school speaking a variety of English that is considered non-standard? There is of course no straightforward answer. The recent Ebonics controversy has demonstrated the difficulties of trying to solve the problem by removing the stigma, whereas the language policy to be discussed in this paper represents an attempt to solve it by removing the variety from the school context.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

It is very hard to find anyone who opposes the learning of standard English (henceforth SE) by Hawai'i's schoolchildren. How to reach this goal, however, or more importantly, at what cost to the local variety of English and its speakers, are issues that

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continue to generate heated controversy. As mentioned above, Hawai'i Creole English (henceforth HCE) is a variety of English first created by the children of plantation workers of various language backgrounds. These workers used an English-based pidgin language for communication across language groups; it developed into a creole language when the children learned it natively. As a creole language, HCE has, among others, two important qualities: 1) it is a full-fledged language (the point that linguists emphasize); and 2) it differs from the so-called SE more noticeably than regional varieties normally do (the point which shapes the attitudes of many non-linguists). This second quality, combined with its origin as a pidgin, and its prominent use by less educated and less powerful people, has made it an easy target for those seeking scapegoats for social ills and/or for those who feel threatened by diversity.

In 1987, several members of the Hawai'i State Board of Education (henceforth BOE) decided that action on their part was necessary to fortify the learning of SE, by eliminating HCE use from the schools. The apparent basis for this view was the continued poor performance of Hawai'i schoolchildren in relation to national norms on standardized tests, local children's perceived inarticulateness, the BOE members' ambivalence to their own HCE heritage in some cases, and probably the feeling that this would be a popular issue with their constituents. Although hard evidence indicating the necessity of a policy was scarce, equally scarce were indications that anyone opposed such a policy. By the time that the issue came up for a vote before the full Board, evidence on the first count was still lacking, but evidence of community opposition had become abundant. In the media and at the BOE meeting, although some criticism of HCE was sprinkled in, the overwhelming trend was support for HCE and opposition to the policy. The policy was passed anyway, but in a considerably watered down form, as follows:

2100.3

STANDARD ENGLISH AND ORAL COMMUNICATION REGULATIONS

Oral communication is the most commonly used form of human interaction in personal or social situations and in the work place. Oral communication, specifically standard English, may be considered the most significant basic skill in our lifetime.

Toward this end:

- o Students will be provided the opportunity to learn and develop facility in oral standard English as a matter of high basic skill priority.

o Staff will:

- 1) provide comprehensive and effective instruction in the expression and reception of oral standard English;
- 2) model the use of standard English in the classroom and school-related settings except when objectives relate to native Hawai'ian or foreign language instruction and practice or other approved areas of instruction and activities; and
- 3) encourage students to use and practice oral standard English.

Adopted: 9/87 Amended: 3/88

The result could be looked at as a victory or defeat for either side. The pro-policy Board members got their policy, but one of dubious substance. The anti-policy people were not able to stop its passage, but they forced a major retreat on the part of the BOE, and more importantly, they significantly heightened consciousness about the nature of HCE and its role in the community. Now, ten years after the approval of the policy, it should be possible to ascertain what effects the policy has actually had, particularly on the teachers and students at whom it was targeted, but additionally in terms of any wider effects. Also, it would be worthwhile to examine the beliefs and attitudes about SE and HCE at the school level, as these will intensify, mitigate, or transform the effects of any policy, as well as provide the seeds for future policies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the actual situation in the public schools with regard to SE and HCE use?
2. What are the attitudes toward HCE in the public schools?
3. What have been the effects of the 1987 BOE language policy at the school level?

The motivations for specifically focusing on these three questions will be discussed individually, followed by an explanation for focusing the data collection on the level of school principal.

1. The actual situation in the public schools with regard to SE and HCE use

In July of 1987, the Hawai'i State Board of Education's Policy on Standard English and Oral Communication (henceforth SE Policy) began to take shape in its Curriculum Committee, chaired by Hatsuko Kawahara, ostensibly in response to a long-standing problem of public school students not learning to speak SE. As committee member Mako Araki put it at the July 28 meeting, "many students complete their education without having gone past pidgin and are not

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able to speak English properly." Mrs. Kawahara and Mr. Araki were quite aggressive in promoting a policy, despite doubts by other members and the Assistant Superintendent Herman Aizawa that a policy was necessary, and/or that a problem existed. Two months later, in her memo to the Chair of the BOE recommending that the SE policy be adopted, Dr. Kawahara included the statement that "Although no field input was obtained, major arguments against the policy are not anticipated inasmuch as there appears to be general public recognition of the problem." Thus, the policy came up for a vote and was adopted on September 17 with no more than cursory consideration of the true nature of the situation it was intended to address. "Hard" evidence of the problem consisted of accounts by two committee members who had personally witnessed teachers using HCE in class when they visited an intermediate school in Waianae, and the testimony of three student representatives from the Hawai'i State Student Council on the negative aspects of HCE use in school. For the BOE, this was apparently enough evidence to justify a policy. Although Dr. Aizawa reported at the September 1 Curriculum Committee meeting that a Department of Education (DOE) Task Force study concerning the impact of HCE on students would be completed by the end of the school year, the committee, and the full Board, clearly did not feel the need to wait for the facts.

