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EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Developing an Indigenous proficiency scale

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Abstract: With an increased interest in the revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultural practices worldwide, there is also an increased need to develop tools to support Indigenous language learners and instructors. The purpose of this article is to presents such a tool called ANA ‘ŌLELO, designed specifically to assess Hawaiian language proficiency. After US occupation of the islands in 1893, Native Hawaiians experienced a waning of cultural identity, traditional values and practices, and a near loss of the Hawaiian language in daily communication. To contribute to ongoing Hawaiian language revitalization efforts, Dr. Kahakalau developed ANA ‘ŌLELO, a unique scale that measures a learner’s proficiency of the Hawaiian language. This article explores ANA ‘ŌLELO and the benefits it holds for teachers, students, and researchers, through the use of standardized subsets of overall proficiency, conversational ability, and language protocol. The article also suggests that ANA ‘ŌLELO can have substantial beneficial impacts for other endangered Indigenous languages; and argues that native populations can and should develop their own language proficiency scales, unique to the culture and language of the population, and outside of the constraints of colonizing languages’ proficiency values.

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Keywords: indigenous language education; Hawaiian language; language proficiency; language assessment; Austronesian languages

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kū Kahakalau is a native Hawaiian educator, researcher, song-writer, and expert in Hawaiian language, history and culture and founder of Ku-A-Kanaka Indigenous Institute for Language and Culture. Kahakalau, her husband Nālei and their daughters ‘I‘inimaikalani and Pōlanimakamae, reside in Kukuihaele, a small rural village directly above historic Waipi‘o Valley, on the Island of Hawai‘i. The first person in the world to earn a PhD in Indigenous Education, Kahakalau is best known in educational circles as the designer of Pedagogy of Aloha, an innovative, values- and place-based, culturally-driven, academically rigorous way of education designed to prepare young Hawaiians for twenty-first century cultural steward-and global citizenship.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This article introduces a unique language proficiency scale, called ANA ‘ŌLELO, specifically designed to measure Hawaiian language proficiency and aid in the revitalization and normalization of the Hawaiian language, part of the Austronesian language family, evolving from a Polynesian language brought to the islands two millennia ago. This scale was developed by Hawaiian language expert Dr. Kahakalau, based on 30 years of Hawaiian language instruction and research. ANA ‘ŌLELO is designed to assist Hawaiian language learners and teachers to measure specific aspects of Hawaiian language proficiency, and increase the number of people able to communicate in Hawaiian, after over 120 years of systemic eradication, as a result of US occupation of Hawai‘i, caused the near loss of the language. This article also recommends the development of unique language proficiency scales, as a practice for other endangered native languages.

1. Introduction

‘Ulu ka hoi, is an ancient Hawaiian proverb, which literally means, the hoi vine grows, but is actually a play on words, specifically the word hoihoi, which means interest. Interestingly, using nature as a metaphor to describe a situation in a witty and playful way, was one of the distinguishing characteristics of our Hawaiian ancestors—and, at least for this Native Hawaiian, must be part of the way we communicate in Hawaiian today, since it reflects the essence of who we are, a witty people, a funny people, a playful people, and an extremely intelligent people. So, it is no surprise that ANA ‘ŌLELO, a Hawaiian language proficiency scale, introduced in this article, considers loea, or native speakers, those who regularly integrate metaphors into their everyday conversations, engage in frequent world play, use proverbs consistently and continuously include witty analogies.

What the above proverb also alludes to is the increased interest in the revitalization of not just Hawaiian, but many Indigenous languages and cultural practices around the world. With this heightened interest, there is also an increased need to develop tools to support Indigenous language instruction and language instructors, who must frequently design and expand their own programs. The ANA ‘ŌLELO language proficiency scale is such a tool, specifically designed by the author and a team of co-researchers to assess the proficiency levels of learners of Hawaiian as an Additional Language (HAL). HAL speakers constitute a very diverse group, who learn Hawaiian somewhere between infancy and adulthood. While for some the initial exposure occurs in the home, where one or more HAL speakers use Hawaiian as an additional language of communication, most HAL speakers today learn Hawaiian in formal educational settings, i.e. Hawaiian language immersion preschools and K-12 schools, or Hawaiian language high-school, college, or community classes, and more recently a variety of online classes as well. Many times, Hawaiian language learning occurs in a combination of formal and informal settings, in and outside of the classroom and from a variety of teachers and sources.

