

# Data inspires pride for Pidgin, a Hawai'i language

By Jennifer Sinco Kelleher  
The Associated Press

**M**ILILANI, Hawai'i — When Hawai'i comedian Andy Bumatai was searching for a new way to attract the attention of audiences on the internet, his wife suggested he find inspiration in something from the old days: Pidgin, the language of his youth.

Her idea came after a flurry of news reports about how census data included a tally of people in the islands who said they spoke Pidgin, a mix of the languages spoken by Hawai'ian, Filipino, Chinese, Puerto Rican, and other workers who toiled in the state's sugar plantations.

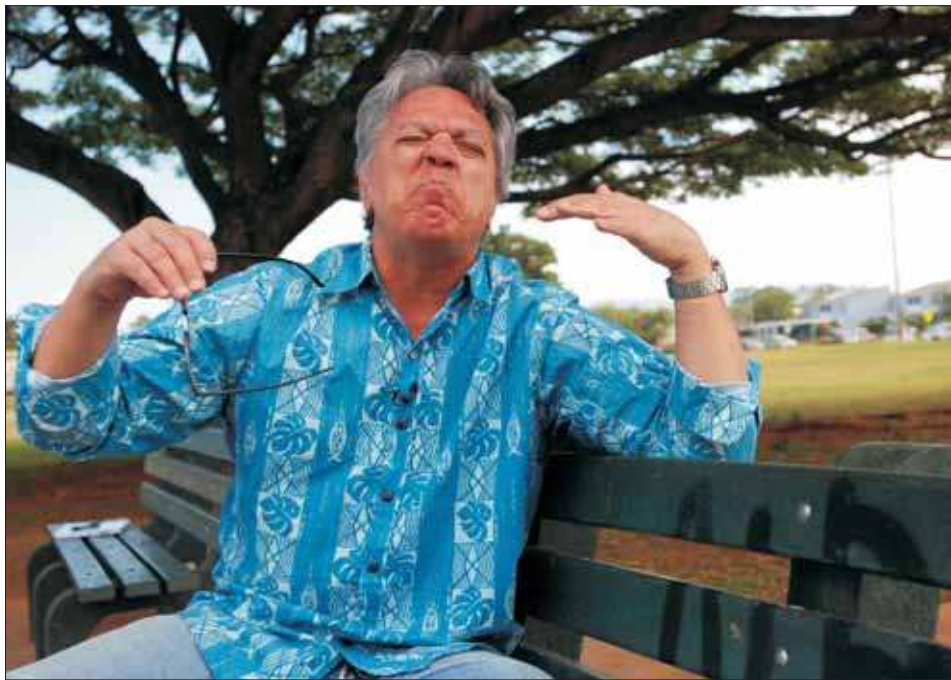
Bumatai put up some videos online doing his routines in Pidgin, and one with English subtitles got 1.5 million views. He said his videos resonated with those who grew up in Hawai'i and were homesick for the sounds of the language.

It is "more than a language. It's become a lexicon that congeals the people who are from Hawai'i," he said.

The news reports last fall helped spark a sense of pride among those who speak the language in their homes and among friends, and a discussion about its use and the stigma that limits its wider acceptance in the state.

There are other pidgins in other parts of the world, including in the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia. Pidgin in Hawai'i, or Hawai'i Creole English, has long been considered a substandard form of English. Some saw the census numbers as recognition for the language, though the U.S. Census isn't in the business of recognizing languages. Census officials have been counting Pidgin since 1990.

Christine Gambino, a survey statistician at the agency, said with more people knowing that it's acceptable to write down Pidgin on the federal questionnaires, future data will be more reflective of an



**PIDGIN PRIDE.** Comedian Andy Bumatai gestures during an interview in Mililani, Hawai'i. News reports about census data showing the number of Pidgin speakers in Hawai'i have helped spark a sense of pride among those who speak the language in their homes. Pidgin is a mix of the languages spoken by Hawai'ian, Filipino, Chinese, Puerto Rican, and other workers who toiled in the sugar plantations in Hawai'i. (AP Photo/Audrey McAvoy)

accurate number of speakers. Many who speak Pidgin believe there are far more speakers than the 1,600 counted in the census surveys.

While Pidgin may sound like mixed-up English because English words provide a large portion of Pidgin vocabulary, it has its own grammar and sound system, said Kent Sakoda, who teaches a course about Pidgin at the University of Hawai'i.

Native Hawai'ians, Chinese, and Portuguese had the most influence on Pidgin structure because they were the earliest plantation laborers. Pidgin borrows phrases from various other languages. "The house is big" in Pidgin, for example, is "big, da house," which borrows from Hawai'ian sentence structure.

