

## VALUES EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PROTEST MUSIC IN ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASSES

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### Abstract

*The English language day by day is becoming ever increasingly important in the world. Music in foreign language education can be seen as a helpful method that spontaneously livens the learning atmosphere. In this paper, we are arguing for (the use of) songs that stir and inspire “social change” and that are an “authentic” part of pop culture as being an effective means of teaching English. We recommend that the songs used in this paper be for intermediate and advanced-level students and/or high school students in grade 9 and above. The researcher behind this paper had 18 years of experience teaching English in every sort of institution within the Turkish National Ministry of Education as well as five years of experience of teaching Turkish abroad. The researcher aims to show—through examples—the benefits of using this all-stirring and inspiring protest music in the English language classroom alongside the opportunity within for students to study a county’s social movements. Students’ renewed enthusiasm as well as what language instruction gains through this enlivened classroom is also defended.*

**Keywords:** Protest Music; culture; values education; character development; speaking

## İNGİLİZCE KONUŞMA DERSLERİNDE ÖZGÜN MÜZİK ARACILIĞIYLA DEĞERLER EĞİTİMİ VE DİL EDİNİMİ

### Özet

*İngilizce dili dünyada günden güne daha da önemli hale gelmektedir. Ders esnasında kullanılan müzik, öğrenme atmosferini aniden renklendiren bir metod şeklini alabilir. Makalemizde sosyal değişimlere de sebep olabilen şarkı türlerinin sınıflarda uygulanmasının genel olarak öğretmenlerin otantik materyal kullanımına olan bakış açılarını da etkileyeceğini düşünüyoruz. Makalemizdeki bütün şarkıları “intermediate’ den advanced” düzeyine kadar olan ve dokuzuncu sınıftan büyük öğrenci grupları için önermekteyiz. 18 yıl Türkiye Milli Eğitim Bakanlığına ait her türlü eğitim öğretim kurumunda İngilizce öğretmenliği tecrübesine ve beş yıl yurtdışında yabancılara Türkçe öğretimi tecrübesine sahip araştırmacı, sosyal değişimi teşvik eden, buna ilham veren müzik şarkılarının İngilizce sınıflarında kullanılmasıyla beraber oluşan faydaları örnekleriyle göstermektedir. Sınıflarda oluşacak bu renkliliğin de öğrenciler tarafından ilginç bulunacağı ve dil öğretimine katkı sağlayacağı savunulmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Özgün müzik; kültür; değerler eğitimi; karakter gelişimi; konuşma

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## 1.) Introduction

The English language day by day is becoming ever increasingly important in the world (Crystal D, 2003; Harmer J., 2007). Despite this, effective teaching methodology of English language for the benefit of the student is the most pressing issue. In general, what is at the root of classroom teachers' criticism is students' lack of interest and motivation (Green-Demers & Pelletier, 2003).

Music in foreign language education—and especially in social research-related topics—is a robust field that has the potential to walk hand-in-hand with classroom textbooks but Coe (1972) writes that there have been no controlled music use in the language classroom experiments and Griffiee (1989) claims that songs aren't used more extensively in the language classroom and this is due to the lack of theoretical perspective.

The music used can be seen as a helpful method that spontaneously livens the learning atmosphere, thins the barrier between itself and the lesson in question. It establishes a tie between that lesson and real life insofar that the lines of a song's verse contain (universal) human themes a part of day-to-day life such as anger, love, hate, romance, and shattered dreams (Nagy & Herman, 1987).

In this paper, we are arguing for (the use of) songs that stir and inspire "social change" and that are an "authentic" part of pop culture as being an effective means of teaching English. These are songs that the teacher can apply to any age group and that will be admired (especially) by young students. The songs we choose are ones that can be used for developing the four basic skills that are part of language learning. We recommend that the songs used in this paper be for intermediate and advanced-level students and/or high school students in grade nine and above.

The researcher behind this paper had 18 years of experience teaching English in every sort of institution within the Turkish National Ministry of Education as well as five years of experience of teaching Turkish abroad. The researcher aims to show—through examples—the benefits of using this all-stirring and inspiring protest music in the English language classroom alongside the opportunity within for students to study a country's social movements. Students' renewed enthusiasm as well as what language instruction gains through this enlivened classroom is also defended.

When teachers express students' lack of enthusiasm towards a foreign language, they forget what students enjoy—the lyrics to a song, or the dialogue of a favourite scene from a movie they have watched that they have memorized by heart. Students will become more easily motivated when the plain and beautiful melodies and understandable lyrics of this genre of music, hand-in-hand with a nation's social and cultural values are taken into consideration.

## 2.) Songs That Inspire Social Change and ELT

Protest music is a response to a social event encircled around culture, politics, women's rights, war, worker's rights, social or economic unrest. This response zeros in on how the given event should or shouldn't be and can



tell an individual story within that response in the form of lyrics. At the end of the 1950s—particularly throughout the Vietnam War—protest music has been observed to have reached its pinnacle, with public involvement in it being very high. This meant the creation of new songs and, through that, the forming of a period of outcry against the social dissatisfaction of the time (Cloonan: 2007).

English teachers can use protest music in foreign language education as material in lessons of a cultural or historical nature. Through this, students will be observed approaching a society's past with more interest and enthusiasm and will not view what they are learning and thus history as mere dry information. They will become swathed in more emotions and, at the hands of this music, will have entered that music's time period and will create an animated, exciting classroom environment.

If the goal of foreign language teachers is to turn students into cultural and social discoverers through the materials they use, then social change-themed songs full that very objective. The overall message of the song should be easy for students grasp. We as English teachers should focus on teaching the language, as well as increase the variety of activities used throughout the lesson through the use of these materials.

In today's world, we are witness to our students' exposure outside of school to the mosaic that is the world at large via the media and technology. We too, in observing this reality, want to spice up foreign language learning within the classroom through materials that are packed with socio-cultural content.

It is a fact that teachers show an interest in using music as part of foreign language teaching. Meaningful songs should not only be used as warm-up activities, they should at the same time have students gain social and cultural awareness. Thus, in addition to students developing their language skills, they will also exhibit personal development through universal issues. A good song will both enhance students linguistically, have students think within a different cultural context, and have them gain an appreciation of art (Murphey, 1990).

### **3.) The Benefits of Songs in Teaching and Learning**

Teachers should remember that songs brought into the classroom through creative methods are more effective than they would anticipate. In our paper, we feel that the classroom use of music that is oriented around social change will also, generally-speaking, influence the opinions the teachers using this authentic material. Teachers will then be of the opinion that they cannot teach without using authentic material.

In general, as far as the researcher observed in the institutions he worked, the songs are brought into classes on happy-go-lucky Fridays by the teachers in order to give students a rest from the drudgery of the week past. Sometimes, these songs are not even fill-in-the-blank or choose the correct word-type activities. Upon talking with the teachers about the use of music in the classroom, it appears that they are interested in incorporating songs into their classes. Some of the feedback given are as follows:

- Songs are authentic material that we bring to the classroom unaltered and that are aimed at using the target language.



- In choosing my materials, I like songs because they make learning active rather than passive.
- Some of the songs I choose are aimed at developing pronunciation, whilst others are aimed at developing speaking skills.
- When I examine each song, I provide students with real dialogues in accordance with the Communication Language Teaching (CLT) method.
- The teacher can use songs as part of various classroom activities, i.e. listening, writing, reading, storytelling, and open conversation; her/his interest is enough.
- Time isn't wasted when the songs we teach in the classroom are classic, repetitive, simple, and understandable.
- From some songs we can focus on culture, whilst from others we can teach grammar.
- I can ask my students questions about their thoughts on what they understood from the song, alongside questions about the song's theme.
- Song analysis should not consume most of the activity, or else it may cause the student to lose interest.
- (The use of) songs is definitely an activity that heightens student's sense of motivation, interest, self-confidence, creativity and level of participation in class.
- Students both have fun as well as learn via the use of songs in the lesson.
- When song-based activities are conducted properly, they pose a benefit to the student's four basic skills.
- Classroom teachers ought to prepare students with authentic patterns of speech—music is thus very beneficial for this.
- Music enables the student to have a positive attitude towards her/his lesson, which in turn supports academic achievement.
- Sometimes when the idea of using music as an activity springs to mind, it at the same time as the potential to change teaching as a profession. Music has changed how pedagogy is viewed.

Eighteen years of experience teaching English in every sort of institution within the Turkish National Ministry of Education as well as five years of experience of teaching Turkish abroad has shown us that a song, when appropriately chosen for the language classroom, is not just merely a reading, speaking, or listening activity for the student within that given point in time.

Music in fact can also allow students to reach a point of defining themselves in terms of character development, philosophical approach, and reaching their potential. Upon talking with the students about music as part of their lessons, it seems that they too are interested in seeing and studying songs as part of their classes—as the following feedback shows:

- Our teachers should be conscious of our language level when choosing music, or else we get side tracked by grammar we haven't yet learned.



- It's sometimes difficult to understand music—especially pop. They are fast and time consuming.
- Thinking about and analysing heightens our sense of linguistic and cultural awareness.
- With the right music, we are regaining our enthusiasm about learning a foreign language, as well as discovering paths that lead into new worlds.
- The songs used in class have a positive impact on our emotions, and they reduce the stress we face with our families as well as with learning English at the hands of the exam system.
- The nervousness and fear I face when communicate in English had a negative impact on me, however understanding songs gives me self-confidence.
- Music has a positive impact on our pronunciation/diction.
- My level of self-confidence is given a lift after very music-based activity.
- Enjoying, singing, and having fun together with the music we are listening to creates a positive feeling, and thus positively affects the classroom atmosphere.
- Connecting with one another while singing is beneficial for our sense of communication.
- I lack of interest when it comes to foreign languages. Music, however, motivates me.
- The feeling of being able to understand native speakers when listening to music makes me happy, and thus I enjoy the music.
- Songs teach me how to listen well and how to understand each and every word.
- Performing songs in front of people (that is, without self-confidence issues or forgetting the lines) is a wonderful feeling that all students should experience.

When a problem occurs during a class-based listening activity, teachers make students emphatically repeat certain words they fail to grasp without keeping track. Students struggle conversing with native speakers, as native speakers themselves do not talk in this fashion. Through songs, listening skills become more automatic and—in the students' favourite music being repeated over—this enables the student to be more at ease with speaking and pronunciation, which in turn dissolves the learner's nervousness (Daniels, 2003; Hatasa, 2002).

#### **4.) English and Character Development Through Protest Music**

There is an old Chinese proverb that says: "If your plan is for one year plant rice. If your plan is for ten years plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years educate children." Our goal in weaving music into the English language classroom is to enhance their sense of character development and values. Our youth, who are sculpting the future upon an internalized sense of world peace, equality, and morality will in turn have a positive impact on the world.



We recommend that these songs be used for at least intermediate-level (grade 9) students as well as for adults. Any one of the songs can be used for any number of teaching objectives, i.e. grammar, listening, pronunciation, etc. However, one should not forget the researcher's wanting these songs to teach human values all the while sharpening students' speaking skills. The use of this kind of authentic material in the classroom shows students natural language as well as attempts to reach out to people in much the same way the artist had naturally intended.

#### **4.1.) "Where have all the flowers gone?"**

Pete Seeger's "Where have all the flowers gone?", which was written in the 1960s during the Vietnam War, and that took a stance against war all the while standing for peace, is one of the most important and most widely used songs of that era. In recent years this song has been used by UNICEF in several of its ads.

The use of this song will prove beneficial in terms of describing this era to students. This song is fun and easy for students to memorize, its useful for vocabulary development and pronunciation and, in addition to enhancing students' sense of capacity from several vantage points, it also contains a powerful message.

Where have all the flowers gone, long time passing?

Where have all the flowers gone, long time ago?

Where have all the flowers gone?

Young girls have picked them everyone.

Oh, when will they ever learn?

Oh, when will they ever learn?

Where have all the young girls gone, long time passing?

Where have all the young girls gone, long time ago?

Where have all the young girls gone?

Gone for husbands everyone.

Oh, when will they ever learn?

Oh, when will they ever learn?

Students through this song are expected to have discussions about war and its casualties. This is an exercise that teaches values that are deemed necessary for today's world. After the song is read through with/by the students, a number of discussion questions can both enliven the classroom environment as well as have students understand the anti-war stance of the song more clearly:

1. What is the main message of this song?



2. How does this song make you feel?
3. Are there songs speak out against war or promote peace in your country?
4. Do you think we can create a world without war?
5. Is it a happy or sad song? Why?
6. Who listens to this kind of song?
7. What do you think of this song?
8. Do you agree with Shakespeare that music is the food of love?
9. Is there a song that makes you emotional?
10. Is the singer popular in your country?
11. What is repeated in this song?
12. Do you know any events happened in the world that year?
13. Do you agree or disagree with his ideas?

One may not immediately grasp the protest theme of a song upon first glance without closer examination and analysis. The melodies of these songs could be mistaken for being rhyming, harmless marches. On the contrary, these songs are all-encompassing and creative in terms of how they influence the masses and how artists rally together crowds. Simple and at times even childlike lyrics, melody, deep and meaningful context, and harmony can become very moving.

#### **4.2.) "We are The World"**

"We Are The World" is a song from 1985 that deals with the topics of famine and death from starvation in Africa. This single, which was written and sung by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, and had sold 20 million copies worldwide, shows us that music is a thought-provoking tool of communication and that it has the potential to lay the groundwork for social change.

We can impart upon language students the idea that the most important rule of causing a change is taking action. As is observed with this song, one's way of thinking when learning a language is positively influenced, and that music gives the soul inspiration. For the teacher, who is aiming to try and amplify the young student's language skills as well as their sense of social and cultural awareness, her/his inner world will too become more enriched.

There comes a time when we heed a certain call

When the world must come together as one

There are people dying



And it's time to lend a hand to life  
The greatest gift of all  
We can't go on pretending day by day  
That someone, somewhere will soon make a change  
We all are a part of God's great big family  
And the truth, you know,  
Love is all we need  
We are the world, we are the children  
We are the ones who make a brighter day  
So let's start giving  
There's a choice we're making  
We're saving our own lives  
It's true we'll make a better day  
Just you and me

The activity involves both speaking as well as poetic analysis of the song, whereby the student is to try and sing the song, discuss the lyrics, and go into greater depth through question and answering. The use of the song's music video will at the same time provide insight into different cultures. Using music videos (in general) will make lessons more interesting as well be looked at be thought highly of by the student.

When this song is worked on, students will be observed as being friendlier, more inclusive of others, and establishing more emotional bonds with one another within the classroom. Students' love of learning the foreign language through music will also incrementally increase. This activity will become more rounded through various questions that are aimed at examining the song and having students arrive at the (overall) message of its content:

1. What is the main purpose of the song?
2. Who wrote this song?
3. What makes you like a song? The melody, the lyrics, or something else?
4. Does music change your mood?
5. What kind of music do you listen to when you are sad?
6. Is the content of the song is still relevant today?



7. What kinds of rhymes are used in this song?
8. Is this song meaningful to you?
9. Does music encourage people to participate in their community?
10. What role can music play in a movement for social change?
11. Are there any similar songs from your country?
12. What kind of language is used?
13. What key vocabulary is used in this song?
14. Are there synonyms to other words you know?

This song is perhaps one of the most beloved songs of all time. Here, the singers had envisioned a world that lived in peace and was shared by all of humanity. This song has been used in many contexts, it has been covered many a time by many an artist, and has been a source of inspiration for a great many things.

#### **4.3.) "Wavin' Flag"**

K'naan is a Somali-Canadian singer and poet. He started off his childhood during the Somalian civil war under extremely difficult conditions. He then later immigrated to North America. In recent years he has won the hearts of youth. There is much significance in his overcoming his struggles. In 2010, he was asked to sing at the FIFA World Cup. This song at the same time is one that can show students about what it's like to live in Africa. It has an easily learnable and captivating melody. The song emphasis and symbolizes an Africa that is thirsty for freedom.

When I get older I will be stronger

They'll call me freedom, just like a wavin' flag

When I get older, I will be stronger

They'll call me freedom just like a wavin' flag

And then it goes back, and then it goes back

And then it goes back, oh

This song also places emphasis on and African being unable to live safely in their own homes, as well as on their living through hunger and famine. The line "When I will be free" hopes for freedom and living humanely. The singer translated this wish into language throughout the duration of the World Cup.

Born to a throne, stronger than Rome

A violent prone, poor people zone



But it's my home, all I have known  
Where I got grown, streets we would roam  
Out of the darkness, I came the farthest  
Among the hardest survival  
Learn from these streets, it can be bleak  
Accept no defeat, surrender, retreat  
So we struggling, fighting to eat  
And we wondering when we'll be free  
So we patiently wait for that fateful day  
It's not far away, but for now we say

The lines of this song call people to take a stand. It tells of their struggles, their desire for freedom, and showcases their patience and hope. This song, is showing what the Somali people are fighting against in order to stay alive, also shows their hopes, strength, and values. It emphasizes the need for people to love and respect one another, how the divide between black and white is nonsensical, and how people need to dissolve their prejudices.

So many wars, settling scores  
Bringing us promises, leaving us poor  
I heard them say 'love is the way'  
'Love is the answer,' that's what they say  
But look how they treat us, make us believers  
We fight their battles, then they deceive us  
Try to control us, they couldn't hold us  
'Cause we just move forward like Buffalo Soldiers  
But we struggling, fighting to eat  
And we wondering, when we'll be free  
So we patiently wait for that faithful day  
It's not far away but for now we say



This song can be started off as a brainstorming activity and as a precursor for a speaking activity. In place of a fill-in-the-blanks exercise, an activity involving the writing of synonyms and antonyms can also add a bit colour.

On the worksheet we have given to the students, instead of asking them to listen to and find the missing words from the song, we can also write extra words and ask them to eliminate the words that are not found in that song.

Similarly, the lines of the song could be divided into parts, given to students in random order, and then have the students reassemble the lines upon listening to the song. The words of a verse could also be given to a student at random, part of the song would then be played and the students would be asked to write that section of that song. The song would then be compared with its original format.

Students through this song will hold the potential to be able to increase their sense of belonging within the society they live, and will foster a positive feeling across all ages. It will enhance language learning, have students gain a more sensitive sense of citizenship, and have them gain a responsive reflex towards/against the problems around them. Basic discussion questions can be provided to students as a lesson warmup:

1. Do you think such songs are helpful to make people think about the war?
2. Do you think such songs can inspire people to act?
3. Does music ever change the way you think?
4. What music can change the way you feel?
5. Which is more important, the sound or the lyrics?
6. Does this song make you feel happy?
7. How would you rate the lyrics and melody?
8. What do you have to change the world?
9. Is the writer realistic or just a hopeful dreamer? Why?
10. Does the writer think that he can change the world? How do you understand that?
11. How does music impact the way people think and act?
12. Is it suitable as background music?
13. Do you know any people who changed the world?
14. Do you know any leaders who did a big change in the history of your country?
15. Do you think you have power to change the world?
16. Are musicians from your country famous in the rest of the world?



Songs are something that can be repeatedly listened to. When language students listen to a song over and over, the reason they listen is not just for sake of grammar and language found within the content of the song, it moreover is fun and natural (Mora, 2000, p.146-152).

Teachers should be careful while choosing the song they want to take into the class for an activity. The students can do successfully in the class if the teacher cares for the song he brings into class. The song should be manageable and the length of the song should be fine. Its portrayal of cultural elements, its vocabulary, and whether it's a type of song that—grammatically-speaking—is reflective of colloquial speech.

For example, pop music is more contemporary and more appealing to young students, its lyrics tend to be like a dialogue, and it is likely to reflect day-to-day life. As pop songs are void of group, place, and time, they are fitting for the personal goals of the listener.

We in this paper aim to show more these songs can be used in speaking activities and how we can thus evoke students to think about the message behind the song. We should not forget that every song at the same time is also a reading activity as well as a look at poetry. Our main goal is to transfer these songs into speaking activities and to raise young individuals' awareness towards societal events.

The content of the songs we choose are to place importance on peace, kindness, friendship, and love. It is believed that these songs, whose messages lean towards universal values, will enable students to gain character-developing values.

When the music provided above is taught in class, students are requested to listen to the song and fill in the blanks with the appropriate word. After listening to the song more than once, the students as a class can try and sing that song.



## CONCLUSION

- Music provides fabulous environment for vocabulary acquisition. Examining the lines of a song is a reading activity that thereby enhances comprehension. The teacher's use of music in the classroom is for the student a different method to try in which they feel more gratified with the words they have acquired, their improved upon accents, and their grammatical knowledge. Students' belief that music improves their linguistic knowledge, and that music is practical thus increases.
- Music is an activity that does not just involve singing; it can be used as part of any teaching activity involving any of the four skills. In turn, music should be taken more seriously and be accepted as academic material.
- With the aim of improving basic language skills, the songs we have provided can be used for discussion, and thus for enhancing speaking proficiency. Speaking activities too can boost student cooperation and interaction.
- Music that is authentic, verbally dextrous, melodic, and poetic both supports and preserves/protects the language being learned. The listening activities that are used in textbooks don't come across to be as reflecting natural speech. They are sometimes slower and more artificial.
- Teachers need to prepare their students for non-classroom, real-life language using authentic materials—music achieves this. The vocabulary, syntax, and patterns found in songs makes the students' learning of a language easier and they psychologically feel better every time they learn a song in English class. Listening to music improves their pronunciation as well as benefits their level of understanding.
- The importance of protest music can be misinterpreted for those the lacking necessary sensitivity. In order to conduct meaningful lessons in connection to foreign language education, cultural studies, and historical analysis, adding on excessive content and repeating the same material in the environment of the classroom will lose students' interest in the foreign language. It will also have a negative impact both on their lives and on how they approach the culture and history of the country/countries of the language they are learning. Protest music approaches these topics in a positive manner in the long run



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