

Ka Baibala Hemolele

Advantages and disadvantages of
using a Bible translation for analysis of
'ōlelo Hawai'i morphosyntax

Matthew L. Maddox

*International Conference on Language Documentation
and Conservation*

University of Hawai'i-Mānoa; March 7, 2025



1. Introduction



1. Introduction

The problem → how to obtain authentic linguistic data for 'ōlelo Hawai'i ('ŌH)?

- Chomsky (1965:3) – “Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.”
- L1 speakers of 'ŌH: currently very few outside of the Ni'ihau community (NeSmith 2019).

1. Introduction

Author	Data source
Hawkins (1979)	3 oral (1 from Ni'ihau); written: Pāka'a (Nakuina, 1901), Ka'ala (Kapu, 1904), newspapers Kū'oko'a, Uluhoi
Hawkins (1982)	Andrews, Alexander; 'ŌH texts from 1840 to 1920
Carter (1996)	McGuire 1938 (an L1 speaker); Fornander Collection; Nākuina 1902 (L1); Hale'ole 1863 (L1)
Cook (1999, 2002)	McGuire, Kamanā & Wilson (1990), Elbert (1959), E&P (1979), P&E (1986), Hopkins (1992), Cleeland (1992); newspapers
Baker (2012)	Novel length texts published in newspapers from 1863 to 1924
Medeiros (2013)	Fieldnotes from three kūpuna speakers located in Kaua'i and Honolulu.
Medeiros (2021)	Elbert & Pukui (1979), Hawkins (1979, 1982, 2000); fieldnotes from two Ni'ihau speakers.

1. Introduction

Goal: Contribute to the maintenance of 'ŌH via descriptive linguistic research.

Studying a minoritized language also raises awareness of it (Sallabank 2013:60).

By raising awareness of 'ŌH to newcomers, locals, and all segments of the population of Hawai'i we can "...transform attitudes and ideologies that have traditionally marginalized and destabilized it" (Solomon 2024:156).

1. Introduction

Positionality:

I aim for my research to be a collaborative effort between myself and the Hawaiian community (v. Charity Hudley, Mallinson & Bucholtz 2024:239).

As an outsider, it is not my place to make decisions or offer opinions regarding language policy and planning (Warner 1999, NeSmith 2005).

1. Introduction

Roadmap:

- Section 2. How did we get the Baibala? (Lyon 2017)
- Section 3. The Baibala as a source of data: Advantages & disadvantages.
- Section 4. Case study #1 – Subject marker 'o.
- Section 5. Case study #2 – Negative markers 'a'ole, mai.

2. How did we get the Baibala?

Lyon, K. (2017) – No
ka Baibala Hemolele:
The making of the
Hawaiian Bible.
Palapala 1:113-151.

I kinohi...

(In the beginning...)

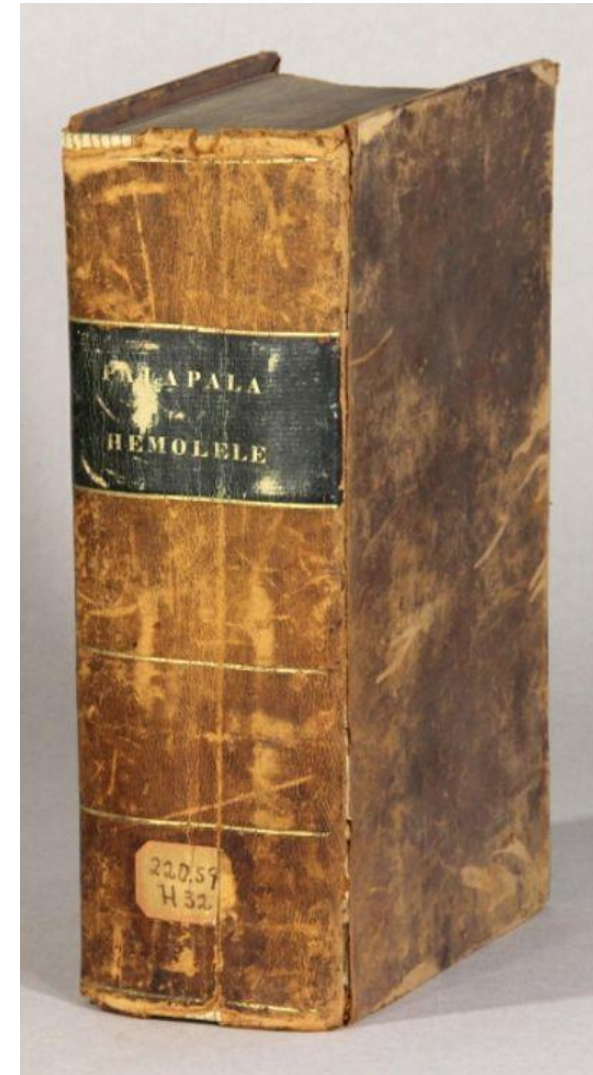
Time period: 1826-1839.