ANA ‘ŌLELO is a tool for both Hawaiian language teachers, and HAL learners. Frameworked from a Hawaiian perspective and designed to meet Hawaiian needs, ANA ‘ŌLELO specifically addresses Hawaiian preferences, propensities and realities. Moreover, as a tool designed by Hawaiians, for Hawaiians, ANA ‘ŌLELO measures not only linguistic abilities, like the ability to engage in conversations, but also the use of the language as a means of perpetuating and fortifying the native culture and traditions of Hawai’i and the values of our forefathers.

This article begins with a brief overview of the history of the Hawaiian language and the evolution of ANA ‘ŌLELO. Next, the article presents a definition of the six proficiency levels, as well as the various assessment categories of ANA ‘ŌLELO. The article concludes with the potential of the scale for other Indigenous languages and the need for international collaboration to maximize global Indigenous language and culture revitalization efforts.

2. Historical Context

In order to understand the need for a uniquely Hawaiian language proficiency scale, as an essential tool for contemporary Hawaiian language revitalization efforts, a brief review of the past 250 years is in order, focusing specifically on the Hawaiian language, which is a member of the Austronesian family of languages, and evolved from a language brought to the Hawaiian archipelago, by the first Polynesian settlers, about 2,000 years ago. This sonorous language, which is similar to other Eastern Polynesian languages, was the sole language of communication in the Hawaiian archipelago, until the arrival of the British explorer Captain James Cook in 1778 (Kikawa, 1994). When literacy was introduced by American missionaries, who arrived in 1820, Native Hawaiians immediately recognized the power of reading and writing, and by the end of the nineteenth century, Hawaiians had one of the highest literacy rates in the world, both in Hawaiian and in English. Today, the millions and millions of pages printed in Hawaiian in the nineteenth century, constitute the largest collection of Indigenous writings worldwide (Kikawa, 1994). These writings range from cosmogonic genealogies, to epics, historical accounts, prayers, ceremonies, proverbs and more, and comprise an invaluable

cultural and linguistic treasure, with unlimited potential to significantly contribute to ongoing Hawaiian language revitalization and normalization efforts.

While Hawaiian remained the primary language of government, education, and society until the end of the nineteenth century, there was also a notable rise of English, as an additional language among Native Hawaiians. In 1893, the Constitutional Monarchy of Hawai'i was overthrown by a small group of militant American businessmen, with support from US Marines, causing not just a sequestration of Hawaiian independence, but also the near loss of the Hawaiian language (Osorio, 2002). In fact, in an effort to wholly Americanize Hawai'i, the newly formed self-proclaimed "Republic of Hawai'i," in 1895, outlawed Hawaiian as a medium of education and initiated an overt indoctrination program through the public school system. By purposefully belittling all things Hawaiian and physically punishing Native Hawaiian children for speaking their native tongue, in only a few decades, Hawai'i's public school system managed to successfully discontinue the use of the Hawaiian language, as the customary medium of communication among Native Hawaiians.

This language loss, which literally happened from one generation to the next, occurred throughout the Hawaiian archipelago, and is exemplified by the author's family. When the author's grandfather, who was of pure Hawaiian descent, was born in 1893, virtually everyone in Hawai'i, but certainly all of Hawai'i's 40,000 Native Hawaiians, conversed in Hawaiian, including her grandfather's extended family. However, once he entered the school system, the author's grandfather was forced to speak English and was beaten by the teacher for speaking Hawaiian on the playground with his Native Hawaiian friend. Moreover, his parents were admonished by the teacher that unless their son started to speak only in English, he would never amount to anything and have no chances for success in life. Although the author's grandfather enjoyed speaking his native tongue with other Hawaiians his age until he passed, he did not impart the language to the author's father, born in 1922, who was unable to hold even a simple conversation in Hawaiian. This inability to converse in Hawaiian pretty much applied to all Native Hawaiians born after the turn of the twentieth century and by the year 2000, fewer than 200 Hawaiian-speaking elders attended an annual gathering of such individuals organized by the 'Ahaui 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Schütz, 1994).

Forced Americanization and a ban of the Hawaiian language in Hawai'i's school, caused not only the virtual eradication of the Hawaiian language within one generation, but also a dramatic transformation of Hawai'i's Indigenous population from one of the most educated people in the world, to Hawai'i's most under and uneducated major ethnic group. Moreover, over 100 years of overt institutionalized racism eroded our belief in ourselves, our language, our culture, our values, our traditions, and our ability to learn—especially our native language.

