



Research Article

Children's popular music culture in Türkiye: reflections and critiques in music education¹

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Article Info

Received: 06 August 2024
Accepted: 10 October 2024
Online: 30 December 2024

Keywords

Music education
Popular children songs
Popular culture music

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Abstract

Popular culture, as an aspect of acculturation, also manifests itself in music. Music influenced by pop culture has the potential to affect a large portion of society. Popular culture music impacts not only adults but also children. At this point, the concept of children's pop music emerges. This study aims to examine the music that influences children under the influence of popular culture in Türkiye. In this study, the selection of popular children's music was based on their inclusion in music education books. This approach limits the examination of music as an object of study, considering its presence in music teaching books at the child level as an element of popular music culture. In this research, 24 musical works were analyzed. The majority of these works are Turkish pop and rock songs, with some in the style of Turkish classical music. Additionally, there are popular songs from Italy, Greece, and the United States. It was determined that songs included in music teaching books often lose their popularity after being added, and there is no pedagogical approach related to the teaching of these songs. It is recommended that future studies conduct more experimental research on what should be considered when selecting popular culture music works for use in music education for children.

To cite this article

Alan, M. (2024). Children's popular music culture in Türkiye: reflections and critiques in music education. *Journal of Music Theory and Transcultural Music Studies*, 2(2), 105-116. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15031821>

Introduction

The term culture has many different definitions but in a general sense, culture is everything that people produce despite other people. With this in mind, one of the productions of life, the term music is in a way a product of culture. When present day is considered, it is seen that culture as a term changed in terms of content and form. As one of these, popular culture emerged. In general, popular culture can be defined as a situation where contemporary general values are open to discussion.

The popular culture, which affects all the people, takes children of primary school age under its effect, as well. In its basic terms, music as a part of life appears as the most effective tool for popular culture. There is a need to consider the differences that appear in music courses in formal training between teacher-student and manner and tone.

Music listened by means of mass communication devices at home, public places, in service cars, at school canteen and at friend meetings sometimes contradict with and separated from the music that students listen at music courses. This contradiction causes the child to develop a new music culture. As mentioned above, as a popular culture tool, music is consumed frequently and artificially in this period. Children, as an important target for popular music, want to listen

¹ This study was partially presented as a paper at the 10th International Conference on Advances in Social Sciences (ICASS), Singapore, on Nov 14-15, 2015. Only the abstract was published.

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to pieces of popular music at school as well. Discussing whether the children achieve their expectations, and reaching a conclusion make the problem of this study.

Popular Music Culture

As it is clear from the aims of the study, while evaluating the effects of popular music in music courses for children, it is believed that the effects of popular music is necessary to consider. In this study, we consider popular culture as popular music. In his dictionary of music terms, Sözer explains Pop music as the reflection of the Popart movement in England in the early 60s. "The pioneering was done by British and American music groups. The development of the amplifier and the strengthening of electronic instruments started the rhythmic music movement. The mixture of black "blues" with white "folk songs", "country" and "western" music created this music genre. It was gradually replaced by "Rock music"" (Sözer, 2012, p:191).

Schnitzer, while describing music, says that we can no longer imagine a life without music. From the Middle Ages to the present day, we have encountered different types of music in many areas of life, willingly or unwillingly. Today, technical media (radio, television, gramophone, magnetophone and cassette recorders) allow everyone to hear and know all kinds of music, from opera to pop music. Music from the most distant countries comes to your home almost free of charge" (Schnitzer, 1982, p:5). Cultural, economic, and political processes are fundamental components of social life. Cultural elements are closely related to political and economic situations. Culture is not just a process that carries values and moral judgments; it is an ongoing phenomenon that has been experienced in the past and continues to be experienced today. People's experiences shape culture and form the life patterns of individuals (Erdogan, 2014).

What we consider here is the relation of culture to which has been experienced-being experienced-and those who experiences. While this relationship can be formed by the person, it could also be formed by a directing superior "effect group". It is seen more like the effect of dominant culture over other cultures. As the repertoires formed by people, who direct television and music programs that shape masses, and especially that ones who choose songs especially in music programs; to make it more clear the people who choose songs and singers, adopt habits to the audience as they reach them.

When the popularity in the field of music is considered, being in "top 10" or "top 40" and having them listened is popularity. As a matter of fact, the effect groups, which prepare the "top" lists, want someone to be listened. We should of course take this from different aspects. The effect of popular music to the music education of children has a great importance both positively and negatively. It is important to present the music of successful contemporary musicians, as well. This necessity can be explained as understanding of the era or keeping up with it. It is also thought to be beneficial when it is considered as a tool that speeds up comprehension.

Popular Music Culture in Türkiye

Turkey, due to its location and cultural structure, which is a product of the synthesis of civilizations, has also become one of the subjects of popular music studies. However, it cannot be said that sufficient research has been conducted in this area. Dürük (2011) defined the concept of 'composite structure in music' and examined it from the perspective of popular music. Çiftçi (2010) addressed the relationship between popular music and music education. He emphasized that, like other genres of music, the popular music genre should also be analyzed and evaluated in music education. Efe and Sonsel (2019) identified the fifty songs that remained on the charts the longest and examined their characteristics according to different variables. Studies addressing popular music, like these, can be found in the literature. Research on Türkiye's popular music at the international level is quite limited. In a study, Fossum (2024) examined the concept of Intellectual Property within the context of two copyright advocacy associations related to music works in Türkiye. The topic of popular music and IP, in particular, has garnered significant attention in Türkiye.

Children's popular music

Popular music, and interdisciplinary studies in this field, often show that when considering the research subject as human beings, the age group is generally quite high. Most studies tend to focus on adults, particularly young people, while research on children in Türkiye is quite limited. The study by Okumuş and Karadağ (2014) on preschool-level students and the impact of popular music on families and teachers is one of the notable works in this area. It is significant

to increase research themed around popular music and children in the context of individuals' childhood experiences and their effects on identity and character development.

“Although the dense interest of children to the popular music that surrounds our daily life in Türkiye has caused music scientists and music education specialists to criticize it at the beginning, with the understanding that suggests that without making any discriminations all the music types are a part of our culture and it is inevitable to separate them from education processes, popular music has been placed in education programs different from the previous ones. Especially that the melodies are simple and catchy, and that the rhythms of the songs are lively, and that they are suitable for children to rhythm with music and dance caused popular music to be adopted more” (Aksu, 2010:95).

As Aksu claimed and as music books verify, popular music could find itself a place in the school life. Popular samples that are evaluated cannot be found in song sources daily. They are placed later. This both spares time for education specialists and helps them evaluate popular music pieces as well. In present day music courses students are able to listen to popular songs during breaks or sometimes in the lesson hour with the help of Internet and social sharing sites. Such sharing is not only for primary school music courses but also for secondary schools, high schools and universities as well. In today's era where communication technologies are in fast speed, and where cell phones allow social sharing with the help of the Internet, allow students to reach every kind of music pieces in every situation

One of the most important issues regarding the use of popular music in children's education is the teacher factor. Kondracka-Szala (2024), in her comparative study, identified that American and Polish preschool teachers differ in their plans regarding this issue. While American teachers emphasize the focus on the use of popular music, Polish preschool teachers focus on their self-development. Therefore, popular music and education for children is an important topic that should be evaluated from all dimensions

Aim of Study

In this study, the aim is to examine how children's popular music in Türkiye is reflected in music education textbooks and to provide a critical perspective on how this music can be applied to music education.

Method

Research Model

This research was conducted using the document analysis method, which is one of the qualitative research types. In this context, the relevant literature was reviewed in accordance with the aim of the research. In the study, to determine the educational reflections of popular children's music culture in Turkey, an examination was conducted of the musical works included in the primary school music education curriculum and present in textbooks. The most useful books for the literature review are those that summarize research or address conceptual discussions on educational topics. Textbooks used in classrooms are generally less useful because they do not contain individual reports of research; however, they do include valuable reference sources and literature summaries (Creswell, 2017:118).

Documents

In the study, our main criterion is to identify children's popular music works that meet the "popularity" criteria and can be evaluated as popular. This identification has been approached in terms of the concept of music popularity according to international standards. The criteria for these songs, in terms of their reflections in music education, are their inclusion in textbooks or music teaching curricula. A total of 24 popular children's songs that meet these criteria were identified.

Analysis

In the study, the processes of identifying popular children's songs can be considered as part of the analysis process. The researcher, being someone who provides training for classroom teachers in music education at the primary school level, provides textbooks and curriculum books related to music that can be taught to children at this educational level to teacher candidates at the undergraduate level. In this regard, an analysis was conducted of music textbooks and teaching programs from 2014 and earlier.

Results

Popular music for children in Türkiye

When primary school course books and songbooks are examined, it is seen that there are some old songs from 5 to 20 years ago; and the number of these songs are limited. The books contain proper songs from a variety of composers. These songs are types that can be counted as "harps on the same string", and they do not set bad examples. Present day popular music has not yet reached to our children.

The music that can be listened by computers with an Internet connection or other gadgets can be counted here as "popular music". The songs found in sourcebooks date far back from the children's age. They are not compatible with the outcome "Works from Music Types in Our Country" in the program. As obvious from the songs we picked randomly, the songs are popular songs of the past.

As a trend that goes on for a while, school songs composed from poems of famous Turkish poets also takes attention. Some common school songs are the ones that are created this way.

Popular Music Songs for Children in Türkiye

Gezsen Anadolu'yu

Lyrics: Behçet Kemal Çağlar, Music: Erdoğan Okyay (Şahin-Melek, 2002, Page:62.)



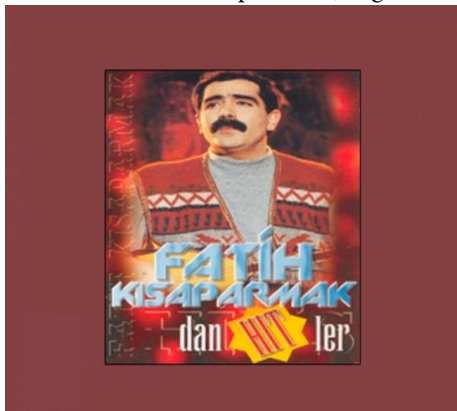
Arkadaşım Eşşek

Lyrics-Music: Barış Manço (Özgül, 2002, Page: 171). Lyrics-Music: Barış Manço (Akkaş, 2005, Page:100).



Kilim

Lyrics-Music: Fatih Kısaparmak (Özgül, 2002, Page: 202). Lyrics-Music: Fatih Kısaparmak (Akkaş, 2005, Page:107).



Bir Aslan Miyav Dedi

Lyrics-Music: Kayahan (Özgül, 2002, Page:158).

**Bu Sabah Yağmur Var İstanbul'da**

Lyrics-Music: Mazhar-Fuat-Özkan. (Sun, 1998, Page:100).

**Gülpembe**

Lyrics-Music: Barış Manço (Aydoğan, 2007, Page: 90).

**Kol Düğmeleri**

Lyrics-Music: Barış Manço (Yavaş, 2007, Page: 66).



Ağrı Dağı Efsanesi

M. Ses (Yavaş, 2007, Page: 64).

**Yine Bir Gülnihal**

H. İsmail Dede. (Çiçek, 1995, Page:61).

**Vak Vak Dansı**

Italian Song (Aydoğan, 2005, Page:93). Lyrics-Music: W. Thomas (Yavaş, 2007, Page: 55).



Samanyolu

Lyrics-Music: Metin Bükey (Aydoğan, 2005 Page:127)

**“Obladi Oblada**

Lyrics-Music: Beatles (Aydoğan, 2005, Page:135).

**Portofino**

Italian Song (Aydoğan, 2005, Page:144).

**Gitmesin Gözlerinden**

Lyrics ve Music: Necdet Tokatlıoğlu (Aydoğan, 2007, Page:79).

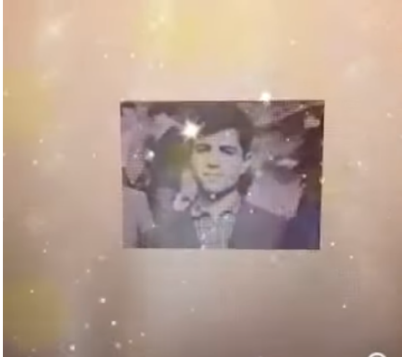


Ben Yaralı Ceylanım

Lyrics ve Music: Zeki Duygulu (Aydoğan, 2007, Page:80).

**Eski Dostlar**

Lyrics-Music:Gültekin Çeki (Aydoğan, 2007, Page: 129).

**Silent Night**

Christmas Song (Yavaş, 2007, Page: 51).



Dua

Lyrics-Music: Necdet Tokatlıoğlu (Yavaş, 2007, Page:55).

**Hatırla Sevgili**

(Yavaş, 2007, Page: 63).

**Dünya Dönüyor**

(Yavaş, 2007, Page: 75).

**Senden Başka**

Yunan Ezgisi (Yavaş, 2007, Page: 75).



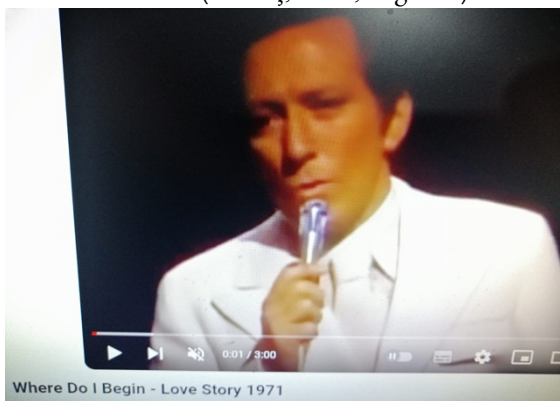
Memleketim

Lyrics: Fikret Şenses. Music: Romen Ezgisi (Aydoğan, 2007, Page:91).



Love Story

Music: Francis Lai (Akkaş, 2005, Page: 73).



The approach to the primary school music curriculum in Türkiye

When primary school music education program is considered, it is seen that unlike 1994 program, which was based on aim and subject matter, the program is created in terms of *structuralist program*, gives importance to learning other than teaching, emphasizes individual differences, encourages students to research, pays attention to previous learning experiences in learning process, highlights performances and activities in learning, takes students learning processes into account, adopts the understanding that students should learn in a social environment, allows students to create information and deducing from experiences (MoNET, 2007).

In the definitions of the outcome “Sings works of a variety of music types in our country” in “Listening-Singing-Playing” learning areas of Ministry of National Education Türkiye (MoNET) Music Program, music belonging to different cultures together with a variety of music types is presented. All the music theorists share a common agreement on this. The same idea is also supported in music books.

Criticisms of the use of popular culture music in music education in Türkiye

When the data appeared as a result of the examination of basic sources of primary school music courses are taken into consideration, it seen that the example songs that we consider “popular music” belong to a couple of generations back from this day. No terms, facts and expressions that are harmful for the education of children were encountered. The example songs create an expression that they are songs of the book writer’s childhood. As it is clear in the books of the writers, we see popular songs belonging to the writer’s own childhood or teenage years. This does not set a problem in terms of education programs. On the contrary, it is clear in the program that popular music exercises of current era should also be presented.

Ministry of National Education, which suggests in their music teaching, programs that children should recognize modern-day songs and understand and sing those songs, could not show how this will be achieved and how these song would add to the education of children.

In order to educate our future generations properly, current events should be followed and turned into outcomes, and as a matter of fact, as mentioned in the aims of this study, “popular Music songs” should be taught to our children before they lose their popularity. This necessity should be brought to the awareness of the public and discussed by the experts in the field.

Conclusion

In this study, where we consider popular songs from primary school music books, it was seen that 9 of the 24 songs sampled were Turkish Pop music songs. 8 songs are examples of Classical Turkish music. There are 5 popular song examples from other countries. There are 2 examples of Turkish Folk music. There is only 1 school music song. It will be accepted that the Pop songs that constitute examples of this study are works loved by the authors. Children do not even know the names of most of them. Classical Turkish music works are again the preferences of the book authors, and some of them do not seem to be understood by the child. For example, Dede Efendi's song Gülnihal would be the best example. “Yine bir Gülnihal, aldı bu gönlümü, sim ten gonca fem, bi bedel ol güzel”, this language is almost impossible for a primary school child to understand. Again, if we consider foreign music, it is seen that 5 songs are 2 of Italian origin and 3 of English origin. Although there are no musical examples in the literature that fit the concept of “children's popular music” among the children's songs examined in the Turkish education system, it is seen that the results of the Popular Children's Music competitions organized by TRT and some institutions are introduced as Children's Popular Music. It is not possible to describe the songs performed by specially prepared and trained children's pop orchestras as “popular songs”. The songs sampled in these studies consist of well-known and beloved school songs. The “Most Popular Children's Songs” on the <https://www.trtdinle.com/playlist/en-populer-cocuk-sarkilari-7406827> internet program broadcast under the name TRT Dinle is an example of this. Although this is not a problem, the most basic principle here is to address the songs of the period in which the target child lives his/her childhood. In European countries, although children listen to and sing the songs of their own era, they sample them within the scope of school activities rather than music lessons. As we stated in the purpose of this study, the examples of popular music voiced in our country's publications or in the music world, which are considered in the context of educational music, constitute the basis of the study. Therefore, the concept of popular children's songs in the literature has been characterized as the most liked-most beloved children's songs considered within the framework of school music. As a result, it is thought that including current Pop Music Examples in children's song books will increase the child's musical gain and interest in music education in terms of understanding the music of his/her own era.

Recommendations

Recommendation for Further Research

In this study, an examination of the educational reflections of children's popular music culture has been conducted. These reflections have been analyzed through music textbooks. Future research can encompass a wide range of perspectives. For example, beyond examining the sociological, psychological, and pedagogical reflections of children's popular music, both quantitative and qualitative studies can be conducted. These studies could focus on practical implications, such as gathering expert opinions on the content of a course titled 'Children's Popular Music' that could be created within the music teacher training programs in Türkiye.

Recommendations for Applicants

Regarding children's popular music, many practitioners, such as anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, and pedagogues, can organize awareness-raising seminars not only focusing on the educational aspect of this research I conducted but also related to their fields of study. Children's popular music, with its multidisciplinary nature, is open

to projects that can be supported in this area. This field should be presented to the attention of music teachers, considering its significance in the context of contemporary music education.

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Alan, M. (2024). An Examination of the Structure of the Kurdish (Phrygian) Mode in Children's Turkish Songs. *Türk Müziği*, 4(1), 57-64.

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