

Date of Hearing: March 17, 2008

Committee: Senate Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent of Education

Title: S.C.R. 121, Requesting Teaching Strategies for Speakers of Hawaii Pidgin in Hawaii Public Schools

Purpose: Requests the Department of Education, in consultation with the College of Education, Department of Linguistics, and the Department of Second Language Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa to develop bidialectal teaching strategies for teachers whose students' whose mother tongue is Hawaii Pidgin; identify schools where significant populations of pidgin speakers may be found; develop plans for conducting a controlled study on the effectiveness of bidialectal teaching strategies; and to report findings and plans to the Legislature.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) does not support this resolution. The Department of Education Regulation No. 2100.3 identifies oral standard English "the most significant basic skill in our lifetime" and calls for students to be provided with "the opportunity to learn and develop facility in oral standard English as a matter of high basic skill priority." The regulation further calls for staff to provide "comprehensive and effective instruction in the expression and reception of oral standard English" and to "model the use of standard English in the classroom and school-related settings."

The Department believes that identifying bidialectal strategies would not be a high priority, given other basic reading/literacy training needs of teachers. The Department has in place, through its many language arts and reading programs, effective strategies and programs to meet the needs of students whose mother tongue is not standard English. These include English Language Learner students and students who predominantly speak Hawaii Pidgin (Hawaii Creole English). Data on standardized, national norm-referenced tests such as the Stanford Achievement Test (2000-2008) shows that the use of these programs and strategies result in schools performing at or exceeding normative expectations.

The Department also questions the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of identifying the location of populations of Hawaii Creole English speakers. Cost items would include the development of an assessment instrument to identify pidgin speakers, the cost of training teachers for and administering such an assessment, and collecting, aggregating, and analyzing the data. The costs of training teachers on the strategies for implementation in classroom is also not acknowledged in the resolution.

The Department further believes that it should not be the lead agency to conduct the “controlled study on the effectiveness of bidialectal teaching strategies” as research is not its primary mission and it lacks staff capacity and resources to carry out such research. Because of the reasons cited above, the Department does not support this resolution.

LAW OFFICES OF
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TESTIMONY

Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 121

By Louis K. Wai, J.D.
Current MATESL candidate at HPU

Submitted to the
Senate Committee on Education
March 17, 2008, 1:15 p.m.
Room 225, State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senator Sakamoto and Members of the Committee on Education:

I am writing in **support** of SCR 121 "REQUESTING TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKERS OF HAWAI'I PIDGIN IN HAWAI'I PUBLIC SCHOOLS."

I am a practicing lawyer here in Hawaii and am also licensed in the State of Nevada. I am a native speaker of Hawaiian creole (more commonly referred to as pidgin). I will also graduate with a Master's Degree from Hawaii Pacific University in December, 2008, in teaching English as a Second Language. I can state unequivocally that my ability to speak Hawaiian creole/pidgin has served this community as well as many locals now living in Nevada on numerous occasions in my career.

I strongly support SCR 121 because creole/pidgin has always aided me and my clients. Hawaiian creole/pidgin is a variety of English and has a place both in the educational system as well as in the communities in which we live. Thank you very much for your consideration of this matter.

I would be available to testify live if you so desire.

Yours very truly,



Louis K. Wai

TESTIMONY
Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 121

By Robert K. Arakaki, Ph.D.
1446 Alewa Drive
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817

Submitted to the
Senate Committee on Education
March 17, 2008, 1:15 p.m.
Room 225, State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senator Sakamoto and Members of the Committee on Education:

I am writing in **support** of SCR 121 "REQUESTING TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKERS OF HAWAI'I PIDGIN IN HAWAI'I PUBLIC SCHOOLS."

Having been born and raised in Hawaii, I was exposed to Pidgin English from an early age. At around the age of eight I realized that I was speaking Pidgin English and made the decision to become fluent in Standard English. After graduating from high school, I went to college. I later did graduate study on the mainland and eventually earned my doctorate in political science.

I give this biographical overview because although I have acquired considerable facility in Standard English, I have long struggled with certain grammatical and syntactic elements in Standard English. It is only recently that I learned from linguists that much of my difficulties stemmed from grammatical and syntactic habits that I acquired unconsciously when I spoke pidgin as a child.

I strongly support SCR 121 because the bidialectal teaching strategy that it proposes will help speakers of Pidgin English be aware of the differences between Pidgin English and Standard English. Knowing the differences will facilitate the acquisition of fluency in Standard English which is so critical for academic success. I also support SCR 121 because it recognizes and affirms that Pidgin English and Standard English are two distinct and valuable languages. Passage of this resolution will help a wide range of Hawaii residents from the young child struggling in elementary school to the graduate student writing his doctoral dissertation.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this matter.