Participants:

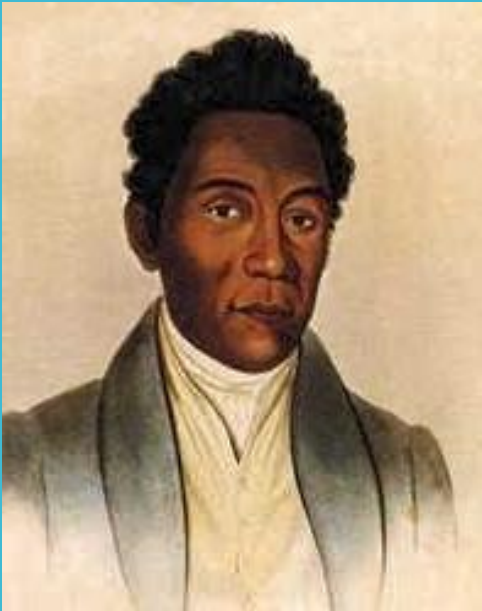
- 5 Hawaiian scholars (*ali'i* & *kākā'ōlelo*)
- 4 American ministers

Process:

- Ministers – rough translation from original languages
- Hawaiians – turned awkward 'ŌH into how it should be "correctly expressed"



Hawaiian advisors



Kēlou Kamakau, Ulumeheihei Hoapili, J.A. Kuakini,
John Papa ʻĪʻĪ, Davida Malo

“each one a profound scholar in the language
and oral literature of Hawaiʻi” (Lyon 2017:114)



“The missionary translators were responsible for the
accuracy and fidelity of the translation, but it was the
Hawaiian scholars who crafted the language.” (Lyon
2017:127)

