

# “Hawai‘i 78”: Through the Lens Code-Switching in Songs

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## Introduction

Music has been with us since we were in the womb. Parents play music for their babies in their early years, and people enjoy it throughout life. There has been lots of research done on the benefits of music played for babies. In the early years of life, there are songs that are educational like the alphabet song, counting songs, nursery rhymes, and so much more. An article says, “Music at early ages helps children express themselves and share feelings” (“How Music Affects Your Baby’s Brain”). This still applies to us as grown people.

As we get older, the range of songs we listen to increases. We learn there are many different genres of music like country, hip-hop, rap, rock, jazz, R&B, and so much more. Each genre of music has different types of

songs that target different types of people. The many different songs we listen to on a daily basis have a story behind them. Whether it is an interesting story or not, songs do have stories behind them.

As we look into different types of genres, there are many songs in specific genres that incorporate code-switching. Now what is code-switching? According to Peter Auer, “Code-switching may be defined as the use of more than one language or language variety concurrently in conversation” (149). Although there can be conversations amongst ourselves, “code-switching is accomplished by parties in interaction, and the meaning of their behavior emerges from the interaction” (Nilep 17). Often times those who code-switch don’t even realize that they are code-switching. Code-switching is very subtle and is often used with bilingual speakers.

Code-switching in a conversation may look something like this: “Gracias for the lovely gift. Está awesome!” This example has both Spanish and English. Another example of code-switching could look like, “Are we eating chez ta mère demain?” This example contains both French and English. Both of these code-switching examples were found in an article

titled “Code Switching: Definition, Types, and Examples.” Code-switching often happens in bilingual groups of people.

Code-switching not only happens in conversation; it also happens in songs. When songs code-switch there is usually either a verse in a different language or words throughout the song that are in a different language. For example, a song written by a Mexican artist may have most of their lyrics in English but code-switch to Spanish here and there. It depends on how the artist decides to write their song.

Many cultures have different genres of music. For example, Mexican culture has different genres such as Ranchera, Latin Pop, Salsa music, Mariachi, and so on. Throughout this paper, we will focus on code-switching in Hawai‘ian genre songs. The majority (if not all) of songs within this genre have stories or messages behind them. Some could be messages about the history of Hawai‘ian culture, a love message, or something else entirely.

Songs use pathos to enhance the meaning of the story or message. What is pathos? “Pathos, or the appeal to emotion, means to persuade an audience by purposely evoking certain emotions to make them feel the way the author wants them to feel” (“Pathos, Logos, and Ethos”). Take, for

example, a commercial trying to persuade someone to donate to an animal shelter. The creators of that commercial may use videos or pictures of sad animals to try to make the audience feel bad so they will eventually donate to the cause. The commercial creator achieves this goal through the use of pathos.

On top of using pathos, code-switching also contributes to enhancing the message of the song. In a song, code-switching adds layers of meaning and complexity to the lyrics of a song.

In this paper, I will analyze three different songs that have different amounts of code-switching. I will focus on one main question: How does code-switching affect the pathos in a Hawai'ian genre song?

## **Data Collection**

The three different pieces I chose to analyze are songs from the Hawai'ian genre. I chose songs from the Hawai'ian genre because I have Hawai'ian blood. I felt it was only necessary to pick songs I was familiar with. When listening to the songs, I paid close attention to when the singer would code-switch. That was the first task to pull apart the song. The next thing I did was translate the lyrics from the Hawai'ian language to dig deeper into the

song. From there I listened to the song on repeat trying to figure out the meaning or story of the song. The last step was to decide whether or not the use of code-switching affected the pathos in the song. Each of these steps helped me analyze the song in a way to figure out how code-switching affects pathos in a Hawai'ian genre song.

## **Introducing the Songs**

The first song I analyzed is a very popular song amongst Native Hawai'ians, "Hawai'i 78" by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole. Israel was a popular singer, songwriter, activist, and well-known Native Hawai'ian. He has written and sung many songs that were popular in the Hawai'ian Islands. "Hawai'i 78" was written to speak about the injustices Hawai'ian people had to encounter and about the modernization of land that was once sacred to the people of Hawai'i. Hawai'i was once ruled by a King and Queen until the United States overthrew their monarchy. This resulted in the loss of native lands, the Hawai'ian language being diminished, and Hawai'ian culture being stripped away from the people of the land. With the Hawai'ian lands being taken over, the land has changed tremendously from what it once was. Sacred lands turned into highways and railroads. There are

hotels, houses, apartments, and more that were built on sacred lands. The Hawaiʻian land was modernized because of the takeover by the United States.

