

REVIEW

By Prof. Adrian Georgiev, PhD, Department of Music and Multimedia Technologies,
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of a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
ON THE TOPIC:

Children's Foreign Language Songs in Music Education at Preschool and Primary
School Age – Problems of Author's Translation and Adaptation

Antoaneta Hristova Stoyanova

Antoaneta Stoyanova successfully completed her doctoral studies at Sofia University, Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts, Department of Music and Multimedia Technologies in 2023, when she was dismissed with the right to defend her dissertation. Her scientific supervisor was Prof. Ganka Nedelcheva, PhD. Antoaneta Stoyanova holds a master's degree with a gold medal in "Opera Singing" from ENMP Alfred Cortot and CNR Cergy, Paris, France. In 2008-2009, she specialized in opera singing at A.R.T. Musica in Rome, Italy.

From the provided autobiographical reference, it is evident that she possesses an exceptionally high level of proficiency in French, Italian, English, German, Spanish, Russian, and Serbo-Croatian languages, at levels C1 and B2, respectively, certified.

This is likely the reason for her interests in the field of music, author's translation, and music for children, which also determined the theme of her dissertation, namely children's foreign language songs in music education in preschool and primary school age.

The topic is extremely relevant in the field of music pedagogy, particularly regarding the possibilities for adapting author's translations.

The dissertation consists of 171 pages, distributed into an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, bibliography of 19 sources (6 in Bulgarian and 13 in foreign languages). Internet resources and sources are also utilised and provided as web addresses. According to the doctoral candidate, the issue of translating foreign language children's songs has not been researched in Bulgaria to date. This argues for the high degree of topicality of the theme addressed in the dissertation.

Understanding, interpreting, and translating foreign language songs into Bulgarian enriches Bulgarian children's exposure to various cultures and traditions worldwide and facilitates their communication with them. The symbiosis between music and text, presented in a concise form known as a song, creates conditions for building interdisciplinary connections both in kindergarten and in primary school education.

The aim of the work is to research and analyze children's foreign language songs, and based on this, to structure and apply specific methodological approaches in their translation into the native language. Clear main tasks related to the development of the dissertation are defined.

- To explore original sources related to the topic (theoretical and practical approaches to translation both domestically and abroad).
- To describe the peculiarities of translating children's songs by defining a specific conceptual apparatus.
- To investigate the current state of the issue.
- To examine publications on educational programs and selections, as well as the relevant interdisciplinary connections.
- To develop a diagnostic toolkit for conducting the research – observations, surveys, interviews, discussions.
- To prepare an appendix with song lyrics and explanations for each one, serving as an additional resource for music teachers in kindergartens and the early stages of schooling.

The subject of the study is the content of children's foreign language songs translated into Bulgarian and their application in music education activities in kindergartens and primary schools. The question is also raised regarding the establishment and enhancement of interdisciplinary connections during the educational process and the influence of translated songs on the perception and understanding of specific educational materials by children in kindergarten and primary school.

The object of the study is the use of foreign language songs in translation and their application in music activities in kindergarten and primary school.

The main hypothesis is: If conditions are created for working on the text, tailored to the final implementation 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.

To prove the hypothesis, empirical studies were conducted, including observations in two kindergartens in Sofia. All age groups were covered – from first to fourth grade. By forming and evaluating control and experimental groups, a diverse contingent was covered, including minority groups. The aim and toolkit include the study and analysis of children's foreign language songs in original and translated versions; the study and analysis of the content of children's foreign language songs in the original and in translation into Bulgarian. The main tasks are to investigate the reactions of children to the perception and understanding of foreign language songs in the original, to investigate the reactions of children to the perception and understanding of foreign language songs in artistic translation into Bulgarian, to compare and analyze the results of the two studies, and to draw necessary conclusions. For the purpose of the study, an individual card was prepared in advance for each child participating in each of the two groups. Above each card, the child's own name is noted with initials, gender, and age.

