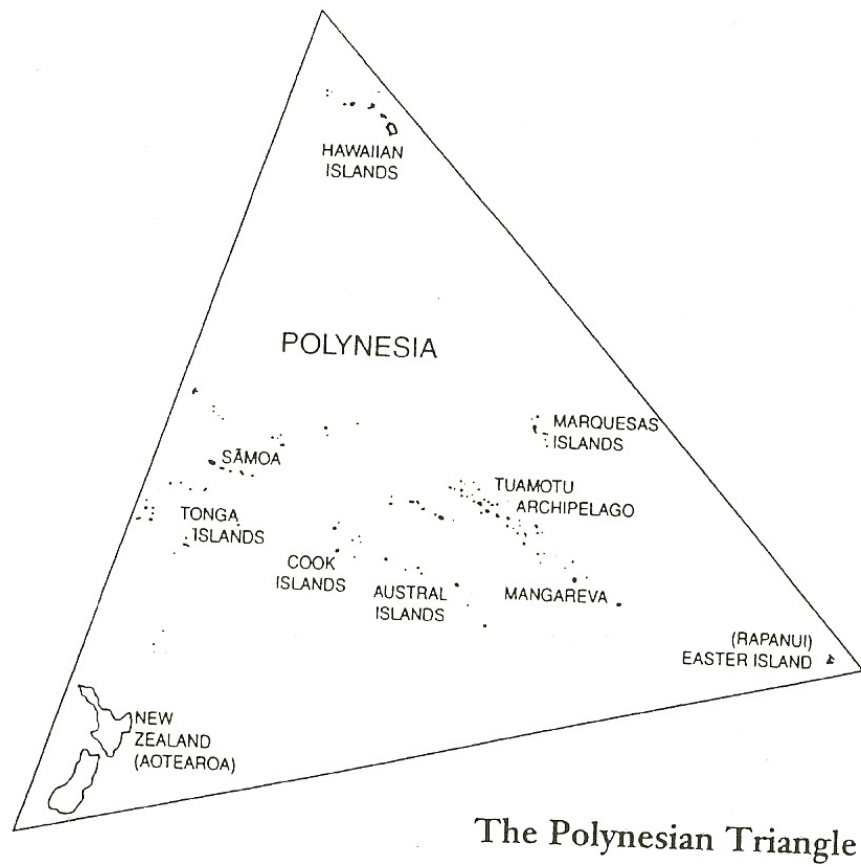


Where Does Hawaiian Come From?

Hawaiian belongs to the Polynesian language family, most of which is spread over a large triangular area in the Pacific Ocean, with Hawai'i at the northernmost corner, New Zealand (Aotearoa), where Māori is spoken, to the southwest, and Easter Island (Rapanui) to the southeast. Polynesian is more remotely related to many languages further west—including Fijian, Malagasy, Malay, and the languages of the Philippines.

Within the Polynesian family, some of Hawaiian's closest relatives are Tahitian, Marquesan, and Māori; more distant relatives are Samoan and Tongan. Here, "distant" doesn't refer to geography, but to the time that has passed since these now-separate languages were spoken as a single language in one community.

Barring earlier Spanish contact—an intriguing but as yet unproved possibility—the outside world received its first glimpse of Hawaiian through the published journals of Captain James Cook, who with his crew sighted the island of Kaua'i on 18 January 1778. On hearing the language for the first time, the explorers were immediately struck by its closeness to Tahitian and Māori in spite of the great dis-



The Polynesian Triangle

tances that separate the island groups. In fact, many early observers thought that Hawaiian and many other Pacific languages were all dialects of one widespread language: Polynesian. This view is easy to understand, for in the late eighteenth century, the various Polynesian languages were much more similar than they are now. (One of the reasons Tahitian has changed so much since then is that a word-taboo system called *pi'i* was in effect there, forcing the lan-

guage to change words, and even syllables, that were similar to those in the name of a chief who had died.) But the main reason for considering Polynesian one language was that Cook and his crew (who knew some Tahitian from their extended stays in the Society Islands) and the Hawaiians were able to communicate on a fairly elementary level. If they chose very common words, the chances are that the languages seemed almost identical. For example, see how similar the numbers are in the three Polynesian languages below:

	HAWAIIAN	TAHITIAN	MĀORI
one	<i>kahi</i>	<i>tabi</i>	<i>tabi</i>
two	<i>lua</i>	<i>piti</i>	<i>rua</i>
three	<i>kolu</i>	<i>toru</i>	<i>toru</i>
four	<i>hā</i>	<i>maha</i>	<i>whā</i>
five	<i>lima</i>	<i>pae</i>	<i>rima</i>
six	<i>ono</i>	<i>ono</i>	<i>ono</i>
seven	<i>hiku</i>	<i>bitu</i>	<i>whitu</i>
eight	<i>walu</i>	<i>va'u</i>	<i>waru</i>
nine	<i>iwa</i>	<i>iwa</i>	<i>iwa</i>
ten	<i>'umi</i>	<i>ahuru</i>	<i>tekau</i>

It's not just the numbers that are similar. Many other words, especially those used most often, are also the same—or nearly so—in the three languages:

	HAWAIIAN	TAHITIAN	MĀORI
bird	<i>manu</i>	<i>manu</i>	<i>manu</i>
canoe	<i>wa'a</i>	<i>va'a</i>	<i>waka</i>
child	<i>kamali'i</i>	<i>tamari'i</i>	<i>tamaiti</i>

drink	<i>inu</i>	<i>inu</i>	<i>inu</i>
face	<i>maka</i>	<i>mata</i>	<i>mata</i>
fish	<i>i'a</i>	<i>i'a</i>	<i>ika</i>
fly	<i>lele</i>	<i>rere</i>	<i>rere</i>
hand	<i>lima</i>	<i>rima</i>	<i>ringa</i>
head	<i>po'o</i>	<i>ūpo'o</i>	<i>ūpoko</i>
house	<i>bale</i>	<i>fare</i>	<i>whare</i>
moon	<i>malama</i>	<i>marama</i>	<i>marama</i>
night	<i>pō</i>	<i>pō</i>	<i>pō</i>
person	<i>kanaka</i>	<i>ta'ata</i>	<i>tangata</i>
power	<i>mana</i>	<i>mana</i>	<i>mana</i>
rain	<i>ua</i>	<i>ua</i>	<i>ua</i>
sea	<i>moana</i>	<i>moana</i>	<i>moana</i>
sick	<i>ma'i</i>	<i>ma'i</i>	<i>maki</i>
skin	<i>'ili</i>	<i>'iri</i>	<i>kiri</i>
sky	<i>lani</i>	<i>ra'i</i>	<i>rangi</i>
tooth	<i>nibo</i>	<i>nibo</i>	<i>nibo</i>
turtle	<i>honu</i>	<i>honu</i>	<i>honu</i>
what?	<i>aha</i>	<i>aha</i>	<i>aha</i>
woman	<i>wahine</i>	<i>wahine</i>	<i>wahine</i>

For over forty years after first contact, the only records of Hawaiian were the dozen or so word lists collected by explorers or beachcombers, and casual observations written in travel accounts. Serious work on the language began in 1820 with the arrival of the Protestant missionaries from New England, who realized that if they were to succeed in their goal of converting the people to Christianity, the Hawaiians had to be able to read and write their own language.

Spelling and Pronunciation

Early Impressions

One of the first impressions visitors had of the Hawaiian language was that it was simple and childlike. But this was merely their naive perception of a language that was very different from European languages. Besides, according to one observer, the Hawaiians simplified their language when they spoke to outsiders, so that what they heard was not natural Hawaiian, but a type of "foreigner talk."

More flattering—but equally vague—adjectives that have been used to describe what Hawaiian sounds like are "smooth," "soft with a musical sound," "fluid," and "melodious." One nineteenth-century writer even compared the language to the warbling of birds!

Why such characterizations? There are two possible reasons. The first is that, unlike English, Hawaiian has no consonant clusters, and every syllable ends with a vowel. Thus, the ratio of vowels to consonants is relatively high. Second, Hawaiian has no sibilants (*s*-like sounds), a characteristic that endears the language to singers, more so even than Italian.

Creating an Alphabet



He bu-ke.



He i-pu i-ni-ka.