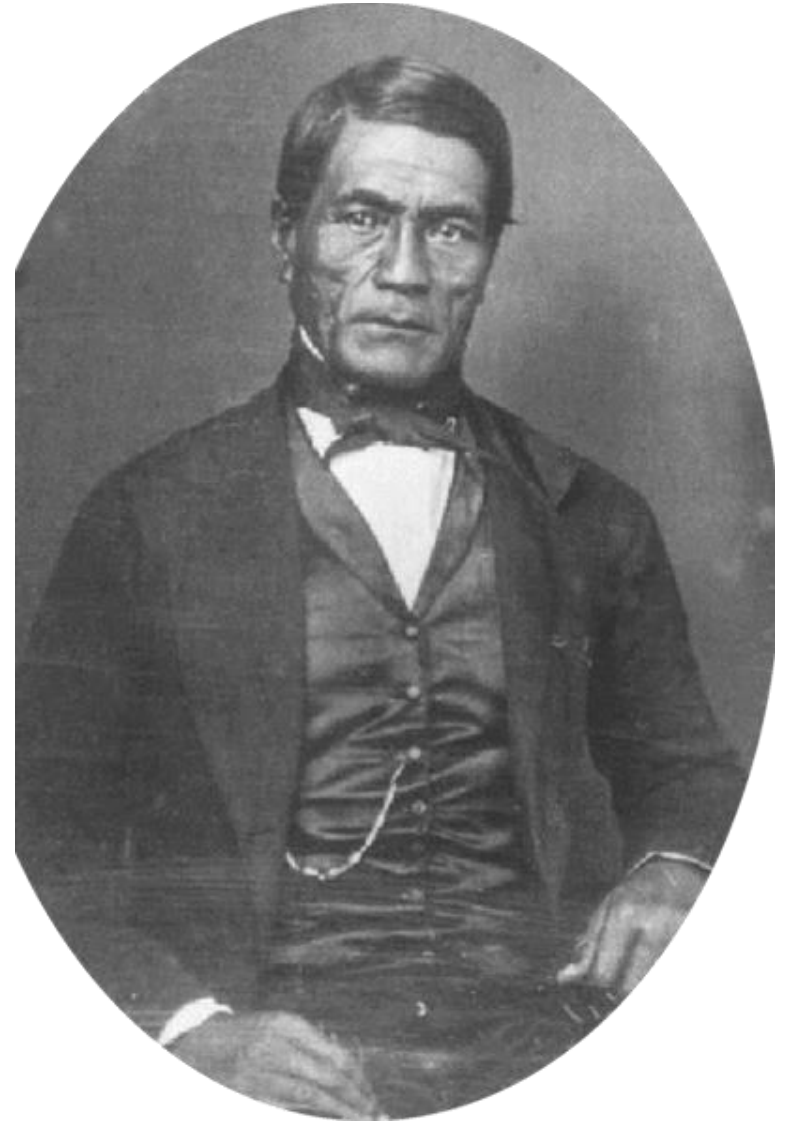
Hawaiian scholars

John
(Keoni/loane)
Papa ʻŪ

- w/ Hiram Bingham
- Matthew, Mark, Luke (1828-1829)
- Colossians, I/II Thess., I/II Tim., Titus, Philemon, Hebrews (1832)

Ulumeheihei
Hoapili &
Davida Malo

- w/ William Richards and Lorrin Andrews
- Acts (1829)
- I Corinthians (1831)
- James, I/II Peter, I/II/III John, Jude, Revelation (1832)



Legacy and impact



The Baibala was widely accepted and highly popular.

- NT reprinted 8 times in the 19th century; several more times in 20th.
- Entire Baibala reprinted 8 times from 1868-2012.

Kūpuna on *Ka Leo Hawai'i* – Baibala used for learning 'ŌH; were required to read passages aloud to their parents and grandparents.

“We cannot ask Malo or Hoapili how to say a thing, but we can, through the Baibala, learn how they actually did say a great many things.” (Lyon 2017:141)

3. Advantages & disadvantages

Ka Baibala Hemolele as a source of linguistic data

Advantages

Ka Baibala Hemolele as
a source of linguistic
data



Resolves the ideal hearer-speaker problem;
all Hawaiian participants were L1 speakers,
with little proficiency in English; trustworthy
data; lived around the same time.

Different versions can be compared (1839
vs. 1868 vs. 2012); including side-by-side. --
<https://baibala.org/>

Audio reading available; narrated by
Kuuipolani (Ipo) & Keola Wong (Lyon
2017:n35).



MOKUNA XVI.

- 1 ¶ A laila ‘ōlelo maila ‘o loba, ʻī maila,
- 2 He nui nā mea like a‘u i lohe ai:
He po‘e hō‘olu‘olu ho‘opilikia ‘oukou a pau.
- 3 He hope anei nō nā hua ‘ōlelo makani?
He aha ka mea ho‘āla mai nei iā ‘oe, i ‘ōlelo mai ai ‘oe:
- 4 E hiki nō ia‘u ke ‘ōlelo aku e like me kā ‘oukou;
Inā paha ua noho ‘oukou ma ko‘u wahi,

OPTIONS

[\[click here for
more
information\]](#)

Version

[2012 Edition](#)

1994 Edition

1868 Edition

1839 Edition

English
Comparison

Audio

[on](#) | [off](#)
Select verses.



KEKAHUNA.

B. C. 977.

MOKUNA I.

O ka lapuwale o na mea a pau. 12 Ka noonoo ana o ke kahuna ma na mea a pau loa.

O NA olelo ^a a ke kahuna, a ke keiki a Davida, oia ke alii ma Ierusalema.

2 ^b Lapuwale o na lapuwale, wahi a ke kahuna; lapuwale o na lapuwale, ^c pau loa na mea i ka lapuwale.

