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Beyond contrastive analysis and codeswitching: Student documentary filmmaking as a challenge to linguisticism in Hawai'i

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses a documentary film project³ produced by high school students in Hawai'i that investigated the value of Pidgin (Hawai'i Creole) in schools and society, and which ultimately aimed to address the problem of *linguicism* (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990). The project was carried out within a critical language awareness framework that treated students as knowledge producers and which provided them with the opportunity to use their own communities and languages as repositories of knowledge and as sites for learning about the relationship between language and society. Through exploring the meanings and values of their language, the students produced a documentary that ended up challenging many of their own assumptions about Pidgin, and which revealed the importance of *translingual* practices (Pennycook, 2007). This article draws on material from the documentary and interviews with the students to illustrate how the students' views towards Pidgin changed during the course of the project, with a particular focus on the language's legitimacy. The results suggest that a students-as-knowledge-producers approach may offer more potential to challenge linguisticism than many contrastive analysis approaches currently being used. By treating non-mainstream languages as subject matter in their own right, without reference or comparison to the dominant language, we argue that these languages earn more respect and acknowledgment in school settings and beyond.

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1. Introduction

A comment posted to a newspaper forum entitled "Pidgin and Education" on the website of the *Honolulu Advertiser*⁴ summarizes common viewpoints about the creole language of Hawai'i in the context of schools:

Many want to speak pidgin just to be "local." That is fine. There is nothing wrong with that what so ever. Every part of the world has its own dialect. However, when it comes to the education of our youth, there is but one standard and there are noneother; the right and proper way. As much as many in Hawaii would like to fight it, we live in a world that unlike the 1800s is now inter-connected and to survive we must be able to compete in a global economy. In the

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⁴ The *Honolulu Advertiser* was sold to the *Honolulu Star Bulletin* in June 2010 which merged both newspapers into the newly formed *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*.

professional world, pidgin just like cajun, and what the hell ever these rap and gangster queers speak is not proper and professional. Try to imagine one of our youth growing up and giving a lecture at MIT, giving a seminar on cancer research or the like in pidgin. It just does not fit [...]

(posted by aerogeek33 4/13/08)

This posting points to several assumptions and misconceptions about Pidgin that explain why there is so much intolerance of this language in educational contexts. First, in comparison with English, Pidgin is not treated as a “proper” or correct language. Second, the use of Pidgin is presented as an obstacle for the acquisition and use of English. There is no mention of any possibility of a bilingual or multilingual populace in Hawai‘i that can communicate both locally in Pidgin and globally in English and other languages. Third, and despite the generally positive acknowledgment that Pidgin allows people to sound local, the intrinsic value of Pidgin is ultimately questioned through disreputable labels (“rap and gangster queers”) that associate Pidgin with disempowered populations and criminality. Finally, the U.S. mainland’s linguistic norms are uncritically presented as the only relevant reference point for (multilingual) Hawai‘i.

The posting reflects the problem of *linguicism*, defined as discrimination against certain varieties of language based on ideological notions of the purity, correctness, and appropriacy of a single standardized language in all meaningful contexts (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990). Of course, these sentiments about language are not restricted to Hawai‘i, as research on linguistic profiling, accent discrimination, and disparaging attitudes towards non-mainstream languages and dialects has shown for many years (Baugh, 1999; Bourdieu, 1991; Labov, 1972; Lippi-Green, 1997). Nonetheless, while linguists and teacher educators have strived to alter negative views about non-mainstream languages for decades, linguicism remains a major problem in schools and society. This seems to be especially true with regard to creole languages, for they are often interpreted as quasi-languages or as ‘broken’ forms of the colonial language, even by creole speakers themselves (cf. Migge, Leglisse, & Bartens, 2010; Romaine, 1999; Siegel, 2007).

Although theoretical discussions of linguicism are relatively easy to locate, examples of effective responses to linguicism in educational contexts are much harder to find. *Contrastive approaches* are commonly used to build on students’ knowledge of their home languages and dialects, and to add academic English to their repertoires (e.g., Godley, Sweetland, Wheeler, Minnicci, & Carpenter, 2006; Wheeler & Swords, 2006; Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999). However, as we argue in this article, these approaches do not effectively challenge linguicism since they tend to grant hegemonic languages more authoritative space under the guise of ‘appropriate language use,’ and because they relegate non-mainstream languages to the periphery. As a more radical alternative that attempts to battle linguicism more directly, we discuss a student documentary filmmaking project that sought to treat a marginalized language as the object of exploration, and which offered students greater opportunity to understand, and negotiate a response to, linguicism attitudes in school and society at large.

2. Responses to linguicism in educational contexts

Since this article presents a response to linguicism specifically in a school context, it is necessary to discuss the current stances on marginalized languages and varieties that have appeared in the research literature. While some strongly advocate for greater inclusion (if not wholesale use of) students’ home languages in schooling practices, we assert that the bulk of the scholarship takes a more middle-of-the-road approach and thus fails to legitimate the home languages, thereby leaving linguicism intact.

We begin our discussion with the 1974 meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, where members proposed the Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) resolution to draw attention to the continuing inequities experienced by minorities and minority language speakers in education, including speakers of non-standardized dialects. In the heyday of the U.S. Civil Rights movement, the resolution took what in today’s climate of English only laws might be seen as a ‘radical’ stance by calling for an affirmation of students’ rights to their own languages and recognized the injustice in both denying speakers access to their own languages and asserting that any one language is superior to another (1974, pp. 2–3):

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language – the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.