The key to literacy (and hence, conversion), the missionaries believed, was an efficient alphabet and writing system. After several false starts (including a scheme to write two of the vowels with numbers rather than letters), the missionaries decided to write the vowels in the European, rather than the English, fashion. They found five distinct sounds, closely matching those in Latin or Italian, that could be conveniently represented by the five vowel letters available in the Roman alphabet.

Another point in this system's favor was that it was already used by the Tahitian Mission, and before it was known how different the two languages actually were, it was hoped that Hawaiians would be able to read books printed in Tahitian.

Once the European use of the vowel letters was adopted, spellings such as those on the left below (as written by one of Captain Cook's crew) were changed to those on the right:

<i>neebo</i>	tooth	<i>nibo</i>
<i>eihoo</i>	nose	<i>ihu</i>
<i>pahoo</i>	drum	<i>pabu</i>

The consonants, however, were another matter, for several of them seemed to vary at random. For example, it made no difference whether a word was pronounced with *k* or *t*: the name of the conquering chief Kamehameha was first written *Tamehameha* (in fact, one early missionary complained that he had seen the name written twelve or fourteen different ways). On Kaua'i and Ni'ihau, *t* seems to have been used exclusively, but we can see that in the early word lists collected on the other islands, observers wrote both letters, sometimes evenly distributed. Other so-called pairs — *v~w* and *l~r* — were more a matter of the sound being neither one nor the other, but instead, something between the two. But the English writing system makes no provision for such sounds. Therefore, most people insisted on writing whichever sound they thought they heard, with the result that any word containing at least one of these problem consonants could be written in different ways—an obvious obstacle to literacy and an insurmountable barrier to compiling a dictionary. The solution to this problem was to choose one letter for each of these groups, a move that made Hawai'i's writing system very efficient—so efficient, in fact, that one missionary wrote in 1827: "With our present alphabet a boy of fourteen, with common intelligence may in one month become a perfect master of the orthography of his language and be able to read and write the whole of it with correctness."

Contrast this with the time it takes to learn to read and write English perfectly!

Still, two sounds remained largely unwritten, since there was no conventional way to indicate them at that time. The

THE ALPHABET.



VOWELS.		SOUND.	
Names.	Ex. in Eng.	Ex. in Huzaii.	
A a --- â	as in <i>father</i> ,	la—sun.	
E e --- a	— <i>tele</i> ,	hemo—cast off.	
I i --- e	— <i>marinc</i> ,	maric—quiet.	
O o --- o	— <i>over</i> ,	ono—sweet.	
U u --- oo	— <i>rule</i> ,	nui—large.	

CONSONANTS.	Names.	CONSONANTS.	Names.
B b	be	N n	nu
D d	de	P p	pi
H h	he	R r	ro
K k	ke	T t	ti
L l	la	V v	vi
M m	mu	W w	we

The following are used in spelling foreign words:

F f	fe	S s	se
G g	ge	Y y	yi



He pu-u.

first of these was the sound that separates the two vowels in the word below, which means 'hill'.

The Glottal Stop

This sound is made in much the same way as a *p* or a *k*, but instead of the lips or tongue producing it, the vocal cords do so. Because it isn't really a consonant in English, it's hard to give an example of what it sounds like. However, you can hear it between the vowels in the expression *Oh-oh*. In Hawaiian, its status is different, and it is just as much a consonant as *p*, *k*, *l*, *m*, or any of the others.

However, probably because there was no conventional way to write the sound, and because it seemed so different from English consonants, the glottal stop was seldom written. And in the nineteenth century, when most readers of Hawaiian already knew the language, leaving it out seldom caused any difficulties, since context would usually tell the reader which meaning was intended. For example, the picture below obviously refers to *i'a* 'fish' rather than to *ia* 'he, she, it'.



He ia.

The captions under all the woodblock prints contain the word *he*, which is often translated as 'a' or 'an'. But it can also mean 'It's a _____.' Thus, *he i'a* can mean either 'a fish' or 'it's a fish'.

Even without the illustration, no speaker of Hawaiian would confuse the two words, since they belong to different parts of speech and would never appear in the same parts of a sentence. Thus, it was not considered necessary to mark the glottal stop in such words, since every native speaker knew it was there.

