

External Review of Linguistics Program at University of Hawai'i at Hilo

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In the academic landscape of the US and the world, the Linguistics Program at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo ("UH Hilo") offers a unique combination of linguistics, language revitalization and teacher education. In so doing, it is playing an intellectually and socially groundbreaking role in the history of higher education and democracy worldwide—by using linguistics and education as formidable tools to enhance the status and prospects of the Hawaiian language. In effect, UH Hilo has been a major player in the revival of a formerly endangered language that was taken to the brink of extinction by US genocidal policies that started in the 19th century when US marines overthrew the Hawaiian Indigenous monarchy and banned the use of the Hawaiian language. Nowadays the Linguistics Program at UH Hilo, the only undergraduate linguistics program in Hawai'i, is famous for its major focus on the revitalization of the Hawaiian language, especially through its collaboration with the College of Hawaiian Language's laboratory schools which start as early as pre-schools—called "Pūnana Leo" in Hawaiian (i.e., "language nests"). These laboratory schools, together with the College of Hawaiian Language and the Program of Linguistics therein, are among the very best examples of successful immersion programs in the context of language revitalization. The Program in Linguistics at UH Hilo (hereafter, the "Program") is thus tracing a new model for Indigenous communities worldwide, especially those whose languages are endangered.

In my analysis, the study and revitalization of the Hawaiian language as a key part of the Program is ushering a new sort of linguistics that is deeply anchored in a progressive agenda for social justice. During the four days that I spent visiting the Program (November 13–16), I was able to witness first-hand its theoretical and applied strengths and what it can offer the University of Hawai'i system in terms of both intellectual preeminence and leadership in social justice. But I could also see the extraordinary challenges that the Program is facing—challenges that seem to unfairly hamper its noble mission as the only undergraduate linguistics program in Hawai'i, and one that is world-famous for its key role in the most successful Indigenous language-revitalization program in the world. I was also able to ascertain some of the ways in which the upper administration at UH Hilo could help correct this unfairness and help the Program reach its full potential as a major player in terms of intellectual achievements, student training and political leadership on a variety of language- and education-related issues that are fundamental for making this world better.

Here some historical background is in order, to clarify the strong links among linguistics, language revitalization and teacher training in the mission of the Program in Linguistics: The two faculty who founded the Hawaiian Studies Program

in the late 1970s, Dr. William H. Wilson (the founding chair of Hawaiian Studies) and Dr. Kauanoē Kamanā (the founding director of the laboratory school that is linked to the Hawaiian Language College—*Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u Hawaiian Language Laboratory School*) both have graduate training in Linguistics and developed those programs based on insights from Linguistics. The Linguistics major was joined to Hawaiian Studies some twenty years later when the Hawaiian program had grown to the point where it had both a teacher training program in Hawaiian and an MA. in Hawaiian language and Literature. These two programs were united under a newly created College of Hawaiian Language which was mandated to operate through Hawaiian. The College was further mandated to offer the world's very first Ph.D. in Hawaiian. The College of Hawaiian Language was given two positions by the state legislature to use for its Ph.D. program but could not find anyone to hire who had both a Ph.D. degree and enough fluency in Hawaiian. The College was already working with Dr. Yumiko Ohara and Dr. Scott Saft, the two non-tenured faculty who were the core of the Linguistics B.A. At that time, no department within the College of Arts and Sciences was willing to house Linguistics or provide it with permanent staff in spite of growing enrollments. Dr. Ohara and Dr. Saft were hired by the Hawaiian Studies Department to work with its Ph.D. program, and they were asked to lead the Linguistics B.A. program, as recommended by a previous reviewer of the Linguistics Program. The UH Hilo administration agreed to the move. Furthermore, the inclusion of Dr. Ohara and Dr. Saft provided additional expertise that was in line with the College's desire to open the Ph.D. program up to other Indigenous peoples interested in revitalizing their own languages.

The contents and structure of this document reflect the organization of my time at UH Hilo where I met with faculty members and students, and visited classes, both on the UH Hilo campus and at the above-mentioned Nāwahī School (*Ke Kula 'O Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u Hawaiian Language Laboratory School*) which is linked to the Linguistics Program via the College of Hawaiian Language that the Program is part of.

My conversations with students from the Linguistics Program brought up the most diverse range of opportunities and challenges facing the Program. So these conversations constitute the “heart” of the report, so to speak—and I have used these conversations as inspiration for my own recommendations in this report, which is organized as follows:

In **Section 1**, I highlight some the extraordinary achievements of the Program and what I see as its unique place for education and human rights in US and in the world.

Then **Section 2** summarizes the academic and social benefits that the Linguistics Program brings to the students. (Conversely the students' diverse backgrounds and their extraordinary enthusiasm and passion for linguistics constitute major assets for the Program.) In that same Section 2, I share, and comment on, direct quotes from my conversations with two groups of students. These quotes provide vibrant testimonies to the success of the Program, and its prospects for the future, especially

thanks to the extraordinary dedication of its 2 full-time faculty members (Professors Scott Saft and Yumiko Ohara).

Section 3 continues with the students' voices, but there I report on the "flip side" of the students' positive comments in Section 2. These comments in Section 3 are, by and large, negative as they reveal the students' perception of the Program's drawbacks, in terms of reduced academic offerings, faculty shortage, lack of logistics (especially space and location) and related issues. Fortunately the students also made suggestions which I report in Section 3 as well and which I hope will be seriously considered by the UH administration.

In **Section 4**, I will share what I myself perceive as the Program's academic and structural limitations, some of which overlap with students' and faculty's concerns regarding curricula and logistics. Then I offer some suggestions of my own, focusing on what I see as extraordinary opportunities for the Program. These opportunities, if adequately mined, will positively reflect on the entire UH Hilo campus, and help make progress on some key aspects of the UH Hilo Strategic Plan.

I'll end the report with a summary, then a high note, namely some remarks about the extraordinary potential of the Program—both for the UH system and for the world at large. It's up to the UH administrators reading this report to help usher the changes that are needed for this potential to be optimally fulfilled.

1. A beacon of hope for linguistics as a scientific tool for social justice

a) *Linguistics at the core of UH's mission for diversity (Hawaiian, Okinawan...)*

In May 2018, I wrote [a letter to *Science Magazine*](#) where I described what I consider to be "Linguistics' role in the right to education." In this letter, I mentioned Hawai'i as "a model for the way forward" toward breaking down the language barrier that's blocking a couple of billions of people (some 40% of the world's population) from access to quality education.¹ My letter to *Science Magazine* also highlights the fact that these communities that are disenfranchised through language barriers are, by and large, part of former European colonies in the Americas, Africa, Asia, etc. This argument where the UH Hilo is a shining model against the misuse of language in neo-colonial systems of education is amplified in my [foreword](#) to a recent anthology by Prof. Donaldo Macedo on [Decolonizing foreign language education: The misteaching of English and other colonial languages](#)

The Program in Linguistics and the College of Hawaiian Language at UH Hilo does show "a model for the way forward" toward inclusion of these disenfranchised communities. This model meets one of the key desiderata in UH Hilo's current [Strategic Plan](#):

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/michel.degraff/posts/10156443884773872>

“Diversity and cultural infusion: We celebrate different people, their backgrounds and history, and the unique cultural mosaic of Hawai‘i that brings the feel of a global community to our local campus.”²

Now, we must again recall the ravages of US cultural genocide *against* “different people, their backgrounds and history” in Hawai‘i (including their ancestral language). This genocidal anti-diversity campaign started in earnest in the 19th century when US laws excluded the Hawaiian language from public use. In effect, then, Linguistics in the College of Hawaiian Language is helping right a historical wrong whose effects are still being felt all across Hawaiian society today. Therefore, the Program’s efforts, via language and education, to right this wrong go to the core of UH Hilo’s diversity-related objectives as described in the Strategic Plan.