As it turns out, the Task Force Report was never completed, having been declared unfeasible. According to an October 4, 1989 memo from Dr. Aizawa to the new Curriculum Committee Chair Debi Hartmann, the intended study could not be completed for the following three reasons:

- 1) there are no standard criteria for determining what pidgin English is;
- 2) there is no evaluation instrument appropriate for a large-scale assessment; and
- 3) observations of the use of pidgin English would have to be accompanied by information about the circumstances under which its use occurred.

It is certainly true that these are daunting challenges inherent in the kind of study envisioned, but none are insurmountable, and one would guess that a State Department of Education is just the type of organization able to marshal the resources necessary for such an undertaking.

In place of the Task Force study, DOE's Evaluation Branch produced *Research Findings on Students' Use of Hawai'i Creole (Pidgin) English and Relationships with Standard English and School Achievement in Hawai'i* (State of Hawai'i, 1988). The studies reviewed in that report dealt predominantly with students in the Kamehameha Early Education Program,

and were thus of limited generalizability to the whole statewide system, but the conclusions nevertheless indicated HCE was a language variety worthy of respect, and that students from an HCE background had special needs, needs that clearly would not be served by a mere "emphasis" on SE.

The situation in the mid-nineties is as it was in 1988; in response to a recent telephone inquiry by the present author, Roberta Mayor, Educational Director of DOE's General Education Branch, indicated that there is still no "hard data" available on HCE use in the public schools.

2. The attitudes toward HCE in the public schools

It is quite obvious that several BOE members had very negative attitudes toward HCE, though as public opposition to the proposed policy began to mount, most began to backpedal, profess that HCE had a place in the community, and claim that the policy was not targeting HCE and its speakers in the first place. The BOE's negative evaluation of HCE should not be surprising, given the traditional low appraisal of HCE even on the part of teachers and students (see Sato, 1991, for review of research). Sato cautions against the uncritical acceptance of such studies' findings, on the grounds that they typically elicit the attitudes of economically comfortable subjects, from urban areas, using quasi-experimental research methods. Observational studies in a full range of settings will be necessary to begin to describe the complex interrelationship of language behavior and language attitudes that exists in Hawai'i's dynamic linguistic environment.

Another dimension to the language attitude question is highlighted by the fact that speakers of dispreferred language varieties tend to accept and internalize the negative evaluations of their variety. Gal (1989) explains this as an aspect of political economy, by which subordinate groups come to accept and perpetuate the legitimacy of their inequality with the more economically successful and 'empowered' speakers of a 'standard' variety. However, another important facet of this situation is the well-documented maintenance of denigrated language varieties (e.g. Milroy 1980, 1982), indicating steadfast resistance to the empowered class's view of the world.

Both types of forces can be seen at work in the controversy surrounding the adoption of the SE Policy. The BOE members, who must be at least somewhat aware of their constituents' attitudes, did not foresee anyone actively defending HCE use. There was no historical precedent for such defense (Sato, 1991). Nevertheless, once positive sentiments toward HCE began to be aired publicly, they were quickly followed

by an outpouring of statements of support and appreciation for the local language variety. It was as if HCE speakers had finally found an outlet for welled up positive thoughts and feelings about their language variety, sentiments that they had previously denied as unworthy of having, much less expressing.

Nevertheless, questions remain about the representativeness of attitudes expressed in the media in relation to the general population, and how much the attitudes expressed were those which emerge in times of crisis but are not deeply felt in everyday life. Most importantly, children's current attitudes to their own and their classmates' language need still to be gauged, as these formative attitudes will come to have the most far-reaching effects. Close behind in importance are the attitudes of today's teachers, who, collectively at least, have a great influence on their students.

3. The effects of the 1987 BOE language policy at the school level

Soon after the adoption of the SE Policy, Ray Galas, a Hawai'i State Student Council official and student at Campbell High School, claimed that "pidgin use has decreased noticeably since the Board's approval of the policy" (Reyes, 1987). While it is true that the policy debate had been prominent in the media and a topic for corresponding debates among high school students, it is hard to imagine Galas' statement having wide generalizability, given that the policy was not even distributed to the schools until November 5, almost two months after the claimed effects. Hikida et al. (1987) also give an account of one Farrington High School teacher's efforts to interpret and implement the policy in her own way, and corresponding stories from three additional teachers at Farrington, Kona Waena, and Waianae High Schools are reported in Reyes (1987). The teachers in this latter article all claimed to agree with the policy, but there was no indication that any of them had changed their teaching behavior to observe it. Thus, there is little direct evidence that the policy had an effect, and the meager evidence that exists indicates that the most salient effect was the raised consciousness resulting from intense media coverage, not the policy itself.

