

REVIEW

by Prof. Milena Shushulova-Pavlova, PhD, New Bulgarian University,
on the doctoral dissertation of **Antoaneta Hristova Stoyanova**,
a regular PhD student at the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts,
Department of Music and Multimedia Technologies at Sofia University "St. Kliment
Ohridski", under the scientific guidance of Prof. Ganka Nedelcheva, PhD, on the topic:
FOREIGN LANGUAGE CHILDREN'S SONGS IN MUSIC EDUCATION AT PRESCHOOL AND
PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE – PROBLEMS OF AUTHOR'S TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION
for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor"
in professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of education in...,
doctoral program "Methodology of music education"

Biographical data

Antoaneta Hristova Stoyanova graduated in Primary School Pedagogy and Radio Journalism at Sofia University (1990-1995). She then obtained a master's qualification in opera singing at the Ecole Normale de Musique de Paris "Alfred Cortot" (ENMP)¹ and at CNR Cergy² (2004-2006) in Paris, France. She specialized in opera singing also in Rome, Italy, at A.R.T. Musica (2008-2009). She subsequently worked as a translator, choral artist, tour operator, manager, and for the past 12 years (2012-2024), she has been an English language teacher. Antoaneta is a translator of numerous children's songs into Bulgarian. She is proficient in English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, and Russian. She has interests in history, arts, and literature.

Content of the dissertation

The doctoral student was expelled on February 1, 2023, by Order of the Rector of Sofia University. The dissertation and the abstract were presented, discussed, and proposed for defense at a meeting of the Department of Music and Multimedia Technologies. The dissertation includes 172 pages. It comprises an introduction, four chapters³, contributions, conclusions, bibliography, and appendices. The bibliography includes 19 sources (7 of them in Cyrillic) and 3 internet links. The appendices include interviews with Boyko Kunev; with Petya Milanova; with Elena Vatrlova; survey cards for parents; individual cards for studying the children of Kindergarten 62, Sofia; Kindergarten 192, Sofia; 51st Secondary School; "Hristo Botev" Primary School, Pleven.

¹ The school is not recognized by the Bologna process (Bologna Convention on the comparability of higher education 1999). <https://www.ecolenormalecortot.com/>

² <https://www.conservatoire-cergyponoise.fr/>

³³ FIRST CHAPTER. **Specifics of translated songs.** 1.1. Problem statement. 1.2. Types of translation. 1.3. Types of children's songs. 1.4. Basic concepts and characteristics of author translation. (1.4.1. Definition of the term author's translation. 1.4.2. Melody of the text helps the successful translation. 1.4.3. Translator approaches. 1.4.3.1. Defining the title of the translated text; 1.4.3.2. Structural and grammatical changes; 1.4.3.3. Chorus. 1.4.4. Translator's style. 1.4.4. Prosody and its huge importance in making a quality translation.)

SECOND CHAPTER. **Theoretical directions in the realization of the translation of children's songs.**

2.1. Peter Low's principles. 2.2. Johan Franzon and his views on translation. 2.3. Aspects of translation in different musical genres according to Ronnie Apter and Mark Herman. 2.4. Methodological views on translation by Philip Tagg. THIRD CHAPTER. **Specific translation tasks for different types of translation songs.** 3.1. Translation of greeting songs. 3.2. Translation of play songs. 3.3. Translation of counting songs. 3.4. Translation of lullabies. 3.5. Translation of songs with a plot. 3.6. Translation of songs with a fairy-tale plot. 3.7. Translation of songs for the development of fine motor skills. 3.8. Translation of songs related to holidays. 3.9. Translation of songs related to education of hygiene habits. 3.10. Translation of dance-related songs. 3.11. Translation of songs translated from a third language. 3.12. Translation of songs from the curriculum with the possibility of cross-curricular connections in kindergarten and school. FOURTH CHAPTER. **Influence of children's translation songs on the emotional development and learning of children in kindergarten and primary school education.** 4.1. Diagnostic toolkit. 4.2. Conducting research in KG 62, Sofia. (4.2.1. A control group study; 4.2.2. An experimental group study). 4.3. Conducting research KG 192, Sofia. (4.3.1. A study of control groups; 4.3.2. A study of experimental groups). 4.4. Survey for parents – structure and results. 4.5. Conducting research with students in third grade at 51st Secondary School "Elisaveta Bagryana", Sofia (4.5.1. A control group study; 4.5.2. An experimental group study of). 4.6. Conducting research with second-grade students at "Hristo Botev" Primary School, Pleven (4.6.1. A control group study; 4.6.2. An experimental group study). 4.7. Conclusions and recommendations.

Precisely formulated goals and objectives of the dissertation

The aim of the dissertation is to investigate and analyze foreign-language children's songs, *to structure* and apply specific methodological approaches in their translation into the native language and apply specific methodological approaches in their translation into the native language.