Newcomers to the language could pick up clues as to how some words were pronounced, for double vowels were a fairly reliable sign that a glottal stop was present. For example, the following words:



He wa-a.



He ka-a.



He mo-o.

are actually:

wa'a

mo'o

ka'a

With some words, however, it was impossible to tell whether or not a glottal stop was present, for there were no double vowels, and context was useless: for example, *kou* 'your' and *ko'u* 'my' appear in exactly the same context. Thus, as early as 1823, an apostrophe showed that such words were different, a convention that was used regularly, even for the translation of the Bible. Today the glottal stop is written with a reversed apostrophe (').

Now, over a century and a half later, when many people learn Hawaiian by eye as well as by ear, it is essential to write this sound. Not only is it the only difference between many pairs of words such as the following:

<i>mai</i>	from	<i>ma'i</i>	ill
<i>moa</i>	chicken	<i>mo'a</i>	cooked

but unless it is written, a student of the language has no chance of pronouncing correctly a word that is spelled with a sequence of two or more vowels.

Long Vowels



He pu.

The second unwritten sound was actually a group of sounds: five long vowels. Here, 'long' means that the vowels are drawn out, but the quality is not changed very much. For

one-syllable nouns, verbs, and adjectives, such as *pū* 'conch shell' above, ignoring the vowel length was not a problem, since in such words the vowel is always long. But in words of two or more syllables, confusing long and short vowels often led to misunderstandings. The following examples show that lengthening the vowel makes the word completely different, just as much as changing the English word *bit* to *bet*. (The long vowels are marked by a straight line, called a *kahakō* in Hawaiian and a *macron* in English.)

<i>'aina</i>	meal	<i>'āina</i>	land
<i>kane</i>	skin disease	<i>kāne</i>	male
<i>pa'u</i>	soot	<i>pa'ū</i>	moist
<i>mana</i>	power	<i>māna</i>	chewed mass
<i>'o'o</i>	to crow	<i>'ō'ō</i>	digging stick

The following examples show how some common words were once written:



He o.



He pa.



He ka.

Now these words are written

pā
ō
kā

Although once used only in teaching materials, these extra but essential symbols—both the glottal stop (reversed apostrophe) and the macron (line over the vowels)—are finally becoming more widely used on street signs, on maps, and in publications. For example, as opposed to *Hawaii*, *Kauai*, *Kalakaua*, and *Waikiki*, the spellings *Hawai'i*, *Kaua'i*, *Kalākaua*, and *Waikīkī* give you a much better chance of pronouncing the names accurately.

But you need a few guidelines. The following list shows what sounds correspond to the letters of the Hawaiian alphabet. First, it is important to remember two things about a guide to pronouncing Hawaiian: (1) Although the English examples are close to the Hawaiian sounds, they do not match them exactly; and (2) The pronunciation of some vowels changes slightly, depending on whether they are accented or unaccented, and what their neighboring sounds are.

How to Pronounce the Vowels

<i>a</i>	as in	father
<i>e</i>	as in	bait (without a glide after the vowel)
<i>i</i>	as in	beet (without a glide after the vowel)
<i>o</i>	as in	boat (without a glide after the vowel)
<i>u</i>	as in	boot (without a glide after the vowel)

There are no hard and fast rules for the pronunciation of *w*, except for a tendency for [w], rather than [v], after *o* or *u*. Otherwise, you simply have to listen to native speakers to hear how individual words are pronounced.

How Accent Works

When you hear Hawaiian spoken, you'll notice that some parts of a word are more prominent than others—that is, they are accented. In shorter words, accent is predictable, occurring on:

1. the second-to-last vowel (if all vowels are short):

máka eye *kanáka* person

2. a diphthong (short or long):

láu leaf *piláu* rotten
'áina meal *'áina* land

3. or a long vowel:

Ka'ú (place name)

manó shark

These examples, with different combinations of short and long vowels, and short and long diphthongs, represent different ACCENT UNITS, the building blocks that combine to form longer words. In the following examples, these units are separated by periods:

pule.lebua butterfly *makua.hine* mother, aunt

showing that the accents are:

púle.lebúa

makúa.híne

with the last accent in the word (or phrase) emphasized slightly. By the way, this pair of words proves that in spite of many statements to the contrary, the first accent in a five-syllable word is not predictable.

