

PIDGIN USAGE OF SOME PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN HAWAII*

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Introduction

While engaged in a follow-up study on the use of English among preschool children of the three ethnic groups in Hawaii showing the greatest retardation in the use of English, the writers were impressed with the continued influence of pidgin among the members of these groups. (See Smith, Kasdon, "Progress in the Use of English.") The purpose of this paper is to describe some of these errors and particularly those which have persisted in these children's speech since the original study was made. (Madorah Smith, "Some Light.") It is not within the scope of this paper to describe pidgin English as used in Hawaii except to point out that Hawaiian pidgin is quite different from the pidgin spoken in other parts of the Pacific.

Although the preschool children of Japanese and Filipino ancestry in Hawaii are now, with few exceptions, no longer bilingual, for the most part, they come to school speaking pidgin to some degree. This persistence in the use of pidgin by children of Japanese and Filipino ancestry results in an estimated group of more than 50 per cent of the pupils entering kindergarten being retarded slightly more than a year in their use of English. (Smith, Kasdon, "Progress in the Use of English.") Despite the gain in the command of English since 1938, this retardation in the use of the form of English in which instruction is given imposes an important task on the school in general and on kindergarten teachers, in particular, if these young children are not to experience a considerable handicap in their later academic work. Also the teacher training institutions, which prepare teachers for the public schools of Hawaii, must prepare teachers to help the children learn standard English.

In the first part of this article we shall describe some of the more common pidgin usages by preschool children of Japanese and Filipino ancestry. The groups of children studied in this investigation also made errors which might be made by young Mainland children; no attempt will be made to describe these errors. The second part of this article compares some facets of the family background of the children in both the 1938 and 1958 studies.

The comparison between the two groups can be made only in a general way, except for the error index, because most of the original data of the 1938 study was lost during World War II. In the 1938 study, the subjects were between 18 and 78 months of age while the 1958 study includes only children between 42 and 66 months of age.

The 1958 study was limited to the three groups that showed the greatest retardation in the use of English in the 1938 study. These three groups are Japanese, Filipino residing in Honolulu (hereafter referred to as urban Filipinos), and Filipinos residing in rural areas in Hawaii (hereafter

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referred to as rural Filipinos). The rural Filipino sample was selected from children living in rural sections of the islands of Oahu and Hawaii.

In both the 1938 and 1958 studies twenty-five children of each age level of the same ethnic background were studied, so that fifty children of Japanese ancestry, fifty urban Filipinos and fifty rural Filipino children were selected as the population for the 1958 study. The children in both the 1938 and 1958 studies were selected so that the distribution of their fathers' occupations was similar to that given in the latest United States census.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILDREN'S SPEECH

As was found in the case of the children of Chinese ancestry, (See Madorah Smith, "Progress.") those of Japanese and Filipino ancestry no longer speak their ancestral tongues. A majority of the children comprising the three samples might be considered bilingual only if pidgin English is classified as a language rather than a dialect. Many children use no language other than a form of English, although a few included one or two commonly used Hawaiian words such as pau, puka, okole, and kaukau.*

Only three Japanese children used more than five Japanese words while being observed by the recorder. One of these children had travelled and lived in Japan. She used such terms as uchi (at home), gichan (grandfather), omotai (heavy), and mata kina sai (come again). No Filipino children, urban or rural, used as many as five words of any Filipino dialect.

As shown in Table I, in the 1958 study the percentage of English words spoken by the Japanese children is 99.0 per cent and 99.4 per cent by the urban and rural Filipino children. In 1938, the percentage of words spoken in English was 49, 94, and 75.5 respectively.

I. Comparison of the Language Behavior of Hawaiian Children of Japanese and Filipino Ancestry in 1938 and 1958

	1938		1958		Differ- ences		t		
<u>JAPANESE</u>									
At Age	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	
Per cent Words Spoken in English	49			99		50			
Per cent Sentences Mixed	29			1.1		27.9			
Error Index Average	465	486	207	184	-258		-302	-6.74*	
M	37	33	10	12				-8.60*	
<u>FILIPINO - Honolulu</u>									
Per cent Words Spoken in English	94			99.4		5.4			
Per cent Sentences Mixed	13			1.0		-12.			
Error Index Average	437	402	284	243	-153		-159	-7.96*	
M	15	19	12	16				-6.40*	
<u>FILIPINO - Rural</u>									
Per cent Words Spoken in English	75.5			99.4		23.9			
Per cent Sentences Mixed	23.5			2.2		-21.3			
Error Index Average	538	540	291	269	-247		-271	-9.21*	
M	24	24	12	12				-10.10*	

*Significant at less than the .01 level

*Technically speaking, kaukau is not a Hawaiian word but is slang. In a conversation, Mary Pukui expressed the opinion that kaukau is a corruption of chow.