The resolution was meant to create an impetus for policy changes in public schools in the U.S. that would serve to improve educational experiences among students who were marginalized due to the languages that they speak. However, the National Council of Teachers of English failed to adopt it until 2003, when the context of widespread English only legislation obviously threatened the constitutional and educational rights of school children (Scott, Straker, & Katz, 2009).

Since attention to students’ rights to their own languages has grown, some progress has been made in the recognition of language diversity in schools, but provisions for children who speak languages other than English have come about

primarily as a result of federal and supreme court decisions. The U.S. Supreme Court case *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) resulted in the provision of bilingual education and ESL instruction to Chinese-speaking children in San Francisco's public schools, and official recognition of African American English (AAE) in the school districts of Ann Arbor, Michigan followed the 1979 *Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School v. Ann Arbor School District Board* ruling, which required the school district to acknowledge AAE as the first language of school children and to devise pedagogical approaches that would improve their school English (SE).⁵ As a result of the King case, teacher training programs were developed based on contrastive analysis that demonstrated the linguistic differences between AAE and school English⁶ for teaching children language awareness and bilingual/bidialectal literacies (Smitherman, 2009). While it is possible to claim that these were gains in the area of linguistic rights, it is important to point out that these programs ultimately aimed to *transition* students from their home languages to SE rather than adopt maintenance or additive bilingual approaches that might legitimize and affirm students' rights to their own languages.

3. Linguicism in Hawai'i: the case of Pidgin

Though Pidgin is spoken by over half of the population in Hawai'i (Sakoda & Siegel, 2003, p. 1), it is often treated with a great deal of antagonism by residents of the state, many of whom are themselves Pidgin speakers. The colonial plantation context in which Pidgin developed appears to have provided the context for linguicism to take root. Many of Hawai'i's residents are descendants of the migrant laborers who came to the islands from China, Portugal (mainly the Azores and Madeira), Japan, Okinawa, The Philippines, Korea, and several other nations to work on sugar plantations owned by American businessmen during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Colonial attitudes of superiority among the Americans towards (especially non-white) other peoples, their languages, and their cultures ensured that the white ruling classes dismissed the Hawaiian-based pidgin first used as a communication tool as a non-language. As the creole developed and incorporated more English vocabulary into it at the turn of the 20th century, and as some workers began to move out of the plantation, acquire and use more English, and set up their own local businesses, a two-tiered public education system was quickly established along racial and social lines, with admission to English Standard schools dependent on demonstrated non-Pidgin-like pronunciation skills (Benham & Heck, 1998). Children who did not pass oral communication tests were sent to the regular schools, where Pidgin was typically the common language, despite official policy that declared English the only allowable medium of instruction in 1896, two years before Hawai'i was annexed. Common to both types of school, however, was overt indoctrination against Pidgin. Even ex-plantation workers were keen to repress evidence of their earlier status, and their open affiliation with the code of power meant that many of them joined in the ideologically satisfying condemnation of the 'broken' English used by the still laboring classes.

Due to continuing prejudice, Pidgin is today still mistakenly considered to be an inferior version of English and is often blamed for interfering with the process of acquiring SE. Educators have been trying to combat Pidgin since the 1920s (Yokota, 2008), and in 1987 the Hawai'i Board of Education even attempted to ban the language from school altogether. However, the BOE's actions provoked a strong reaction, even from many teachers, for the proposed policy was seen as an unfair and discriminatory attack on Pidgin and its speakers (Hargrove & Sakoda, 1999; Sato, 1991; Watson-Gegeo, 1990). Surprised by the level of public support for the local language, the BOE revised its policy and allowed some Pidgin in the classroom while stressing the high priority of English. Needless to say, the role of Pidgin in education remains a very sensitive issue.

When asked about Pidgin usage, Pidgin speakers will generally comment that Pidgin is inappropriate in any formal settings, even though this is often contradicted by their actual language use. In a recent small-scale study by Marlow and Giles (2008), for example, Pidgin speakers on the island of Hawai'i claim that English should be spoken in educational settings and with superiors at work and that Pidgin should be reserved for interactions with family, friends, and co-workers. However, the same study provides ample evidence that the participants nevertheless use both English to Pidgin at work when it serves their communicative goals, such as establishing rapport with customers. One participant summarized her ability to switch in the following excerpt (Marlow & Giles, 2008, p. 63):

- C: It definitely helps now, well now with my job. The oddest thing is that I can turn it off and on. I can be with a client that is very local and I can flip it in a second and just start talking broken English.
M: So that's what you do then?
C: Yes. It really helps me to connect with my clients.

Though many of Hawai'i's residents may believe that Pidgin is 'broken English,' and therefore not appropriate for certain domains, this appears to be much more of an ideological consequence of linguicism rather than a description of sociolinguistic practices. As the participants in Marlow and Giles (2008) indicate, locals use English alongside Pidgin within single conversational episodes, frequently code-switching based on perceived contextual constraints and/or for pragmatic effect. Other studies of Pidgin in actual use demonstrate similar findings, including Furukawa (2007), who provides examples of linguistic hybridity involving English, Pidgin, and other local languages, including mock Filipino, in stand-up comedy shows

⁵ We prefer this term to 'standard English,' a misnomer which indexes the mythical concept of a single and unified language often associated with certain levels of education, socio-economic status, and oftentimes, race. As countless linguists have shown, 'standard English' is a myth more than a reality (cf. Lippi-Green, 1997). We also prefer this term over 'academic English' since it implies that academic ability is limited to English.