In the 1970s, western scientists predicted the death of the Hawaiian language—and the last Hawaiian. However, by 2000, an awakening of Hawaiian voices throughout the archipelago instigated the beginning of a far-reaching, enduring Hawaiian renaissance, which brought about the rebirth of many traditional Hawaiian practices, including hula (ancient dance) and chant, lua (native martial arts), celestial navigation, long-distance voyaging, rituals, protocols, healing practices, and numerous Hawaiian arts (Kanahale, 1979). The Hawaiian Renaissance also initiated an exciting Hawaiian language revitalization, spearheaded by the world-renown Hawaiian language immersion movement, which resulted in the creation of 13 Pūnana Leo Hawaiian Immersion Pre-schools, 20 Kula Kaiapuni (K-12) Hawaiian Immersion Public Schools, and a Hawaiian Language College established in 1998. In addition, the Hawaiian language is being taught in public and private high schools, Hawaiian-focused charter schools and at most public and private universities in Hawai'i, along with a variety of adult and community in-person and online classes.

3. The Evolution of ANA 'ŌLELO

Modern linguists generally define proficiency as the ability to use a language in real-world situations, in a manner acceptable and appropriate to native speakers of the language. In order to measure this proficiency, linguists have created language proficiency scales with a spectrum of abilities, which

rank how well a person can navigate in the language. While in the past these abilities were primarily focused on comprehending written and spoken language, writing, and speaking (often in that order), more recently, a recognition to assess beyond content and accuracy of written and spoken language surfaced, which supports a focus on context, culture, and socio-linguistic aspects. This has resulted in the creation of contemporary language proficiency assessments, which go beyond determining isolated language skills, like a person's ability to listen, speak, read, or write, but rather measure a learner's overall communicative competencies. These assessments are spontaneous, i.e. non-rehearsed, and clearly demonstrate what the language user is able to communicate, regardless of where, when, or how the language was acquired, and when, where and how proficiency is assessed.

While, much can be learned from these efforts, proficiency scales developed by linguists for individuals who are learning an additional, thriving language for employment or travel purposes, are not always useful for measuring Indigenous language proficiencies. This is because Indigenous languages are often not widely spoken anymore, except perhaps by a few elders. In addition, individuals who are learning their native language as an additional language, i.e. not as their first language, have very different motivations and needs as they relate to the acquisition of their native tongue. As a result, it is imperative that Indigenous peoples design our own proficiency scales that meet the needs of Indigenous language communities, which vary greatly depending on their present language status, the number of native speakers, the nature of current language revitalization efforts, etc. Indeed, many variables affect why Indigenous communities are interested in creating language proficiency scales, how we define language proficiency levels, and what tools we use to measure them. Despite these variables, there is consensus that Indigenous language proficiency assessments must go beyond simply identifying if a person is a beginner, an expert, or someone in between, and factor in the unique linguistic and cultural realities and needs of Indigenous language communities. In addition, creating these proficiency scales must be a collaborative effort, centered at the community level, spearheaded by native language enthusiasts, cultural experts and native language teachers and learners.

In Hawai'i, concerted efforts to identify and measure Hawaiian language proficiencies began in 2010, when a team of Native Hawaiian researchers and Hawaiian language experts from the Kū-A-Kanaka Indigenous Institute for Language and Culture started to discuss the development of a Hawaiian Language proficiency scale to assess the proficiencies of HAL learners. This Institute is part of a social enterprise located on Hawai'i Island, with a mission to revitalize and promote Hawaiian language, values, and cultural practices, tapping ancient and twenty-first century technologies. Kū-A-Kanaka's founders have been part of the Hawaiian language revitalization movement for over 30 years and are recognized worldwide as innovators and experts in Indigenous education and research.

Initially, the Kū-A-Kanaka research team identified three primary reasons for creating ANA 'ŌLELO. One was to provide some kind of baseline to measure Hawaiian language proficiency, i.e. define the various levels of language proficiency, and give learners and teachers of the Hawaiian language a measuring stick to see where the learners were at and where they were going. The second reason was to create a tool to validate a person's Hawaiian language proficiency for educational or work purposes, i.e. provide a certificate or badge of proficiency for speakers at Level 3, 4, and 5. The third reason was to inspire the tens of thousands of Native Hawaiians, who currently are at a Level 2 Hawaiian language proficiency, and make them not only realize how much they already know, but more importantly show them that a transition to a Level 3 basic proficiency level is achievable, despite significant failures trying to learn how to speak Hawaiian in the past. The long-term goal of not just Kū-A-Kanaka LLC, but of many Native Hawaiian individuals, families, groups and organizations is to keep revitalizing and strengthening Hawai'i's native language, until Hawaiian is again used as the preferred medium of communication in day-to-day conversation, both within and outside of Hawaiian family life throughout Hawai'i.