Let's see how this system works on longer words. For instance, the name of the highway leading to Hanauma Bay and beyond (named after a Hawaiian prince and congressional delegate) is rather formidable when seen as a whole word:

KALANIANA'OLE

However, with the accent units marked, it is much more manageable:

KALANI.ANA.'OLE

This marking shows that there's an accent on the second-to-the-last syllable in each unit. If we wrote these accents on the vowels, the word would look like this:

KALÁNI.ÁNA.'ÓLE

But since the accent units themselves are shown, the accent marks aren't necessary.

One extreme example (a word well known because it's used in the last line of a perennially popular song) is the word for 'triggerfish':

HUMUHUMUNUKUNUKUĀPUA'A

Try to pronounce that! But if it's written this way:

HUMU.HUMU.NUKU.NUKU.Ā.PUA'A

you have a much better chance of pronouncing it. Each unit is accented as if it were a separate word, and, as noted earlier, the last accent is slightly stronger than the others.

To help readers pronounce longer words, the more recent editions of the *Hawaiian Dictionary* show the accent units for each entry. And from this point on, we'll mark them in the same way. Just remember—the periods aren't part of the spelling system but are shown only to help you pronounce the words accurately.

Grammar

One feature of Hawaiian that prompted early observers to call it childlike is that it often repeats one or two syllables of a word to modify the meaning. The new form usually refers to actions that are repeated, frequent, or done by many people. This feature, which is anything but childlike, and is found in all the other Polynesian languages as well, enriches the vocabulary and expresses subtle distinctions that another language might manage only by adding phrases or coining new words. Examples are:

<i>ku'i</i>	to punch	<i>ku'i.ku'i</i>	to box—that is, to punch repeatedly
<i>'au</i>	swim	<i>'au.'au</i>	bathe
<i>ha'i</i>	say	<i>ha'i.ha'i</i>	speak back and forth
<i>ma'i</i>	sick	<i>ma'i.ma'i</i>	chronically sick
<i>hoe</i>	paddle	<i>hoe.hoe</i>	paddle continuously

Using the prefix *ho'o* is another way Hawaiian can modify a word. Although *ho'o* has a number of meanings, the most common is CAUSATIVE. For example:

Some Sound Correspondences for Polynesian Languages

Hawaiian	P	K	‘	H	H	W	M	N	N	L	L	-	-
Tahitian	P	T	‘	F	H	V	M	N	‘	R	R	-	-
Tuamotuan	P	T	K	F	H	V	M	N	G	R	R	-	-
Maquesan	P	T	K	Hf	H	V	M	N	nkg	L	‘	-	-
Maori	P	T	K	WH	H	W	M	N	nkg	R	R	-	-
Rarotongan	P	T	K	‘	‘	V	M	N	G	R	R	-	-
Samoan	P	Tk	‘	F	S	V	M	N	G	L	L	-	-
Tongan	P	T	K	F	H	V	M	N	G	L	-	‘	H

Words that exist in each language would vary according to the corresponding sound changes which were adopted in each language area:

Hawaiian	hale	kanaka	‘oukou	Hawai‘i
Tahitian	fare	ta‘ata	‘outou	Havai‘i
Tuamotuan	fare	tagata	koutou	Havai‘i
Maquesan	hale/fa‘e	tan/k/g/ata	koutou	Havai‘i
Maori	whare	tan/k/g/ata	toutou	Hawaiki
Rarotongan	‘are	tagata	kouttou	‘avaiki
Samoan	fale	tagata	‘out/k/ou	Savai‘i
Tongan	fale/fae	tagata	koutou	Hawaiki

(These changes are affected by local word changes/substitutions)

Nā Huapalapala Paipala

B	bē	B	BĒ
C	sē	C	SĒ
D	dē	D	DĒ
F	fā	F	FĀ
G	gā	G	GĀ
J	iota	J	IOTA
Q	kopa	Q	KOPA
R	rō	R	RŌ
S	sā	S	SĀ
T	tī	T	TĪ
V	wī	V	WĪ
X	kesa	X	KESA
Y	ieta	Y	IETA
Z	zeta	Z	ZETA