⁶ For example, the Academic English Mastery Program founded by Norma Lemoine in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

performed on O'ahu. Siegel also notes that in casual conversation, people may make use of occasional Pidgin features in English conversational episodes, drawing on lexical and grammatical features from both basilectal and acrolectal forms (Siegel, 2008: 266).

3.1. Responses to linguisticism in Hawai'i

In the 1980s, linguistic research and advocacy in Hawai'i, as well as greater awareness of language diversity and language rights, led the U.S. government to designate Pidgin as one of the languages that qualified for federal funding under Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Tamura, 1996). As a result, the Hawai'i State Department of Education's Office of Bilingual/Multicultural Projects secured funding for a series of programs to teach SE. From 1984 to 1988, Project *Holopono* ('success') provided children in grades 4–6 across seven schools who spoke Hawaiian, Pidgin, Ilokano, or Samoan with transitional bilingual education and aimed to improve academic achievement and cross-cultural relationships through bilingual/multicultural instruction for students and their parents. The reality of the program, however, was that Pidgin was used as a stepping stone for the acquisition of SE, following a transitional bilingual educational model. Students did not develop literacy skills in Pidgin, nor were materials developed in Pidgin for future use. Similarly, from 1989 to 1992, Project *Akamai* ('smart') targeted Pidgin speakers in grades 9–12, serving about 600 students. It used ESL approaches (i.e., Sheltered English Instruction, the Natural Approach) to facilitate the acquisition of SE, promote communicative competence, and to help students meet grade promotion and graduation requirements (Pablo, Ongteco, & Koki, 2000). Similar examples followed, including Project *Keiki* ('children') on Maui, which targeted pre-school and Kindergarten children who spoke Ilokano, Hawaiian, Hawai'i Creole, Spanish, and Tongan; and Project *Malama O Keiki O Lana'i* ('care for the children of Lana'i'), which provided ESL services to preschool-Kindergarten from 1997 to 1999.⁷

These programs were based on the premise that students who speak other languages and dialects at home need to acquire SE, the language of power, in order to succeed in society, and that contrastive analysis and code-switching strategies can provide them with the tools to do so. This premise is supported by various scholars in applied linguistics and education, such as Delpit (1988, 2002), Lobeck (2005), Gee (2004), Wheeler (2009), and Wheeler and Swords (2006), researchers who have argued that if children do not acquire SE, they will ultimately remain disenfranchised since SE is the *language of power*. The logic is that, without this language, the children will also lack power. These scholars are generally critical of the hegemony of SE, but they argue that non-SE speaking students need to be equipped with this academic literacy while learning to take on a critical perspective that is conscientious of the underlying power issues surrounding language use. Gee (2004) summarizes this perspective well in his discussion of academic Discourses (which include the use of SE):

It is often the case that authentic beginners to a Discourse are allowed to master the Discourse only enough for them to become 'colonized' members of it, and never really experience the power of transforming their own practices and changing the values and practices of others in the Discourse. . . they must learn to 'play the game', but they must also learn to 'talk strategy' and at extreme points, to 'call the game' [. . .] While we go about fighting for [. . .] revolution, I would suggest that we make both ourselves and our students more aware of how language works in terms of social languages, Discourses, situated meanings, cultural models, situated identities, situated activities. (p. 30)

To this end, programs such as those devised by Wheeler and Swords (2006) have been developed to help teachers find ways to add SE to students' repertoires and to learn to see non-mainstream languages as 'different' rather than 'deficient.' Through training and workshops, teachers are led to recognize the systematicity and validity of their students' home languages and to learn how to teach students to learn how to investigate their own ways of speaking. Teachers engage with contrastive analysis activities involving AAE with SE. Then, students carry out similar activities, where they are ultimately taught to select the 'appropriate' language for the right context and to acquire the ability to *code-switch*⁸ between their home language and SE. While home language is usually deemed appropriate for 'informal' communication and literary expression, SE is typically presented as the right choice for school, business, and other 'formal' contexts.

In addition to contrasting languages, other suggestions have been made for expanding curricula to incorporate a more of students' home cultures in the teaching of standardized language. For example, Delpit (2002) discusses how teachers might draw on African American girls' strong interest in hair to create middle school lessons on science and math, involving research on African hair braiding as a way to affirm their African heritage.

4. The limits of contrastive approaches

Contrastive approaches may aim to teach students that home languages are equally valid on linguistic grounds, but we would argue that they do not affirm the value of languages other than SE in a truly meaningful way. This is because contrastive

⁷ The Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) also served to bridge home and school literacies; however, this program was funded by Kamehameha School and not with US DOE monies. The project aimed to transition Pidgin-speaking children to SE while implementing culturally sensitive approaches such as *talk story* interactional styles (cf. Rynkof, 1993).

⁸ Also see examples of codeswitching between AAE and SE in the Academic English Mastery Program of the Los Angeles Unified School District featured on *Do You Speak American?*, a DVD set produced by the United States Public Broadcasting Service.

analysis too often tends to treat home languages such as AAE as stepping stones to SE, rather than as languages that should be guaranteed a more equal place in schooling and in society. In fact, in the example given by Delpit, which connects African American girls' interest in hair to school via their ethnic identities, the ultimate goal is further acceptance of SE, rather than equal valuing of home and school language. She writes, "When students' interests are addressed in school, they are more likely to connect with the school, with the teacher, with the academic knowledge, and with the school's language form" (2002, p. 45). From our point of view, if SE is the only language affirmed, students may never be able to view their home languages, and themselves, as truly legitimate in the eyes of their teachers or the education system.