In line with Indigenous worldviews which support collective action, the Kū-A-Kanaka research team was cognizant that creating a Hawaiian language proficiency scale could not happen in a vacuum, but had to take place in the context of current Hawaiian language realities, factoring in the effects of over three decades of internationally renowned efforts to revitalize the Hawaiian language as the preferred medium of communication among Native Hawaiians. These efforts not only prevented the predicted death of the language, but also resulted in a steady increase of Hawaiian language speakers of various proficiency levels. Actually, some publications mention over 18,000 HAL speakers, although there is no hard data to confirm these numbers, or validate the actual proficiency levels of these speakers (State of Hawaii, 2016). What's more, until the creation of ANA 'ŌLELO, there was not even, to the author's knowledge, a clear definition of what constitutes a proficient HAL speaker. As a result, individuals, many times non-Hawaiian, claim to be Hawaiian speakers, (even in their application for high-paying government jobs), when they have very limited language proficiency, generally a high Level 1 or a low Level 2. In contrast, others, mostly Native Hawaiians, profess that they don't speak Hawaiian, when in fact they rate at a high Level 2, and often know hundreds of vocabulary words and dozens of songs, chants, proverbs and other sayings, and need only a little prompting to transition to Level 3, where they can hold simple conversations in Hawaiian.

Building on past Kū-A-Kanaka research efforts, the Kū-A-Kanaka research team frameworked the development of ANA 'ŌLELO as an Indigenous, heuristic action research project, using a Hawaiian research methodology, called Mā'awe Pono, created by the author. Mā'awe Pono believes in non-linear research for Hawaiians, by Hawaiians, using Hawaiian methods of data collection, analysis and presentation. Moreover, Mā'awe Pono is accountable to Hawaiian values, our culture, our communities and future generations. Mā'awe Pono also includes a strong heuristic element in that it involves the researchers on a personal level, includes intuitive judgment, a spiritual dimension and relies on common sense—a shared Indigenous practice. Furthermore, Mā'awe Pono utilizes both quantitative and qualitative data, gathered from multiple groups of co-researchers, in this case, Hawaiian language students, teachers, parents and community members, who shared their thoughts about language growth and assessment via a series of focus groups, conducted by the Kū-A-Kanaka research team, over a period of three years. These focus groups discussed not only language proficiency, but also language documentation and assessment, and involved HAL speakers from multiple islands and with diverse levels of Hawaiian language ability and cultural connections. Focus group data were subsequently analyzed by the team and provided the main framework for the construction of ANA 'ŌLELO. In 2012, the first iteration of ANA 'ŌLELO was presented at the International Conference on Language Proficiency Testing in the Less Commonly Taught Languages in Bangkok, Thailand. Since then, ANA 'ŌLELO has continued to evolve, and been shared with diverse communities throughout the world involved in Indigenous language revitalization efforts.

Because the research team realized that ANA 'ŌLELO should not be limited to the content of a particular program, curriculum, or textbook, or according to a specific set of grammar-based standards, articulated by well-meaning linguists, a scale was designed that can be used to assess current language proficiencies of HAL speakers, regardless of where, when, from whom and why they studied Hawaiian. Moreover, as an innovative, culturally-driven language tool, ANA 'ŌLELO can be used as is, or modified to meet the needs of specific Hawaiian language speaking communities, for example, the hula community. In fact, one distinguishing aspect of ANA 'ŌLELO is that it is extremely flexible, so that it can meet the diverse realities of native language learners, such as age, attitude, ability, time and other factors. This propensity of ANA 'ŌLELO to be easily adaptable and expanded was an important factor in the design of the scale, since HAL speakers come with different Hawaiian language learning experiences.