Letter of Support
Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 121

By Mana Ueda
7233 Anakua St
Honolulu, Hawaii 96825

Senate Committee on Education
March 17, 2008, 1:15 p.m.
Room 225, State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senator Sakamoto and Members of the Committee on Education:

I am writing in **support** of SCR 121 “REQUESTING TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKERS OF HAWAI’I PIDGIN IN HAWAI’I PUBLIC SCHOOLS.”

Having been born and raised in Japan. I’m an international student in Hawaii. I’ve been Hawaii for about 2 years. When I came to Hawaii at first time, I was staying with my host family. The host grandmother grew up Kawai and came to Oahu. I didn’t know about Pidgin at all before I met her. She always spoke Pidgin. I could communicate with the other member of the host family like host mother and brothers, but it was too difficult to communicate with her. I couldn’t understand what the host grandmother said. One day my host mother told me that the grandmother use Pidgin. Then, I realized that the reason why I couldn’t understand her speaking. I tried to communicate and understand what her saying every day. However, it was really hard to communicate. Therefore, I thought that Pidgin was not English. I also I need to learn Pidgin academically to communicate with her and the other pidgin speakers.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this matter.

Senate Committee on Education
Re: SCR 121, March 17, 2008

3/16/08

Dear Senator Sakamoto,

My name is Dr. Christina Higgins, and I am writing in support of SCR 121, "REQUESTING TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKERS OF HAWAI'I PIDGIN IN HAWAI'I PUBLIC SCHOOLS." I would like to provide some testimony for the Senate Committee on Education for the hearing on March 17, 2008.

I am an assistant professor in the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. My area of expertise is multilingualism in society, which includes the study of language in schools.

I support the Resolution on Hawai'i Pidgin because it recognizes a linguistic resource that many students and teachers have in the State of Hawai'i which is being underutilized for learning and teaching. If more attention is paid to Hawai'i Pidgin in schools, it is my opinion that education, particularly in the language arts, would be more effective.

Many people who speak Hawai'i Pidgin in the state have a negative view towards this language because they were raised to believe that it is a 'broken language.' However, linguists have studied Hawai'i Pidgin (a.k.a. Hawai'i Creole English or Pidgin) and have established many times over that this linguistic code is indeed a fully-fledged language with a rich grammar and a deep sociolinguistic history. This research has also shown how Hawai'i Pidgin differs from English in significant and systematic ways, and therefore, should not be mistaken for a lesser version of the English language. Unfortunately, this scholarly research on Hawai'i Pidgin has not affected the way most people think about this language, including teachers, and therefore, more action is needed in the form of a resolution.

I support the resolution because it would call for an awareness-raising campaign in schools through which educators and students could learn more about the linguistic aspects of Hawai'i Pidgin and how it differs from Standard English, which is the first step toward achieving respect for Hawai'i Pidgin as a legitimate language. Hawai'i Pidgin is often disparaged in educational contexts, and the result for Pidgin speakers is that they often feel their language, and hence, their ways of expressing their thoughts and participating in schooling, are not welcome. Consequently, many speakers of Hawai'i Pidgin disengage with educational practices and come to view school as an unwelcoming environment that only rewards certain ways of speaking and participating. For students, this can lead to a lack of confidence in their academic abilities, a disinterest in learning, and worse, the (false) belief that they are unintelligent.

Research that examines the teaching of students' home languages under a critical language awareness approach (of the type being called for by this resolution) has shown a great deal of success in reversing these negative trends. When students' home languages and/or dialects are discussed in the classroom, students become more confident about language since they become more knowledgeable about language differences, grammar, and the social, economic, and

political reasons for the stigmatization of languages like Hawai'i Pidgin. In other words, knowledge empowers them and motivates them to learn. Students who have been exposed to teaching strategies that compare languages and/or dialects typically learn to view themselves as multilingual and multicompetent, rather than deficient in language. Such reversals of identity are very positive for students, who have the opportunity to view themselves as capable rather than incapable, and for teachers, who have the opportunity to create a more welcoming teaching environment for their multilingual/multidialectal students.

A Hawai'i Pidgin advocacy group known as Da Pidgin Coup, a group of scholars, community members, and educators, has written a position paper on Hawai'i Pidgin in which many research reports are provided that support these ideas. This paper is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.hawaii.edu/sls/pidgin.html>

The recommendations included in this paper, which I also support are:

- language awareness seminars, classes or in-services for teachers, which include strategies for building on the home language, and for understanding language systems.
- language awareness programs for students to learn about the history and social functions of both Pidgin and English, and to discover ways in which Pidgin and English are different.
- research on the relationship between Pidgin and school success, and how to best build on the language that children come to school with in the achievement of school success.