3 ^d Heaha ka uku i ke kanaka i ka hana a pau ana i hana'i malalo iho o ka la?

4 Hele aku la kekahi hanauna, a hele mai la kekahi hanauna; ^e aka, ua mau no ka honua.

5 ^f Puka mai ka la, a napoo ka la, a wikiwiki aku la ia ma kona wahi i puka mai ai.

6 ^g Puhī aku la ka makani i ke kukulu hema, a huli mai la ia i ke kukulu akau; huli ae la ia io, a io; a hoi hou ka makani i kona wahi i puhī ai.

7 ^h Kahe aku la na muliwai a pau i ke kai, aole nae i piha ke kai; i

kahi a lakou i kahe mai ai, malaila lakou e hoi hou aku ai.

8 He mea luhi na olelo a pau, aole hiki i ke kanaka ke hai aku; aole i ana ⁱ ka maka i ka ike ana, aole hoi i piha ka pepeiao i ka lohe ana.

9 ^k O na mea mamua, oia na mea e hiki mai ana; a o na mea i hanaia, oia na mea e hanaia mahope aku nei: aole mea hou malalo iho o ka la.

10 No kekahi mea e hiki anei ke olelo mai, Eia! he mea hou keia? he mea no ia i ka wa kahiko mamua loa o kakou.

11 Aole i hoomanaoia mai na mea kahiko; a o na mea e hiki mai ana, aole e hoomanaoia ia mau mea e ka poe mahope aku.

12 ^l Owau o ke kahuna, ua noho au i alii maluna o ka Iseraela ma Ierusalema.

13 Ua haawi au i ko'u naau e imi, a e huli me ka noeau i na mea a pau i hanaia malalo iho o ka lani. ^m He mea kaumaha loa keia a ke

B. C. 977.

¹ Sol. 27. 20.

² mo. 3. 15.

³ pau. 1.

⁴ Kin. 3. 12.
mo. 3. 10.

Advantages

Ka Baibala Hemolele as a source of linguistic data



Digital images of original printed text easily accessible.

Advantages

Ka Baibala Hemolele as a source of linguistic data

Linguistic interference from Hebrew/Greek very unlikely given the nature of the process and the background of the Hawaiian consultants.

Parallel English NASB Biblical text handy for researchers with low proficiency in 'ŌH.

Clicking on a word gives a dictionary definition.

John 10

a'u e 'ōlelo aku nei iā 'oukou, 'O ka mea komo 'ole ma ka puka i loko o ka pā hipa, akā, e pī'i a'u i l.

no ma ka puka, 'o ia ke kahu o nā hipa.

'i puka nona, a ua ho'olohe nā **hipa** i kona leo; a kāhea aku ia i kāna po'e hipa ma ka inoa, a ala

i po'e hipa pono'i ma waho, hele i

aku i ke kanaka 'ē, akā, e holo lākou i ke kēia 'ōlelo nane iā lākou; 'a'ole nā ou maila 'o Iesū iā lākou, 'Oia'i'o, le mai ma mua o'u, he po'e 'aihue nā e komo kekahi ma o'u nei, e oliai ia e 'aihue wale nō, a e pepehi Hipa maika'i: 'o ke kahu hipa mai ho'olimalima 'ia, 'a'ole ho'i ke kaha, a holo akula; a hopu maila ka 'ilio nae ia iakou, a no opuenu akula i ka po'e nipa.

Dictionary lookup via wehewehe.org

hipa [Hawaiian Dictionary (1986) (Hawai'i)]

1. vs. Var. of hepa, imbecilic.

2. n. Sheep. *Eng.* (loane 10.2.) Hulu hipa, wool. 'Ili hipa, sheepskin. 'Īlio kia'i hipa, sheep dog. 'I'o hipa, mutton. Kahu hipa, shepherd.

View [hipa](http://wehewehe.org) on wehewehe.org

Disadvantages

Ka Baibala Hemolele as a source of linguistic data

| Bible | [Search](#) | About the Bible | Contacts |

[Search](#) ▶ | [Word Search](#) | Verse Search |

ā ē ī ō ū ‘

☐ Enable case sensitive search

☒ show summaries in search results

Whole Bible
Old Testament
The Law (Genesis - Deuteronomy)
History (Joshua - Esther)
Poetry (Job - Song of Solomon)
Prophets (Isaiah - Malachi)

--
Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Customize search

☒ 2012 Edition
☐ 1994 Edition
☐ 1868 Edition
☐ 1839 Edition
☐ All Editions

15149 verses matched the query.