Since the use of the Hawaiian language is intricately linked to Hawaiian cultural practices, ANA 'ŌLELO is not just a Hawaiian language proficiency scale, measuring oral language proficiency. It also allows learners to quantify their practice of Hawaiian traditions like protocol, an intricate part of traditional communications. This focus on protocol makes ANA 'ŌLELO not just a distinctly Hawaiian,

but also a distinctly Indigenous language scale. In Hawai'i, the concept of protocol is generally defined as doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason. Protocol starts and ends our day, our various activities and all meetings. It guides how we greet and interact with our guests and how we behave as visitors. Protocol happens before we enter a house, a forest, a sacred site, or the ocean and when we exit, as well. It is done before planting, harvesting and eating, and before starting on a journey. Protocol connects us with our ancestors and the spiritual world, and is an integral component of our spiritual practices, traditional rituals and ceremonies. Because protocol guides us in behaving properly or pono, knowing and practicing Hawaiian protocol is considered an important component of one's Hawaiian language proficiency.

4. ANA 'ŌLELO Proficiency Levels

One of the initial activities of the ANA 'ŌLELO research team was to select the number of proficiencies to be assessed and define the various proficiency levels. In the end, ANA 'ŌLELO, similar to other language proficiency scales, ended up with six proficiency levels, ranging from Level 0, which indicates no language proficiency to Level 5, which equates to native speaker proficiency. Moreover, there is the option to assign designations like 0+, 1+, 2+, 3+, or 4+, when proficiency substantially exceeds one skill level, but does not fully meet the criteria for the next level.

After a thorough review of current Hawaiian language realities in Hawai'i, the Kū-A-Kanaka research team came up with the following Hawaiian language proficiency levels:

Level 0—HŌLONA: No Knowledge: Level 0 denotes that a person has very little or no Hawaiian language knowledge. Although they may know a few words, or know how to correctly read or pronounce a few personal and place names, they have no connection to the language, or the native culture of Hawai'i. Generally, these individuals also know no Hawaiian songs, chants, proverbs or traditional protocol. In Hawai'i, this group includes most tourists, newcomers to the islands, as well as non-Hawaiian island residents, who do not intermingle with Native Hawaiians, and do not acquire local culture. It also includes many Native Hawaiians who live in the continental United States, especially those born and raised on the continent.

Level 1—NŌHIE: Elementary Knowledge: The general translation of nōhie is simple, or basic. At this level, individuals can correctly pronounce and write most common Hawaiian names and words, and have an elementary knowledge of a few dozen basic Hawaiian vocabulary, as well as a few common Hawaiian songs like Hawai'i Aloha, or well-known chants, like E hō mai, or the Doxology. Overall, Level 1 speakers have very limited, if any, mostly memorized Hawaiian language skills and generally no knowledge of traditional protocol. Level 1 includes most non-Hawaiian island residents, as well as those Native Hawaiians, who to date, have made little or no effort to learn their native language, culture and traditions. It also includes many Native Hawaiians who have moved to the continental US and although interested in staying connected to their native language and culture, have little opportunity to be exposed to anything Hawaiian.

Level 2—LAUA: Limited Proficiency: Laua literally means progressing, or nearly finished. This word was selected, because tens of thousands of Native Hawaiians today are currently at a Level 2. By validating that their current proficiency is nearly at the level where they can actually converse in Hawaiian, ANA 'ŌLELO hopes to make Native Hawaiians realize that they are nearing their goal, which according to over 1,000 Native Hawaiians surveyed, is to be able to speak Hawaiian. Level 2 includes individuals living in Hawai'i, the continental US, and elsewhere, who proudly identify as Native Hawaiians, and are actively involved in things Hawaiian ranging from hula to canoe paddling, from Hawaiian martial arts to lauhala weaving and lei making, from practicing traditional land stewardship to being involved in the Hawaiian sovereignty/independence movement. Because of their practice of things Hawaiian, many Level 2 speakers have quite an impressive knowledge of vocabulary, and know many phrases and even proverbs, while others know dozens, or even hundreds of Hawaiian songs and/or chants. There are also thousands who have memorized their personal

introduction (ho'olauna), and in many cases parts of their genealogy in Hawaiian, and some can even perform elaborate, albeit memorized greetings and prayers.

Although these individuals are still unable to hold a basic conversation in Hawaiian, being at Level 2 implies that they are making an effort to learn the Hawaiian language, either by enrolling in Hawaiian language programs, or by engaging in diverse Hawaiian cultural activities or art forms, where the language is integrated at various levels. Frequently, individuals in this group have attempted, often multiple times, to learn how to speak Hawaiian by enrolling in Hawaiian language classes, but dropped out somewhere along the way, due to their lack of a strong foundation in English grammar, required for standard Hawaiian language courses.