b) *A unique opportunity: The coupling of linguistics with teacher-preparation programs toward the revitalization of endangered/minoritized languages*

From my first moment entering the campus of UH Hilo via the new building of the College of Hawaiian Language, it became clear to me that I was witnessing the unfurling of a unique feat in world history: In the early 1980s there were fewer than 50 native speakers of Hawaiian below the age of 18. Back then it would be in only rare occasions that one could hear fluent Hawaiian spoken anywhere. But here I was, in the morning of Tuesday, November 13, 2018, at the College of Hawaiian Language’s welcoming ceremony, being [warmly greeted by some 35 College affiliates \(faculty and students\) speaking and singing in fluent Hawaiian](#).³

At my own University (MIT), thanks to my colleague Prof. Norvin Richards, our Linguistics department, which is often rated the best in the world, has launched an [Indigenous Language Program](#) to “provide its graduates with the linguistic knowledge that will help them in efforts to keep their communities’ languages alive.” Our best known success story to date is that of Jessie Little Doe Baird, a graduate of our Masters’ Program in Linguistics, who has been instrumental in reviving the Wampanoag language. Jessie’s own daughter (Mae) is the first native speaker of Wampanoag after one century during which the language was totally moribund—with no native speakers at all.

In spite of this success, MIT Linguistics’ Indigenous Language Initiative (“MITILI”) has been struggling, especially in comparison to the successes of UH Hilo’s Program in Linguistics. Two reasons for that, among others, are: (i) unlike the Program at UH Hilo, MITILI doesn’t have access to a critical mass of Indigenous people (this is due to complex historical and socio-economic reasons related to the different patterns of conquest in Hawai‘i vs. Massachusetts; (ii) unlike the Program at UH Hilo, MITILI does not have access to academic units that teach Indigenous languages and we do not have direct access to Indigenous-language immersion schools.

² <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/strategicplan/documents/2011-2015StrategicPlanWebVersionFINAL.pdf>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/michel.degraff/videos/10156903187358872>

These key factors (access to Indigenous people and affiliation with the College of Hawaiian Language and with laboratory language-immersion schools such as Nāwahī) are at the core of the UH Hilo Program in Linguistics' success, due in large part to its home in the College of Hawaiian Language and its connection to laboratory Indigenous-language immersion schools such as the Nāwahī school.

c) *Nāwahī as a language-immersion laboratory for a better world (cf. MIT-Haiti Initiative)*

My visit to the Nāwahī School, on a par with the one at UH Hilo, is one that I will never forget, keeping in mind the history of that school, especially the now familiar fact that the Hawaiian language was banned in the late 19th century, and it took some 100 years before it could be used again in education. One sad, yet hopeful, aspect of this story of near cultural genocide is the fact that, prior to the arrival of the US in the 19th century, the Hawaiian population was highly literate in Hawaiian, and there still exists an impressive body of classic Hawaiian texts—a collection that is of great interest to scholars in the College of Hawaiian Language. After the US campaign against Hawaiian, fewer and fewer children grew up speaking Hawaiian, and the language quickly became endangered. At the Nāwahī School today, the children are on their way to becoming highly literate in Hawaiian as well, as their ancestors were before the US annexation of Hawai'i. These children are also becoming [literate in Latin, Chinese and English!](#) The goal of these language classes, in addition to teaching English as a global lingua franca, is to honor the students' ancestry, very much in the Hawaiian spirit. The schoolchildren at Nāwahī are also learning [mathematics, science and all other disciplines in Hawaiian.](#)⁴ Indeed in the Nāwahī school, all courses and all administrative duties are carried out in Hawaiian! So I was fortunate to be assigned two students as interpreters. Their English too was flawless—as fluent as their Hawaiian, it seemed to me.

As it turns out, the overall academic results of the school are most impressive, including the levels of students' mastery of English. Since its first high-school graduation in 1999, Nāwahī has considerably outperformed the state average for all ethnicities in high-school graduation and college-attendance rates, with a long record of 100% high-school graduation rate and 87% college-enrollment rate. This is despite the fact that Native Hawaiians, over 95% of the enrollment at the school, have among the lowest high-school graduation and college-enrollment rates in the state as a whole. Furthermore, the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunches at Nāwahī ranges between 65% and 70%, considerably above the state average of 47%. The school community has been a leader in the development of Hawaiian language-medium education, which has been institutionalized by state legislation.

Nāwahī's greatest success is the following fact: in the 1970s, there were no children speaking Hawaiian on the Island, but now some 33% of all students enrolled at Nāwahī come from homes where Hawaiian is spoken, usually in addition to Hawai'i

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/michel.degraff/posts/10156907815508872>

Creole English, the dominant language among Native Hawaiians in the Puna region where the school is located. Puna otherwise has some of the lowest academic outcomes in the state. In elementary and intermediate school all students study two “heritage” languages (Latin, alongside Chinese or Japanese) to honor immigrants who historically intermarried with Native Hawaiians. They also study eight years of English as a world language from late elementary school through high school. Contrastive analysis of Hawai‘i Creole English and other languages is part of language studies in the school, including Hawaiian language arts courses from elementary through high school.

The success of Nāwahī is due in great part to the connection between Nāwahī and the College of Hawaiian language, as legislated by state law. The Director of Nāwahī is a faculty member of the College whose assignment is at Nāwahī. Over 90% of the Nāwahī teachers are graduates of the College and its Hawaiian-medium teacher education program, Kahuawaiola. The curriculum at Nāwahī is such that students take courses through Hawaiian within the College while in high school. All faculty of the College, including those in the Linguistics program, are required to have taught at Nāwahī or some other Hawaiian-medium school in order to be tenured. College faculty with expertise in linguistics have been key to all language study at Nāwahī as well as other educational innovations there.

At this rate it may be useful for me to briefly digress and disclose my own engagement in a somewhat germane MIT-based project that links linguistics, education and human rights—in my own native country, Haiti. The rationale of this project is too close to that of the Program for me to not mention it. Moreover I think that a brief description of this project—especially its objectives, then the limitations and challenges it faces—will help the reader more deeply appreciate the extraordinary importance of the Program’s own achievements through its laboratory schools for Indigenous-language immersion and why I myself am in such awe of these achievements, even as I realize the Program’s own limitations and challenges.

In a nutshell, when it comes to geo-political patterns of hegemony, French has been to Haitian Creole (aka “Kreyòl” in Haiti) what so called “Standard” English has been both to the Hawaiian language and to Pidgin, with the key caveat that Kreyòl in Haiti, unlike Hawaiian, was never an endangered language. Yet, like Hawaiian during the time when it was banned by law and like Pidgin today in Hawai‘i, Kreyòl in Haiti was (and, to some degrees, is still) excluded from written communication in formal education and administration. The hegemony against Kreyòl might even look more spectacular when we realize that, since 1987, the Haitian Constitution has made Kreyòl a co-official language with French, and has recognized it as Haiti’s sole national language. This contradiction, between the *de jure* and the *de facto* status of Kreyòl is all the more paradoxical when we see that French in Haiti is still the main language of instruction and examination even though the vast majority of Haitians speak Kreyòl only. In effect, instruction in French is among the root causes of the

academic failure of generations of students, and a bottleneck to the country's social and economic development.