Six criteria have been defined to study the reactions of children from different age groups during the respective observations. They are all interconnected and complement each other to create a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes of young listeners during the observation and, consequently, when summarizing the reactions. The graphs on the right indicate the titles of two or three songs offered to the children, depending on their age, during the observation.

On a 10-point scale, the criteria in the graphs are summed up, where zero represents complete dissatisfaction, and 10 represents complete satisfaction. Below each card, the final score is noted, obtained by summing up the graphs of the six criteria. For the purpose of the declarative stage of the experiment, a control group is formed to monitor the reactions of the children during two listening sessions of songs in the original language. For the purpose of the real experiment, an experimental group is formed to monitor the reactions of the children during two listening sessions of songs translated into Bulgarian.

The comparative analysis of the results from the conducted six observations with control and experimental groups yields the following conclusions:

- The songs in their original language initially "capture" the children's attention, thanks to the melodies; the lack of understandable lyrics provokes reactions of confusion, disturbance, and reluctance to reproduce the suggested songs.
- The participants' concentration significantly weakens, especially during the second listening of the suggested songs.
- The final result in percentages significantly differs from that of the study of translated songs; a predominance in terms of emotional satisfaction level is observed in favor of the experimental groups.
- Songs with artistic translation into Bulgarian provoke faster, more complete, and more decisive interest and desire for reproduction; they increase motivation through positive emotional reactions during learning and reproduction; they form a strong connection between music and memory; they demonstrate how artistic translation of songs can improve listening skills with comprehension in young children by informally introducing them to new vocabulary, expressions, and idioms; they have strong emotional content, making them suitable for dramatisation.

This could be used as a beneficial strategy in children's education, the productivity of which is directly related to their visual-spatial thinking and perception at preschool and early school age; the texts of many translated songs provide a basis for creating interdisciplinary connections, both in kindergarten and in primary school. Teachers and parents are advised to use translated foreign language songs according to the children's age, due to the different duration, type, and complexity of the lyrics; to be prepared to answer any questions from the children prompted by the lyrics of the songs or words and phrases requiring explanation; to use songs in their original language when studying the respective foreign language; songs in the original language can also be used as a means to provoke children's curiosity and desire to learn a foreign language.

I agree with the significant points in the dissertation work, and I will highlight some, which I consider to be the most important:


- The use of foreign literature on the topic of author's translation, despite the grammatical and phonetic differences in foreign languages, cited in the dissertation, can provide important guidelines for structuring the translated text and for developing one of its main components – the melody.

- Methodological guidelines have been derived through the reasoning in the theoretical part, which can serve young authors who wish to undertake the challenging task of translating children's songs from different languages.
- For the first time, the concept of the author's translation is defined, and its specifics are described.
- Various types of songs are studied and practically applied through observations and experiments in kindergarten and elementary school.
- Utilisation of the translated songs previously created by the author of the dissertation, released on CD and DVD, and published on various music platforms as a practical resource in kindergarten and elementary school.

Publications on the topic of the dissertation:

1. "Author's Translation of Children's Foreign Language Songs – Specifics and Challenges" - Yearbook of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Arts, Volume 115, pp. 55-74, Sofia 2022, ISSN 2738-7062
 2. "Play as a Means of Music Education in Preschool Age", Section "Musical Interpretation, Pedagogy" I.2024; Musicology-bg.com; ISSN: 2534-9279
 3. "Influence of Children's Translated Songs on the Development of Emotional Intelligence in Preschool Children", Section "Musical Interpretation, Pedagogy" II. 2024; Musicology-bg.com; ISSN: 2534-9279
 4. "The Magical World of Children's Foreign Language Songs: 101 Song Lyrics", Antoaneta Stoyanova, AnimaArts 2022, ISBN 978-619-7366-03-7
- Considering all the above, I confidently propose to the esteemed scientific jury to award Antoaneta Stoyanova the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching... Methodology of music education.

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Signature: .....
 Prof. Adrian Georgiev, PhD