Level 3—MĀKAUKAU: Basic Proficiency: ANA 'ŌLELO identifies Level 3 as mākaukau, which means ready in Hawaiian. At this level, speakers are ready to engage in a simple exchange about everyday topics in Hawaiian and fulfil routine social demands, such as greetings and introductions, as numerous Native Hawaiians and some non-Hawaiians, who have taken courses in the Hawaiian language in high school, at the university or in the community either in person or online. While for these individuals speaking Hawaiian still requires lots of efforts and results in relatively awkward speech with many mistakes, they are able to understand and engage in basic conversations in Hawaiian. In addition, to having the basic skills to function in diverse, primarily informal settings, Level 3 speakers are also ready to participate in basic protocol and other cultural practices in the Hawaiian language with some effort. Getting to this level is a crucial step for all who desire to become Hawaiian language speakers, because once a person can carry on a simple conversation in Hawaiian, there is a huge increase in confidence that they can become fluent speakers of Hawaiian.

Level 4—PĀHE'E: Full Proficiency: Pāhe'e literally means smooth, or to slide, with the term 'ōlelo pāhe'e indicating fluent speech. This level describes Hawaiian language speakers who speak the language fluently and with little effort. Level 4 speakers are able to discuss a broad range of topics with ease and participate in all manners of conversations, only rarely making grammatical mistakes. They are also able to read, translate, and interpret most of the millions of pages written by our ancestors during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and engage fully in Hawaiian protocol. Moreover, being certified at a Level 4 proficiency, connotes, especially to businesses and organizations, looking for employees able to communicate in Hawaiian, that the speaker has a general mastery, i.e. an advanced proficiency in the language.

Level 5—LOEA: Native Proficiency: Loea means expert and this level implies that a speaker is able to use the language the way a native speaker of the language would. This proficiency level currently applies to less than 5,000 speakers, including about 500 speakers from the island of Ni'ihau, who make up the only community that has continuously used Hawaiian as the language of the home, since antiquity. While ANA 'ŌLELO is not designed to quantify the proficiency of these true mānaleo, or native Hawaiian speakers, it can be used to measure the proficiency of HAL speakers who have studied and often taught the Hawaiian language for many years, in some cases decades. This group is not only able to fluently converse in Hawaiian with little or no effort, but also able to continue the linguistic propensities of Hawai'i's native language and the linguistic traditions of our Hawaiian ancestors and their sonorous tongue, which makes them a Level 5.

According to modern linguists, the language spoken by our Hawaiian ancestors at the time of Western contact was a highly sophisticated oral language. In fact, our Hawaiian-speaking ancestors, like other Polynesians, were known for their superlative oratory skills and engaged in extremely poetic communication, with extensive uses of metaphors, focusing heavily on images from nature. They had a fascination with hidden, or multiple meanings, called kaona in Hawaiian, and loved to integrate proverbs into their lyrical conversations and graceful compositions. They used chants to communicate not just with the spiritual world, which is a rather common phenomenon worldwide, but also to communicate with the environment, as well as with one another. For example, before one set foot into a forest, a greeting was chanted asking for permission to enter. Or, when two

people who had not seen one another in a long time, met, they would exchange elaborate, highly poetic, impromptu chants, often including dozens of place names, which recalled past experiences, things that happened since they last saw one another, and/or other information, like the praises of a loved one who had passed away. Being able to engage in this kind of communication is what distinguishes a Level 5 Hawaiian language speaker.

5. Language Proficiency Assessment Categories

Just like determining the six proficiency levels, selecting and defining the categories to assess Hawaiian language proficiency required intense collaborative research, involving multiple focus-group discussions over a three-year period. After much deliberation, the research team decided to focus on the following: Active knowledge of Vocabulary, Songs, Chants and Proverbs, Ability to engage in conversations, including Greetings, Introductions, Descriptions, Questions and Answers, Talk Story/Chatting, Oral Presentations and Storytelling, and Knowledge and Practice of traditional Protocol. We believe, that collectively, these indicators provide a well-rounded picture of a person's Hawaiian language speaking ability, as well as his/her ability to actively participate in the Hawaiian language community as it exists at this point in time.

6. Knowledge of Vocabulary, Songs, Chants and Proverbs

As may be argued by some, the four categories below consist of somewhat arbitrary numbers, determined by the Kū-A-Kanaka research team. Actually, these numbers were selected based on a thorough review of current realities, over 30 years of experience teaching Hawaiian language to learners of all ages, as well as in-depth discussions involving not just the research team, and the focus group participants, but also other Hawaiian language experts. We do anticipate that over time, as the number of HAL speakers and their proficiency levels increase, these numbers will need to be adjusted. This applies particularly to the *vocabulary category*, which characterizes vocabulary as words that a speaker can quickly remember and actively use when speaking, thinking, and writing.

Level	0	1	2	3	4	5
Vocabulary	<10	<100	<500	<1,000	<4,000	4,000+
Proverbs	<2	<5	<10	<100	<200	200+
Songs	<3	<10	<20	<50	<75	75+
Chants	<2	<5	<10	<25	<50	50+

7. Knowledge of Conversational Aspects

The following charts list the various abilities that define the eight conversational proficiency levels selected by the research team. This category can stand by itself and provide concrete, quantitative data on a speaker's conversational proficiency.

Level	Greetings	Introductions	Descriptions	Questions & answers
0	Hello, goodbye	Name only		
1	One sentence greetings	One sentence introduction of self and family	One word description	One word questions and answers Q&A
2	Memorized greetings and protocol	Memorized introduction of self, family and place	One sentence description	One sentence Q&A
3	Standard greetings of people and places	Standard introductions of people and places, including basic genealogy	Basic descriptions	Basic Q&A
4	Greeting of people and places with metaphors	Detailed introduction of people and places w/ some kaona	Detailed descriptions	Detailed Q&A, some kaona
5	Elaborate poetic greetings	Poetic introduction of people and places	Poetic descriptions	Indirect Q&A, full of kaona

Level	Talk Story	Oral presentations	Storytelling	Reading
0	No ability to communicate	No ability to present information in Hawaiian	No knowledge of Hawaiian stories	Unable to read or comprehend
1	One or two word sentences	One sentence, memorized information	Pidgin English with Hawaiian words	Read Hawaiian words with markers, lots of mistakes and effort, little comprehension
2	Mostly memorized sentences	One sentence ad lib	Pidgin English with Hawaiian phrases	Read Hawaiian words with markers, some mistakes, effort, comprehension
3	Simple responses re: basic subjects, lots of mistakes and effort	Basic information, ideas and concepts	Simple, short story, extensive memorization	Read basic text with markers, some mistakes and effort, basic comprehension
4	Appropriate responses to popular subjects, little mistakes, and effort	General information, ideas and concepts	Popular story, little mistakes and effort	Read and comprehend complex texts, with markers, few mistakes, or effort
5	Complex, multi-level responses w/kaona	Complex, information, ideas and concepts w/kaona	Expert story telling with audience participation, extensive body language, frequent kaona and poetic references	Read and comprehend complex texts, without markers, no mistakes, or effort

8. Knowledge and Practice of Traditional Protocol

Quantifying a speaker’s knowledge and practice of traditional Hawaiian protocol is one of the aspects that makes ANA ‘OLELO a uniquely Indigenous proficiency scale. Moreover, while our research team highly suggests that this assessment is integrated into the larger language proficiency profile, technically, this category can be used as a stand-alone measure to quantify an individual’s ability to participate in Hawaiian protocol, a practice continuously increasing and re-establishing itself throughout the islands. In fact, being able to verify that one is able to engage in Hawaiian protocol may already have appeal for some employers and organizations, who have made a commitment to perpetuating this very important cultural practice of our Hawaiian ancestors.

Since the beginning of time, protocol has connected us with our ancestors, the spiritual world, as well as the environment. In fact, protocol is synonymous with Hawaiian spiritual practices, traditional rituals and ceremonies. It also guides our behavior in respect to how we interact with others and factors prominently into daily activities, including our past times, in fact into pretty much everything we do. Based on these premises, the research team decided to quantify three aspects, knowledge of protocol, understanding of protocol and practice of protocol. Collectively these three categories quantify a learner’s Hawaiian protocol proficiency and present a valid assessment of an individual’s understanding and practice of Hawaiian protocol.

1. Knowledge of Protocol. This category measures the number of protocol chants/prayers an individual is able to recite and/or chant without mistakes.

Level	0	1	2	3	4	5
# of Chants/ Prayers known	<2	2+	5+	20+	40+ including some ad-lib	Ad-lib

2. Understanding of Protocol. This category quantifies an individual’s ability to explain the content of the chants/prayers he/she is able to recite, as well as the purpose and components of specific protocols.

