

IMPROVE EDUCATION
PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT
ADDRESS INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES
ADOPT SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC STRATEGIES
MEET HUMAN NEEDS & PRESERVE LOCAL CULTURE

FOCUS OUR
MAUI ISLANDS
NUI OUR FUTURE

Own it!

PIDGIN~Help or Hindrance?



Pidgin, or Hawai'i Creole as experts call it, began as a form of communication used between non-English speaking immigrants who came to work in the plantations, and the Hawaiian and English speaking residents.

Pidgin has been influenced by the many languages of settlers in Hawaii who included Portuguese, Cantonese (Chinese), Japanese, Filipino and Korean, as well as Spanish, Mexican and Puerto Rican. Pidgin started to be used outside the plantation between ethnic groups in the community, and schoolchildren learned Pidgin from their classmates. Eventually it replaced their original languages and became the primary verbal communication of most of the people in Hawai'i.



In the classroom however there was intolerance of Pidgin by teachers and administrators as it was considered to be a hindrance to learning standard English. But in the 1970s, linguists studying the varieties of Creole English throughout the world came to consider these dialects to be languages in their own right and advocated their use in the classroom as a means of reaching pidgin-speaking students who could not understand the teachers. Many Hawaii children grew up speaking standard English in the classroom and at home, then switching to Pidgin in the playground and neighborhood. Those who can switch between two languages have an added skill and are known as 'code switchers.' "They have a clear advantage in that they can negotiate in different situations," says Walter Wolfram, a North Carolina State University linguist. In a 2004 study published in the journal *Psychology and Aging*, researchers determined that bilingual speakers are better able to deal with distractions, and that may help offset age-related declines in mental performance.

"Every time
we close the
door on
pidgin,
we close the
door on
culture."

~Lois-Ann Yamanaka
Hawaii Author



FOCUS MAUI NUI is a community-driven vision for the future of our islands, spearheaded by Maui Economic Development Board, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the economic well-being of Maui County. VISIT www.focusmauinui.com or CALL 808.270.6801