This is the historical and societal background of the [MIT-Haiti Initiative](#) that I direct and whose main objective is, in some ways, to do for Kreyòl in Haiti what UH Hilo and its laboratory schools are already doing, with great success, for the Hawaiian language in Hawai'i. That is, the MIT-Haiti Initiative has enlisted Kreyòl as an indispensable tool for substantially improving the quality of, and open up access to, education in Haiti via Haiti's own "Indigenous" language—if we can consider Kreyòl as (somewhat) "Indigenous" to Haiti, though the socio-historical status of Kreyòl in Haiti is more akin to that of Pidgin in Hawai'i.

So my MIT colleagues (at the MIT Indigenous Language Initiative and at the MIT-Haiti Initiative) and I have experienced first-hand what kinds of [challenges](#) await pioneers like the linguists and language activists at UH Hilo who are trying to reverse well entrenched hegemonic patterns that have, for so many years, devalued Hawai'i's ancestral language.

From my standpoint as a Haitian linguist at MIT trying to undo similar hegemonic patterns in my native Haiti,⁵ I am humbled and inspired by what the Program at UH Hilo has already accomplished.

2. Students' perspective on the Program's successes

I met with two different groups of students on November 13, 2018 and the next day, November 14. There were 6 students at each meeting, for a total of 12 students, out of a total of 39 students currently enrolled as linguistics majors. What follows are highlights of the students' comments—first the positive comments in this Section of the report (Section 2), then the negative comments in Section 3.

a) Individual attention to students on the part of extraordinarily receptive and helpful faculty

This was one of the points that both groups of students mentioned with the most enthusiasm and emphasis. By and large, the two groups of students felt extremely fortunate that the two full-time faculty (Dr. Yumiko Ohara and Dr. Scott Saft) and the part-time lecturer (Dr. Pat Perez) are always ready to make themselves available for advising and for out-of-class directed studies. Here are some quotes that exemplify the students' appreciation of the quality of interaction and teaching they get from the Program's faculty:

“The faculty are always receptive to my needs.”

“It's great that we know and call professors by their first names”

“They're great working around my work schedule.”

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/michel.degraff/posts/10156586592578872>

“Ohara will meet her students at any time. And I do mean *any* time, even in the evening.”

“They invite us to office hours. And they sometimes offer to teach us outside of the classes and classroom schedule.”

“Very encouraging. One classmate couldn’t turn in a research paper, and they got help from Ohara.”

“Yumiko [Ohara] and Scott [Saft] are our ‘linguistics mom and dad’. They don’t do it for the money or for the prestige. They do it for the love and their commitment. *THEY CARE!*”

b) *Class interaction creates safe spaces for intellectual growth*

Another set of extremely positive comments concerns the quality of the classroom interaction between faculty and students. Students shared their appreciation of the faculty’s efforts to create spaces that are safe for questioning and for intellectual growth.

Some students volunteered the information that they are “refugees” from other disciplines where they were disenchanted; then they discovered linguistics and now they are grateful for the intellectual and social qualities that the Program offers.

Here are quotes that express the students’ satisfaction vis-à-vis the safe spaces created by the faculty for students’ intellectual growth:

“Very friendly and welcoming professors. They always welcome all kinds of questions. And this is one class where I never feel stupid asking a question.”

“One of my relatives has an advanced degree in science, and she gave me the thumbs up when she heard me describe the kind of exchanges we have in my linguistics classes.”

“The faculty never make me feel uncomfortable even if I don't know what I am talking about.”

“They remember our names and say ‘hi’.”

“I am excited to go to class every single day!”

c) *Appreciation of active learning*

The students also commented positively on the fact that classes, which often have small groups of students, typically involve active learning whereby students get to become happily willing agents in building their own knowledge in various sub-discipline in linguistics—knowledge that is driven by their own specific interests. Having visited linguistics classes taught by the two full-time faculty members (Dr. Ohara and Dr. Saft) and by the part-time lecturer (Dr. Perez) I can personally attest that these classes have all a good amount of activities that engage a

substantial subset of the students—in constructivist-learning mode—with students generally looking self-motivated, engaged and excited.

One student commented on how empowering it is for them to have the opportunity to use the knowledge of languages that they know (e.g., English, Japanese, Japanese, Spanish) to deeply understand, and even bring challenges to, current theoretical frameworks in syntax, phonology, etc. I myself was able to witness such excitement first-hand during my visit to linguistics classes by Prof. Saft (on syntax) and Prof. Ohara (on phonetic and phonology). In the latter, students were having lots of fun solving problem sets in class on fundamental concepts in phonetics and phonology. In Saft's class, the students were invited to use their knowledge of languages other than English (such as Japanese) in deciding how best to tweak certain aspects of syntactic theory having to do with word order. Though some students seemed withdrawn in each of these two classes, it was heartening to see most students so invested in answering questions and solving problems in class and in actively building their understanding of linguistic theory through active learning.

One student compared the joy of active learning in linguistics classes with the absence thereof in one of their other classes:

“In my **astronomy** class, students don't participate. When the professor there asks questions, nobody answers. In my linguistics classes, professors ask questions, students answer, and after 10 minutes, we are still debating each other's answers.”

3. Students' perspectives on the Program's limitations

Though generally positive about the Program, the students are painfully aware of its limitations, which affect them directly and on a daily basis. So I take this Section to be one of the most important of the report, as it leads us, along with Section 4, to areas where the upper administration at UH Hilo could, and should, take swift, substantial and decisive actions toward helping the Program fulfill its lofty mission. Such actions will, in turn positively reflect on the entire Hilo campus and the UH system as a whole. (As in the previous section, I will insert, in the subsection below, direct quotes from the students' input in my conversations with them. The goal is to illustrate, as vividly as I can, the students' points of view and their constructive engagement with the program.)

a) Negative impact of faculty shortage on course offerings and scheduling

From the students' perspective (and from that of the faculty as well—more on this below), the exceedingly small size of the faculty seems by far the biggest threat to the future of the Program. The students complain that, due to the small number of faculty (2 fulltime faculty and 1 part-time lecturer!), there are too many courses that are not offered on any regular basis. So there's pressure on the faculty to offer some of these materials through directed studies, which in turn put extra pressure on the faculty's already overstretched schedule.

I think this concern—a concern that should be topmost in the upper administration’s priorities vis-à-vis the future of the Program—can be heard loud and clear in these quotes from the students:

“With only two fulltime faculty in this Program, there are simply not enough faculty. This creates major hardship in creating our schedules. Really there’s no flexibility.”

“And imagine: what will happen when anyone will retire? Or if one of them gets sick?”

“Compare linguistics and history. In linguistics, two full-time faculty to cover all sub-disciplines. In history, one faculty for each sub-discipline for a total of 6 professors! Why this differential treatment?”

“Certain classes can only be offered at only one specific time. Certain courses, even some required courses, are listed in the course catalogue, but they are not offered (example: French)”

“It would be so good if there could be more courses at more times. Certain courses are only offered on certain days. For example, Ohara only teaches Tuesdays and Thursdays. It would be so good to have more flexibility.”

b) Negative impact of lack of space on intellectual and social cohesion of student body

Another item high on the students’ wish list is: “More space, more space, more space.” Here too, the students kept comparing the Program with other disciplines that seemed better off. Among other disciplines that they know first-hand, they cited programs that have major counts lower or similar to the 39 in Linguistics, i.e., Astronomy (32 majors) and History (39 majors) as examples of disciplines that can claim a space of their own that enhances students’ intellectual and social cohesion and their collective identity while providing regular opportunities for disciplinary and interdisciplinary debates that hone students’ expertise and communication skills. They wish the Program had a similar space.