The last recommendation for research on Hawai'i Pidgin and school success is precisely what the resolution on Hawai'i Pidgin is calling for. As a member of the faculty of the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, I recognize the need for collaboration among researchers in different disciplines at the university level and the Department of Education in order to fully address this area by including various perspectives in designing research and carrying out studies in schools. With the support in the Senate Committee on Education, this level of collaboration will become much more possible.

I sincerely thank the committee members of the Senate Committee on Education for hearing this resolution.

Christina Higgins,
Assistant Professor
University of Hawai'i at Manoa

1890 East-West Road
808-956-2785
cmhiggin@hawaii.edu

testimony

From: Richard Nettell [nettell@hawaii.edu]

Sent: Friday, March 14, 2008 6:54 PM

To: testimony

TESTIMONY

Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 121

Prof. Richard Westbury Nettell, Ph.D.

500 University Avenue #2215

Honolulu, Hawaii 96826

Submitted to the

Senate Committee on Education

March 17, 2008, 1:15 p.m.

Room 225, State Capitol

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senator Sakamoto and Members of the Committee on Education:

I am writing in **support** of SCR 121 "REQUESTING TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKERS OF HAWAI'I PIDGIN IN HAWAI'I PUBLIC SCHOOLS. "

Having taught English at practically all levels in Hawaii since 1991 (most recently as an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Hawaii at Manoa), I would like to express my support for this resolution. What it does is simply acknowledge the linguistic reality of the islands, where the majority of our citizens learn to speak a variety of Pidgin as their first language. Rather than succumbing to the irrational prejudice that defines Pidgin speakers as low-class and uneducated (Pidgin is all too often incorrectly equated with bad English), our school system needs to do more to educate its teachers, educational professionals, and students about how the grammatical structure (and not just vocabulary)

3/14/2008

of Pidgin differs from English. A bilingual (or bidialectal) strategy, whereby teachers and students in our schools become aware that they are dealing with two separate language systems, would no doubt enhance confidence in, and the success of, our current English language teaching programs. Furthermore, many of our already highly competent language users (Pidgin speakers) would no longer feel as degraded by, and alienated from, our typically English-Only school system, thus enabling greater acceptance on these learners' part of the important role of English in many areas of life here in the islands. As a society, we would also be building more proactively on so many of our citizens' bi-lingual (or bi-dialectal) competencies, something our culture otherwise promotes as useful knowledge (albeit generally in more traditionally accepted other-language systems).

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Richard Nettell, Ph.D.
Department of English
University of Hawai'i at Manoa
Honolulu, HI 96826

nettell@hawaii.edu
(808) 956-3036

testimony

From: Kiyomi Yamamoto [kiyomiya@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2008 8:52 AM
To: testimony
Subject: Committee on Education hearing on March 17 1:15p.m.

LETTER OF SUPPORT
Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 121

By Kiyomi Yamamoto
2345 Ala Wai Blvd. #1513
Honolulu, Hawaii 96815

Submitted to the
Senate Committee on Education
March 17, 2008, 1:15 p.m.
Room 225, State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senator Sakamoto and Members of the Committee on Education:

I am writing in support of SCR 121 "REQUESTING TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKERS OF HAWAI'I PIDGIN IN HAWAI'I PUBLIC SCHOOLS."

I am currently a student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, majoring in Second Language Studies. I was born in Japan and raised in California. Before coming to Hawaii for college, I was told by people that I would not understand the locals, because they speak Pidgin. As the school year started and socializing with many people, most of whom were locals, I was surprised by the way people in Hawaii spoke. I did not want to be rude, but I could not help myself but to think that they could not speak "good" English.

Coming from the mainland, where most everyone speaks the Standard English, I was surprised how the locals could not speak English with the correct grammar. I also saw that in my English101 class, local students lacked English grammar skills. Within this past year, as I started to take courses for my major, I was given the opportunity to learn about Hawaiian locals and their speech. In my Bilingual Education class, I learned that Pidgin was actually a separate language from English with a different grammar structure.