Untagged database can yield too many results.

Disadvantages

Ka Baibala Hemolele as a
source of linguistic data

- Informal or low register variants unlikely to appear.
- Data not manipulable like spontaneously elicited data.



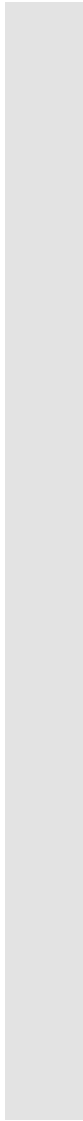

- (1) 'A'ole i hele 'o ia.
- (2) 'A'ole 'o ia i hele.
- (3) Mai hele 'oe.
- (4) Mai 'oe hele.

Disadvantages

Ka Baibala Hemolele as a
source of linguistic data

Could be perceived as
devaluing the participation of
L1 speakers (and L2 as well).

Using a Western (settler-
colonialist?) text to study a
non-Western language?



4. Case study #1: Subject marker 'o

Maddox (2023, To appear)

4. Case study #1: Subject marker 'o

Hawaiian 'o = topic, preverbal

- (5) A 'o 'Isema'ela, ua ho'olohe ho'i au iā 'oe nona.
and 'o Ishmael TAM hear INT 1SG OBJ-PERS 2SG POSS
'And as for Ishmael, I have heard you.' (Genesis 17:20)

- (6) Ho'opio ihola 'o losua i nā kūlanakauhale.
capture DIR 'o Joshua OBJ PL city
'Joshua captured all the cities.' (Joshua:11:12)

Hawaiian 'o = subject marker, postverbal

4. Case study #1: Subject marker 'o

(7) **Ko** Hone i kite i te taahae.

ko John TAM see OBJ the thief

'It was John who saw the thief.' (Bauer 1993:220)

Māori *ko* = focus, preverbal

(8) I tīhore a Pita i te hipi.

TAM skin PERS Pita OBJ the sheep

'Pita skinned the sheep.' (Harlow 1986:297, cited in Pearce 2021:219)

Māori *ko* = subject marker, postverbal

Results



1) Analyze the structure of 'o-cleft constructions: biclausal vs. monoclausal.

2) Account for the historical change of 'o as a topic/focus particle to a subject marker due to loss of personal article *a* before subjects.

3) Show that the change that took place in Hawaiian also occurred in other Polynesian languages such as Tahitian.

4. Case study #1: Subject marker 'o

4. Case study #1: Subject marker 'o

AMBIGUITY

Clefts with full and contracted relative clauses.

- (9) 'O Keoki **ka mea e** kōkua nei iā Pua.
'o Keoki the one TAM help DIR OBJ-PERS Pua
'Keoki is the one who is helping Pua.'
- (10) 'O Keoki **ke** kōkua nei iā Pua.
'o Keoki TAM help DIR OBJ-PERS Pua
'It is Keoki who is helping Pua.'
- (11) 'O lākou **ke** loa'a ia'u.
'o 3PL TAM find OBJ-PERS-1SG
'They are the ones who find me.' (Proverbs 8:17)

4. Case study #1: Subject marker 'o

ANALOGY

Object marker *i* + personal article *a* > *iā*.

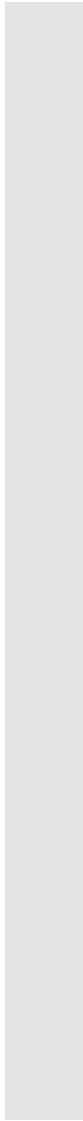

- (12) Nānā iā Pua / iā Maui / ia'u.
look OBJ-PERS Pua OBJ-PERS Maui OBJ-PERS-me
'Look at Pua / Maui / me.' (Elbert & Pukui 1979:133)
- (13) Lawe a'ela 'o 'A'arona iā 'Eliseba.
take DIR 'o Aaron OBJ-PERS Elisheba
'Aaron married Elisheba.' (Exodus 6:23)