Granted, there is equally little evidence that the policy did not have an effect, though from the statements of several BOE members and DOE officials that the policy reaffirms what the schools have been doing all along, one would not expect spectacular changes to occur. Even people with diametrically opposed positions on the proper role of HCE, such as BOE member Chuck Norwood and UH professor Charlene Sato, had similar assessments in this regard. Norwood termed it a "non-policy policy" and Sato referred to it

as a "nothing" policy. Sato's concern, consonant with that of another UH linguist Michael Forman, was that the policy would serve to divert attention away from the real problems that needed attending to in the education of HCE-speaking children (Hikida et al., 1987).

Other reasons for expecting a minimal effect from the policy are that no attempts were made to define SE and HCE, no guidelines for enforcement were provided, no sanctions for violators were specified, and no means of evaluation accompanied it.

Level of Analysis: School Principals

The causes and effects of the BOE's decision could be studied on any number of levels, from the governor of the state of Hawai'i, to the Hawai'i Superintendent of Schools, through the levels of bureaucracy at the DOE and its school districts, to the school level, to individual students. A start from any point could conceivably lead to valuable findings, but for this study it was thought to be most fruitful to start at the school level, where people's lives were most likely to be affected.

Clearly, the best way to examine language behavior, determine the effects of a policy, and to corroborate the accuracy of assumed or expressed language attitudes is through long-term systematic observation. However, such observational studies are often not feasible, due to time and access constraints. Furthermore, an observational study may end up an unfortunate waste of time and opportunity if not carefully planned and focused on the basis of whatever systematic knowledge has been accumulated up to that time. Such systematic knowledge regarding language use in Hawai'i's schools is still in woeful short supply. For these reasons, a study stopping short of actual classroom observation was considered justified, and a concentration on the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of school principals was decided upon as the most effective use of the resources available.

There are several reasons why principals are a good place to start in attempting the answer the research questions posed above. The first is that principals generally have the greatest amount of knowledge of the overall situation at their schools. Secondly, although they are not in the classroom currently, they have extensive classroom experience. Third, although they understand teachers' points of view from their own background and perhaps from their membership in the teacher's union, their job is one of middle management within the educational system. They are directly responsible for implementing policy on the school level. Indeed, Assistant Superintendent Aizawa stated explicitly in relation to the SE policy that "the key to enforcing the use of standard English lies with the

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principal" (Hikida et al., 1987). Finally, principals have personally made the decision to hire at least some of the teachers at their school, so they can be expected to have an informed opinion about teachers' language varieties.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

There are two overlapping groups of informants in this study. The first is a group of six principals that I interviewed personally. I was introduced to the first of them by the University of Hawai'i professor I was working with. The second one is the principal of the school that my own children were attending, and she in turn introduced me to the other four, all of whom are her professional acquaintances. The second group of 29 informants, who filled out questionnaires, were randomly selected from each of the state's seven school districts. The two groups are overlapping in that my last four interview informants all filled out the questionnaire, and their responses are included in the quantitative data.

Data collection procedures

Interviews

For the interviews, the first step was to call for an interview appointment; I identified myself first as a PTA vice-president, and then quickly added who I was referred by. I received no refusals, though by neglecting to include my introducer's name in a phone message to an absent principal, I suspect I nearly lost my opportunity to make contact with her. Most school principals in Hawai'i are very busy and not eager to commit away additional chunks of time.

I began each interview by telling the principal what the research was about, and emphasizing that as a parent and Ph.D. student, I was interested in general in both education and public policy, and eager to learn more about the problems that principals face. I hoped to establish their trust in this way. In order to minimize the tendency to provide responses that the interviewer wants to hear, I also mentioned that I was new to the state and was only starting to get familiar with the language situation there.

The first two interviews were tape-recorded, with no noticeable effect on the frankness of the responses. However, the conflict of simultaneously establishing trust and asking to record the conversation made me feel uncomfortable, and since I had developed the questionnaire before the third interview anyway, I relied on my notes, the questionnaire, and my memory for the third through sixth interviews. For the first two interviews, I had typed out a sheet with some background to the study and a list of open-ended

questions; the questions were intended to get the principal started talking and so that we could delve deeper into the topic. However, the first principal's responses to a number of the questions were unexpectedly categorical and brief, suggesting that I was not hitting on issues that he considered worth discussing. Revisions in the questions made the second interview go much smoother than the first, and provided a framework from which the first draft of a Likert-scale questionnaire could be constructed.

Questionnaire

Distribution of Questionnaires:

Forty-three questionnaires were sent out on December 2 in East-West Center envelopes to randomly selected principals (every fifth name in each district, taken from the 1990-1991 Directory (State of Hawai'i, 1991)). Each questionnaire was accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope, a copy of the BOE SE policy, and a cover letter, also on East-West Center letterhead. The cover letter emphasized our joint concern with educational improvement, the minimal amount of time required by the questionnaire, and my ties with the PTA, the East-West Center, and University of Hawai'i (a large majority of Hawai'i's principals are University of Hawai'i graduates). Within two weeks, 29 were returned, for a return rate of 67%.

