

English articles

It's useful to read articles in English, even if you don't understand every word - it will help you increase your vocabulary and keep up to date with things happening in English-speaking countries!

*This page will be updated on **Mondays**. The first article is aimed at a B1 and upwards level and the second article is aimed at a B2 and upwards level*

Articles of the week



Trump signs order designating English as the official language of the US



By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

President Donald Trump signed on Saturday an executive order designating English as the official language of the United States.

The order allows government agencies and organizations that receive federal funding to choose whether to continue to offer documents and services in language other than English.

It rescinds a mandate from former President Bill Clinton that required the government and organizations that received federal funding to provide language assistance to non-English speakers.

“Establishing English as the official language will not only streamline communication but also reinforce shared national values, and create a more cohesive and efficient society,” according to the order.

“In welcoming new Americans, a policy of encouraging the learning and adoption of our national language will make the United States a shared home and empower new citizens to achieve the American dream,” the order also states. “Speaking English not only opens doors economically, but it helps newcomers engage in their communities, participate in national traditions, and give back to our society.”

More than 30 states have already passed laws designating English as their official language, according to U.S. English, a group that advocates for making English the official language in the United States.

For decades, lawmakers in Congress have introduced legislation to designate English as the official language of the U.S., but those efforts have not succeeded.

Within hours of Trump's inauguration last month, the new administration took down the Spanish language version of the official White House website.

Hispanic advocacy groups and others expressed confusion and frustration at the change. The White House said at the time it was committed to bringing the Spanish language version of the website back online. As of Saturday, it was still not restored.

The White House did not immediately respond to a message about whether that would happen.

Trump shut down the Spanish version of the website during his first term. It was restored when President Joe Biden was inaugurated in 2021.

How a canoe helped turn Hawaiian culture into a source of pride and even influenced Hollywood



By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

KANEOHE, Hawaii (AP) — Hawaii's American colonizers once banned the Hawaiian language in schools. Some Native Hawaiians tried to lighten their skin with lye. Many people believed Polynesian voyagers had simply lucked into finding the islands by drifting on logs.

But a canoe launched half a century ago helped turn Hawaiian culture from a source of shame to one of pride, reviving the skill of traveling the seas by decoding the stars, waves and weather. That vessel — a double-hulled sailing canoe called the Hokulea, after the Hawaiian name for the star Arcturus — would even influence the Disney blockbuster “Moana” decades later.

To mark the anniversary, the Hokulea's early crew members gathered Saturday for ceremonial hula and kava drinking at the Oahu beach where the canoe launched on March 8, 1975, and where they began their first training sails.

“It's a vehicle of exploration. It's a vehicle of discovery,” Nainoa Thompson, the CEO of the Polynesian Voyaging Society, said in an interview. “It's also been our vehicle for justice as Native Hawaiians, as Pacific Islanders, as a very unique, special culture of the Earth.”

In 1980, Thompson became the first Hawaiian in six centuries to navigate to Tahiti without a compass or other modern instruments — a span of about 2,700 miles (4,300 kilometers).

Hawaiian culture had long been repressed

Thompson, 71, remembers stories from his grandmother, born less than a decade after the U.S.-backed overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893. Teachers beat her for speaking Hawaiian, and her uncle tried to wash the brown off his skin with lye.

When she had children, she didn't teach them Hawaiian.

“If her children tried to be Hawaiian, they would get hurt in the new society,” Thompson said. “And so you have to become something else.”

A resurgence of Hawaiian pride and identity starting in the late 1960s and 1970s set off a cultural renaissance. Artist Herb Kane began painting ancient canoes based on drawings from European explorers and got the idea to build a double-hulled canoe with tall, triangular sails similar to those his ancestors had used hundreds of years earlier.

Debunking the drifting log theory

At the time, many people accepted the notion that Polynesians settled islands by accident.

Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl had theorized that Polynesians arrived from South America, pushed west by the prevailing winds and currents. In 1947, he set out to prove it by floating from Peru on a log raft. He landed in the Tuamotu Islands north of Tahiti and wrote a best-seller.