Level	Knowledge of protocol
0	No knowledge
1	Mostly non-verbal participation, very limited understanding of protocol and chants
2	Limited participation in well-known chants, able to understand general gist of chants and protocol
3	Able to understand gist of commonly known chants and prayers, as well as gist of customary protocol

Level	Knowledge of protocol
4	Able to explain general content of the chants/prayers he/she is able to recite, as well as the purpose and components of specific protocols. Able to lead protocol and create spontaneous prayers
5	Able to lead protocol and explain specific content of chants/prayers and create spontaneous prayers and chants using high level poetry and kaona

Practice of protocol: This category indicates how often an individual participates in real-world protocol and how much it is part of his/her way of life.

Level	Frequency of engagement	Type of engagement
0	No engagement	No engagement
1	Rarely	Rare engagement, mostly as quiet, non-active participant
2	Once in a while	Occasional, sporadic engagement, atypical of usual behavior
3	Regularly	Purposeful engagement as part of specific practice of culture, ex: protocol for gathering greenery or food, or before engaging in fishing, hula (dance), surfing, meeting, eating, etc.
4	Consistently	Daily engagement in protocol, ex: at start of day, and before most activities
5	Continuously	Every day, all the time. Protocol and ceremony are a vital component of daily life

As we implement ANA ‘ŌLELO and create certificates and badges tied to specific Hawaiian language proficiencies, and as the number and proficiency levels of HAL speakers increases, we anticipate adjustments and modifications to ANA ‘ŌLELO, specifically increasing the numbers of vocabulary, songs, chants and proverbs an individual must know to be at a certain proficiency level. There has also already been a request to create additional categories, similar to the protocol category, which integrate language and cultural practices. In addition, the Kū-A-Kanaka research team is already working on creating categories that measure specific Hawaiian language abilities, but do not follow the six-level pattern. One of these is the ability to compose Hawaiian poetry, known as haku mele in Hawaiian and considered as something done at the most significant and lofty level of Hawaiian language. Haku mele requires an in-depth understanding and knowledge of kaona, or hidden and multiple meaning, and concealed references characteristic of Hawaiian poetry. This means that a HAL speaker must be at least a high 4 or Level 5 proficiency, and a specific training in Hawaiian poetry, to be considered a proficient haku mele.

9. Conclusion

As mentioned in the beginning of this article, ANA ‘ŌLELO was designed as a Hawaiian language proficiency tool by Hawaiians, for Hawaiians, specifically addressing Hawaiian preferences, propensities and realities and measuring not only language, but also basic Hawaiian cultural skills like protocol, intricately tied to traditional and modern Hawaiian language use. While it is obvious to ascertain the use of the scale for Native Hawaiians, one wonders what others, particularly other Indigenous peoples involved in native language revitalization, can learn from this language proficiency scale.

For one, it is that as Indigenous peoples we cannot simply rely on the use of existing Western language proficiency concepts and scales to measure the native language proficiencies of our people. Rather we must create our own measurement tools, based on our values, our ways, and our priorities. Moreover, ANA ‘ŌLELO validates that Native peoples can design our own, highly useful and relevant language tools, with or without the help of western linguists, using our own Indigenous research methodologies.

ANA ‘ŌLELO provides a template of what an Indigenous language proficiency scale can look like and what it can focus on, with the understanding that this scale can be adapted as necessary for learners and teachers of other Indigenous languages, or simply used as a start-up point for Indigenous communities and tribes around the world to develop their own proficiency scales that

meet their current language realities and measure the things important to them at this point in time. Ultimately, the author and the ANA 'ŌLELO research team highly suggest that Indigenous peoples, sharing the same language, create informal research teams to discuss what types of language proficiency tools will advance the revitalization of their language into the future and then set out to collaboratively create these tools based on their preferences and values.

'A'ohe pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okahi, is an ancient Hawaiian proverb, which reminds us that not all knowledge comes from one source. This is also true for the development of native language tools, such as ANA 'ŌLELO. So, while the author and the Kū-A-Kanaka research team have worked hard to develop this scale, we are also cognizant of the value of other, different assessments. As Hawaiian language enthusiasts and supporters of fellow Indigenous language revitalization movements around the world, Kū-A-Kanaka LLC (www.kuakanaka.com) is excited to share ANA 'ŌLELO with Native peoples interested in measuring Indigenous language proficiencies, and collaborate, assist and consult with Indigenous peoples throughout the world, as we collectively develop culturally-congruent language assessment tools that advance the revitalization of native languages worldwide and contribute to the normalization of native languages among native peoples. E ola mau ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i, may the Hawaiian language—and all Indigenous languages—live forever!

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