Anonymity and Disclosure

All informants were guaranteed anonymity, and were offered copies of the results and/or the full paper upon completion.

Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of five sections: Biodata, Working Definition, Assessment, Beliefs & Attitudes, and BOE Language Policy Effects.

Biodata sought information concerning school level (elementary, etc.), district, amount of experience as principal at current school and in total, and previous experience as a teacher. This information was considered important for the interpretability of the data.

Working Definition required a prioritization of the features which distinguish HCE from SE: prosody, phonology, lexis, and morpho-syntax. Although the BOE SE policy included no guidance as to how to define either variety, principals must have some notion in their minds of what distinguishes the two varieties. In addition to increasing the interpretability of other items, this section was intended to find out how much consensus existed among the principals on the nature of the phenomena they were being asked to control. It needs also to be mentioned here that throughout the questionnaire I referred to the language variety by the locally popular term "pidgin" rather than Hawai'i Creole English or HCE, which are not so well known among

the general population.

Assessment of the current situation attempted to determine the actual language use situation at the schools (Research Question 1), as perceived by their principals. On very general four or five point Likert scales, aspects HCE and SE were alternately surveyed for students and teachers, specifically related to ability for use and amount of use in instructional and non-instructional school settings. Problems with inappropriate HCE use that have required the principals' attention were then probed, followed by a self-assessment of HCE use to put other responses more into perspective.

Beliefs & Attitudes was intended to get at the principals' ideology (Research Question 2), by asking their views on the advisability of using HCE in the classroom, the worthiness of HCE to be maintained by its speakers, and the degree to which HCE impedes the learning of SE. Two additional items, motivated by the use of the concept "self-esteem" by both sides in the debate over the BOE SE Policy, elicited principals' beliefs on the degree to which use of HCE or criticism of HCE use could impair self-esteem.

BOE Language Policy Effects measured the principals' perceptions of the intensity and direction of the policy's effects (Research Question 3). Although this was originally intended to be the heart of the study, the interview data indicated that the policy did not weigh heavily on the minds of principals. Thus the question of intensity was consequently designed to confirm/disconfirm the impression gained from the interviews that the policy was ineffectual, and the direction question was to see if, among those principals who did perceive some effect, that effect was positive or negative.

Interview Results

Principal A was the first principal that I interviewed, on referral from my University of Hawai'i mentor, an acquaintance and former student of his. Principal A has been a principal at various levels for many years, his current school being an elementary school with a mixed local and military-dependent student body in central Oahu. Although I went into the interview with a set of prepared questions, and tape-recorded the conversation, I missed getting potentially relevant information because I failed to anticipate the full range of possible answers to each of my questions. After all my reading on the controversy surrounding the BOE SE policy, I was surprised by Principal A's claim that SE exclusively was spoken in the classroom by teachers and students, and that therefore HCE was a non-issue for him. Although he admitted that there might be some schools where it is still an issue, he maintained that the problem of HCE impeding the

acquisition of SE was essentially one of past generations; decreolization had reduced the problem naturally. He mentioned that personally, he had to go to the mainland to learn SE when he was much younger, and that even now he felt that he had to exert effort to speak good SE.

Interestingly (in light of the quantitative results which I will present later), Principal A stated that at the junior high and high school levels, the HCE issue becomes even more insignificant, due to the plethora "real" problems that principals have to deal with at those levels.

On the topic of hiring teachers, Principal A indicated that all the candidates he had interviewed over the years spoke SE; in hiring interviews, which have no specific guidelines, he is most concerned with content, e.g. if the prospective teacher can speak articulately about relevant educational concepts such as "whole language." His statements about current and prospective teachers juxtaposed with his feelings of inadequacy about his own English reveal ambivalence: although the job-related criterion level of SE is rather easily reached, the ideal level of SE is out or reach to most of Principal A's generation.

For the last three years, **Principal B** has been the principal at the elementary school that my own children attended; it is through this connection, and more specifically my role as PTA vice-president, that I approached her for an interview. Learning from the mistakes of my first interview, I first tried to ascertain a definition of HCE; Principal B felt that word choice and grammar were relevant, but not rhythm and intonation. As with Principal A, she asserted that all her teachers spoke SE, and that SE had never been an issue in a hiring interview. She did express concern, however, that some applicants for SLEP (Students of Limited English Proficiency) positions were not appropriate for those positions for reasons of intelligibility. Having become a principal since the passage of the policy, Principal B had only a vague recollection of it. She did not know how many of her own staff were able to speak HCE, but felt that HCE should never be used in the classroom in front of the whole class. If necessary for comprehension purposes, one-on-one use would be acceptable. Principal B, who is of part-Japanese part-Caucasian ancestry, does not speak HCE herself, though her brothers, who attended different schools, do speak it.