Kirkland and Jackson (2009) demonstrate how the implicit hierarchy of SE in contrastive approaches is very likely to emerge despite best efforts. In a critical language awareness project they carried out in Detroit, 16 male African American students aged 10–14 participated in a male mentoring program for nine months that was modeled after the contrastive analysis language lessons used in Oakland, California (cf. Rickford, 1999), focusing primarily on raising language awareness about the linguistic differences between AAE and SE. Towards the end of the project, the researchers asked the boys to draw pictures of how to code-switch in daily life. Many of the images revealed links between AAE and street life, including criminality, drug use, and gangs (and note, the same images referenced in the online posting about Pidgin at the beginning of this article); other images the boys drew created associations between SE and upward mobility, affluence, and law-abiding behavior. Alarmed by the results, Kirkland and Jackson (2009) state that "by using [AAE] simply as a 'scaffold' (up) to [SE], [contrastive analysis] approaches reinforce the asymmetrical positioning between the two languages – relegating [AAE], as well as the people who speak it – to an inferior social status" (p. 137).

To address this problem, Kirkland and Jackson call for a more critical re-conceptualization of contrastive analysis approaches that can provide students with the chance to use their languages in ways other than merely facilitating the transition to SE. Rather than identifying languages such as AAE as appropriate only for the playground, the home, or the street, they argue that students and teachers need to find ways to create more inclusive linguistic environments where these languages can become valid and valuable resources for learning and transforming social attitudes towards all marginalized languages, especially student home languages other than SE. In other words, more needs to be done in schools to *alter the power relations* between SE and the languages that students speak so that students do indeed have a right to their own language in educational contexts and beyond, rather than a right to SE alone.

5. Theoretical underpinnings of the project

Taking the perspective that transformative practices are needed which valorize home languages within school settings, we chose to pursue a project which would avoid treating home languages as stepping stones to SE. The selection of a student-produced documentary on Pidgin as a form of potentially transformative practice emerged from our considerations of various forms of critical pedagogy and concepts about critical language awareness. We chose to begin by working directly with students who were directly affected by linguisticism, and we were inspired by research in education which demonstrates the vitality of asking students to produce knowledge about their own languages and cultures by becoming ethnographers of their own communities (Egan-Robertson & Bloome, 1998; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006) and by authoring their own *identity texts* (Bernhard et al., 2006; Cummins, 2006). We felt that the students and the wider community would be more responsive to this approach than any tactics that might be seen as top-down, mandated, or even worse, as views from the 'ivory tower.' The student-produced documentary also allowed for a wider range of multimodal forms of expression, which we felt would enable the students to explore local identity in Hawai'i from a more varied set of viewpoints. Next, we discuss the key concepts that shaped our approach to the design of the project and our analysis of its impact on the students' perspectives.

5.1. Critical language awareness

Critical language awareness (CLA) is an approach to language study, discourse analysis, and linguistics that encourages a critical approach to education and schooling through a thoughtful and careful analysis of language and its use in society (Fairclough, 1989, 1992). CLA is becoming increasingly necessary as a basic preparation for effective membership of a democratic society in that it gives a holistic perspective linking many levels of social reality and is especially important for giving individuals the ability to challenge social conventions. Furthermore, in a multilingual and multicultural environment like Hawai'i, CLA can be an important factor in encouraging a fairer and more equal distribution of power between various ethnic and language communities.

CLA differs from other language awareness programs (e.g., Hawkins, 1984) in that it is founded on the general assumption that there is a connection between language and ideology which needs to be examined. While Fairclough (1989) calls for an analysis of ideologies through a close reading of texts, others, such as Clark et al. (1990), explain that CLA should not only "empower language users, in terms of developing their awareness, but should also help them on the way to emancipation by giving them the chance to challenge existing conventions and the right to offer alternatives in order to help shape new conventions" (p. 87). Part of offering such alternatives includes providing speakers of stigmatized languages opportunities for using their own experiences with language as a framework for examining links between language and power.

5.2. Funds of knowledge

In treating Hawai'i's languages, and the cultures connected to them, as local *funds of knowledge* (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992), we argue that greater transformations can be achieved with regard to challenging the hegemony of SE. Funds of knowledge are ways of knowing, acting, and behaving that children acquire outside school through their participation in social networks such as their own families and communities. Most research on home and school language and literacy practices suggests that educators should learn about these various funds of knowledge in order to help students bridge the 'gaps' to acquire school literacies. A funds-of-knowledge perspective can also emphasize possible intersections and ways to build relationships to support student learning. Rogers, Light, and Curtis (2004), for example, describe a project with African American fifth graders that gave them the opportunity to learn about the language and literacy of their communities. Their study found that the children could identify the in-school and out-of-school D/discourses (Gee, 1990) that they participated in, but they also recognized that the school did not validate their home and community funds of knowledge. One of the participating students, Monica, explained her reasons for separating her home and school languages through the practice of code-switching (Rogers et al., 2004, p. 194):

I think the kids are trying to sound like, more smart in school, sound more like they know what they're talking about instead of sounding like they don't know what they're talking about, and they're not making any sense, they trying to sound more proper, more proper for what their doing, more proper for school. (Interview, 1/11/02)

Similarly, Devon, another fifth grader, when asked about his own language use, thought "at school, we supposed to be more intelligent than out in our homes" (p. 197). This comment echoes the sentiments about AAE expressed by the boys in Kirkland and Jackson's (2009) study as well. At the same time, Devon exhibited a lack of confidence in his SE and a concern to fit in with his home community: "If I don't talk slang, they probably think I'm a nerd or something, my cousins, they crazy" (p. 197). Rogers et al. conclude that more congruence between home and school d/Discourses would benefit students by making school a more welcoming place, and asking students to explore their own local funds of knowledge could be the first step in achieving this goal. However, given the tenaciousness of the deficit model in schools, it is especially important to find convincing ways to validate and legitimate home languages in educational settings.

