I Ke Mele Ke Ola: Hawaiian Language Lives Through Song
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Keiki Kawai ‘ae ‘a
Recalled encounter between a prospective immersion parent and a school administrator who related to the parent “Why would you want your child in Hawaiian immersion - all they do is sing songs and dance hula”

Socio-Political Context
- Overthrow: 1893
- Hawaiian medium education outlawed: 1898
- Language Decline: 1898-1980s
- Cultural Revitalization / “Hawaiian Renaissance”: 1960s-present
- Language Revitalization / “Reversing Language Shift”: 1980s-present

Pūnana Leo History / Today
- Formed and first Pūnana Leo Preschool established in 1983
- Hawaiian medium education “legalized” in 1986
- Today: 11 Preschools on 5 islands

Pūnana Leo o Hilo: Ka Honua (The Environment)
Music As Pedagogy

- An adaptation of “classical” Hawaiian education methods (Charlot 2005)
- Mele and musical performance used as a vehicle for transmission of knowledge
- Acquisition of grammatical structures and vocabulary
- Hawaiian poetic devices assist in retention of knowledge

Example 1: “Nā I’a ’Ono Ė”

Example 2: “Ku ‘u Kumu”
Example 2: Advanced grammar in childrens’ song

- Common SL Learner usage
  Nāna - e a ’o mai - ia ’u
  Subject - verb phrase - object
- Native/Advanced Speaker usage
  Nāna - au - e a ’o mai
  Subject - object - verb phrase

Example 3: Transmission of Cultural Knowledge/Values

- Two children misbehave during performance of song for ali ’i (chief)
- Students corrected after music performance, ask for and receive forgiveness
- Lessons continue…

Culture Clash?

- Prospective Pūnana Leo parents objecting to mele mentioning pre-Christian deities.
- Māori woman who objected to the use of Christian hīmeni (hymns) at Pūnana Leo schools

Conclusion

- Demonstrates power of music as pedagogy, transmission of
  - Language skills
  - Other subject content
  - Culturally appropriate context and behavior

Mahalo!

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