I strongly support SCR 121 because the students in the public schools who are speakers of Pidgin English need to understand that they are speaking a different language. This realization is important for the learning of the Standard English, because it will help them to separate the two languages. I believe that the students having trouble with telling Pidgin English and Standard English apart, is one of the main causes for their low test scores on the Standard Achievement Test. Therefore, it is only fair for these students to receive bidialectical teaching strategy. Through SCR 121, not only will it help the students, but will help other people to recognize Pidgin English as a language itself and distinguish from the Standard English.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of this matter.

testimony

From: Yuta Sugihara [yutas@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Saturday, March 15, 2008 4:32 PM
To: testimony
Subject: Letter of Support to Senate Committee on Education

Letter of Support
Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 121
By Yuta Sugihara
2345 Alawai Blvd #1513
Honolulu, Hawaii 96815

Submitted to the
Senate Committee on Education
March 17, 2008, 1:15 p.m.
Room 225, State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96815

Dear Senator Sakamoto and Members of the Committee on Education:

I am writing in support of SCR 121 "REQUESTING TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKERS OF HAWAI'I PIDGIN IN HAWAI'I PUBLIC SHOOLS."

I am a college student, currently taking a Second Language Studies course at University of Hawaii at Manoa. I was born and raised in Japan until Junior high school, and I decided to study abroad from high school. When I was deciding which high school I should go to, to learn English, Hawaii was the place where I actually wanted to go, but many people objected, because they said I would not learn "good" English in Hawaii. Therefore, I went to a high school in Connecticut, and came to Hawaii after I graduated high school.

When I came to Hawaii, I was surprised of how locals speak English. Their English was different from what I learned in high school, because most of locals do not know differences between Standard English and Pidgin English, so they speak English which is constructed by mixing of Standard English and Pidgin English. For instance, many kids use a mix of Pidgin and English when they speak, but they cannot define which is Pidgin and which is English. Moreover, they cannot make pure Pidgin sentences. I did not realize these facts, and the fact that Pidgin English is another language from Standard English until I took this Second Language Studies class at University of Hawaii.

I support SCR 121 because the bidialectical teaching will help speakers of Pidgin English to become aware of the difference between Pidgin English and Standard English. By understanding the difference between the two languages, students will learn Standard English more fluently, which is important for academic success. Also, as people recognize that Pidgin English and Standard English are a different language, they will acknowledge that these two languages are different and valuable languages.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this matter.

testimony

From: Kaimana Chow [kbchow@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2008 10:31 AM
To: testimony
Cc: kbchow@hawaii.edu
Subject: Letter of support

Kaimana Chow
Hale Noelani Rm A314
2585 Dole St.
Honolulu Hi, 96822

Dear Members of the Committee of Education:

I am an advocate of the SCR 121 "Requesting Teaching Strategies For Speakers Of Hawaii Pidgin In Hawaii Public Schools."

I have lived in both Hawaii and Alaska my whole life. I can say that I have experienced pidgin in the school systems here as a child growing up and as an adult now. Being from Alaska as well allowed me to differentiate between the commonly spoken Pidgin in Hawaii schools and the more proper Standard English spoken in Alaska. Upon graduation of High School I enrolled in the University of Hawaii at Manoa, it was only then that I realized what sort of habits I had picked up from speaking Pidgin during school.

I firmly believe that the SCR 121 would be an excellent bidialectical teaching strategy to incorporate into the schools here in Hawaii. I feel that it would benefit the future generation as they go on in life and allow Pidgin speakers alike to become more aware that Pidgin is not nearly the same as Standard English. Even though I missed out on something that was so overlooked in the past, it is now time to put this issue in the forefront of our concerns, for this reason I deeply support the SRC 121.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Kaimana

testimony

From: Kent Sakoda [sakoda@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Sunday, March 16, 2008 1:11 PM
To: testimony
Subject: Senate Comm. Education - SCR 121 March 17, 2008 1:15 p.m.

TESTIMONY

Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 121

By Kent Sakoda
611 Hausten St. Apt. #3
Honolulu, Hawaii 96826

Submitted to the
Senate Committee on Education
March 17, 2008, 1:15 p.m.
Room 225, State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Hauzit Senator Sakamoto and Members of the Committee on Education:

I am writing in support of SCR 121 "REQUESTING TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKERS OF HAWAI'I PIDGIN IN HAWAI'I PUBLIC SCHOOLS."

My name is Kent Sakoda and having been born and raised in Hawaii, I am a native speaker of both Pidgin and English. I have been teaching a course at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa in the Dept. of Second Language Studies about Pidgin in Hawai'i for about 15 years. I presently serve as the director of the Charlene Sato Center for Pidgin, Creole & Dialect Studies and as co-convenor of a Pidgin advocacy group who call themselves Da Pidgin Coup (all puns intended). I have also co-authored a book called Pidgin Grammar: An Introduction to the Creole Language of Hawai'i with a close friend, fellow Pidgin advocate, and internationally renown creolist Jeff Siegel.