Principal C was the first principal whom I subjected to my questionnaire. Having become a principal shortly before the SE Policy was adopted, and being at a school in an affluent area of Honolulu where SE is quite

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prevalent, he was vaguely aware of the policy, but could not remember much about it; there are many polices, and principals pay careful attention to them only when there will be a change required, or major impact expected, at the school. As an example of a policy that attracted his attention, he offered the new policy on district exceptions, which entails a significant logistic and financial burden for certain schools, his included. Principal C hears almost nothing but SE at his school (although he specifically mentioned to me a new non-instructional employee who spoke with a Southern accent, and how he was pleased about the enriching opportunity the students now had in hearing a different language variety). He also admitted that if teachers (or students) did use HCE in class, he probably would not know about it because of his role as "management." A local-born Japanese American, he himself uses HCE very seldom. Despite his assessment of the situation at his school, he still indicated that it might be occasionally useful for a teacher to use HCE in class for better communication.

Principal D, a local-born Chinese American, has been a principal for 12 years altogether, coming to her current school three years earlier. The school is in a low-income predominantly Filipino area, with many of the students coming from families receiving welfare assistance, and some of them with a parent confined in the nearby correctional facility. Principal D felt that SE and HCE were distinguishable at any of the levels of pronunciation, word choice, or grammar; she herself uses HCE very seldom. She asserted that teachers at her school use HCE when needed, which is often, and that the emphasis she encourages is on teaching the student, not the curriculum. Her view of the SE Policy was that it had a minimal, but negative effect. She believes that the BOE is far removed from the realities of the schools, and that its policies have to be interpreted and implemented in light of local conditions at each school. In general, she echoed Principal A in making it clear that there were a lot more serious issues than a prescribed language variety.

Principal E is a Caucasian principal at an elementary school in a primarily Samoan area on Honolulu. Well over half the student body is from low income families (as defined by eligibility for free or reduced lunches). She has been at that school for three of her five years as principal, and has been in school administration for a total of 8 years. Although Principal E is from the mainland, she considers herself to have picked up HCE in her 20 years in Hawai'i. She had a hard time specifying which features were most important in distinguishing SE from HCE, feeling that

all of them were important. In her assessment of the situation at her school, she indicated that over half of the students spoke SE, but almost all of them spoke HCE. She seemed to feel that it was not as much of a problem as it might be at some other schools, since Samoans tended not to use as much HCE at home as other local ethnic groups. Though she felt that it might be occasionally appropriate for teachers to use HCE for the benefit of students not understanding SE fully, she stressed, like other principals, the need for versatility in both varieties. She was proud to tell me of a school assembly organized by a woman who had been the first from a large HCE-speaking family in Ewa Beach to master SE, and subsequently go on to becoming very successful in the modeling industry on the U.S. mainland. Despite Principal E's generally favorable attitude toward HCE, she did agree that exclusive or nearly exclusive HCE use could perpetuate a lack of self-esteem. Specifically concerning the BOE SE policy, Principal E felt that it had had no effect, that some members of the Board are out of touch with reality, and that if the policy had had a real and negative impact on the school, she would have protested it. Principal E stated that there are some Board members who appreciate input from the schools, although others do not. As with several other principals, she put the BOE's behavior in the perspective of its role in serving a constituency.

Principal F was the hardest to reach of all the principals I was referred to by Principal B, and after a week of unreturned phone calls I nearly gave up. Still, I felt that as a matter of principle (no pun intended), I should not give up without an explicit refusal. As it turned out, the persistence was well worthwhile. Principal F's elementary school serves one of the wealthier areas of Honolulu. There is no majority among student ethnic groups, but the largest group is Asian American, followed by Caucasian. Principal F believes that some of the youngest children (K-1) may have some problems in comprehending and speaking SE, and for those children she would consider the transitional use of some HCE acceptable, but she was confident that in her school the children would quickly pick up SE even without any accommodation toward their HCE home variety.

Principal F was the only one of my interviewees who could recall a problem with HCE use at her school. Strangely enough, it involved a teacher and a parent. In a school-related but informal setting (not a parent-teacher conference), the teacher on one occasion spoke what the parent, a Caucasian from the east coast of the United States, considered to be improper English. The parent reported the incident to Principal F, who then

asked the teacher about it. The teacher, who apparently had no problems at all with SE, explained that she had slipped into a more local variety of speech after having come to feel close to and comfortable with the particular parent, who at the time was room mother for the teacher's class. Principal F's bringing the complaint to the teacher's attention was enough to remedy the problem, which did not recur. Principal F's attitude was that it was a case of an over-sensitive parent; nevertheless, the only viable response was to humor the parent and make sure that the parent was not subjected to HCE again.

Principal F herself spoke to me in what was not identifiable as a local accent, but told me that she does speak HCE from time to time, especially when talking to friends of her husband, who is from Kaua'i. She said she had lost most of her local accent by being subjected to Speech 100 at University of Hawai'i, where she "was sent down to the basement" to work on her "slushy 'r's." It was a humiliating experience that still sticks with her, and she said that at the time she was required to take the course and then be examined, she was too ashamed to tell any of her friends.