Here’s one extensive quote about the space issue:

“There’s no place for linguistics majors to come together. This is so unlike Astronomy majors who have a space to call their own in the Science and Technology building. We also pale in comparison with History students who have UCB 333 with snacks, computers, printer, library, with faculty’s offices all around the club room. Biology students too have their own space. We in the Linguistics Program see each other in class, but there’s no real place for linguistics students to hang out together as a group. That sucks.”

Two more logistics-related comment:

“Classrooms for Linguistics classes are in the College of Hawaiian Language, away from the main campus. This is a problem especially when it rains. And there’s no cafeteria anywhere nearby. There’s a common room but it’s not always available. Sometimes you go there, but there’s a ukulele class or some other activity that makes the room unusable.”

“We don’t even have a library that we can use at all times in the College of Hawaiian Language.”

c) Curriculum/syllabus issues: lack of diversity in intellectual and language-related interests

Some students expressed the concern that the Program’s focus on the Hawaiian language entails, to a certain extent, exclusion of other languages that would attract more students. It seems that some students feel pressured to study Hawaiian.

Perhaps this concern about the Program’s focus on Hawaiian is not surprising given that the Program is part of the College of Hawaiian Language—with all the intellectual and social-justice opportunities that come along with such an affiliation (as discussed above, in Section 1). In fact one *non*-Hawaiian student, formerly enrolled in the Biology program, explained that he himself discovered linguistics after taking an Hawaiian language class—he so very much enjoyed his first Hawaiian language class that he decided to enroll in Hawaiian studies. Then he took a linguistics class with Prof Ohara that he enjoyed as well. So he decided to double major in Hawaiian and in Linguistics, with a minor in Biology!

Here’s one rather detailed quote from one student about what’s perceived and described as a certain narrowness of intellectual focus and the potential drawbacks of such focus:

“We do feel some pressure to learn Hawaiian. Take the Program’s courses for the Masters in language revitalization: they are taught exclusively in Hawaiian. Shouldn’t a Masters’ Degree in Linguistics be more independent of any specific language? Now what about Pidgin? What about Korean? What about Okinawan? Including other languages, besides Hawaiian, in the Linguistics Program will draw more students and a more diverse student body. Perhaps we would attract an even greater number of Hawaiian students. For example, those who might feel closer to Pidgin than Hawaiian. For now, having this strong exclusive focus on the Hawaiian language makes you feel “pigeon-holed”—no pun intended! What about the “Aloha” spirit about respecting everyone’s roots? What about other languages outside of Hawaiian?”

Another student amplified this latter point:

“Pidgins and Creoles offered only online and only in the Summer—students would like to take it during regular semester in situ.”

Then another student:

“The Program should open up its curriculum to other languages that are familiar to us, like Pidgin and Okinawan. There are some 30,000 Okinawans in Hawaii. Linguistics should open up an exchange program with Okinawan because Okinawan is the “Hawaiian” of Japan!”

Another student quickly added that Prof. Ohara helps organize and participates in monthly workshops on campus about the Okinawan language, and she also goes to Japan to do research on Okinawan. This brings to mind the fact that, in spite of the Program being housed in the College of Hawaiian Language, there actually is no formal requirement to study Hawaiian for the Linguistics degree. In addition, students at the B.A. level are offered the opportunity to study other languages as much as they are offered Hawaiian, and students in the M.A. Program in Hawaiian Language and Literature are required to travel to an area where another endangered or minoritized language is spoken, and Hawaiian speaking Ph.D. students are also required to study about other endangered languages and earn at least 8 credits in any language other than Hawaiian. I return to related issues in the recommendations at the end of this report.

Meanwhile, in my conversations with the students, one leitmotif was the perception of Hawaiian taking priority over linguistics. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Linguistics Program and its courses are held at the Hale‘ōlelo building with students constantly hearing Hawaiian and from the fact that the only M.A. opportunities in linguistics are in Hawaiian. A couple of students reiterated the point that often times they feel that the Program in Linguistics is a “satellite” to Hawaiian studies when, intellectually speaking, it should be the other way around—with different languages feeding into Linguistics. That is, it’s Linguistics that should be considered as *the* foundational discipline (about the scientific workings of Language with a big “L”), with individual languages like Hawaiian, Okinawan, etc. (“languages” with a small “l”) falling under the empirical coverage of Linguistics.

A couple of students offered a wish list:

- History of English
- Historical / Comparative
- Language and technology
- Linguistics and education (early intervention)
- American Sign Language (perhaps in partnership with College of Continuing Education)
- Language studies outside of Hawaiian (e.g., Japanese studies, French—Professor Faith Mishina)
- Graduate courses, perhaps through distance learning with Mānoa

- Graduate interdisciplinary courses with Computer Science, Psychology, Education, Continuing Education, etc.

As it turns out, a number of the above courses are already offered in other departments, namely English, History and Education, and some of them count for the Linguistics major. But the last bullet point warrants extra comments. Some of the students expressed the wish for graduate-level courses in linguistics. But they also seem (painfully) aware that such graduate-level courses are reserved for the Mānoa campus which, unlike UH Hilo, offers a PhD in linguistics. So they suggested that the Program could exploit collaboration between linguistics and other departments in order to offer graduate-level courses.

By making repeated references to partnerships with other departments and even other campus (e.g., Mānoa) the students were also highlighting, again, the #1 challenge to the Program, namely its faculty size (with $n = 2!$) which, in turns, leads to a relative lack in course offerings. So as a reviewer, I myself do feel need to stress the direct proportional relation between faculty size and curriculum diversity, with the latter being one desideratum that's ranked high in UH Hilo's online Strategic Plan.

Be that as it may, the students' concern about the Program's emphasis on Hawaiian is, in my analysis, directly linked with their (and the Faculty's and my) concern that having only two fulltime faculty plus one part-time lecturer staffing the Program is simply not viable—especially when it comes to intellectual and language-related breadth of interests and expertise. Yet, I must also note a fact that the students did not make explicit in our conversations. In spite of the brutal time constraints on the three faculty of the Program, they still manage to offer language courses beyond Hawaiian. For example, every Spring semester Prof. Saft teaches a course called Languages in Hawai'i where he focuses on Hawaiian, Pidgin, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and the languages of the Philippines and Micronesia.

This said, the students' complaints about the apparent lack of intellectual interest and course offerings related to Hawaiian Pidgin—and, more generally, to Creole and Pidgin languages, taught by a non-UH faculty and only during the Summer—raise a distinct concern, and one that perhaps can be connected to still untapped intellectual assets that are already available in the College of Hawaiian Language. Indeed, during my visit I met one of the faculty in the College of Hawaiian Language, Prof. Jason Iota Cabral, whose research interests include the linguistic connections between Hawaiian and Pidgin. Moreover, Prof. Scott Saft in the Program already has published papers, co-authored with students, about the social status of Pidgin in Hawai'i. So the intellectual interest is already there. Now the challenge is, again, faculty shortage. For Saft (and perhaps Cabral) to offer courses related to Pidgin, there would be need to hire additional faculty to cover some of the (too many!) courses that are currently being covered by Saft.

The students' "Aloha" comment (i.e., "What about the "Aloha" spirit about respecting everyone's roots? What about other languages outside of Hawaiian?") becomes

even more pointed in the context of the (apparent) absence of Pidgin in the Program's formal curriculum. Given the human-rights issue and the anti-colonial agenda at the very foundation of the College of Hawaiian Language and the Program in Linguistics, the students are certainly right that Pidgin too deserves the Program's attention, especially in light of this troubling fact about languages in Hawai'i: Pidgin is a language of its own right, like Hawaiian, but unlike Hawaiian, it still needs to receive official recognition as one of the legitimate languages of Hawai'i. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for the Program in Linguistics.

d) Lack of internships and other practicum / research opportunities for linguistics students

This concern was voiced most clearly by a student who said:

“The Program offers no internships in linguistics. This is another gap—as compared to, say, Biology where students do have such opportunities.”