I tell you all of this to make the point that although I feel I am a strong advocate of Pidgin, I still cringe when I happen to fall into an unintended Pidgin pronunciation of a word while speaking English. I cringe, not because Pidgin is such a bad thing, but because I was told that it was and grew up believing this lie. This stigma is always there and will perhaps be my bane for life. I suspect that many native speakers of Pidgin endure the same. I wonder how much more difficult and confusing this must all be for the children of Hawai'i.

I am also a strong advocate for diversity and for giving people the chance to make choices, their own choices. This requires sound judgements and full awareness of social and other consequences based on these choices. I strongly support SCR 121 because the bidialectal teaching strategy that it proposes will help speakers of Pidgin to become aware of the differences between Pidgin and English. Knowing the differences will facilitate the acquisition of fluency in both Pidgin and English which is so critical for academic success. I also support SCR 121 because it recognizes and affirms that Pidgin and English are two distinct and valuable languages. I have little doubt that the spirit of this resolution is about helping a wide range of Hawaii residents from the young child struggling in elementary school to the graduate student writing his doctoral dissertation to the community seeking some validation for their endemic vernacular.

Mahalos plenty for your kokua on this matter.

Aloha & leitaz,
Kent Sakoda

testimony

From: Koichi N Takahashi [koichit@hawaii.edu]
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2008 12:00 AM
To: testimony
Cc: ultraprospinner@yahoo.com
Subject: Letter of Support

Hello, my name is Koichi Takahashi. Here is a letter of support to SCR 121. Thank you very much for your time and Aloha.

LETTER OF SUPPORT
Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 121

By Koichi N. Takahashi
139 Uuku Street
Wahiawa, Hawaii 96786

Submitted to the
Senate Committee on Education
March 17, 2008, 1:15 p.m.
Room 225, State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senator Sakamoto and Members of the Committee on Education:

I am writing in support of SCR 121 "REQUESTING TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKERS OF HAWAI'I PIDGIN IN HAWAI'I PUBLIC SCHOOLS."

Having been around with Pidgin speakers in Hawaii, I have noticed that some of my friends cannot distinguish between proper grammar for Standard English and Pidgin English. It is natural for some of them to use Pidgin English with Standard English.

I strongly support SCR 121 because the bidialectal teaching strategy should help speakers of Pidgin English be aware of the differences between Pidgin English and Standard English. By teaching the children during their youth, they will be able to acquire Standard English fluently so that they would not have problem in the future when moving to other part of the world. It is important to let people know that Pidgin English and Standard English are two distinctive languages. This is part of the reason why I support SCR 121. I believe that the passage of this resolution will help many people in Hawaii.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this matter.

testimony

From: □□ □□ [kento_f@hotmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, March 15, 2008 7:26 AM
To: testimony
Subject: Testimony Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 121

Testimony
 Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 121

By Kento Fujiwara
 1726 St. Louis Drive
 Honolulu Hawaii 96816

Submitted to the Senate Committee on Education
 March 17, 2008, 1:15 p.m
 Room 225, State Capitol
 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senator Sakamoto and Members of the Committee on Education:

I am writing in support of SCR 121 □\$B!H□(BREQUESTING TEACHING STRATEGIES OF SPEAKERS OF HAWAII□\$B!G□(BI PIDGIN IN HAWAII□\$B!G□(BI PUBLIC SCHOOLS.□\$B! I□(B

I was born and raised in Japan until middle school. I started attending Mid-Pacific Institute from high school and currently studying at University of Hawaii at Manoa. I started learning English at international school in Japan by native English speakers. Therefore, I was used to hear and understand English before I started studying in Hawaii.

When I first started studying at Mid-Pacific Institute, I had trouble listening to people□\$B!G□(Bs conversation because many of them had different accent and vocabularies. Since our school was a private school where most of students are from more than middle class families, they had used less pigeon English comparing to public school students. However, it is obvious that English spoken in Hawaii has accent comparing to main land speakers. Therefore, even though I have been living Hawaii for 6 years, sometime I still have hard time listening to people speaking on television.

From Economic perspective, it is better for public students to have more knowledge on Standard English and think Hawaii pigeon English as separate language which would provide higher class occupation opportunity for them. It would support state of Hawaii□\$B!G□(Bs economic development for long run. Also, it would be helpful for foreign students who come to study English and other fields. Therefore, I strongly support SCR 121 of the bidialectrical teaching strategy.

Thank your very much for your consideration of this matter.