*Significant at less than the .01 level

It would follow that since the children incorporate few foreign words in their every day speech, few sentences would be classified as mixed. One per cent of the Japanese and urban Filipino children's sentences fell into this category and 1.8 per cent of the rural Filipino children used mixed sentences (see Table I). One child asked his father to carry him piggy-back by saying, "Daddy, opah (colloquial Japanese) me." Thomas asked his playmate, "You like see the kukai?" (Hawaiian for excrement) as they were looking for his dog. Cynthia invited the observer to accompany her by saying, "Manang, come." (Manang is roughly the Ilocano equivalent of Miss). Sandra was playing a Japanese card game and said to her playmate, "No, because you going gaji (use the joker) my sakura (a playing card with a picture of a cherry blossom on it).

The error indices (number of errors per 1,000 words) shown in Table I for the three samples reflect an approximate 50 per cent reduction in the number of errors. The 1958 Japanese children made the fewest number of errors, followed by the urban Filipinos and the rural Filipinos. All differences in the error indices of the 1938 and 1958 samples are significant at less than .01 level. Many of the errors made by the children in the 1958 study can be attributed to their use of pidgin. The speech of these children reflects the influence of pidgin, which is spoken by most of their parents and playmates. It is interesting to note that in the few cases where the parents did not speak pidgin, most of their children did make some pidgin errors. When comparing the members of the samples in the current study with monoglots, their performance in this area is below the three-year-old level.

Listed in Table II are the pidgin English errors which the children made. Some of the uses of these words, although not exactly incorrect, occur very rarely in standard English usage. Since there might not be occasion to use many of the particular phrases frequently during the limited period of observation, comparisons in Table II are shown according to the number of children making the specific error rather than by frequency of occurrence of the error.

It is interesting to note that in the present study few of the errors are peculiar to any one of the three samples. This general lack of differentiation of error types in the use of pidgin may be attributed to the decrease of the influence of ancestral languages and specific structures peculiar to them. In addition, there now appears to be a generalized pidgin dialect in Hawaii rather than types of pidgin such as Japanese, Filipino, Portuguese, and Hawaiian pidgin that was common twenty years ago.

The errors made by more than 10 per cent of the children are listed in rank order in Table III.* These errors, discussed in detail in the following paragraphs, are usage errors exclusively, not errors of mispronunciation such as "ass" for "that's."

1. The most common of all specific errors is the use of no for not, which is made by 117 of the 151 children whose records were examined. This error was also the most common in the 1938 study. Typical examples of this usage are as follows: "My brada and and sista go school, but I no go." "I no like." "I no like hear." "You no can catch me." "No blow, Barbara, no good."

*For a discussion of the probable origin of these errors, see M. Smith, "Some Light."

II. List of Pidgin Errors of the 1958 Samples

	Number of Children Making Each Error			
	Japanese	Filipino		Total
		City	Rural	
already*	5	1	1	7
ass why -- because	1	3	3	7
been (for past tense)	1	1	0	2
broke -- break	4	1	3	8
broke -- tear	0	0	1	1
by-n-by	3	0	1	4
come big -- become	3	0	2	5
every time -- always	6	2	0	8
find (ing) -- seek	1	0	0	1
get -- have or there is	22	23	38	83
got -- had or is	4	1	2	7
go -- will or should	24	29	29	82
go (as infin. or redundant)	5	2	2	9
kind (used redundantly)	10	10	8	28
like -- want	27	34	42	103
little more -- soon	1	1	0	2
make or made -- <u>do</u> or <u>fix</u>	13	16	19	48
me I or us we	1	1	0	2
more big, bigger or better	5	3	5	13
no -- for not	34	38	45	117
no more -- haven't any	4	8	5	17
no need -- not necessary	4	2	0	6
anclitic (usually no)	5	3	5	13
one** (a or the)	7	6	15	28
one time -- once	1	0	0	1
open -- turn on	1	1	2	4
plenty -- many or much	3	7	8	18
shame -- ashamed	2	1	2	5
small -- little	1	1	0	2
sore -- hurt	1	0	0	1
stay -- is (present or here)	5	18	19	42
talk -- say	0	4	1	5
tell -- say	1	0	0	1
the -- how	2	0	3	5
try (for emphasis)	16	8	11	35
waste time -- don't care to	3	0	0	3
went (go) (for past tense)	15	23	18	56

*Used sometimes to express simple past time, sometimes redundantly for emphasis.