The *subject* of the study is focused on the content of foreign-language children's songs translated into Bulgarian and their application in music education activities in kindergartens and primary schools. It examines the role of children's songs in establishing interdisciplinary connections in the educational process, the influence of translated songs on children's perception and comprehension of specific educational material. The research object is the work with translated foreign language songs and their application in music classes in kindergarten and primary school. The main hypothesis of the doctoral student is: "*If conditions are created for working on a text adapted to the final realization of the song, then it will have value and influence on the formation and development of children's emotional intelligence and will find its wide application*" (quote from the dissertation). The main tasks set are: to investigate original sources related to the topic (theoretical-practical approaches to translation in Bulgaria and abroad); to describe the characteristics of translating children's songs, defining a specific conceptual framework; to examine the current state of the problem; to study publications of educational programs and selections and the corresponding interdisciplinary connections; to develop a diagnostic toolkit for conducting the study – observations, surveys, interviews, discussions; to prepare an appendix with song lyrics and explanations for each one as an additional resource for music teachers in kindergartens and in the early stages of schooling.

Importance of researching the problem in a scientific and scientific-applied context

According to the PhD student, the problem of translating foreign language children's songs in Bulgaria has not been studied. This provides arguments in favour of the relevance of the topic addressed in the dissertation. "*Understanding, interpreting, and appreciating foreign language songs translated into Bulgarian enrich the Bulgarian child's exposure to various cultures and traditions from around the world and aid in their communication with it.*" (quote from the dissertation) For the successful completion of Antoaneta Stoyanova's quality scientific work, personal experience is of great importance – she has translated over a hundred songs from seven languages, some of which have been published for music education purposes in kindergartens in the "Wonderful World" supplement by "Prosveta" Publishing House, as well as in music textbooks for first, second, and third grades by "Riva" Publishing House. All songs (101) have been published in audio format, and some in video format on various music platforms (YouTube, Spotify).

Degree of understanding the problem and relevance of the literature used

The first chapter of the dissertation addresses the issue of author translations with their processes, stages, and conceptual apparatus that serve them. The chain of original – author translation – arrangement – singers-actors – producer (publisher) – sound recording – listeners/performers is important, with its components, according to the PhD student, needing to work in complete symbiosis. The songs realized as video animations further contribute to the emotional comfort of children, not only for auditory but also visual perception of the specific product. Antoaneta Stoyanova allows herself to provide some guidance to young authors wishing to engage in translating children's songs. Translated songs from different languages are used as a resource in music education, released on six CDs by "Kanev Music" Production House, as well as distributed on YouTube and other platforms. **In the second chapter**, the theoretical aspects of translation are clarified through the publications of song translators from Europe, North America, and New Zealand, their views on the characteristics of the original, and their path to realizing the translated texts as an integral part of the musical line. Some possible and permissible changes are considered with the aim of successfully completing and implementing the final product. **The third chapter** analyzes various types of songs. Reflections and years of experience as a translator assist in the research work. The examined songs or parts thereof are presented in tables to illustrate the examples. **The fourth chapter** presents the experimental pedagogical study – perception, comprehension, and reproduction of a translated song by children. The degree of their emotional reactions and satisfaction is noted. The experiment covers a wide age range. Reactions of children in kindergarten and students at the initial stage of schooling are monitored. For this purpose, the PhD student establishes two groups – *control* and *experimental*. An individual card is created for each child and student, reflecting the degree of reaction according to certain criteria, which, after statistical processing, provides an indication for interpreting and understanding the translated children's song.

For a higher level of objectivity, surveys with parents, interviews with music educators, and producers have been utilized, complementing the researcher's observations and analyses.

For the purposes of the current dissertation, the term "**author's translation**" is introduced, which appears both in the textual content and in the tabular presentation. I would like to quote the following from Antoaneta's dissertation: "***The melody of the text aids in successful translation (a term introduced in the lectures of Prof. A. Georgiev, PhD) does not simply mean 'singing the song,' but rather a musical-verbal unity between the text and the composition. This makes the text 'singing,' i.e., conveying a message in combination with the music – an important detail that must always be present to achieve quality translation. ... Five criteria (Pentathlon Principle) define the success of song translations: singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme.***"

Scientific conclusions drawn by Antoaneta Stoyanova from the comparative analysis of the results of the conducted six observations with control and experimental groups: "***When listening to the songs in their original language, they initially 'capture' the children's attention, thanks to the melodies. However, the lack of understandable lyrics provokes reactions of confusion, disturbance, and reluctance to reproduce the proposed songs. The concentration of the participants significantly weakens, especially during the second listening of the proposed songs. The final result in percentages significantly differs from that of the study of translated songs. Songs with artistic translation into Bulgarian provoke faster, fuller, and more decisive interest and desire for reproduction. Motivation increases through positive emotional reactions during learning and reproduction. A strong connection between music and memory is formed. Studies show how artistic translation of songs can enhance listening skills with understanding in young children, especially when the songs are suitable for dramatization. This could be used as a useful strategy in children's education, the productivity of which is directly related to their visual-spatial thinking and perception in preschool and early elementary school age. The texts of a large part of the translated songs serve as a basis for creating interdisciplinary connections, both in kindergarten and in elementary school.***"