5.3. Translingual practices

In the context of Hawai'i, people speak Pidgin, local varieties of English, and a number of other languages such as Samoan, Tagalog, Ilocano, Hawaiian, and Japanese. They also move between these languages with great agility, very often blurring the boundaries between what usually count as separate languages. The boundaries between Pidgin and English are especially fluid since Pidgin is an English-lexified creole, and because Hawai'i English shares prosodic and pragmatic features with Pidgin. In addition, Hawai'i English contains many borrowings from Pidgin, Japanese and Hawaiian, so it makes more sense to view language in Hawai'i as system of complex linguistic repertoires rather than domain-based multilingualism with compartmentalized functions for different languages. Such a *disinvention* of multilingualism (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007), we suggest, is better referenced as *translingual practices* (Pennycook, 2007), a term which acknowledges the ways that multilinguals use their multiple linguistic resources in deterritorialized ways as acts of new forms of cultural production.

Translingual practices may involve *code-meshing* (Canagarajah, 2006; Young, 2007), or the intentional use of multiple language varieties for purposeful, multivocal, and sometimes playful rhetorical effect, and *translanguaging*, that is, the act of bi/multilinguals using their languages to make sense of their bi/multilingual worlds in ways that do not reference monolingual standards or clear-cut linguistic boundaries (García, 2009, p. 45). As the student filmmakers experimented with their portrayals of language in Hawai'i, we observed that they often employed translingual practices to express their points of view about Pidgin, typically in reference to the role of English, both in Hawai'i and beyond.

5.4. Students-as-knowledge-producers

We would suggest that students who have been marginalized by virtue of their languages should have the opportunity to transform their identities from recipients of school-based knowledge to more active *youth-as-knowledge-producers* (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). This project therefore seeks to achieve a transformation, through engaged analysis, of popular perspectives towards a stigmatized language (Pidgin) among students, teachers, and their community. Hence, it differs from the contrastive approaches discussed above, which view home languages primarily as potential scaffolds for the acquisition of SE. We therefore situate our project on the more radical end of a continuum of social change, where Pidgin is recognized not merely as a resource in SE academic literacy development, but as a focus of learning, as well as the medium of inquiry and knowledge production. Table 1 portrays the location of the project vis-à-vis contrastive analysis approaches, as well as instructional practices which typically do not acknowledge languages other than SE as 'appropriate' for school contexts.

We interrogate these theoretical perspectives through a practical critical language awareness project that sought to make space for constructive dialogue about Pidgin among multilingual students by asking them to make a documentary film on their local language and thus placing them in the role of youth-as-knowledge-producers. From a larger perspective, the project ultimately sought to examine the ideological construction of Pidgin on numerous levels, including those evidenced



Fig. 1. Eye dialect in a *titologue* ('That was like being in elementary school').

credits, and as bridges between the various segments, there are further on-screen examples of Pidgin (using eye-dialect), as well as short excerpts from additional interviews conducted by and with students from a nearby middle school.

When the film was finished in April, we asked the students, their film teacher, and the director of Ali'i Productions to attend two public screenings and to form a panel to respond to audience questions and comments after each showing. We also asked a panel of local writers, playwrights, and linguists to offer their 'responses' to the film at the same events. We then posted the film to youtube.com, eventually adding a version with subtitled transcriptions to benefit viewers who are not Pidgin speakers. We have noted in subsequent presentations and showings of the film that the subtitles have also served to highlight for local viewers the extent of the actual use of Pidgin in the film.

8. Findings

8.1. Attitudes before filming

The main goal of the project was to create an opportunity for students to produce their own knowledge about their community language and potentially, to challenge hegemonic beliefs about Pidgin as a result. In our first round of interviews with the would-be filmmakers, the research team discovered a range of attitudes towards Pidgin. Most described the local language as an intrinsic part of their (and especially the Native Hawaiian) community heritage, praising Pidgin as a marker of place and culture. At the same time, however, the majority nevertheless adhered to the stereotypical view of Pidgin as "broken" English, and in comparing it with English, generally devalued Pidgin in the process. The following excerpts demonstrate this perspective (which we have underlined) from four different students:

(1) It's basically our broken English. But you have to know when to stop it and... keep going with your proper English.

(2) It's pretty much broken English. It's like a way we shorten the words and stuff.
Pidgin is who we are, but it doesn't help us.

(3) Um, I don't think it's really important but it just... I guess it kinda is important because it's part of our culture, you know, but like, in a way, not so helpful.

(4) Yeah, (Pidgin is good) between you and your friends and family, but if it's for a job, you have to speak English. There's no way Pidgin would fit in with your job.

This stereotype of Pidgin as broken or lazy English is hardly surprising given the ideology of SE promoted in school and reinforced in many of the comments made by their interviewees. Nevertheless, a few students, generally those who from the outset readily identified themselves as Pidgin speakers, offered a much wider range of attitudes towards Pidgin, some of which were quite critical:

(5) Interviewer: If someone told you, or others you know, to stop speaking Pidgin permanently, what do you think that would, how would it have an affect on people?

Student: I think people would get offended because, I mean, it's like they're telling you to be someone else.

One student even suggested that incoming teachers from the mainland should learn Pidgin in order to acculturate towards local linguistic norms rather than expect local people to submit to the dominance of English. Interestingly, he was one of the few students who felt comfortable using Pidgin in his interview (with an interviewer who was not a Pidgin speaker):

(6) Student: Yeah, *had some teachers*, they stayed down here for like three years, cuz they're teaching, and then, now they're not stuck up and *jus talk*.

8.2. Attitudes during the filmmaking

During the making of the film, the students' perspectives on Pidgin certainly shifted somewhat towards greater tolerance and respect, and a considerable influence in this regard appears to have been the segment in the film that focuses on a social studies teacher at their school. Quite bravely, considering the potentially negative consequences for a state DOE educator, the teacher agreed to be filmed using English and Pidgin in his classroom, and in an on-screen interview, he explains what he considers to be the pedagogical benefits of using the local language he shares with his students:

(7) Teacher segment from *Ha Kam Wi Tawk Pidgin Yet?*

Teacher: I use Pidgin when you gotta like explain things to the kids. . . You can use it to *talk story* ('connect') with them, you can use that to y'know, make jokes, and play around *li dat* ('like that') [. . .] Cause you write it out on the board and then you gotta tell them. So they can see it and they can hear it. But when you tell *em*, sometimes you just *gotta say em* ('say it') right so they understand you [. . .] So I have to use words that they are familiar with or terms they know how to use.

The teacher's legitimation of Pidgin is clearly reflected in one of the second round of interviews with the student filmmakers. As one student explains, her stereotypes about Pidgin speakers were challenged through her experience of making the documentary precisely because the film demonstrates the actual use of Pidgin in a wide array of contexts:

(8) Student: Before, I thought Pidgin was for like *moke kine* people, ('tough guys') or something *li' dat* ('like that'), but now I notice a lot of teachers use it and that sometimes kids [. . .] okay, like before kids, the teacher used to talk about a assignment and use like these words that people don't understand. Like, what you call these words again? Like *private school kine words* ('private school type of vocabulary'), like y'know. A teacher, he said that when he *talks Pidgin* ('speaks Pidgin'), students actually do good on their work because they understand more because the way how he talks.

This increasing sense of validation of Pidgin as appropriate in contexts outside the stereotypical limitations of home or humor is also expressed in the final segment of the film, where insider information is associated with a shared insider code. This segment featured a high school student expressing the value of Pidgin from a very positive perspective:

(9) Segment featuring a high school student in *Ha Kam Wi Tawk Pidgin Yet?*

If you ask *da governa, da maya, da state representative* you ask him "*Wassup cuz?*" you tell him "*Howzit, cuz?*" see, he gon tell you "*Wassup, braddah?*"

('If you ask the governor, the mayor, or the state representative, you ask him 'what's up cuz?,' you tell him 'how are you, cuz?' see, he will tell you 'what's up brother?')

Furthermore, through the project itself and the attitudes of the researchers involved, the students began to speculate more about Pidgin's potential, given its acceptability as a topic of educational research. One filmmaker student explained that the project provided her with a space where she did not have to shift her language:

(10) Before it was like, I wasn't ashamed of it, but I knew when to turn it off, and like with you guys, we don't have to turn it off.

8.3. Attitudes after the film

As the film was ultimately under the control of the students themselves, the project's success can be measured as much by its challenge to traditional pedagogy as by its (albeit never explicitly articulated) challenge to linguisticism. What is certain is that their ownership of the learning process was itself demonstrably empowering. Furthermore, the selection of the material and creation of the overall design of the film, in terms of ordering and editing, produced a remarkably professional-looking and already often-viewed segment on youtube.com. Thirdly, in addition to their need to solicit and discuss community opinions to be able to make the film, the students gave two public presentations of their work, one for the Leeward Coast community and one at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. On both of these occasions, the students themselves felt accepted as experts, as they expressed in interviews:

(11) Student: I really enjoyed it when we went up to the stage to answer questions. I thought it was really nice and that we were able to answer questions from the audience and stuff.

In an interview, one of the students described the expertise she felt when she and a fellow filmmaker were engaged in a conversation by an aspiring teacher after one of the screenings. The future teacher had asked her about how to use Pidgin in class to connect with students:

(12) Student: It's kinda tricky because some, some kids cannot understand you. *Depends on how you talking Pidgin, and some can, and some no like people that try to talk Pidgin* ('It depends on how you speak Pidgin, and some can learn to speak it, but some people don't like it when (non-native Pidgin speaking) people try to speak Pidgin') [. . .] So we were trying to explain to her. But it was cool cause then *when we was talking to her*, ('when we were talking to her') she was just soaking it all, soaking it. I felt like *one teacha* ('a teacher'), just telling her. And she was just, like, soaking it in.

Moreover, the students also learned a great deal of critical language awareness. To begin with, many of the people the students had initially identified as proud Pidgin speakers and therefore excellent potential interviewees (family, friends, as well as several teachers and coaches at their school) declined invitations to participate in the project. The teachers and coaches in particular were apprehensive of the potential professional consequences of any public acknowledgment of their competence in, and/or support for, Pidgin. This demonstrated to the students the undeniable contradiction between the Aloha State's avowed ideology of inclusiveness and tolerance and the sort of guilt by association that, in terms of Pidgin, is actually Hawai'i's linguistic reality. What the students also became aware of was the strength of local people's linguistic



Fig. 2. *Das Hawaii do.*

convictions and particularly the power that these apparently grant those that hold them to define other people's linguistic competences.

In the first interview segment of the documentary, for example, we have a mother's on-screen determination, as linguistic authority over the three other generations present, that her filmmaker daughter's Samoan-as-mother-tongue speaking grandmother should not be recognized as a Pidgin speaker. In the film, she is shown saying, "grandma just speaks with an accent," a perspective based on the mother's stereotypically reproduced definition of the local language as "when they take proper English words and they break it up into like a slang."

Similarly, in the very next interview segment of the film, yet another parental authority figure, a filmmaker's father, reiterates the stereotype that "Pidgin is a broked up language. . . Pidgin is cut short of the English terminology" but with the additional barb "like when the *mahus tawk*" (referring to the often-disparaged third-gender population in Hawai'i who are known to have a secret language). By the final interviews, however, the student had discussed the matter further with her father and decided for herself that Pidgin is not simply broken English:

(12) Student: That kinda made me, um, *small kine* ('a little') mad because, I mean, it is a language. It's its own language. And that's what I learned throughout the whole thing too. It's not just *one* ('a') slang anymore. It's not broken English. It's an actual language. It was *one* slang before, but now that I know it's *one* language, I'm like, I talk to my dad about it and we analyze it.

Furthermore, the father of the student in (12), despite his otherwise negative comments, not only speaks Pidgin throughout the film interview but insists that "*Pidgin is part of da culture.*" Similarly, the grandmother shown on the film, despite conceding that "I'm old time, they never have a good school," insists, on camera, on her right to identify as a Pidgin speaker, and rather than being seen as linguistically challenged, she is shown to be skillfully negotiating meaning through a repertoire that includes Pidgin, English, Samoan, and Hawaiian. In this way, the funds of knowledge that the students both acknowledge in their community and then re-present in their film serve as a challenge to the hegemony of school knowledge and SE. For example, on camera, one filmmaker challenges the mother of an interviewee for what she perceives as unnecessary code-switching, asking her, *Why you tawking proper English for?* ("Why are you speaking English now?"). In the interviews, the same filmmaker student bemoans the general perception that Pidgin is inappropriate on camera ("Nobody likes to be themselves in front of a camera because they don't like people judge them"), the students increasingly comment on their own and others' multilingual competencies and, in their choice of the grandmother segment, for example, clearly grow to respect a linguistic competence outside the narrow definitions of language which they learn in school and hear reinforced by authority figures in their community.

9. Complexifying CLA with code-meshing and translanguaging

As far as contrastive analysis approaches are concerned, the solution to linguisticism would simply be to teach overt recognition of the grammar of Pidgin and perhaps, hopefully, even increase pride in the separate and additional code that students have unknowingly already mastered. However, as we have argued, separate and additional is not separate and equal precisely because contrastive analysis approaches in most formal teaching situations set themselves the primary goal of moving students towards full competence in just one code: a separate and purer form of English. Similarly problematic with contrastive analysis is the tacit acceptance that all speakers should code-switch as appropriate between these neatly separated codes. However, as the students' work shows, the separation is often much more ideological than actual. In the *titologues*, for instance, which are the primary examples of their own linguistic performance in the film, the students obviously revel in subverting standard English orthography. In her story about fighting back against taunts from boys about her weight, one *titologue* ends with the student proudly stating/transcribing "*Das Hawaii do,*" simultaneously indexing 'that's how I do' and 'that's (how) Hawai'i do(es).' (see Fig. 2). Of course, some might dismiss the eye-dialect as a reformulation of a variety of English, albeit with Pidgin phonology, as in another example from a different *titologue*: "*yestaday wuz da worse day of ma life.*" It is true that the students did not choose to transcribe examples from their *titologues* which, from a contrastive

analysis and code-switching perspective, would have been much more clearly marked syntactically as Pidgin (e.g., “*fus ai wen weikup leit*”, ‘First of all, I woke up late’). However, the impact of “*Das Hawaii do*” is profound precisely because of its multiple indexicalities – the student is able to use the multimodal resource of Pidgin, here transcribed with witty eye dialect, to explain a local cultural practice (standing up to boys by being a *tita*, ‘a tough local girl’). By describing the practice as ‘that’s (how) Hawai’i do(es)’ and as something that she herself does, she uses translanguaging to simultaneously relate the story to non-local audiences in a didactic manner while also claiming a very local identity for herself.

Though the students themselves did not explicitly comment on them, many other examples of translingual practices were found in interviews and in the film itself in the form of code-meshing. In her post-production interview, one student describes her father, who is featured on the film, as someone who has “worked so hard to learn proper English, so now he has a hard time going back to Pidgin,” yet in the film segment in which he appears, he offers his assessment of the local language in a variety that is not uniformly SE or Pidgin:

(14) Segment featuring a filmmaker’s father in *Ha Kam Wi Tawk Pidgin Yet?*

It’s a shorter way of talking, shorter sentences, shorter, burst out. . . Right now I stay body working dis car. I gotta get em ready fo paint. I get plenny work fo do.

(‘Right now I am doing body work on this car. I have to get it ready to be painted. I have a lot of work to do.’)

As the mismatch between the student’s interview data and the film footage of the father’s speech reveal, people are taught to believe that there are clear borders around what is “proper,” “straight” English, but in practice, what locals in Hawai’i (as nearly everywhere else) are generally doing when they speak and write what they believe is singular English is producing a discourse which contains elements from a variety of Englishes and Pidgins, ranging from the basilectal *kanaks* (from Hawaiian *kanaka*, ‘native’; in Pidgin, ‘really local’) Pidgin, Samoan and Hawaiian (as expressed in the film segment on the Samoan family), to the hyper-corrected English (“Salutations, my friend”) produced in the final segment by a high school student who states that using English would be inappropriate among his friends (“*I gon look like one dummy*”).

One of the filmmakers, without the training or terminology to differentiate between basilectal and acrolectal varieties, comes close to articulating a range of choices within the local linguistic repertoire that begin to question the ideological boundaries between English and Pidgin. In her final interview, for example, she criticizes one of her fellow students’ *wassupbrah*-filled local talk as “soft Pidgin” or “broken English” because “real” Pidgin is what she learns from her grandfather, featuring non-English derived vocabulary such as *hamajang* (‘messed up’, ‘broken’) and *wiki-wiki* (‘fast’). Similarly, and sporting a shirt with the word *hamajang* printed on its sleeve, the teacher featured in the film makes the point that Pidgin, like all living languages, varies and changes over time. He notes that recent expressions offer younger people different choices, but that the choices to be made are not between Pidgin and English, as the teacher clearly accepts IDK and LOL as Pidgin as well as, no doubt, English:

(15) Segment featuring a social studies teacher in *Ha Kam Wi Tawk Pidgin Yet?*

I think Pidgin is evolving, um, it’s changing, you see. I see a lot more slangs that are like that IDK and LOL because of the internet, because of the technology. They’re using their own slangs that us older people don’t know.

Virtually all of the student filmmakers report having competence in other languages additional to English or Pidgin, and their complex multilingual transactions characterize their language practices as they interact with others and, as a linguistic community, make sense of the complex linguistic and cultural context that is Hawai’i. Hence, notions of translanguaging or code-meshing, as opposed to the idealized tidiness of the theory of code-switching, are better descriptors for acknowledging the linguistic realities on the ground, and for developing critical language awareness programs and projects. In the final analysis, everyone in *Ha Kam Wi Tawk Pidgin Yet?* is doing what all speakers do even if no-one fully articulates it: instead of switching between distinctly separate codes, they engage in translingual practices which more or less mesh the separate into a singular. In this regard, the *titologue* transcriptions, and the code-meshed medium of the film itself, should ultimately be viewed positively as an act of translanguaging (García, 2009), and more importantly, as a critique of our compartmentalized conceptualization of language.

10. Summary of the project’s effectiveness at battling linguisticism

Overall, we noticed a relatively positive change in student perspectives towards Pidgin. A significant shift was that the students increasingly talked about Pidgin as a language, rather than a ‘broken’ version of English, and as a language which they consider valid in a wide number of contexts, perhaps most importantly as a language for schooling. As they filmed, they also became much more openly critical of linguisticist attitudes towards Pidgin and Pidgin speakers, and their interviews reveal remarkably positive defenses of the legitimacy of the language. They also developed much greater appreciation of the range of languages in their own communities and the range of varieties that are subsumed under the term Pidgin in Hawai’i, acknowledging both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ Pidgin and the validity of the Pidgin spoken by relative newcomers to the community (especially young teachers recruited from the mainland). Even though we did not initially aim to discuss it, their awareness of linguisticist attitudes towards other marginalized home and community languages such as Samoan, Tongan, Hawaiian, and Tagalog and Ilocano also occasionally emerged in the process.

11. What's next?: Sustaining and expanding student-produced knowledge

Since we are dedicated to facilitating and increasing the inclusion of Pidgin in education in Hawai'i, the next phase of the project made use of the student videoethnography project (the film and the interview data) to expand learning opportunities for teachers and students about Pidgin, its history, its literature, and its centrality to the notion of multiculturalism to which Hawai'i, as well as the US as a whole, tends to aspire. As members of Da Pidgin Coup, an advocacy group for Pidgin, we have developed a website with educational materials that use *Ha Kam Wi Tawk Pidgin Yet?* and other relevant documentary and fictional films to explore language differences, attitudes, literary devices, and social history (see sls.hawaii.edu/Pidgin), and to promote awareness of the website and these materials, we are also involved in delivering workshops to in-service teachers across the state.¹¹ We are also emphasizing our commitment to student-produced knowledge about Pidgin through continued work with Ali'i Productions, as students continue to produce videos about Pidgin, including on themes such as language variation, the relevance of local identity and speaking Pidgin, local food, and language use in local comedy. We are striving to create a resource that educators can use to expand the opportunities for Pidgin in schools, creating a space where more can be done to achieve linguistic equality.

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¹¹ We were very much inspired by the fine work produced by Walt Wolfram, Jeffrey Reaser, and their colleagues on the languages of North Carolina, <http://www.ncsu.edu/linguistics/ncllp/index.php> (and see Reaser & Adger, 2007; Reaser & Wolfram, 2007a, 2007b).

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