Orthography

II. History of the Hawaiian Orthography

1. Before the “book” arrived...

Until 1822, there were various writing systems, as each individual missionary invented his own spelling system in recording the local place names and some words.

- In January 1822, they received "two copies of the New Zealand Grammar and Vocabulary.”
  This book uses five vowels (a, e, i, o, u) and twelve consonants (b, d, h, k, l, m, n, p, r, t, v, w).
- Six days after the arrival of this book, the very first book in Hawaiian was printed by Loomis.
  This book consists of the alphabet, some spelling lessons, and some selections of reading.

Another influential figure is William Ellis, who came to Hawaii after six years’ missionary work in Tahiti and the other Society Islands. He had read John Pickering’s work on establishing the orthography of Native American languages. Pickering’s system is phonemic, in which each sound has a corresponding character. As Ellis put it, “every sound has its appropriate sign; every word is spelled exactly as it is pronounced.” (Wise and Hervey 1952: 315).

2. Some puzzling facts

One major problem was what the missionaries called ‘interchangeable sounds’:

Different people found themselves hearing Hawaiian consonants in different ways. Often the same person would hear the same Hawaiian speaker pronounce the same word with different consonants. When confronted with the two pronunciations, the Hawaiian would sometimes choose one rather than the other, or would say that both sounded alike to him and that it made no difference. (ibid.: 316)

E. Loomis wrote on June 22, 1824:

Thus Kairua may be spelt Kairua or Kailua, Tairua or Tailua.

These are allophones, a set of sounds that are phonetically different but perceived as a single phoneme.

- Complementary distribution: predictable phonetic variants of phonemes
  e.g.. /p/ in put [pʌt] and sip [sɪp]

- Free variation: Alternative pronunciations of a word in which one sound is substituted for another without changing the word’s meaning.
  e.g.. /t/ in don’t: [dɒnt] and [dɔnt]

Q1 List the allophones in Hawaiian that confused the missionaries.
3. *Thus the redundant characters were eliminated*

In order to solve this problem, a committee of three was appointed to discuss this problem. On June 20, 1825, the committee reported:

An Alphabet was adopted more than three years ago; which was intended to include all the letters necessary and no more. … In order to effect an uniformity either the k or the t, the l or the r, the v or the w must be excluded form the Hawaiian Alphabet. (ibid.:322)

Some of the responses to the committee’s proposal:

There is a peculiar sound which is something like a medium between the English l & r. … the natives do differ among themselves in the articulation of this medium sound (William Richards)

Though the v may be used by some few natives whose upper lips are too short, & whose fore teeth are very prominent; yet I question whether the proper sound of the v is found in the language (Asa Thurston from Kailua, Island of Hawaii)

As a result, the standardized alphabet was adopted in 1826. Compare the 1826 alphabet with the pre-1826 alphabet. Identify the deleted characters and state why they were eliminated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before 1826</th>
<th>The Hawaiian Alphabet 1826</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vowels:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vowels:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Consonants:</strong></td>
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4. *Yet, something was still missing…*

The committee succeeded in eliminating the redundant letters. But there is another question. Does the above set include “all the letters necessary and no more”?

Q2 Compare the conventional alphabet with the modern one. What is missing in the former?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Hawaiian Alphabet 1826</th>
<th>The Modern Hawaiian Alphabet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vowels:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Consonants:</strong></td>
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The modern orthography was introduced only in 1943 by Henry P. Judd, Mary Pukui, and John F. G. Stokes. In the literature published prior to 1943, the conventional orthography was used.

4.1 Vowel length

It took more than forty years till the vowel length was officially recognized as an important element that should be included in the Hawaiian orthography.

Andrews (1854) and Alexander (1968) understood it as “accent”. They considered that the difference between the following pairs of words is the accent.

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{āka and akā (aka and akā)} \\
&\text{āno and anó (‘ano and ‘ānō)} \\
&\text{kanāka and kānaka (kanaka and kānaka)}
\end{align*}
\]

4.2 Glottal stop

While the missionaries apparently recognized the glottal stop, it was never subjected to proper formulation.

Bingham recognized the glottal stop acoustically, but he speaks of it only as separating adjacent identical vowels.

Double or triple vowels are never used to express a single sound, and where they occur, are sounded separately, as: a-a, e-e, i-i, o-o, u-u. The accent being generally on the former, the latter being a sort of echo, as in the name Ha-a-li-li-o.[H. Bingham 1847, The Sandwich Islands, Hartford, Huntington: 154]

Q3 Why do you think that the missionaries fail to include these sounds in the Hawaiian alphabet?

5. Problems

The conventional orthography lacked the symbols for the glottal stop (the inverted apostrophe, ‘okina) and long vowels (the macron, kahakō). Obviously, this caused a number of problems when people tried to write in the Hawaiian language. Neves (1976) discusses the following problems the modern readers face in dealing with the old Hawaiian texts.

5.1 The glottal stop

Generally, the glottal stop is not indicated in the old Hawaiian texts. Thus,

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{ao could refer to} &\text{ao} &\text{‘cloud’} \\
&\text{a’o} &\text{‘learning’} \\
&\text{‘ao} &\text{‘dried baked taro’, or} \\
&\text{‘a’o} &\text{‘a sea bird’}
\end{align*}
\]

Sometimes the hyphen is used to indicate the glottal stop. For example,

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{a-a for} &\text{a’a} &\text{‘to challenge’} \\
&\text{ka-i for} &\text{ka’i} &\text{‘to lead’} \\
&\text{ku-i for} &\text{ku’i} &\text{‘to punch’}
\end{align*}
\]
5.2 Vowel length

Generally, the vowel length is not indicated in the old Hawaiian texts.

Andrews (1854) and Alexander (1968) understood it as “accent” and used the accent mark.

\[ \text{aká} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{akā} \]
\[ \text{kaнакa} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{kānaka} \]

Sometimes in later texts the hyphen is used to indicate the vowel length.

\[ \text{aka-ku} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{akkū} \]
\[ \text{e-o} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{eō} \]
\[ \text{maka-po} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{makapō} \]

However, the use of the hyphen for this purpose is not quite consistent. Sometimes the hyphen indicates both the glottal stop and the vowel length, as in the following examples.

\[ \text{a-a} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{‘a‘ā} \]
\[ \text{ho-o} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{ho‘ō} \]
\[ \text{pa-u} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{pā‘ū} \]

Andrews (1954: 21) wrote:

As the Hawaiian books have been printed almost entirely for the use of Hawaiians; it has not been thought necessary to use any marks for accents, but if they should be used by those who wish to acquire the language, it would be very convenient for such to have certain classes of words accented.

Q4 Andrews seems to suggest that the orthography is only for non-native speakers. Do you agree?

5.3 Word boundaries

Andrews (1854: 18) observes:

It was at first a difficult thing for Hawaiians to learn to divide words properly: that is, to separate words in a sentence from each other. It was very common for them to unite the article with the noun as one word, and so the adjective with the substantive.

\[ \text{eia} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{e ia} \]
\[ \text{iuka} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{i uka} \]
\[ \text{kainoa} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{ka inoa} \]
\[ \text{maia} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{ma ia} \]
\[ \text{ka Penakuke} \quad \text{for} \quad \text{Kāpena Kuke} \]

Q5 Does this mean that the Hawaiians did not have the notion of “word”? How else can this phenomenon be explained?