Results and Discussion: Questionnaire Data

In the following section, all the aggregate results from the questionnaire responses have been tabulated and presented in tables. The trends and distribution of responses begin to suggest answers to the three research questions articulated above, but only a very preliminary analysis of the results is presented here; correlations of these response patterns broken down by sub-categories with each other should produce much more revealing findings. Nevertheless, even the more fine-grained analysis will have to be interpreted with caution, as the Likert scales are not precise enough to support broad generalizations.

BIODATA

Number of respondents by school level

Elementary	Intermediate	High
16	5	6

Additionally, two principals managed schools which included K-12, and one principal a school that included both intermediate and high school.

Number of respondents by district

Honolulu	Central	Leeward	Mauai	Hawai'i	Kauai	Windward
11	6	5	4	3	2	2

The actual number of questionnaires received from the Honolulu District was seven, with four additional questionnaires deriving from the interviews with principals. Thus, in terms of response rate (and responses in proportion to number of schools in a district), Honolulu is actually under- rather than over-represented.

Mean years of experience

Current School	Total as Principal	Teaching Experience
5.21	7.94	13.6

It should be clear from this table that the principals who responded have had very extensive experience in the schools, both as principals and as teachers.

WORKING DEFINITION

The features which I feel distinguish standard English from pidgin (Hawai'i Creole English) are:

Rhythm and Intonation

Most important	2nd most impt	3rd most impt	4th most impt	Not impt
4	8	6	10	4

Pronunciation of Individual Sounds and Words

Most important	2nd most impt	3rd most impt	4th most impt	Not impt
6	8	11	4	3

Choice of Words

Most important	2nd most impt	3rd most impt	4th most impt	Not impt
8	7	6	10	1

Word Order and Grammatical Markers

Most important	2nd most impt	3rd most impt	4th most impt	Not impt
14	9	6	2	1

From these tables it is clear the largest number of respondents ranked word order and grammatical markers as the most important distinguishing feature between SE and HCE, but it is also apparent that there is a lot of individual variation. Some of the variation may be due to the degree of decreolization in the community where the principal works, or to the degree that the principal herself speaks HCE. It is encouraging that rhythm and intonation, the features which tend mark even the most decreolized local speech, and which are the least susceptible to decreolization, are given the lowest ranking. Nevertheless, the fact that they were ranked first by four respondents, and the variation in general, are worrisome, in light of the fact that principals could be attempting to enforce very different linguistic behavior according to their various conceptions.

ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

Respondents were asked for a rough estimation of various aspects of SE and HCE use by teachers and students at their schools, and finally their own use of HCE. The aggregate distribution of responses is given in the first table under each item, and the average rating and standard deviation in the second table. The averages were calculated by attributing a 1 to each response in leftmost category, then 2, 3, 4, and sometimes 5 for the categories further right. No statistical inferences should be drawn from the averages, but they do help to recognize patterns in the responses.

1. Teachers at my school are able to speak standard English.

less than half(1)	most(2)	almost all(3)	all(4)
0	0	3	30

Average	Stan.Dev.
3.91	0.29

Only three respondents did not indicate that all their teachers were able to speak SE. Two of these were at the high school level, where the most interesting variation occurs on other items as well, and the third 'almost all' response was from a principal who did not specify level. In general, the impression from the interview data that the principals perceive all their teachers to command SE is borne out.

2. Students at my school are able to speak standard English.

less than half(1)	most(2)	almost all(3)	all(4)
4	10	17	1

Average	Stan.Dev.
2.45	0.75

In contrast to the previous item, only one principal (at an elementary school in the Central District) believed that 'all' of her students commanded SE. However, the next most frequent response was 'almost all.' The variation appears to be more by individual school than by district or level. Among the 'less than half' responses, two were from Honolulu with level unspecified, one from a Leeward elementary school, and one from a Maui elementary school.

3. Teachers at my school are able to speak pidgin.

less than half(1)	most(2)	almost all(3)	all(4)	I have no idea
5	16	6	1	5

Average	Stan.Dev.
2.11	0.74

The variation on this item fell into no particular discernible patterns. Given the large amount of variation and the high proportion of 'no idea' responses, it is likely that the principals were most impressionistic on this item.

4. Students at my school are able to speak pidgin.

less than half(1)	most(2)	almost all(3)	all(4)	I have no idea
6	6	18	0	5

Average	Stan.Dev.
2.4	0.81

By far the most frequent response was that almost all students are able to speak HCE, and at the high school level it was unanimous.

5. Teachers who are able to speak pidgin probably use it in class.

never (1)	very seldom (2)	occasionally (3)	frequently (4)	I have no idea
2	19	6	2	2

Average	Stan.Dev.
2.35	0.75

This item corroborates the trend in the interview responses that teachers generally do not use HCE in the classroom, but that the composition of the student body will lead to significant variations. Furthermore, although only two respondents answered 'never,' Item 9 later provides confirmation that the extent that teachers do use HCE is very rarely considered a problem by the principals, and Item 12 provides further support for the view that principals generally support the use of HCE when such use is indicated by the situation.