Heyerdahl's theory took hold even though Hawaiians for generations had passed down stories of people who traveled from the distant lands – including Kahiki, possibly what is today known as Tahiti — by canoe, bringing with them edible plants such as ulu, or breadfruit.

Kane, University of Hawaii archaeologist Ben Finney and Honolulu surfer Tommy Holmes wanted to challenge the drifting log concept. They started the Polynesian Voyaging Society, intent on sailing a canoe to Tahiti without modern instruments.

They needed a navigator. Traditional long-distance voyaging skills had all but disappeared, but a

Peace Corps volunteer on the isolated atoll of Satawal in Micronesia told them about Pius “Mau” Pailug, who had been taught navigation from childhood. Over about a month in 1976, Pailug guided the Hokulea from Hawaii to Tahiti — about the same distance from Hawaii to California.

Some 17,000 people thronged the Tahitian shore to greet them and witness what one crew member called “the spaceship of our ancestors.”

Former Hawaii Gov. John Waihe'e was in his 20s then, and a delegate to the 1978 state Constitutional Convention. The Hokulea's success spurred delegates to make Hawaiian an official state language even though few residents still spoke it, he said. They also created the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to improve the well-being of Native Hawaiians.

“It helped us believe in everything that we were doing,” Waihe'e said.

Today, two dozen schools have Hawaiian language immersion programs, and Census data show more than 27,000 people in Hawaii, and 34,000 in the U.S., speak Hawaiian at home.

Bringing dignity to the elders

In 1978, an ill-prepared crew set out for Tahiti in poor weather, and the Hokulea capsized just hours after leaving port. Crew member Eddie Aikau paddled his surfboard to get help. The Coast Guard rescued the canoe, but Aikau was never found.

The voyaging society overhauled itself in response, setting clear goals and training requirements. Thompson studied at a Honolulu planetarium and spent over a year under the tutelage of Pailug. In 1980, he navigated to Tahiti.

Thompson said he felt a deep obligation to fulfill Aikau's wish to follow the path of his ancestors and “pull Tahiti out of the sea.” But he didn't celebrate when the Hokulea got there.

“I just went into a quiet, dark place and just told Eddie we pulled it out of the sea,” Thompson said. “There's no high fives. It's too profound.”

In decades since, the society has sailed the canoe around the Pacific and world, including New Zealand, Japan, South Africa and New York.

It inspired other Pacific Island communities to revive or newly appreciate their own wayfinding traditions.

In Rapa Nui, Chile — also known as Easter Island — islanders have embarked on long-distance canoe voyages. The University of Guam has a navigation program. Similar trends have surfaced in the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Samoa and Tonga, said Mary Therese Perez Hattori, the director of the Pacific Islands Development Program at the East-West Center.

“We come from very, very ancient societies,” said Hattori, who is Chamorro, the Indigenous people of the Mariana Islands. “Hokulea sort of helped us remind the world of this.”

Hollywood makes a blockbuster

Hokulea's influence spread in 2016 when Disney released “Moana,” an animated film about a 16-year-old girl who learns wayfinding about 3,000 years ago.

Thompson spoke to hundreds on the movie's creative team about wayfinding and the importance of

canoes to Pacific culture, said Aaron Kandell, a Hawaii-born writer who worked on the movie.

Kandell, who is not Native Hawaiian, spent a year studying navigation with the Polynesian Voyaging Society during his 20s and incorporated that into the script, including where Moana learns to use her outstretched hand to track the stars and runs her hand in the ocean to feel the currents.

Crew members taught animators about coconut fiber ropes so they would look right when Moana pulls on them, Kandell said.

The Polynesian Voyaging Society's initial plan was to sail to Tahiti once, supporting a documentary, book and research papers. Thompson remembers pushing Hokulea's hull into the water with the crew back in 1975.

"It was really a moment — I didn't recognize it — but this was going to change everything," he said.

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