**It was counted only when it was erroneously used.

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2. Like for want is used by more than two-thirds of the children. In the 1938 study this error ranked third. The following are some examples of their error: "I like doughnuts, Aunty." "I like ride your bicycle." "He not like let me." "Come on, I like play."

3. Get for have or there is is used erroneously by over half of the children. In the 1938 study, it ranked fourth and was rarely employed correctly. Three-fourths of the rural Filipino children favor this usage while slightly less than half of the other two groups use it. The following illustrate this usage: "Get mail on the floor." "I get one record." "You get pencil?" "I get one cousin name Clifford." "You folks get television?" "I get plenty marbles." "I get more big kind."

4. Go for will or should is used incorrectly by over half of the children. In the 1938 study this error ranked second. Only when it is used incorrectly to form the future tense was it counted as an error. (A redundant use of the word go seems to have crept into the children's speech, and this usage was classified separately). The following sentences are examples of the use of go in place of will or should: "I go stand up." "We go make tent with this one." "C'mon, we go call Junior." "I go make somersault."

5. Went or went go is still commonly used to indicate the past tense. This error ranked ninth in the 1938 study. At that time, the Japanese did not make this error as often as other racial groups; and in the present study, it was used by a larger proportion of Japanese children, but not to the same extent as the two Filipino groups. This increased usage of went to indicate the past tense lends support to the statement that there is now one general pidgin dialect. Many of the children, of course, use the past tense correctly and some use it correctly at times and employ went at other times. Typical examples of this error are as follows: "I went eat." "The man go went fall down." "Spotty went kill one pussy already." "She went go party with his mother." "Who went go drop all this?" "Judy went go conk my head."

6. Make for do or fix is used by slightly less than one-third of the children. This error ranked fifth in the 1938 study and was made by far fewer Japanese children than Filipinos. Table II shows that, although not as many Japanese children employ this usage, the differences are not great. The following sentences illustrate this usage: "You can make like this." "I said no make!" "Hey, you no can make like this."

7. Stay for is present or here is used by 28 per cent of the children. In the 1938 study it ranked eighth, and was not used by many Japanese children. This infrequent usage holds true in the present study. Examples of this error are as follows: "They mommie stay." "Andy stay catching bees." "Stay hea, the cow." "When somebody stay, he no talk." "I stay more up."

8. Try, employed for emphasis (usually as an auxiliary), is used by slightly less than one-fourth of the children. This usage ranked eleventh in the 1938 study and was employed a little more often by the Japanese than it is now. Examples of this usage are as follows: "I like try, John." "Roy, try look." "Try stand up, Suzanne." "Try come; we go make tent."

9.5. Kind for type or way is used redundantly or where it would appear that the child is at a loss for a word to express himself more adequately. In the 1938 study this error ranked sixth. Typical examples of this error are as follows: "This is marble kind agate." "You make this kind?" "I brought home big kind dolly." "What kind she doing?"

9.5. One, used generally as a substitute for a or the, was counted an error. It is not always wrong, as when the child says, "I see one man," but it sounds strange; for in standard English, "I see a man" would be more usual. In the 1938 study this error ranked tenth and was made by more than 10 per cent of the children. The urban Filipinos made this error most frequently then; in the present study it is made twice as often by the rural Filipino children as by either of the other groups. Examples of this error are as follows: "We get one pussy." "You one monkey?" "Mine one hard, you know."

11. Plenty for many is used by approximately 12 per cent of the children. In the 1938 study it ranked twelfth and was used by less than 10 per cent of the children. At that time, the error was made least frequently by the Japanese children; in the present study, it was used most frequently by the rural Filipino children. The following are examples of this error: "She got plenty holes." "Plenty grasshopper here." "Plenty guys come my house." "I get plenty marbles."

12. No more is another negative error that is used frequently enough (by 11 per cent of the children) to be listed separately. In the 1938 study this error ranked seventh. Then, it was made least frequently by the Japanese children. In the present study, the Japanese and rural Filipino children made this error somewhat less than the urban Filipino children. The following are samples of this usage: "Mary Ann no more teeth." "Pau, no more already." "After dat da ada guy when (went) die, no mo' 'nough air." "Dopey no mo' head."

III. Rank Order Listing of Pidgin Errors Made by More Than 10 Per Cent of the Japanese and Filipino Children in the 1958 and the 1938 Studies

	<u>1958</u> <u>rank</u>	<u>1938</u> <u>rank</u>
no -- not	1	1
like -- want	2	3
get -- have or there is	3	4
go -- used to form the future tense	4	2
went (go) -- for past tense	5	9
make or made -- do, fix	6	5
stay -- is (present)	7	8
try -- used for emphasis	8	11
one -- a or the	9.5	10
plenty -- many or much	11	12
no more -- haven't any	12	7
kind -- used redundantly	9.5	6

FAMILY BACKGROUND OF THE CHILDREN

When analyzing the father's occupation, the Barr Rating Scale was used. Even though this Scale is somewhat obsolete in terms of modern occupations, its use was necessary to permit comparisons with the earlier study. The Barr rating of the fathers' occupations of the 1958 samples reflect an average increase from .66 to 1.86 points. The data in Table IV shows that the rural Filipino fathers made the greatest gain, reflecting the increased amount of mechanization in pineapple and sugar cane plantations.

The general rise in the Barr ratings of the three groups is indicative of their upward occupational movement in the last two decades. Currently, the Japanese have a higher Barr rating, 9.28, as contrasted with the urban and rural Filipino groups, 7.00 and 7.26 respectively. These ratings reflect the fact that, since the Japanese immigrated to Hawaii earlier than the Filipinos, they therefore have had more economic opportunities.

This conclusion is further corroborated by the fact that 95 per cent of the Japanese parents were born in the United States as compared with the two Filipino groups -- urban, 50 per cent and rural, 83 per cent. In the urban Filipino group, 30 per cent of the fathers and 70 per cent of the mothers were born in the United States. In contrast, the 1938 figures for the three groups of parents were 41 per cent, 18 per cent, and 2 per cent respectively.

The parents of the children in the present study are better educated than those of twenty years ago. Table IV reflects school attendance in the United States only. The average education is 11.5 years for the parents of the Japanese group as contrasted with 2.7 years twenty years ago. The urban Filipinos' average is 8.8 years of schooling as against 4.1 years; and the rural Filipinos' average 9.6 years versus 3.2 years in 1938.

English is now spoken almost exclusively in the children's homes. (see Table IV) However, in 1938, the ancestral language was generally used by all three groups, and by the Japanese at least as often as English. The language ratings of homes (see Table IV) reflects the Anglicizing of speech. The language rating, ranging from 3.3 to 3.9 on a five point scale, primarily reflects the amount of pidgin now spoken rather than an ancestral language.

In the thirties, the urban Filipinos were more proficient in English than the rural Filipinos. Now the reverse is the case. The probable reasons for the change may be suggested: (1) After World War II, many of the Filipinos who migrated to Hawaii sought work in the city rather than on the plantations where the number of jobs has been declining; (2) the segregation of races in plantation villages had been abandoned so that there are few Filipino families who do not have neighbors of other races; and (3) increasing mechanization on the plantations has resulted in a greater demand for skilled labor.

In thirty-six of the fifty Japanese homes, no one prefers to use Japanese although all of the parents had attended after-school Japanese language classes and a few had received all or part of their education in Japan. In eleven homes, a grandparent who prefers to speak Japanese resides and in only three homes does one parent prefer that language. Even the children's names reflect the tendency toward Anglicization. In the earlier study, almost all of the children's given names were Japanese; now none are, and in only one case did a child call a playmate by a Japanese name. This use of Anglo-Saxon given names was influenced by conditions during World War II

when many adults of Japanese ancestry changed their first names or added an Anglo-Saxon name. Since then children are usually given names in both languages.

Among the rural Filipinos, only one parent speaks a Filipino dialect as the preferred language. In these homes there are twenty grandparents who prefer to speak a Filipino dialect and sixteen others who speak pidgin. Among both Filipino groups, our data indicate that pidgin is more commonly spoken than standard English.