6. Students who are able to speak pidgin probably use it in class.

never (1)	very seldom (2)	occasionally (3)	frequently (4)	I have no idea
1	4	5	21	2

Average	Stan.Dev.
3.48	0.85

The stark contrast between the amount of teacher and student HCE use foreshadows the contrast between responses to Items 9 and 10 concerning problems surrounding that use. An important trend in the data is that student use of HCE in class seems to increase steadily by level from elementary to high school.

7. Teachers who are able to speak pidgin use it outside class (playground, cafeteria, etc.)

never (1)	very seldom (2)	occasionally (3)	frequently (4)	I have no idea
2	9	19	1	2

Average	Stan.Dev.
2.61	0.67

A fairly consistent response is that teachers generally speak SE but occasionally use HCE in non-classroom settings. This item would be improved by specifying more clearly the settings I had in mind, and stating clearly non-classroom school settings.

8. Students who are able to speak pidgin use it outside class (playground, cafeteria, etc.)

never (1)	very seldom (2)	occasionally (3)	frequently (4)	I have no idea
0	3	2	26	2

Average	Stan.Dev.
3.74	0.63

The picture created here is that HCE is used freely outside of class by students who speak it, with the trend again being toward increase with school level. It might have been interesting to ask parallel questions about proportion of SE to HCE heard among students.

9. At my school, problems with pidgin use by teachers have required my attention:

never(1)	once(2)	twice(3)	a few times(4)	many times(5)
26	4	0	2	0

Average	Stan.Dev.
1.31	0.78

The overwhelming majority of principals had not had occasion to deal with inappropriate HCE use among their teachers. For the six respondents who had, it would be very useful to know the nature of the problems. Perhaps the problems were like that of Principal F, simply a response to a complaint, which meant no more or no less than an acknowledgment of the right of complainants to insist on exclusive SE use within their earshot (this sort of behavior, however, does have important implications in terms of the political economy arguments elaborated by Gal (1989)). On the other hand, the problems might indicate an attempt to maintain strict adherence to the SE policy or a comparable principle subscribed to even before the policy. Consistent with some of the previous items, four of the six principals who have experienced problems are at the high school level, including both of the

responses which indicated problems 'a few times.'

10. At my school, problems with pidgin use by students have required my attention:

never(1)	once(2)	twice(3)	a few times(4)	many times(5)
18	1	1	7	3

Average	Stan.Dev.
2.2	1.58

Again, the large majority of principals indicated no problems, though the number of those indicating 'a few times' rose to seven, and three principals reported having to deal with problems many times. This time no clear pattern emerged as to level, with six elementary principals reporting at least one problem, along with two intermediate principals, three high school principals, and one unspecified. Further investigation into the nature of these problems is once again indicated.

11. I personally use pidgin:

never(I can't) (1)	never(try not) (2)	very seldom (3)	occasionally (4)	often (5)
2	4	11	14	1

Average	Stan.Dev.
3.25	0.95

The principals were evenly split between those who used HCE never or seldom, and those who used it occasionally or frequently. Only two claimed inability to speak HCE, and only four avoided its use. This finding suggests, though weakly, that most of the principals have a neutral to positive attitude toward HCE. Further analysis of response patterns may make further generalization possible, but still subject to confirmation by detailed observational study.

The general picture from the assessment items is that both teachers and students use both SE and HCE at school, students more HCE than teachers; SE is generally used in class by teachers, though they seem to accept a certain amount of HCE use by students. A few principals have had a few problems with the current situation, the largest proportion of them being at the high school level.

BELIEFS & ATTITUDES

12. There are times when it may be advisable for a teacher to use pidgin in class for better communication with her pidgin-speaking students:

never(1)	very seldom(2)	occasionally(3)	frequently(4)
5	14	11	2
Average		Stan.Dev.	
2.31		0.82	

Five principals were against the use of any HCE in the classroom, and the largest number of responses favored a minimum of use of HCE. The fact that the high school average (2.67) was higher than the elementary average (2.19) suggests that principals may view the use of HCE less as an aid to comprehension than as helpful in "reaching" students on a social psychological level.

13. It is worthwhile for speakers of pidgin to maintain it for some purposes.

strongly disagree(1)	disagree(2)	agree(3)	strongly agree(8)
1	2	21	8
Average		Stan.Dev.	
3.13		0.66	

This item provides fairly clear evidence that principals are at least somewhat favorably disposed toward HCE use for some purposes. The three principals who disagreed or strongly disagreed were relatively new principals (1-2 years at current school, 1-5 years altogether), two of whom made conscious efforts never to speak HCE themselves.

14. The maintenance of pidgin impedes the learning of standard English:

not at all (1)	slightly (2)	considerably (3)	completely (4)	I have no idea (5)
12	10	7	0	4
Average		Stan.Dev.		
1.83		0.8		

While the largest single category of responses indicated that there is no trade-off between HCE use and the learning of SE, a larger total number of respondents believed that there is some degree of impedance connected with HCE use. The average response score decreased at each level, suggesting that at the higher levels, the use of the two varieties was more a matter of choice than ability. In order to more fully interpret the results for this item, it is important to

find out the degree to which the nature of the impedance is one of exposure, practice, and/or social pressure.