Another student made a related comment:

“100-level courses should mention what kinds of jobs one can get with a linguistics degree. Students should know early on that there are cool jobs related to linguistics: forensic linguistics, judicial linguistics, speech-related applications, teaching of English as a Second Language, etc.”

One student also suggested that classes should do a better job pushing students to read original research papers:

“We should be assigned foundational primary texts (by Whorf, Chomsky, etc.) — especially handy for those of us who'd like to pursue graduate studies.”

I would suggest that this desire on the part of some students for practicum and research activities could be connected with what they perceive as an overly narrow intellectual and language-related focus. Yet I am also told that this lack of internship opportunities is general characteristics of the College while such internships are accorded to the flagship Mānoa campus. Be that as it may, pending additional hires in the Program, students enrolled in specific classes could be offered “bonus” assignments in these classes, i.e., assignments that would involve primary texts in conjunction with the writing of papers on research topics and languages of their choices—papers that could, eventually, be published. There's a model already in place for that, as I am, again, thinking of the afore-mentioned couple of papers on Hawaiian Pidgin that Prof. Saft has co-authored with some of his students and that have been published in high-profile journals. This suggestion may not be so easily implemented when we consider the already overburdened schedule of the Program's faculty. But it may still be worth considering, at least for the relatively small number of students who would be interested in such “bonus” assignments and who would benefit from having such publications in their portfolios for potential applications to graduate school.

4. Challenges and opportunities

The contents of this section stems from conversations with faculty and students and from first-hand observations—conversations and observations both at UH Hilo and at the Nāwahī School.

Challenges:

a) Dramatic shortage of faculty and staff

This issue is one with frustrating and draining consequences for both students and faculty. When I asked the faculty about sabbaticals, the expression on their faces suggested that I had uttered a foreign word! And from what I gather through the students, the two fulltime faculty spend very long hours at work, especially because some of the materials that the students must or would like to master cannot be taught through regular courses, so the faculty often offer directed studies, without pay. So this drastic faculty shortage becomes a threat to the faculty's health as well.

This faculty shortage is a consequence of being in the College of Hawaiian Language which seems, overall, severely understaffed. In all likelihood, this shortage is, perhaps by far, the toughest and seemingly most arbitrary challenge facing the Program.

Toughest: Given its documented high levels of student enrollment, alongside its crucial mission, in intellectual and moral (i.e., social justice) terms vis-à-vis the history of Hawai'i and the history of its ancestral language in education, there's simply no way that the Program can be sustainable with just two full-time faculty and one part-time lecturer.

Most arbitrary: As I reported above (in Section 3), the students themselves, when I met with them, compared faculty/student ratios among diverse disciplines in the Humanities. They, like me, are puzzled as to the reasons why the Program can be so understaffed, especially keeping in mind that Linguistics has more majors than Philosophy and Mathematics, and similar numbers as Anthropology and History. Yet Linguistics has vastly fewer fulltime faculty than either of these 4 other disciplines!

This understaffing is specially paradoxical, keeping in mind UH Hilo's mission toward diversity and toward honoring Hawai'i's history, alongside the fact that this is the only undergraduate linguistics program in Hawai'i. The paradox is even more striking when we consider that this faculty shortage also affects other programs in the College of Hawaiian Language, such as the B.A. in Hawaiian Studies which has more majors than many other B.A. programs at UH Hilo, including Linguistics. It's also noteworthy that the College of Hawaiian Language offers the only Ph.D.

program in Hawaiian studies in the U.S. With such facts in mind, the College's severe understaffing seems to belie the lofty spirit in these paragraphs in [UH Hilo's Strategic Plan](#):

“Threaded throughout our plan is a profound appreciation for the Indigenous history, culture and language of Hawai‘i. We continue to embrace our responsibility to serve students of Native Hawaiian ancestry and to support the UH system’s goal to significantly increase the number of Native Hawaiian graduates. We expect to continue exceeding the targets set for UH Hilo in this regard.”

“We seek to reflect Hawai‘i, its people, history, cultures, and natural environment, and to embody the concept of a ‘Hawaiian university’. As a member of the University of Hawai‘i system, we embrace our responsibility to serve the Indigenous people of Hawai‘i and to *kāko‘o/support* Hawai‘i’s Indigenous language and culture.

I would argue that the Program in Linguistics, as part of the College of Hawaiian Language, is central to this noble “responsibility to serve the Indigenous people of Hawai‘i and to *kāko‘o/support* Hawai‘i’s Indigenous language and culture.”

But, beyond that, another argument in favor of additional faculty hires is the Program’s growing enrollment numbers and the immense intellectual and practical benefits it offers to the College of Hawaiian Language, to UH Hilo and to the revitalization of the Hawaiian language alongside other endangered languages. Plus there’s the pressing need to address the students’ repeated demands for increased intellectual diversity and language foci in the Program. All these factors make additional faculty hires for the Program an urgent priority for the upper administration at UH Hilo.

b) Space for the cohesion of the Program

One of the key concerns on the part of both students and faculty is the lack of autonomous space for the Program. In the students’ perspective, the location of the Program within the College of Hawaiian Language is one more factor, in addition to the curricular issues already described above (in Section 3), that makes the Program look like a “satellite” of Hawaiian studies.

c) Need for graduate assistants

This issue was brought up in meetings with faculty at the College of Hawaiian Language—faculty both in and outside the Program of Linguistics. The general issue here is that graduate assistants are key for both research and teaching, especially in courses where students need extra recitation time or where they may need to engage in some research activities that require expert supervision.

Some of the students in the Program had mentioned their desire to read primary texts in linguistics. Given the limited number of faculty, this reading of primary texts is one set of activities that would benefit from having graduate assistants.

Faculty outside of Linguistics expressed concern about the longevity of the Graduate Division of the College of Hawaiian Language. This is indeed a fundamental issue: How can such a Graduate Division be viable in absence of graduate assistants? The latter are a necessary resource for graduate programs. Yet, though graduate assistants are a feature of graduate education on the Mānoa campus, they are not supported by UH Hilo for the College of Hawaiian Language. This is yet another crucial lacuna that begs for correction by the UH Hilo administration.

d) Faculty lines for senior faculty who will retire in the near future

The concern here has to do with whether these lines will be recycled within the College of Hawaiian Language. Of course, it is crucial for the viability of the College of Hawaiian Language (and in keeping with the mission of UH Hilo as described in Strategic Plan) that all efforts be made to ensure the longevity of the College of Hawaiian Language. Therefore there should be a plan in place to, at the very least, recycle all faculty lines of retiring faculty, and, ideally, increase the number of faculty lines, especially for the Program in Linguistics. This issue is all the more worrisome as the College lost funding for one of its 14 tenure-track positions upon retirement of one of its professors.

e) Lack of an internet presence

Perhaps unsurprisingly this was a concern noted exclusively by the students. They noted a number of challenges on that front—and here I’m reporting directly from the conversation with students, not having thoroughly investigated how accurate these complaints are:

- (i) The linguistics major would benefit from “more publicity via social media.”
- (ii) Even in the school website, linguistics is somewhat “hidden.”
- (iii) The UH Hilo app does not include enough information about language- and linguistics-related activities.