	Stage I	Stage II
	Māori/Old Hawaiian	Contemporary Hawaiian
Left periphery	ko/'o _[+focus] + XP; ko/'o = Prep	'o _[+focus] + XP; o' = Prep
Object nominals	i _{Prep} + a _{Det} + NP _[+proper]	i _{Prep} + a _{Det} = iā + NP _[+proper]
Subject nominals	∅ _{Prep} + a _{Det} + NP _[+proper]	'o _{Prep} + ∅ _{Det} + NP _[+proper]

4. Case study #1: Subject marker 'o

4. Case study #1: Subject marker 'o

- Analysis -- 'o replaced the personal article *a* before proper proper/pronominal subjects due to:
 - 1) reanalysis of 'o-clefts as monoclausal;
 - 2) analogy between proper subjects and objects;
 - 3) ambiguous strings of ['o + null determiner (personal article) + noun] after loss of the personal article.
- Cross-Polynesian patterns 'o cognates and the personal article *a* support the prediction that if the personal article *a* is lost, the cognate is coopted to replace it.



5. Case study #2: Negative markers

Maddox (2024)

5. Case study #2: Negative markers

Negation with '*a'ole*

(14) Ua hele ke kanaka.
TAM go the man
'The man has gone.'

(15) 'A'ole i hele ke kanaka.
NEG TAM go the man
'The man has not gone.'

5. Case study #2: Negative markers

Negation with *mai*

(16) E hele 'oe!
TAM go 2SG
'Go!'

(17) **Mai** hele 'oe!
NEG go 2SG
'Don't go!'

5. Case study
#2: Negative
markers

Two-way allomorphy

Negation under '*a'ole*: $ua > i$.

Imperative mood triggers *mai*
instead of '*a'ole*.

5. Case study #2: Negative markers

Goal: determine distributional differences between
'a'ole vs. *mai*.



Claim → Allomorphy reduces to negatives belonging
to distinct categories

'a'ole = verb

mai = negative head

5. Case study #2: Negative markers

Verbal properties of 'a'ole - (I)

(18) Proto-Polynesian **ka kore* > 'ŌH 'a'ole

- 'A'ole - 'a > 'ole; 'ole can take verbal prefix (*ho'o*).

(19) E **ho'olohe** 'oukou i ka 'ōlelo a lēhova.
TAM hear 2PL OBJ the word of Jehovah
'Heed the word of the Lord.' (Jeremiah 19:3)

(20) E **hō'ole** aku ana ho'i i ke Akua ho'okahi.
TAM deny DIR TAM INT OBJ the God only
'And deny our only God.' (Jude 1:4)

5. Case study #2: Negative markers

Verbal properties of 'a'ole - (II)

- Only 'a'ole (not *mai*) triggers i TAM particle.
- 'A'ole parallels the modal verb *pono* in allowing subject displacement.

(21) Pono 'oe e kākau i kou inoa i kāu mau mea.
should 2SG TAM write OBJ your name on your PL thing
'You should write your name on your things.'
(Hopkins 1992:226))

(22) 'A'ole au i mana'o e pono au ke hele aku.
NEG 1SG TAM think TAM should 1SG INF come DIR
'I did not think that I should come to you.' (Luke 7:7)

5. Case study #2: Negative markers

***Mai* as a negative head**

- Strict order: *mai* + V; nothing intervenes
- TAM particles absent; *mai* = Neg/TAM hybrid morpheme?

(23) Mai ho'opoina 'oe.

NEG forget 2SG

'Do not forget.' (Deuteronomy 25:19)

(24) Ua ho'opoina 'oe i ke Akua.

TAM forget 2SG OBJ the God

'You have forgotten God.' (Isaiah 17:10)

5. Case study #2: Negative markers

Mai as a negative head

- A possible path of grammaticalization: Adv > Neg_[+Imperative]
- *Mai* = *almost*; “imminence marking particle, ” always preverbal (Elbert & Pukui 1979:63, Pukui & Elbert 1986:220-221).