Accuracy in citing a representative number of authors

Antoaneta Stoyanova is meticulous in her citations. She relies on a modest bibliography, upon which she has built and substantiated her doctoral thesis. However, a significant supplementary argument for her bibliography is her extensive personal experience as a translator and educator in the field.

Contributions of the dissertation work

I would present the contributions of the dissertation as follows:

1. The present dissertation contributes due to the absence of publications in Bulgarian on the topic. The foreign literature used in the dissertation on the issue of authorial translation (regardless of the grammatical and phonetic differences in different languages) can provide important guidelines for structuring the translated text and supporting its main component - the melody.
2. In the dissertation, in the theoretical part, methodological guidelines are derived which can serve subsequent translators wishing to work on children's songs from various languages. For the first time, the concept of **author's translation** is defined, and its specifics are described.
3. Various types of songs have been researched and practically applied through observations and experiments in kindergartens and primary schools. In the analysis of the songs throughout the dissertation, tables have been applied to illustrate the content (of the entire text or parts of it). This was done to showcase the beauty of the Bulgarian language and the richness of all its lexical and grammatical forms. Conscious avoidance of foreign words, to the extent possible, despite their widespread use today, is necessary for preserving the Bulgarian language and would prevent our depersonalization as a nation.
4. A particularly valuable contribution to the dissertation research are the translated songs created by Antoaneta Stoyanova (released on CD and DVD) and published on various music platforms as practical resources for kindergartens and elementary schools, enriching knowledge across various subjects by establishing interdisciplinary connections through the types of songs analyzed in the dissertation.
5. The translated songs in Bulgarian are successfully used by the Bulgarian diaspora abroad (in family or educational settings). An important aspect is the preservation of the native language

as a primary source of communication and connection with Bulgaria. Many Bulgarians living in Germany, Italy, France, and the USA benefit from the CDs of translated songs released by "Kanev Music". In the appendices, there is feedback from a Bulgarian school in Nantucket, USA, regarding the significance of translated songs and their application in the education of its students.⁴

Assessment of the alignment of the abstract with the main points and contributions of the dissertation.

The abstract does not correspond to the dissertation. Two of its chapters are not included. The second chapter, which I consider interesting and important because it discusses scientifically and practically different translation systems - according to Peter Low (the five principles mentioned above), Johan Franzon, Ronnie Apter and Mark Herman, Philip Tagg. And the third chapter, which presents in detail the specific tasks of translating various children's songs, something extremely interesting for music educators and young translators embarking on this path. I consider this a significant omission in the abstract.

Personal qualities of the author (if the reviewer knows them)

I don't personally know Antoaneta Stoyanova. Her doctoral dissertation demonstrates seriousness and practical expertise. She will likely continue to be active in her work, both in research and teaching.

Recommendations

This work should become sufficiently visible to a wider audience - among teachers, students, youth, and translators. However, for this purpose, it needs editorial and proofreading intervention. The text requires serious formatting.

Publications on the topic of the dissertation work

Antoaneta Stoyanova has presented three publications related to the topic of her doctoral dissertation, necessary for the theoretical dissertation work.

In conclusion of this REVIEW, I would like to provide the following assessment: The work of the doctoral candidate meets the scientometric criteria for obtaining the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor," according to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria. The doctoral dissertation of Antoaneta Hristova Stoyanova, a regular PhD student at the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts, Department of Music and Multimedia Technologies at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Ganka Nedelcheva, on the topic: FOREIGN LANGUAGE CHILDREN'S SONGS IN MUSIC EDUCATION AT PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE - PROBLEMS OF AUTHOR'S TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION, together with its contributions, scientific and applied qualities, as well as her publications, are considered sufficient to give my positive evaluation and to propose to the esteemed academic jury **to award the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor"** in professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching..., **to Antoaneta Hristova Stoyanova**, in accordance with the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

5.4.2024, Sofia

Prof. Milena Shushulova-Pavlova, PhD

⁴ As part of her contributions, doctoral candidate Antoaneta Stoyanova also includes her authored book "The Magical World of Children's Foreign-Language Songs," which she presents as "a wonderful practical resource in music classes through the opportunities provided for studying the lyrics of various songs in their original or translated form. The book can also serve music teachers in the early stages of language schools." I agree with the benefit of the book. I would consider it to be part of the contributions of the dissertation if it is included as an appendix to it.