I am not sure what the students meant by “hidden.” I myself was able to find information about [the Program](#) via a simple Google search with “University of Hawai‘i,” “Hilo” and “linguistics” as keywords.⁶ But the students are right about the Program’s lack of an active presence on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

⁶ <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/academics/linguistics/>
<https://hilo.hawaii.edu/catalog/ba ling>
<https://hilo.hawaii.edu/news/press/release/611>
<https://hilo.hawaii.edu/catalog/ling-courses>

Indeed the Program has neither a Facebook page, nor a Tweeter feed, nor an Instagram account.

The Program's social-media shyness could be an issue, especially in this era where students get so much of their information (and excitement) through social media. As a linguist engaged in social-change media campaigns (about the use of Kreyòl for education and social justice) I myself can attest first-hand how helpful it's been to be able to reach out to interested parties via social media. So I would suggest that the Program increase its presence on social media. Perhaps this is one area where students themselves can contribute. In the Linguistics section at MIT, most of our [social media presence](#) is managed by our graduate students, and they do so quite efficiently.⁷

Opportunities:

The good news is that, in my analysis, the challenges listed above pale when compared to the opportunities afforded the Program through its vision and accomplishments to date—assuming that the UH Hilo upper administration will do the right thing by the Program, and work with its two fulltime professors and the leadership of the College of Hawaiian Language toward solving the above challenges. Recall that, in the main, these challenges urgently require additional faculty hires for the Program and the creation of a pool of graduate assistants for the College of Hawaiian Language. These requirements, among others, also apply to the fulfillment of these opportunities that I now turn to. And I must, again and again, stress that none of these extraordinary opportunities (*opportunities that will add to the leadership and preeminence of UH Hilo as a whole*) can be explored without adding resources to the Program, especially faculty lines. Without additional faculty hires, any one item among these recommendations will tax faculty resources that are already spread too thin.

a) Include Pidgin, alongside Hawaiian, in the Program's intellectual & social-justice agendas

I am a native speaker of a language that falls in the “Creole & Pidgin” category alongside Hawaiian Pidgin. I'm also a linguist who, for the past two decades, has been deeply engaged in a theoretically-grounded campaign to enhance the status of my native Haitian Creole. As such I feel personally invested in having the Program give its due to Pidgin in Hawai'i—so that Pidgin can one day be recognized as a valid full-fledged language, on a par with Hawaiian and English. Now that I have witnessed first-hand how hard the faculty in the Program and their colleagues in the College are fighting to enhance the status of Hawaiian at UH Hilo and beyond, it's clear to me that the corollary enhancement of Pidgin is another extraordinary

⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/MITLinguistics>

opportunity waiting to be mined. And it's an opportunity that the students are begging for.

Another piece of good news is that the faculty are already thinking along these lines—in both conceptual terms and practical terms. In this regard it is important to note that the College of Hawaiian Language is the only College where the majority of faculty are native speakers of Hawaiian Pidgin and also that it has the highest percentage of students who are native speakers of Pidgin. Indeed, because of such demographics, Hawaiian is taught in the College through a comparative linguistics approach to Pidgin and Hawaiian.

In a related vein, Prof. Saft has recently published papers on Hawaiian Pidgin in collaboration with UH Hilo students. As it turns out, one of these papers⁸, by Scott Saft and one of his students (Hannah Lockwood), investigates the status of, and attitudes toward, Pidgin in public domains, including UH Hilo. The paper starts with a comparison of attitudes toward Hawaiian vs. Pidgin (known as “Hawaiian Creole” among linguists), noting that the positive shift toward the Hawaiian language, now considered “the jewel of [Hawaiian] culture,” has not so clearly extended to Pidgin. In Lockwood & Saft’s assessment, Pidgin’s “place in Hawaiian society is far from official and continues to be a source of controversy.” Yet, Lockwood & Saft report “a growing tolerance regarding the usage of [Pidgin]” and mostly positive attitudes toward Pidgin at UH Hilo. The [abstract of this paper](#) is worth quoting at length:

“Ideologies about language have burdened Hawai‘i Creole (HC) with a social stigma such that it has been considered inferior to English and inappropriate in public domains of society. Recent efforts at language activism within Hawai‘i, however, have attempted to raise awareness in support of [Pidgin] as a viable language. In light of this activism, this study reports interviews with 18 faculty members at a university in Hawai‘i and finds, in contrast to earlier survey research that noted predominantly negative attitudes toward HC, mostly positive views about HC’s place in education. With many interviewees remarking that [Pidgin] should be treated as its own separate language and that it should occupy a position equal to English in the university and also in society, the findings are discussed in regards to the possibility of a shift in language ideologies in Hawai‘i and the role of language activism in promoting such a shift.”

It’s worth noting that Lockwood & Saft’s bibliography includes research by Suzanne Romaine in the context of a UH Hilo course on “Pidgins and Creoles.” Unfortunately this is the same course that the students complained is only offered online and in the Summer—they would prefer to have such a course *in situ* during regular semesters.

⁸ Lockwood, Hannah M, and Scott L. Saft. "Shifting Language Ideologies and the Perceptions of Hawai‘i Creole Among Educators at the University Level in Hawai‘i." *Linguistics and Education*. 33 (2016): 1-13.

So here lies an opportunity for the Program to more fully engage in research at the very “source of the controversy” on the status of Pidgin, and to do for Pidgin (and perhaps other Creole languages) what the College is already doing for Hawaiian. What’s most attractive, to me as a Creole-speaking linguist, is that this sort of engagement can creatively enlist all areas of linguistics research and teaching, including:

- (i) areas of theoretical linguistics (syntax, phonology, semantics, pragmatics, etc.) toward the study of the formal structures of Pidgin;
- (ii) applied areas of linguistics (socio-linguistics, language and education, etc.) around the sort of theoretically-informed “activism” that can undermine the negative ideologies that have hampered the use of Pidgins in public domains.

Judging from the data and analysis reported by Lockwood & Saft, the time is ripe for the Program to introduce Pidgin as an object of study and research. Such innovation in the Program’s curriculum will, in due course, help make Pidgin an acceptable *tool* for teaching and learning in the classroom, and then make Pidgin an official language as well. In light of the students’ input when I met with them, plus Lockwood & Saft’s findings (especially the reports of positive attitudes about Pidgin on the part of UH Hilo faculty from Hawai’i), the inclusion of Pidgin as a privileged object of study, alongside Hawaiian, stands a good chance to augment the moral standing of the Program and trigger additional interest and excitement about Linguistics within both the student body and the pool of potential applicants. Indeed, among the interviewees in Lockwood & Saft’s paper, some of the faculty from Hawai’i mentioned how important it is to use Pidgin in order to make the Hawaiian students feel accepted and respected in the classroom—in order to “promote and support the locally-born students.”

For now, the relative neglect of Pidgin in the Program’s *formal* curriculum, though not in the actual practice of the faculty who teach Hawaiian through a comparison of Pidgin and Hawaiian (as noted above), creates a certain level of moral incoherence if we consider that some, though not all, of the pedagogical, intellectual and ethical reasons for the defense and enhancement of the Hawaiian language at UH Hilo apply to Pidgin as well. This point is made quite clear in one of the positive responses reported in the Lockwood & Saft paper—note the plural in every occurrence of “languages” in that quote:

“Papers and presentations can be submitted in the official languages of Hawai’i which should include Pidgin. Historically, the languages and cultural aspects of these islands have been crushed numerous times. We are instructing the generation that can change this. If we allow them to be themselves and support the revitalization of the Hawaiian culture and languages, we are helping to right the wrongs done in the past.”