(25) *Mai hā`ule ke keiki.*

NEG fall the child

‘The child almost fell.’ (Elbert & Pukui 1979:63)

(26) You almost fell! (but you didn’t) > You’re about to fall! >
Don’t fall!

Conclusion

Two case studies demonstrate that the Baibala can serve as a rich source of authentic (written) L1 data for research on 'ŌH, despite some challenges.

- A tagged corpus for linguistic research of 'ŌH is much needed.

Next steps →

- Continue to build relationships with the Hawaiian community.
- Make research useful for speakers and learners of 'ŌH.
- Keep learning 'ŌH!

References (I)

- Baker, C.M. K. 2012. A-class genitive subject effect: A pragmatic and discourse grammar approach to a- and o-class genitive subject selection in Hawaiian. PhD dissertation, University of Hawai'i-Mānoa.
- Carter, G.L. 1996. The Hawaiian copula verbs *he*, *'o*, and *i* as used in the publications of native writers of Hawaiian: A study in Hawaiian language and literature. PhD dissertation, University of Hawai'i-Mānoa.
- Chomsky, N. 1965. *Aspects of a Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Cook, K.W. 1999. Hawaiian *he*, *'o*, and *i*: Copular verbs, prepositions, or determiners? *Oceanic Linguistics* 38:43-65.
- Cook, K.W. 2002. The case markings of Hawaiian locative nouns and placenames. *Representing space in Oceania: Culture in language and mind*, ed. G. Bennardo, 91-104. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Elbert, S.H. & Pukui, M.K. 1979. *Hawaiian Grammar*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Hawkins, E.A. 1979. Hawaiian sentence structures. *Pacific Linguistics B*(61). Canberra: Department of Linguistics, Research School of the Pacific, Australian National University.
- Hawkins, E.A. 1982. *A pedagogical grammar of Hawaiian: Recurrent problems*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

References (II)

Ka Baibala Hemolele/The Holy Bible. 2018. Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, LLC.

Lyons, K. 2017. No ka Baibala Hemolele: The making of the Hawaiian Bible. *Palapala* 1:113-151.

Maddox, M. 2023. From subject marker to personal article: Hawaiian 'o and its Polynesian cognates. Paper presented at the 30th Austronesian Formal Linguistics Association (conference). Lund University, Sweden.

Maddox, M. 2024. Patterns of allomorphy in 'ōlelo Hawai'i: Negative markers and TAM particles. Paper presented at Sentential negation across the Globe: Theoretical and empirical perspectives. Université Paris Cité, France.

Maddox, M. To appear. Focus marker, subject marker, or personal article? Hawaiian 'o and its Polynesian cognates. *Studia Linguistica*.

Medeiros, D. 2013. Hawaiian VP-remnant movement: A cyclic linearization account. *Lingua* 127:72-97.

Medeiros, D. 2021. Hawaiian at the syntax-phonology interface. Polynesian syntax and its interfaces, eds. L. Clemens & D. Massam, 168-191. Oxford: UP.

References (III)

- NeSmith, R. Keao. 2005. Tūtū's Hawaiian and the emergence of a Neo Hawaiian language. *ʻŌiwi Journal-A Native Hawaiian Journal*. Honolulu: Kuleana ʻŌiwi Press. NeSmith, K. 2019. Take my word: Mahalo no i toʻu matua tane. *Linguapax Review* 7:93-112.
- Pukui, M.K. & Elbert, S.H. 1986. *Hawaiian Dictionary*. Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press.
- Sallabank, J. 2013. *Attitudes to endangered languages: Identities and policies*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Solomon, N. Haʻalilio. 2024. Attitudes and ideologies surrounding ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi: A qualitative study. Doctoral dissertation, University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa.
- Warner, Sam L. Noʻeau. 1999. Kuleana: The right, responsibility, and authority of indigenous peoples to speak and make decisions for themselves in language and cultural revitalization. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 30:68-93.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following individuals who have helped and supported this work in different ways:

- Kapali Lyon
- N. Ha'alilio Solomon
- Puakea Nogelmeier

I also thank the ICLDC 2025 organizers:

- Gary Holton (Dept. of Linguistics, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa), Bradley McDonnell (Dept. of Linguistics, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa), Jim Yoshioka (NFLRC, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa)