

## **Part 2 The World's Least Spoken Language**

There are about 6,900 languages spoken in the world. The number of speakers of these languages goes from very large (there are nearly 1 billion speakers of Mandarin Chinese!) to tiny. One of those languages which have a very small number of speakers is Hawaiian.

People speak this language in the American state of Hawaii, which is actually an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Through most of the eighteenth century, Hawaiian was the only language people on the islands used, but European travellers started to arrive and brought their languages with them, starting with explorers from England in 1778 and then the Spanish arrived in 1789.

The number of Hawaiian speakers started to go down when many schools started to use English as their main language for teaching. From 1900 and for many years after, all students had to speak English and got into trouble if they spoke Hawaiian at school. By 1997, there were only 1,000 speakers of Hawaiian left who could use the language fluently.

The good news is that, thanks to the teaching of Hawaiian again in school, the number of fluent speakers is now up to over 24,000 people. So Hawaiian is growing again!