One may ask if the proposed inclusion of Pidgin in the Program’s curriculum would unnecessarily duplicate what is already happening within UH Mānoa’s academic

activities around Pidgin. But I'd say that the College of Hawaiian Language puts UH Hilo in an intellectual position to make unique contributions to the study of Pidgin (*and Hawaiian!*) in a way that other places cannot. With faculty fluent in both Hawaiian and Pidgin, faculty at the College, together with faculty in the Program, can make synergistic connections between the study of these two languages. And here too, there's already in place a sketch of that model in the College, in the work of Prof. Jason Iota Cabral who has been making presentations on the influence of Hawaiian linguistic patterns on the make-up of Pidgin. During my visit I was fortunate enough to have lunch with Professors Cabral, Saft and Wilson when I got to hear first-hand about Cabral's findings. The latter, alongside the sort of sociolinguistics research about language ideologies, as exemplified, in the Lockwood & Saft paper, could lay out a constructive and insightful research and teaching program for generations of students interested in "the revitalization of the Hawaiian culture and *languageS*" (in the plural).

b) Multilingual education and the revitalization of endangered languages worldwide

Also related to the revitalization of the languageS of Hawai'i is yet another major opportunity for the Program, and one that is already being cashed out by the faculty. Let's start with a recent example of that: The week following my visit, the Program hosted the defense of Lance Twitchell, a PhD candidate from Alaska who was at the forefront of the campaign to include Alaska's Indigenous languages among the State's official languages and who is now leading the movement to preserve the endangered language Tlingit. In fact, Twitchell's Ph.D. dissertation not only focused on the endangerment situation of Tlingit but also included a plan for revitalization based on his study of the situation of the Hawaiian language. His dissertation was completed under guidance from a committee that included Scott Saft, Kauanoe Kamanā, and Pila Wilson from the Program's faculty.

Another example: The faculty in the Program and their colleagues in the College have been instrumental in the founding of the National Coalition of Native American Language Schools and Programs. This coalition is a network of schools based on the model of the Nāwahī School—the language-immersion laboratory school that is connected with the College of Hawaiian Language.

In my view, the model set up by the Program's language activism for the protection or revitalization of Indigenous languages could and should extend to marginalized languages world-wide, including my native Haiti and elsewhere in the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia, Australia, etc., where neo-colonial language ideologies continue to undermine the human rights of disenfranchised populations where these languages are (or were) spoken. Here too we can cite work already ongoing in the Program, namely the work of Prof. Yumiko Ohara on the Okinawan language of Japan. Ohara has helped establish monthly meetings at Hale'ōlelo devoted to the teaching of Okinawan languages and cultural aspects, and she has also been a leader

in establishing a series of conferences focusing on Okinawan language revitalization and in supporting universities and other institutions in Okinawa that are interested in duplicating features of the College of Hawaiian Language. The students themselves use Ohara's language activism as one example that they wish would lead to similar efforts in the context of other languages besides Hawaiian.

After my visit in Hilo, I myself have disseminated, via both [my Facebook page](#) and the Facebook page of the [MIT-Haiti Initiative](#), videos of activities at UH Hilo and at Nāwahī.⁹ The goal is to publicize yet another set of proofs-by-example of the proposition that heretofore marginalized "local" languages (like Hawaiian and like my own Haitian Creole) are viable tools for education.

In a related vein, Norvin Richards, my afore-mentioned colleague who leads MIT's [Indigenous Language Program](#), tells me that UH Hilo's Program in Linguistics offers the world a model that language-revitalization programs must emulate in order to succeed. Richards' assessment about the preeminence of the Program echoes that of other linguists who have called UH Hilo's College of Hawaiian Language and its Hawaiian language nests "the most successful effort in language revitalization efforts in the United States."¹⁰

c) More linguistics in Hawaiian studies

I was very impressed by the (non-linguistics) Hawaiian language classes that I visited during my visit at the College of Hawaiian Language. I visited three such classes: (i) HAW 603 Graduate level Hawaiian, taught by Prof. Jason Iota Cabral; (ii) KHAW 403 taught by Prof. Hiapo Perreira; (iii) KHAW 103 taught by Prof. Kekoa Harman. These are some of the best language teachers that I have seen anywhere. But I also sensed a potential pedagogical and intellectual gap there—and yet another opportunity to be tapped by the Program in Linguistics. Indeed my sense, while visiting these classes and speaking to a couple of the corresponding instructors, is that Hawaiian studies could and should benefit more from Linguistics course offerings.

To make a concrete case for that, I'll take as example the course taught by Prof. Hiapo Perreira on the literary analysis of classic Hawaiian texts. There Prof. Perreira guides the students through, among other things, the discovery of relatively unfamiliar domains of the Hawaiian lexicon. As Prof. Perreira described his course to me, especially the lexical analyses at the core of it, it became clear to both of us that his course would be enriched if students had a stronger background in core theoretical areas of linguistics, in particular Morphology, Semantics and Pragmatics. These are three areas of formal linguistics that could be very helpful for the study of

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/mithaiti/photos/a.169694073381932/755924951425505>
<http://whamit.mit.edu/2018/11/26/11706>

¹⁰ Grenoble, Lenore A. & Lindsay J. Whaley (2006) *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

the lexicon of any language. Having these courses in the toolbox of Prof. Perreira's students would certainly enhance the course's findings and the students' learning gains around the oratory power of classic Hawaiian texts.

Yet, even as Prof. Perreira and I discussed the importance of such linguistics courses, I realized that Semantics and Pragmatics are not included among the core courses that the students majoring in linguistics must take, though there is a course "Semantics and Pragmatics" that is offered, but only as an elective. And thus arises yet another opportunity for the program, related to the expansion of the core set of required courses. (Then again, such expansion will depend on an increase of the faculty size.)

d) Linguistics and Hawaiian Studies as foundational at UH Hilo

This is a (very programmatic) opportunity that goes beyond the Program per se as it involves the entire College of Hawaiian Language and its potential connections with the *total* set of disciplinary offerings at UH Hilo. Such connections between the Program in Linguistics and Hawaiian Studies, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, every other field of study at UH Hilo would offer an extensive set of win-win intellectual partnerships—to benefit the College of Hawaiian Language and all other disciplines at UH Hilo.

Here I'll borrow an apt phrase from Prof. Keiki Kawai'ae'a, Director of the College of Hawaiian Language, about the mission of the College concerning the "re-normalization of Hawaiian." If we go back to the 19th century when Hawaiian was the vibrant primary language of Hawai'i, the language was certainly not confined to just one area of inquiry called "Hawaiian studies." Of course, back then, there was no such thing like "Hawaiian studies" with anything like the mission of the College. Indeed, back then there was no need for any concerted effort to protect or revitalize Hawaiian. Back then, the language was transparently foundational in every area of inquiry, at the core of Hawaiian knowledge and its production and transmission. In other words, until the 19th century, speaking Hawaiian in Hawai'i was foundational to Hawaiian ways of learning and knowing. So one can indeed imagine that in a future UH Hilo, Hawaiian would be used as it was in the 19th century, i.e., Hawaiian would be at the core of every other discipline at UH Hilo. Such pervasive use (or at least the *study*, if not the fluent use) of the Hawaiian language would certainly strengthen the presence of Hawaiian studies and the Hawaiian language at UH Hilo, inviting more students and faculty to become acquainted with the Hawaiian language and culture.

So my recommendation here is that a two-course combination in the linguistic structure of Hawaiian and in Hawaiian studies (to learn the language or to learn about some fundamental aspect the language) be required of *every* student at UH Hilo.