TABLE IV
Comparison of Background of Hawaiian Children of Japanese
and Filipino Ancestry in 1938 and 1958

Parents' of Children	JAPANESE (Honolulu)			FILIPINO (Honolulu)			FILIPINO (Rural)		
	1938	1958	Difference	1938	1958	Difference	1938	1958	Difference
Number of Children	50	50		50	50		50	51	
Barr Rating of Father's Occupation	8.62	9.28	.66	6.23	7.00	.77	5.50	7.26	1.76
% of Parents Born in U. S.	41	95	54	18	50	32	2	83	81
Average Educ. of Both Parents in Years (U. S. only)	2.7	11.5	8.8	4.1	8.8	4.7	3.2	9.6	6.4
Language Rating of Homes	2.0	3.9	1.9	2.2	3.8	1.6	1.9	3.3	1.4

In order to appreciate the full flavor of the children's language and the type of errors we have discussed, it is interesting to examine the fifty sentence record of two children. The first is from a little girl, the daughter of a truck driver for the Federal government, who lives in the Palolo section of Honolulu. She is four-and-a-half and was playing with three playmates when the record was made of her language.

No, no, give him!
 He going keep um.
 No, no, give him!
 Da las time I wen' give him; he wen' keep um. (Referring to toy money.)
 You know when I bring _____
 Iris, you know when I _____
 Iris! Iris!
 You know when I was going by da _____
 You know when I was going play docta, heh?
 Da girl wen' put something in my mout.
 How much you sell da kind flowers? (Pretending to buy flowers from her sister.)
 Hey, hey, no let Johnny!
 Hey, pu da flowa up hea.
 O. K. much do you sell _____
 A-a-a, how much do you sell da yella flowa?
 Dat kind?
 No, no! (Her sister took too much toy money for the flowers--so she's protesting.)
 I gonna put _____ (then places the flowers on the washing machine.)

Johnny, dis is okit! (orchid)
What?
Ai, he stay talk just like one Chinese.
Wait, come!
If you want to put you flowa, come.
Dis is okit!
O. K. Come on, sell um!
How much do you sell um?
Two what?
One! (She would only pay two toy dollars for the flowers.)
An--an you give me change!
No, give him one stuff an' one money.
As all! (Talking to her friend as she waits for more flowers
and money.)
Wah (where) his money?
He lost. (He didn't have any money left.)
May I have one da kind_____ (Pointing to a blue flower.)
Da blue flowa.
Gimme change.
Nice, heh?
No! (Her reply when her playmate gave her the money.)
You give him da blue kind now.
Who's dat hanging clothes?
Ahh, may I buy da little flowa?
Give us dolla, too!
Dolla, I like dolla too, dolla.
No! I like dis kind.
My gardenia. (Holding the flower to her nose.)
Ah, I drop my change.
We gara (got to) go sleep now.
I going, going a, I going use da phone.
Hello! (Speaking into an imaginary phone.)

The second record was taken while a five-year-old Filipino boy was playing with two brothers and four other playmates. This boy lives in a village on the Island of Hawaii. His mother attended school through the seventh grade. His father, a native of the Philippines, had no formal education and is employed on a sugar plantation.

Oh, you fat bull. (Playing with older brother.)
C'mon, we go play airplane kind.
Superman, I got big muscles.
Okay, horsie kind.
No push um. (Neighbor pushed a little brother.)
Ala, no can go outside. (Gate was locked.)
Where you going? (Neighbor was leaving yard.)
We go play Indian kind.
That boy went go on the road.
Ass you. (Talking with the neighbor.)
Yeah--ass right, them like go sea beach.
I like drink soda.
Watch this. (Threw grass in the air.)
Button, come. (Called playmate.)
Benny said he going talk you something. (Talking with
playmate.)
Like I whack you? (To neighbor who was bothering his little
brother.)
You make arrow. (Talking with playmate.)

I need this? (Holding a stalk of grass.)
We going make.... (Did not complete the sentence.)
I'm Commando Coliss.
Flying Command 2.
Watch this.
Yeah--the guys stay drunk. (Referring to noise from nearby.)
I going make one small cage. (Playing with cut grass.)
Eah--what's the big idea? (Someone took some of his grass.)
I making one cage.
I going get one eggs.
I going get one worm and eat it.
No blow, Barbara, no good. (Playmate blew on a dandelion.)
How come no come off? (Dandelion tuft did not blow off.)
Bring um. (Addressed to girl to bring grass.)
I lick you folks.
I laying eggs. (Sitting in the grass.)
I going kick um off. (Kicked his pile of grass.)
You like mine?
What my name? (Acting silly with playmates.)
Me Superman.
He the baby.
Ah, I saw one small agate (marble.)
Hey, this mine. (Playmate tried to take the marble away.)
I going push um down, broke um.
I going make this house.
I can broke this bolo-head house.
But you going need gasoline. (Talking with playmate.)
And you too.
Eh, look. (Found a firecracker.)
What's this--going get something.
Get powder.