The first two lines along with the last verse of this song are in the Hawaiʻian language. The line is “Ua mau, ke ea o ka ʻāina, i ka pono, o Hawaiʻi.” This translates to “the life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness.” This very meaningful line tells us that the life of the land and the people of the land rely on one another. What is meant by this is if the people of the land tend and take care of the land, the land will take care of them. In Hawaiʻian culture taking care of the land is doing things like having loʻi patches which will give back to the people by giving them foods like poi, lau lau, and other Hawaiʻian dishes. The English parts of the song make the listener think about how our ancestors would feel if they were to come back and see their once sacred land being modernized.

The second song analyzed is “Pualena” sung by Josh Tatofi. Josh Tatofi is a well-known artist today. The song “Pualena” has very minimal code-switching. The only code-switching going on in this song is the word “Pualena” being used during the song. The word *Pualena* translates to “darling.” This song was written for a special individual in the writer’s life.

The special individual is described as strong and beautiful. The love the writer has for this person is so strong it drives them crazy (a good crazy, of course). Throughout the song, the listener can understand how much love the writer has for their “Pualena.” It shows that the love they have for each other is unconditional and how much the singer adores his other half.

“Pualena” is a romantic song that has a slow beat to it. Listeners feel relaxed, almost like the song is something to fall asleep to. This love song along with many other songs written and sung by Josh Tatofi is very popular amongst local Hawai‘ian people.

The last song analyzed is “Fish and Poi” sung by Sean Na‘auao. Throughout this song, the writer code-switches throughout the song. There are specific words in the song that are in Hawai‘ian while the rest of the lyrics are in English. Some words that are sung in Hawai‘ian are, “luau,” “poi,” “lomi,” “laulau,” and “poke.” Most of these words are Hawai‘ian words for different foods in the Hawai‘ian culture. *Poi* is a starch made out of *Kalo*. *Laulau* is any type of meat wrapped in ti leaf and steamed. *Poke* is a cubed fish mixed with different sauces like oyster sauce and sesame oil. The word *lomi* is usually heard with the word salmon, so *lomi* salmon. *Lomi* salmon has diced-up tomatoes, onions, salmon, green onions, and more, all salted.

Lastly, the word *luau* is a gathering whether it be friends or family. These gatherings consist of eating Hawai'ian dishes like *poi*, *laulau*, *lomi* salmon, and *poke* all while enjoying the presence of everyone's loved ones.

This song gives the listener a glimpse of living in Hawai'i. Enjoying catching fish, eating *poi* that was made from the land, and more. Listeners can reminisce on childhood memories. It also reminds the listener never to forget the roots of growing up in Hawai'i. This song shows the natural beauty and cultural traditions of the Hawai'ian islands.

## Looking Beyond

When listening to "Hawai'i 78" there is a strong use of pathos within the song. To begin, the chorus talks about our ancestors "crying" because of the modernization of the land. Already here this is pathos. Including the emotions of how the ancestors would react to seeing the land makes this song very sad. The use of code-switching at the beginning and end of the song also adds to the effects of pathos. Understanding that one of the injustices Hawai'ians had to deal with was the diminishing of the Hawai'ian language, including a line of Hawai'ian language was a bold move for the author. Especially the line that was used; it holds so much meaning.



Incorporating the Hawai'ian language was a way of protesting to bring back the Hawai'ian language.

In the love song, "Pualena" uses pathos to show the audience how much love the writer has for their significant other. The chorus of the song is "You're my Pualena... you're so beautiful... God knows I love you, you're all I need... Pualena you take my breath away..." These words work so beautifully together giving the audience an almost "mushy gushy" feeling. It's almost like the author uses these words to make the audience feel as if they are "Pualena."

In "Fish and Poi," the use of native Hawai'ian dishes brings a lot of emotions for me as the listener. The song brings all the positive emotions back to the surface when enjoying Hawai'ian foods. Along with the Hawai'ian foods the listener is also able to reminisce about their childhood in Hawai'i. Of course, this song does not mention every common memory in each child's childhood, but the song allows the listener to have flashbacks of what they would do as little kids. It brings the listener back to their inner child self. They are able to relive their childhood all through a song.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we have answered our research question which was, how does code-switching affect the pathos in a Hawai'ian genre song? We answered this question by analyzing three different songs from the Hawai'ian genre. First being "Hawai'i 78," second being "Pualena," and third being "Fish and Poi." These songs contained different amounts of code-switching which for me as a listener played a role in the effect of pathos in the songs. Each song has different stories and meanings behind them making them all very unique.

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