But where's the win-win, one might ask? Here's one proposition: Having every field of inquiry at UH Hilo incorporate some degree of knowledge of the Hawaiian

language and, more generally, of Hawaiian ways of knowing should be beneficial to all, especially for Hawaiian faculty and students interested in quests for knowledge, including scientific knowledge, that take their ancestral culture into account. One possible example, which was inspired in my conversation with Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs Ken Hon during my visit at UH Hilo, is the coupling of volcanology with details in Hawaiian myths that are related to actual geological events (e.g., the story of the Goddess Pele).¹¹

Similarly, in ever other field of inquiry, with enough boldness and imagination, one can imagine constructively linking pieces of contemporary scholarship with elements of local Indigenous cultures. Experts in Indigenous cultures have even ventured the claim that, in certain areas of science (e.g., studies of climate, the environment, agriculture and water), Indigenous ways of knowing may actually produce better science, including the sort of science that is more friendly to Planet Earth and that can better lead us to a sustainable future. In other words, incorporating certain Indigenous cultural frameworks and modes of teaching and learning in our education system stands a chance to cure the [“ecological amnesia”](#) that is so dangerous to the planet.

Such desiderata may seem much too idealistic. But at the very least, the prospect of having the Program of Linguistics and Hawaiian Studies enter into conversation with other disciplines seems most germane to UH Hilo’s Strategic Plan “to embody the concept of a ‘Hawaiian university’...” that will:

“Support continued *revitalization of the Hawaiian language* and UH Hilo’s position of international leadership in language and culture revitalization by structuring an education incubator for the development of ideas, practices, and qualifications relating to Hawaiian and Indigenous language and culture to serve our distinctive campus, our bilingual state, and other Indigenous communities.”

In my analysis, “the concept of a ‘Hawaiian university’...” that will so staunchly “support *revitalization of the Hawaiian language*” does entail, in Prof. Keiki Kawai’ae’a’s terms, a “re-normalization” of Hawaiian through the use or, at the very least, the study of Hawaiian language and culture as a core requirement for all students at UH Hilo.

In other words, I’d like to suggest that, in keeping with UH Hilo’s Strategic Plan, the university require every single academic discipline on campus to incorporate, via the use or study of the Hawaiian language, key aspects of Hawaiian culture, especially Hawaiian ways of knowing. One could go even further and contemplate the addition of “Hawaiian studies” tracks for appropriate disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences—such as history, sociology, anthropology, education,

¹¹ <https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/70162568>
<https://www.livescience.com/40149-myth-or-magma-hawaiian-stories-reveal-geologic-past.html>
http://www.ksbe.edu/assets/spi/hulili/hulili_vol_6/3_Oral_Tradition_and_Volcanic_Activity.pdf
<http://pages.mtu.edu/~raman/papers2/SwansonKilaueaMythsJVGRO8.pdf>

etc.—and even in the hard and life sciences such as geology, biology, etc., where Hawai‘i has special traits to offer for study. One model that comes to mind is [Prof. Kerri Inglis](#)’ research program in the History department.¹²

5. Summary of findings and suggestions for the way forward

The Linguistics Program at UH Hilo, the only undergraduate linguistics program in Hawai‘i and a key player in the most successful Indigenous language-revitalization effort in the world, is breaking new grounds toward a new kind of linguistics that puts human rights and social justice at the center of its mission—toward a deeply decolonial future for its students, faculty, staff and the larger community, both in and beyond Hawai‘i. Indeed, with its focus on the newly revitalized Hawaiian language (the most successful revitalization of an Indigenous language in the US), UH Hilo is tracing a model for marginalized Indigenous communities throughout the world, from the US and Canada to Asia, especially those whose languages have been endangered through colonial attempts at cultural genocide.

But in order to realize its lofty and challenging mission, the Program needs extra resources that are currently sorely lacking—keeping in mind that the two fulltime faculty on board in the Program are already being spread thin beyond humanly acceptable limits. Please recall that the current faculty shortage has dire effects on all aspects of the Program, including the wellbeing of faculty members who are forced to work insanely long hours and who cannot offer to students the courses they need. This faculty shortage undermines the leadership role that the Program is poised to fulfill within Hawai‘i and the US, and throughout the world.

Given the findings in this report the main recommendations concern:

- I. Faculty shortage is by far the most urgent need to solve: The fulltime (tenure-track or tenured) faculty size needs to be, at the very least, five—as in the History, a program with a comparable number of majors, one that, unlike the Program in Linguistics, lacks M.A., Ph.D., and laboratory-school responsibilities.
- II. There needs to be a pool of teaching and research assistants at the College of Hawaiian Language.
- III. There’s also a need for space—ideally a new building for the Program in Linguistics.
- IV. The Program and the entire College need assurance of longevity. There must be a guarantee that faculty lines are retained in the College even after retirement of senior faculty.

¹² <https://uhh-hawaii.academia.edu/KerriInglis>

- V. The Program’s curriculum needs to include Pidgin & Creole courses *in situ*, with focus on Hawaiian Pidgin—for “moral coherence” vis-à-vis the respect due to Hawai’i’s languageS (in the plural).
- VI. The set of required core courses should be expanded to include Semantics & Pragmatics.
- VII. The Program must broaden its reach within the College of Hawaiian Language as well. I.e., core courses in linguistics (Phonetics & Phonology, Morphology & Syntax, Semantics & Pragmatics) should also be required of students in Hawaiian Studies, including graduate students.
- VIII. The Program should offer courses in other minoritized languages besides Hawaiian (e.g., Okinawan) and integrate such coursework into the existing strengths of the College of Hawaiian Language with respect to the education of students whose languages have been institutionally discriminated against (i.e., “minoritized”). This coursework should be organized toward providing a graduate-level certification that indicates that the holder thereof can provide courses about, of, and through a minoritized language.
- IX. The administration, in keeping with the spirit of UH Hilo’s Strategic Plan, needs to better integrate Linguistics and Hawaiian Studies, as the “binding cord” of UH Hilo’s identity and intellectual life-force, with other disciplines at UH Hilo. So a campus-wide core requirement of at least 2 courses in the linguistics of Hawaiian and in some aspect of Hawaiian studies
- X. The College must extend its reach toward a wider and more diverse range of communities that can benefit from the language revitalization model of the College and its laboratory immersion schools.
- XI. The Program must increase its presence on social media.

In a nutshell, the Linguistics Program is suffering because of its own success and promise. Indeed its extraordinary growth in a relatively short time hasn’t yet been met with the necessary budget growth and related support from the upper administration for increased faculty and staff size (including graduate assistants), and autonomous space and logistics. Thus far, the Linguistics Program and the entire College of Hawaiian Language have had a major impact on the revitalization of Hawaiian as part of a larger agenda for diversity and social justice via language and education. But, this sort of impact can only last when it can be passed down through multiple generations. UH Hilo is key in this effort through a unique PhD Program in Hawaiian and Indigenous Language & Culture Revitalization and via its teacher education program supported by the Linguistics Program. Without adequately increased support from the UH Hilo administration, this impact and the Program’s promise for a better world will be compromised. Yet my impression is that, to date, the Program has had relatively little support from the upper administration in terms of logistics, especially when it comes to faculty lines, teaching and research assistants, space, and intellectual integration with other units.

UH Hilo's Linguistics Program's success is part of an extraordinary journey toward realizing a broad and ambitious vision for a re-appropriation of Hawai'i's national soul—its very *mauli*—through a “re-normalization” of Hawaiian. The Program has set up a model for the world at large, especially for these communities whose languages, thus their human rights, have been marginalized or endangered, for far too long. It is the responsibility of the upper administration of UH Hilo, alongside the UH system, to support this most noble mission to the maximum extent possible.