15. Criticism of pidgin use may cause pidgin-speaking students to lose self-esteem.

strongly disagree(1)	disagree(2)	agree(3)	strongly agree(4)
3	11	12	4
Average		Stan.Dev.	
2.61		0.88	

During the discussion leading up to the approval of the SE Policy, both sides used the concept of the students' self-esteem to argue their positions. The principals' responses indicate equal disagreement among themselves. This item was the most evenly balanced of any, with some principals apparently feeling that to criticize the HCE use was to criticize the student's identity, while others may have felt that criticism is appropriate and unharmed to call students' attention to inappropriate HCE use.

16. Pidgin use itself is a sign of low self-esteem.

strongly disagree(1)	disagree(2)	agree(3)	strongly agree(4)
12	17	2	0
Average		Stan.Dev.	
1.68		0.6	

As ambivalent as principals were on the previous item, they were categorical on this one: HCE use does not indicate low self-esteem. This is not to say that perceived lack of ability in SE does not affect self-esteem, but rather that it is a separate issue. Interestingly, the two principals who agreed with this item were both very experienced Maui high school principals who both spoke HCE occasionally themselves.

BOE LANGUAGE POLICY EFFECTS

17. The 1987 BOE policy on oral standard English has had a major impact at my school.

strongly disagree(1)	disagree(2)	agree(3)	strongly agree(4)	I have no idea
5	15	5	1	7
Average		Stan.Dev.		
2.08		3.33		

The variations of 'disagree' outnumbered the variations of 'agree' by a margin of twenty to six, and the seven 'no idea' responses can also be most likely interpreted as 'disagree,' since if they have not noticed

an impact, no one else at their school has either. Furthermore, three out of five who agreed with the statement indicated in the next item that that major impact was neutral, and the respondent who strongly agreed did not respond at all to the next item. Nevertheless, it will be important to try to ascertain in what way the policy had an impact for those who perceived one, since this type of response was totally unanticipated on the basis of the interview data. One clue is that none of the 'agree' or 'strongly agree' responses were at the elementary level. The junior high school level, where two out of four responses were 'agree,' was consistently on the conservative end of most items, though the small sample size makes generalization dangerous. Another even more telling indication of what the positive responses might (not) mean is that four of the six principals who gave them have been principal for two years or less, and thus are likely to be responding more on the basis of guess or personal belief, rather than the facts of the actual situation.

18. All things considered, the effect of the 1987 BOE policy has been:

very negative(1)	negative (2)	neutral(3)	positive (4)	very positive (5)	no idea
0	2	15	7	2	6
Average		Stan.Dev.			
3.33		0.73			

Consistent with the previous item, the fifteen 'neutral' responses indicate minimal effect for the policy. However, whereas only two principals assessed whatever effect there was as being 'negative,' nine assessed it as 'positive' or 'very positive.' Five of these nine were high school principals (and they represented five of nine of the sample for that level). For some reason, high school teachers are the most pleased to have a policy. It would be tempting to infer that the principals who had had the most problems with HCE use are those who would appreciate a strong policy to back them up, but the data shows little relationship between positive perception of the policy and number of HCE-related problems experienced. Clearly, it would be very useful to know more about the thinking of the nine principals who perceived an overall positive effect for the policy, but that will have to wait for further research.

Recommendations

On the basis of a preliminary analysis of this limited sample of data, some very tentative recommendations can be made.

1. The BOE should utilize available information and should actively seek more relevant information before proceeding with policy formulation. Even the preliminary results of a small-scale study like this one show clearly that the promoters of the policy were starting from untenable assumptions.
2. Principals and teachers should make efforts to demystify the differences between SE and HCE, linguistically and functionally, for themselves and then for their students. Negative attitudes toward HCE are generally based on ignorance and/or confusion of language use with non-linguistic problems. One positive step would be to encourage children's creativity in HCE, so that it can go far beyond the functions of group solidarity and resistance to authority.
3. Parents should be informed of the school's approach to SE and HCE, and their input should be sought in public forums. Too often, parents' attitudes and guidance to their children unnecessarily work at cross-purposes with those of the school.
4. Principals and teachers should carefully monitor the language use and test scores of students, especially at the elementary level, to pinpoint the nature of problems that actually do exist.

Conclusion

This study has attempted in an economical fashion to get a reading on the actual language use situation (Hawai'i Creole English and Standard English) in Hawai'i's public schools, to probe the language attitudes of the principals who manage those schools, and to ascertain the effects of the 1987 Hawai'i Board of Education Standard English Policy. The preliminary indications are that, despite substantial variation that remains to be accounted for, the principals generally show a somewhat enlightened and positive attitude toward HCE. Concerning the policy itself, the principals as a group find its effect to have been negligible, but a sizable minority (28%) perceive the effect to have been in some sense positive. This result is important but unfortunately uninterpretable without additional data, and should provide a productive starting point for future studies.

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