DOCUMENTATION OF HAWAI'I SIGN LANGUAGE:
AN OVERVIEW OF SOME RECENT MAJOR RESEARCH FINDINGS
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This paper summarizes some of the recent major research findings that have occurred as a result of ELDP Project MDP0278 entitled "Documentation of Hawai`i Sign Language: Building the Foundation for the Documentation, Conservation, and Revitalization of Endangered Pacific Island Sign Languages".

1) Hawai`i Sign Language (HSL) does not appear to bear a genetic relationship to any other known sign language used outside of Hawai`i. While many people have claimed that HSL is related to American Sign Language (ASL), lexicostatistical comparison of core basic vocabulary in HSL and in ASL reveals only a 12% rate of possible cognates, a rate lower than British Sign Language and ASL (26%) which have been classified as distinct languages belonging to different language families. A comparison with another recently discovered Pacific Island sign Language, Majuro Sign Language reveals a 27% rate of possible cognates in core basic vocabulary.

2) Statistical estimates used by the United Nations applied to the general population of Hawai`i would suggest a maximum of 280 Deaf people in Hawai`i over the age of 65. However, this estimate does not take into account variations in the number of people over the age of 65 who were actually born in Hawai`i, the number of deaf people who actually had the opportunity to learn HSL, etc. So far we have identified roughly 40 Deaf people over the age of 65, who were born in Hawai`i, who still live in Hawai`i and who claim they know HSL. However, interviews we have been able to conduct, indicate that more than 75% of the people interviewed are not actually using HSL. Instead they are using a creolized form of HSL, which only shares only 54% of its basic core vocabulary with HSL, which contains many signs which are cognate with American SL, and which contains neologisms that are not present in HSL or ASL. CHSL and HSL are distinct but historically related languages like ASL and French Sign Language which have 62% possible cognates in core basic vocabulary.

3) The documentation of HSL serves as an interesting case study. Our understanding of the extent of endangerment, the existence of the creole, and the use of these languages and ASL in Hawai`i is constantly evolving. Data collection for the project is a rare opportunity for our consultants to use HSL or CHSL, and we have found that as they become more comfortable using these languages again, native speaker intuitions can change. Our data also records complex code-switching between HSL, CHSL, and ASL, depending on which users are present, the topic of conversation, and the stage in the project. This process illuminates the need for time in documentation work, and the unexpected information that continued data collection may provide.

4) Non-manuals and movement play extremely important roles in HSL phonology. There are a number of non-manual lexical items, such as HAVE and FAVORITE. In addition, a number of signs, such as NEW and CLEAN, LOVE-ROMANTICALLY and LOVE-NONROMANTICALLY are distinguished only by non-manual expression. Also, a number of signs, such as NAME, WRITE, PRINT, DRAW, and COLOR are distinguished by very small differences in movement.

5) Morphology in HSL is clearly independent of what is typically found in ASL and what has been reported in a number of sign languages. Morphological processes common in ASL, such as Subject-Verb Agreement, are not present in HSL and are expressed syntactically. Certain handshapes in HSL, however, do have morphological meaning, but they are not used in the same ways as in ASL

and other widely-researched sign languages. Clear visual examples will be provided during the lecture.

　　　6) Basic word order in HSL is SOV. MAN WOMAN LOVE ("The man loves the woman"). Negatives follow the verb but can be separated from the verb. CHILD MANGO EAT NOT ("The child didn't eat mangos.") CHILD MANGO EAT TWO NOT ("The child didn't eat two mangos."). Content question words occur at the end of the sentence. MANGO EAT WHO ("Who ate mangos?") CHILD EAT WHAT ("What did the child eat?")