One of Cantonese's influences is evident in the Pidgin word "get," which means both "has" and "have," as well as both "there is" and "there are." "Para," which means "for" in Portuguese, influenced how Pidgin speakers use "for" in places where English uses "to."

Pidgin has flourished as the voice of

Hawai'i long after the end of the plantation era.

"You're ranked as to how local you are with how much you understand and are able to speak," Bumatai said.

Television station Hawai'i News Now posted to Facebook a mock traffic report in Pidgin by reporter Lacy Deniz. Hawai'i viewers were enthusiastic, while some outside the state thought it made her sound uneducated, she said.

In "Kapakahi Traffic," Deniz refers to a stalled motorist as "uncle" and roadside assistance workers as "braddahs." Her intonation is characteristically Pidgin, her grammar and vocabulary accurate: "We goin' have choke students out on da roadway tryin' fo get to school, makin' their classes ... It's gonna be supa busy."

"We knew that majority people here in Hawai'i, it's something they connect to," she said.

Colbert Matsumoto, chairman of Island Insurance, Hawai'i's largest locally owned insurance company, said he doesn't always

speak Pidgin in the "downtown circle" in which he operates. Sometimes he lets himself fall into the ease of Pidgin.

"I always thought that Pidgin was something of value," said Matsumoto, who grew up on Lanai, which can feel a world away from downtown Honolulu. "It made me feel grounded."

Mike McCartney, chief of staff for governor David Ige, said he's proud of his ability to speak Pidgin.

"To me it's part of who we are as a people, place, and culture," said McCartney, whose father was an English teacher and would correct him when he spoke Pidgin. McCartney said now he can turn Pidgin on and off fluidly, as many others do.

Former Hawai'i governor Ben Cayetano worries about those who can't switch back and forth.

"Hawai'i kids are at a distinct disadvantage if they can't speak standard English," he said. "My first year in college on the mainland, I hardly said anything in class ... I was concerned about whether my English would be good enough."

The stigma against speaking Pidgin is strong, despite moments of pride, said Lee Tonouchi, an author and activist who calls himself the "Da Pidgin Guerrilla." He makes it a point to only speak Pidgin.

To him, until the state university system starts offering degrees in Pidgin or if Pidgin joins Hawai'ian and English as the state's official languages, the language will never gain any true respect.

"I tink still get stigma," he said. "For me, I tink da goal always goin' be fo Pidgin to get institutionalized recognitions."

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## Salt Lake Comic-Con to host pop culture events in Asia

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The organizers of Salt Lake Comic Con are entering a partnership to host events in China, Thailand, and the Philippines.

The Salt Lake Tribune reports the team behind the

Utah pop-culture convention announced the deal. They're partnering with Pop Life Entertainment, a company that makes big-headed figurines of popular characters from movies, television, and more.

Events are scheduled for June in the Philippines, September in China, and December in Thailand, though organizers are still working out exactly where.

As part of the deal, the company will also produce exclusive items for the March 24 through 26 Salt Lake City event, including a figure of the character Daryl Dixon from the zombie show "The Walking Dead."

Norman Reedus, the actor who plays Daryl Dixon, is set to appear at the 2016 Utah convention.

## FIFA cancels two of Kuwait's World Cup qualifying matches

ZURICH (AP) — The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) says it has cancelled Kuwait's two scheduled World Cup qualifying matches this month and opened a disciplinary case against the country's soccer federation.

Kuwait has been suspended by FIFA since October because of government interference in how the federation is run.

The national team also failed to play a previous World Cup qualifier in November. That match was forfeited as a 3-0 win for Myanmar.

Kuwait was scheduled to play Laos on March 24 and complete its program against group leader South Korea five days later.

FIFA says it told the federations involved that the matches "cannot take place as things stand."

Kuwait faces forfeiting both matches and being fined.

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Difficulty level: Hard #19237

**Instructions:** Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

**Solution to last week's puzzle**  
Puzzle #25951 (Medium)

All solutions available at [www.sudoku.com](http://www.sudoku.com).

6	1	4	2	7	5	8	3	9
9	5	7	3	8	6	1	2	4
3	8	2	9	4	1	6	7	5
7	3	5	4	6	2	9	8	1
8	4	1	5	3	9	7	6	2
2	9	6	7	1	8	4	5	3
1	2	3	6	9	7	5	4	8
4	6	9	8	5	3	2	1	7
5	7	8	1	2	4	3	9	6

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